

A Brief History of The Thing Itself



In the autumn of 2015 I found myself on a poetic pilgrimage, following the call to Ireland's biggest spoken word & poetry event, Dublin's *Lingofest*. Having attended the previous year as a newcomer to the idea of spoken word, I had come prepared. I wasn't alone.

Many will attend a visual arts or music event content in the role of observer, perhaps some quietly harbouring desires or even regrets about never picking up an instrument or a brush earlier in life, but there is something different about poetic affairs.

It's in the universal nature of poetry, in its accessibility and the quiet gnawing at the back of each unsteady mind. It's in the fact that if you can speak or write, you can form something poetic, be it on the tongue, the page or simply floating through the mind. And so spoken word events tend to be attended mostly by poets; established poets, retired poets, aspiring poets and very often secret poets.

Lingo was no exception; you wouldn't dare stop to tie your shoelace for fear of a distracted poet falling over you, especially with the price of a pint in Dublin. All manner of page poetry, spoken word and hip-hop infused the experience, with poets from every corner of Ireland and many from the far corners of the world. They had journeyed far and wide to produce and consume the spoke and the writ. Mingling at every corner, buying, selling, performing and exchanging – books, pamphlets, business cards and discs. Of the many topics circulating, the more intrepid bards began to float familiar questions:

*So where is your night?
And where do you go to perform?
How would I get a spot up your way?
What do you mean there isn't one?*

There was a gap in the market, and plenty of poets looking to help fill it. One saw fit to quote *Field of Dreams* and *Wayne's World* at us:

If you book it, they will come.

So we booked it, and thankfully you came.

Beginning in February 2017 we launched our first spoken word event in *The Happiness Trap* café Enniskillen. Our mission statement was to give local

poets a platform to have their voices heard, whilst providing another pit-stop on the Irish circuit for well-honed performers to come and showcase their work, helping inspire locals looking for something refreshing. Most importantly, perhaps, we could speak to that gnawing poetic feeling in the back of some minds and use our platform to help coax out a few of those aforementioned secret poets.

After a small adjustment period and a successful movement to a long-term venue in Mulhern's Bar, *The Thing Itself* was born.

Over the course of our first year, we have provided a stage for many of the local community and managed to convince a small handful of first-time performers to join us and to return again to build on their skill. We have hosted nine regular events, helped facilitate different stages of the All-Ireland poetry slam, hosted a special lunchtime open-mic on board the *Lovely Leitrim Boatel* and proudly held a launch night for the first book of poetry by our team member Kate O'Shea, titled *The Human Condition*.

In our goal to keep the nights refreshing we have brought some of the most renowned spoken word acts, Slam champions and published poets to Enniskillen, hosting talent like John Cummins, Rory Jones, Mel Bradley, Cat Brogan, Stephen Murphy, Ted McCarthy, David Braziel and Abby Oliveira.

Each night features a set-list from an original songwriter to help break up the wall of words, with musicians such as Conor Phillips, Paul Corrigan, Luke Belvedere, Luke Burns, Andrew Train and Myles McCormack.

We hope we can continue to provide exciting and fresh spoken word experiences throughout the coming year thanks to the continued support of our performers, our audience and of course our ever-helpful and accommodating home at Mulhern's Bar Enniskillen!

If you wish to perform or attend any of our events we are accessible on all popular social media platforms where you can find event info, including a newly launched Facebook group that will serve as a community hub for our followers to share and discuss poetry and become more involved with 'The Thing Itself'

Facebook Twitter Instagram

Or you can check the Corncrake Events listing.

The Thing #10 will occur on Saturday 28th April from 7.30pm in Mulhern's bar basement. Spoken word by Michael Wilson & David Hynes, music by Katie Armstrong

I'll leave you with some poetic words from our team member Darren Reihill.

So
I'd like to stress
that This Thing
Itself
is us,
the many facets

*that bring our senses
from the selfs
to ourselves,
the lone
beautiful moment
into silver
relatable lyrics
grown
on the smelting pot
on uniquely tarnished lives
on the petals
that wilt and die
on the telling
of the hope
of life
that seeds eternal
the creation,
that stirs
in all of us*

*Thank you for your continued support,
You are **The Thing Itself**
X*

Caimin O'Shea