

THE SEAN MCCARTHY

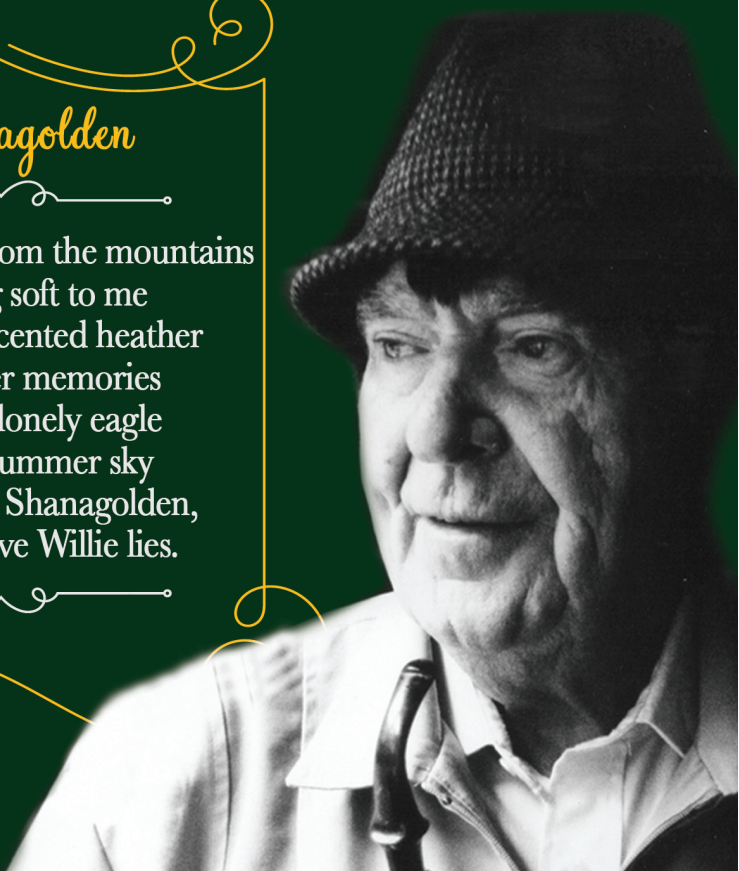
Memorial Weekend

FRI. 31ST JULY - MON. 3RD AUGUST 2026

FINUGE, COUNTY KERRY

Shanagolden

The cold winds from the mountains
are calling soft to me
The smell of scented heather
brings bitter memories
A wild and lonely eagle
up in the summer sky
Flies high o'er Shanagolden,
where my love Willie lies.



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Welcome Note

FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Welcome to Finuge for the 31st Annual Sean McCarthy Weekend.

The Festival was launched back in 1994 as a tribute to Sean who was a renowned Singer/ Songwriter, broadcaster and columnist. Sean wrote some of Irelands most popular ballads which continue to get airtime across national and local radio. Sean was also synonymous with Sunday Miscellany on Radio Éireann and The Rambling House on Radio Kerry. He was a regular columnist with the Kerryman newspaper, and made a huge impact with the article series McCarthy's Women published in that paper in the late 1980's which highlighted the vital role that women play in so many different facets of Irish life.

Keeping the ballad tradition alive is very much part of our Festival objectives. Over the years many of Ireland's best known ballad singers and groups have performed at the Festival including Liam Clancy, Jim McCann, Johnny McEvoy, Sean Keane, The Fureys & The Kilkennys. Last year Maedhbh Walsh was our special guest and this year the hugely popular Elle Marie O'Dwyer will perform at the opening concert. The concert is in memory of Claire Horgan and is sponsored by her mother Nellie Horgan and family. Claire passed away in February 2025 in the prime of her life. She had a deep affection for Finuge where she grew up and was a regular at the Sean McCarthy Festival.

The Sean McCarthy ballad competition attracts entrants from all parts of Ireland and continues to grow in popularity with singer/songwriters. According to the judges the quality of the ballads submitted for adjudication this year is at a very high level.

Storytelling has been very much part of our Festival since 1994. Initially we had a great champion in Eamon Kelly who is regarded as the father of Irish storytelling. Ironically his last recorded performance before he died in October 2001 was at the Festival in Teach Siamsa in Finuge. The story telling competition is sponsored by the McCarthy Family in memory of Mick McCarthy - Seans brother - and includes a special junior section to encourage young people to continue this important oral tradition.

The festival will conclude on Monday with the very popular Rambling House in memory of the late Peggie O'Connell. Peggie organised a very successful Rambling House in Sheehans Thatched Cottage for years before she passed away last year.

This year is also special because we are unveiling a plaque to mark the twinning of Sheehans Thatched Cottage with Teac Mallon, South Armagh. I would like to welcome Brigid Brady, Rosaleen Farrelly, Rosemary Tumilty and Paddy Creedon from Teac Mallon who are with us to participate in this momentous event to foster cross border relationships through the medium of storytelling.

In conclusion on behalf of our committee I would like to thank our sponsors: IMRO, Greenville Procurement Partners, Mike & Sue Nillson, The Estate of Sean McCarthy, the Horgan family, all those who advertised in our programme, our many Patrons and all those who will attend the various events over the weekend. Because of your support the festival has and will continue to survive into the future.

~ Jimmy Deenihan

THE SEAN MCCARTHY MEMORIAL WEEKEND

FINUGE, COUNTY KERRY

31ST JULY TO 3RD AUGUST 2026



FRIDAY, 31ST JULY

ELLE MARIE O'DWYER

Time: 8:30PM | Venue: Teach Siamsa | Adm: €20 + Booking Fee
Sponsored by the Horgan Family in memory of Claire Vivian (Horgan)

KIMS PEOPLE

Time: 10:00PM | Venue: McCarthys Bar & Beer Garden
Admission: Free



SATURDAY, 1ST AUGUST

Twinning Ceremony with Sheehans Thatched Cottage and "Teac Mallon" Meigh, Armagh

Time: 4:00pm | Venue: Sheehans Thatched House | Admission: Free

FINAL OF THE SEAN MCCARTHY BALLAD COMPETITION

Time: 8:30PM | Venue: Teach Siamsa | Admission: €15 + Booking Fee

THREES A CROWD

Time: 10:00PM | Venue: McCarthys Bar & Beer Gardens | Adm: Free



SUNDAY, 2ND AUGUST

CRAFT FAIR & CAR BOOT SALE

Time: 12PM to 4PM | Venue: Sheehans Thatched Cottage | Adm: Free

Note: Stalls/Pitch 5 euro email info@finugeweekend.com for bookings

FINAL OF THE MICK MCCARTHY STORYTELLING COMPETITION

Time: 8:00PM | Venue: Teach Siamsa | Admission: €15 + Booking Fee

HEART & SOUL

Time: 7:00PM – 9:00PM | Venue: McCarthys Bar & Beer Gardens | Admission: Free

MONDAY, 3RD AUGUST

PEGGIE O CONNELL MEMORIAL RAMBLING HOUSE

Time: 2:30PM – 5:00PM | Venue: Teach Siamsa | Admission: Free

THREES A CROWD

Time: 6:00 PM | Venue: McCarthys Bar & Beer Gardens | Adm: Free



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SUNDAY 2ND: HEART & SOUL 7PM 'TIL LATE

MONDAY 3RD: THREES A CROWD FROM 6PM

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Elle Marie O'Dwyer

2026

Elle Marie O'Dwyer hails from Freemount in North Cork. With numerous All Ireland accolades in traditional singing under her belt, Elle Marie began her journey as a recording artist in 2012. Since then, she has 4 albums to her credit.

Following her completion of a Masters in Irish Traditional Music Performance, Elle Marie also published a collection of traditional songs for young singers. She has toured and performed in venues all over the world, sang in Croke Park, Áras an Uachtarán and graced the stage with legends The High Kings, Seán Keane, Cherish the Ladies, Maura O'Connell and Liam O'Connor to name but a few.

Currently, she performs as one of the lead vocalists with world renowned show *"Gaelic Roots"*, based in Killarney, Co. Kerry and is a much sought after performer at festivals nationwide. Passing on the singing tradition is of great importance to Elle Marie. She teaches classes to young singers weekly and acts as tutor at festivals at home and abroad.





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Claire Vivian Tribute

(née Horgan)

2026

Claire Vivian (née Horgan) was a native of Finuge, Co. Kerry. Born in Horgan's shop in the village. Beloved daughter of Nellie and the late John, sister to Breda, Eleanor, Padraig, Nuala, David and Laura. She was married in Jersey in the Channel Islands where she resided with her husband Gary and they had two adoring sons Kyle and Ryan.

Claire sadly passed away after a short illness on February 22nd, 2025. Claire was very proud of her Irish roots and heritage and maintained a strong bond with her family. She visited Finuge annually and enjoyed the Sean McCarthy Memorial Weekend on many occasions over the years. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.



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*We wish everyone a most enjoyable
weekend in Finuge!*

Mike & Sue Nilsson

SPONSOR PROFILE

Mike and Sue Nilsson have attended every Sean McCarthy Festival since 2006 and have sponsored the Ballad award since 2012. They live half the year in Palm Springs, California and the other half in Ballyheigue, where his father was born. His grandfather came from Sweden to Ballyheigue in 1900, with several other Swedish Engineers to mechanize and manage the North Kerry area creameries. Like several of the Swedes he married a local Irish girl, Deborah Lawlor of Ballinorig, Causeway and remained in Ballyheigue the rest of his life. Thus the connection between Mike and North Kerry.



Mike, after getting his engineering degree from Northwestern University, left Chicago in 1962 for California, eventually becoming Executive Vice-President of Sinclair Paint Company and living in Beverly Hills.

In the 90's he met Sue, who coincidentally was raised in the Chicago Area. Sue had taught elementary school in Illinois, Libya and Nigeria and lived in Europe until 1984 when she returned to the US where she eventually met and married Mike. She has 2 sons and 3 grandchildren.

Mike is also a retired Commander in the United States Armed Forces and has been on the Cal Tech Entrepreneurs Forum board of directors since 1991.

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Lionel McCarthy

TRIBUTE

Proud son of Mick McCarthy and nephew of Sean, Lionel was passionate about supporting the tradition of storytelling and the memories of two great Listowel legends. His support for the Mick McCarthy storytelling competition being testament to this. His wishes are that those men and women committed to this art are recognised, supported and celebrated.



The committee of The Sean McCarthy Weekend wish to acknowledge the contribution Lionel made to our festival and for his incredible support of the weekend over the years. He will be fondly remembered by us all here in Finuge and we thank him for his most generous support of the Mick McCarthy storytelling competition.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.



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2. Bartra Island - Barney McCabe
3. Go West Young Man - Caroline O Callaghan
4. Mo Gra Mo Croi - Shelia O Sullivan
5. The Boys from Kilgarvan - Darren Donovan
6. The Calling - Emily Ahern
7. The Cork Mothers Lament - Marian Quirke
8. Peace and Harmony - Gerry Keogh
9. The Brendan of Spa Parish - Dave Buckley
10. Field of Dreams - Willie Kelly
11. O'Reilly Away - Barry Tierney
12. Mermaid Rocks the Blues - Rosemary Tumilty

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The Mick McCarthy Storytelling Final 2026

Adult Category

Dominic Bennett - Almost 50 Years

Pauline O'Grady-Noonan - The Bond

Michael London - Grandmoms Funeral

Paddy Commene - Buying Myself A New Trousers

Francis Kennedy - Changing Times

Tom Costello - Multicultural Junior B Team

Danny Larkin - The Small Window

Marie Gillen - Mannanan Mac Lir

James Fogarty - The Human Touch

Tom Moore - Drink is a Scourge

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Juvenile Category U18

Conor Cox - John the Man

Emily Flahive - The Clever Dog

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*The Committee of The Sean McCarthy Weekend
would like to thank our Festival Sponsors, Patrons
and Siamsa Tíre for their continued support.
It is greatly appreciated.*

*Best Wishes to everyone in Finuge
from*

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Armagh

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People often arrive as strangers and leave as friends regardless of class or creed. We've been featured on many TV and radio programs and have hosted many VIP guests over the years including the President of Ireland Mary McAleese and the then Irish Minister of Arts & Culture Jimmy Deenihan TD.

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Brigid Brady always acknowledges her cousins Paddy, John and Peter Mallon as without their generosity Teac Mallon would not have become the wonderful rambling house it now is. - Brigid says *"I must keep their memory alive"*.

Teac Mallon is a focal point for many activities including:

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 - *The Teac Mallon Social & Storytelling Club*
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