

John Fox (Ballinamore)

The Shannon Erne Writers Group had our book *First Cut* launched by John McGahern in the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon. When Brian Leydon introduced me, the writer asked, *Where do you live?*

A few doors up From Pat Mac's garage in Ballinamore I said. (Pat Mac was his uncle.)

He quizzed me about John Fox, the present owner and sole apprentice to the late Pat.

He still buys bread in Dinkins, Belturbet, his favourite bakery.

He smiled. I breathed, a nervous novice in the literary world.



John Fox outside his garage, painted by Padraic O'Reilly, Acrylic on Paper, Exhibited in Solas Art Gallery, Ballinamore 2009.

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Sometimes he works
at a wooden table in the office,
angled like an ancient school desk.
The indentation of his hand
smooth as an old leather glove.

Under a low sagging roof
he sticks papers on spindle
then shuffles around tyres,
past gas tanks, bales of briquettes
and bags of kindling.

Out at the pumps,
all weathers, all hours.
Leitrim people queue
for petrol, diesel and extra fills
in plastic drums.

A man from America
photographs him.
John complains he doesn't
give him time to comb his hair.

A portrait is painted.
He shakes his head,
It sold for big money
I don't know why.

Nor does he understand why
the McGahern summer school
comes by bus to view the garage
and meet him.

He walks back to the office
where tools hang askew,
spider webs in the corners,
gossamer memorials
of time gone before.

Angela McCabe is the winner of the 2016 Listowel Poetry Collection. Her second book comes out this year.