

Kenmare author publishes first novel

AWARD-winning Kenmare poet, writer and playwright Penelope Thoms has just published her new book *Seanchai* (The Storyteller).

The Carnegie Arts Centre in Kenmare hosted a book launch for Penelope and *Seanchai* last Friday. Penelope has lived in Kenmare with her husband Stephen and two border collies since 2000. Her first book, *Thin the Veil: Living and Dying within Celtic Spirituality*, was published in 2006 and continues to sell well in America and Ireland. *Seanchai* is her first novel.

Told in the voice of Brigid, a young Irish woman on the edge of life-shifting discoveries, *Seanchai* is centred in the trend in fiction that explores women's various identities. In the book, Brigid both discovers and creates her own identity via the strange story that is coming to her from forces beyond herself.

Steeped in Irish lore, magic and edgy

sexuality, the characters that emerge through Brigid's agency – both magical and very human – shape the young woman's soul, her character and her destiny.

American author and editor David M. Hazard writes that, "Thoms' ability to create all kinds of Celtic atmospheres – from convents, to country crofts, to moonless nights on wild fens, is absolutely brilliant.

"This is a profoundly moving read, with innocence and dawning maturity, sacred and profane, thin lines between love and lust, and with a pulsing build-up to a wild night of horrifying consequences... that somehow have to happen to make the tale all work out."

Penelope says that she found her voice while living in the West of Ireland, where she has been infused with the humanity, the wildness and the magic of the Irish



spirit.

"I listened to the tales told by the 'ole wans' of black dogs, banshees and mysterious white women – all agents of death foretold. These stories were believed and related as true as the Irish rain and the double rainbows. Familiar as I was with death and dying, both in America and Ireland, I awaited the outcome of the Irish saying, 'When you stand by the tomb of others you evoke madness or poetry,'"

To learn more about Penelope and *Seanchai*, visit www.penelopethoms.com.