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Book on disappearance of Glenveagh owner to be launched tomorrow



Author Lucy Costigan signs a copy of her book, *Glenveagh Mystery*, for Maria Gorrell of Donegal Town at Four Masters Bookshop. Photo: Michael Cullen, www.irishphoto.org

By Paddy Walsh

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A summer's day in 1933. The rugged beauty of Inishbofin had enthralled and beguiled the American couple, then owners of Glenveagh Castle, to such a degree that they had built a fisherman's hut on the Donegal island.

Perfect seclusion. An ocean away from the lifestyles that up to then had been the lot of the Harvard Professor and multi-millionaire and his wife.

But on that summer's day, seventy-nine years ago, Arthur Kingsley Porter vanished without trace from Inishbofin. Disappeared from his halcyon retreat never to be seen again. At least in these parts. A mystery story that even in Donegal has rarely been broached or speculated upon.

Until, that is, a small group of interested people, fascinated by the subject, got together to initiate what will culminate in a series of events this weekend marking one of the county's greatest ever mysteries.

On Saturday, November 16, Glenveagh Castle will be the appropriate setting for the launch of a new book that will finally cast light on the disappearance of the man who seemingly had everything.

Author Lucy Costigan has undertaken intensive research into the Arthur Kingsley Porter story since a visit to the county in 2005 brought her into contact with the bones of the mystery.

“It has been a fascinating journey for me,” says the Wexford based writer who is one of four members of the Arthur Kingsley Project, a movement that not alone has spawned the book but is also responsible for unveiling a feature film, a drama production, an art initiative and a potential tourism bonanza for Donegal.

While boasting no direct links with the county herself, it was that visit seven years ago that helped inspired Lucy to investigate the disappearance and ultimately detail her findings between the covers of her book to be launched by Minister for the Gaeltacht and Islands, Dinny McGinley.

She was among a party that had undertaken a tour of Glenveagh Castle when they learned of Porter’s mysterious disappearance on July 8th, 1933.

“It’s an incredible story and the more I delved into it, the more incredible it got. No body was ever found but there have been quite a few reported sightings of him in Europe and India.

“One woman we met said she believed he had cleared off to France. He certainly had the means and the money to do it,” Lucy points out.

Arthur Kingsley Porter and his wife, Lucy, had spent many years studying Romanesque sculpture in France, Spain, Italy, Greece and Egypt. But a chance visit to North-West Ireland had left the couple spellbound and in 1930 they purchased Glenveagh Castle and grounds.

But as if this wasn’t remote enough from their home in Connecticut, they then built a fisherman’s hut on Inishbofin Island and it was from here that the Harvard Professor and archaeologist disappeared.

As part of her research work, Lucy Costigan has visited the now deserted island. “I can see its drawing power. It’s a beautiful island, just an incredible raw beauty about it. It’s sad to see that nobody lives there now.”

Following her husband’s disappearance, Lucy Porter remained on in Donegal but the bitter memories attached to the county finally forced her to sell Glenveagh Castle to Henry McElhinney in 1937.

The book, “Glenveagh Mystery: The Life, Work and Disappearance of Arthur Kingsley Porter”, has already won the endorsement of none other than singer Daniel O’Donnell. “We were talking to Daniel and his wife, Majella, and they were very impressed with the story.”

Manager and publicist of the Arthur Kingsley Porter Project, Thomas Williams, believes the events of this week will result in huge tourism benefits for the county.

“This could be massive for Donegal and can bring a lot of tours to the area with people anxious to see where Porter lived and from where he disappeared.”

On Thursday, a book signing was held at An tSeán Bheairic, Falcarragh Heritage Centre followed by a dinner at the Ostan Loch Altan. And the Omagh Players were staging their drama ‘Murder Mystery’ in Gortahork.

Lucy Costigan signed copies of her new book in Eason’s, Letterkenny, this morning, Friday and at the Four Masters Book Shop, Donegal Town, this afternoon and evening.

An art competition for the children has been also organized with the involvement of local libraries including the Central Library, Letterkenny; the Community Libraries in

Bundoran, Carndonagh, Milford and Buncrana; Leabharlann Phobail na Rosann, Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair; and Falcarragh Library.

A feature film has been produced and directed by Loïc Jourdain of Lugh Films while the Arthur Kingsley Porter Project team has also secured a major tourist company from Illinois, USA, Martha's Travel Corner, who has designed tours to Ireland around the Porter story, beginning in July 2013. The project has also secured the support of an airline, a helicopter company, a car company, two coach companies, 10 visual and performing artists, and two hotels, the Shelbourne Hotel in Dublin and the Talbot Hotel in Wexford.

The Project has also handed over a portfolio after two years of research, on the regeneration of Inishbofin Island to Donegal County Council, outlining the infrastructure required to promote tourism to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the Professor's disappearance.

"We're also readying for the 80th anniversary of the disappearance next year. There'll be T.V. crews coming to cover the events from all over the world. This can truly be a bonanza for Donegal but the opportunity has to be grasped," insists Thomas.

For more information, or to order the book, visit

www.arthurkingsleyporter.com.

<http://www.donegaldemocrat.ie/news/local/book-on-disappearance-of-glenveagh-owner-to-be-launched-tomorrow-1-4496062>