

Local artist has more than one string to his bow

LOCAL artist John Connery has proved he has more than one string to his bow with the publication of his first book.

'The Insular People' was officially launched with a book signing in Bridge Books in Dromore last week.

John, who is originally from Hillsborough but now lives in Dromore, has built up an international reputation as a landscape artist and has exhibited his work throughout Ireland. He draws his inspiration from the country and people that he loves.

And the same people and scenery which inspire John's paintings have also inspired his book, a collection of short stories or 'Irish Yarns'.

"The short stories are my paintings in words" John said. "They are drawn from Irish life, the quirks of Ulster and Irish people and their characters.

"I collected the stories over about two years and thought I would go for it and try to get them published. I just jotted things down and then when I had time I wrote them out properly.

"I spent the most time typing everything out

by **JULIE SPENCE**

because I still haven't quite made it into the 21st century."

One of the most poignant stories in the book is 'Time But Enriches', which recalls John's early years in Hillsborough and jumps in time from the present day back to the 1960s.

The stories are drawn from keen observation and imagination, tinged with humour and sadness and uniquely the characters in one story sometimes relate to characters in another.

The stories run chronologically from the 1850s to the present day so it is important to read them in order.

As well as working to get the book published, John has gone back to his musical roots to record a single,



Local man John Connery signs copies of his new book *The Insular People* in Bridge Books, Dromore. Included is Lesley Price, proprietor.

'Grumpy Old Man'. John has always been a music lover and played in his younger days with a band. Still enthusiastic about music, John plays guitar and has put his talent to good use with the creation of a new single.

"I have been gigging in pubs and clubs for the last 30 years," said John.

"I felt it was time to draw that part of my life to a close so I decided to record a single. I think I am in the middle of a mid-life crisis and I

wanted to get a lot of grumpiness off my chest."

John will go into Kudos Studios in Lisburn next month to record the single, which he has already written and it is hoped that 'Grumpy Old Man' will be in the shops very soon.

As if two such huge accomplishments weren't enough for one year, John is also working on around 50 new oil paintings for an exhibition in the Taylor Gallery in Belfast in

November, which will again draw on the Irish landscape and its people.

"I wanted to set myself three projects this year," explained John. "I wanted to complete things that I had always wanted to do. I wanted to draw a line under my music career, write a book and press on with my art."

'The Insular People' is available now from Eason's and independent retailers, priced at £6.99.