

Newsletter

Friends of Fermanagh County Museum

————— No. 8 - February 1993 —————

Continuing Developments at Enniskillen Castle



Opening of the Molacana and Dresser China Exhibitions : (from left) Dr Megan McManus of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Mr Patrick Murphy, who opened the exhibition, Helen Lanigan Wood, Museum Curator, Mrs Ida Burton and Mr Keith Johnston of Forge Antiques, Lisbellaw. (Photo courtesy of The Impartial Reporter).

Our new exhibition centre opened to the public on July 1st 1992, the first of several new ventures planned for Enniskillen Castle. Two new audio visual programmes were on view and two special exhibitions - *Molacana: Indian Art of South America* and *Dresser China*.

Molacana : Indian Art of South America.

The molacana were lent to the museum by Patrick and Antoinette Murphy from Dublin, a collection reflecting their extensive travels and art interests. Molacana are richly decorated and brightly coloured textile panels for blouses worn by the Cuna Indians of South America. It was an unusual

exhibition and for most visitors a first time to see folk art of this kind.

Dresser China.

This pottery, once commonplace on kitchen dressers throughout Ireland, came from Forge Antiques of Lisbellaw. While potteries like Belleek are best known for their fine wares, they also produced cheap china for everyday use as did potteries in Scotland and Staffordshire. This pottery was often decorated with sponge-impressed designs and the same technique is used today by Nicholas Mosse from Kilkenny whose work was also included in the show.

Shades of Green



This was undoubtedly one of the most unusual slide shows produced in Northern Ireland. Conceived by Mike Hartwell for the Environment Service it took the viewer on a trip to some of the best known landmarks and sites in the North, including many in Fermanagh. What made this show different was the use of 3-D photography which when viewed with special glasses had the effect of making the images stand out of the screen in a most dramatic way. *Shades of Green* was extremely popular with visitors, so much so that its run was extended for several months.

Danger - men at work!

Recently a member of the museum staff joined up with the staff of the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the D.O.E. to investigate the inside of the Watergate turrets. However despite their best efforts the secrets of the Watergate remain intact and all they managed to discover was that the Watergate is now an excellent bird sanctuary, the irony of which will soon become obvious.

The intrepid band of workmen, at risk to life and limb, had scaled the turrets much to the dismay of the local crow population. John Nolan, foreman, and stalwart member of our Friends, had safely returned to ground level and was directing operations at the base of the turrets. Suddenly, just like a scene in the Hitchcock movie 'The Birds', he was bombed from a height with a large pebble which struck him directly on the forehead (hopefully recorded in the accident notebook!). Stunned and shocked he was heard to remark, with some surprise, on the accuracy of the aerial bombardment after which concussion and temporary amnesia set in - oh yes, what was in the turrets? He can't remember!!!

SUMMER EXHIBITION

1993

1 June - 3 September

'When the Yanks Came Marching In.'

The GIs in Ulster 1942-45

An exhibition which captures the glamour and nostalgia of the time when Ulster was host to 120,000 US servicemen.

Can You Help?

Have you photographs, memorabilia or memories of the American troops in Fermanagh? If you have, please contact Janie Crone, Museum Officer.
(0365-325000).

Canon Grainger - Magpie Collector

Canon Grainger was an avid collector from Co. Antrim whose extensive archaeological and ethnographic collection was donated to the Ulster Museum. This travelling exhibition displayed a range of his material, from prehistoric weapons to samurai armour.

The Grainger exhibition coincided with National Heritage Day, 12th September 1992, when Greer Ramsey from the museum talked about the collecting practices of antiquaries like Grainger and how they were often sold forgeries. He also showed slides illustrating some recent archaeological finds from the River Blackwater and River Sillees.

Walter Brady

Mr Walter Brady, for 35 years the honorary secretary of The Fermanagh Naturalists Field Club, was honoured at a reception held in the new building at Enniskillen Castle on Wednesday 6 May 1992. His contribution to the success of the Field Club was noted by several speakers

including Mr Robert Northridge, Mrs Anne Loane and Mr Roger Weatherup. The evening gave an opportunity to recall some of the highlights of the Field Club outings over the past 35 years including the discovery of one of the famous stone figures on White Island.



Walter Brady (4th left) is congratulated by Mr Robert Northridge, Chairman, Fermanagh Naturalists Field Club. Also included are (l to r) Mrs Anne Weatherup, Mrs Nora Brady, Mr Roger Weatherup, Mrs Anne Loane and Mr Edmund Richey, Club Secretary. (Photo courtesy of The Fermanagh Herald).

Old Walls and Cannon Balls discovered in the Castle Barracks Yard.

Anyone who has visited Enniskillen Castle recently will probably have noticed a series of trenches running across the courtyard. When these were being dug to house cables for a new public address system, the workmen discovered a number of cannon balls and the foundations of substantial walls. These walls were investigated

by archaeologists Dr Chris Lynn and Mr Nick Brannon of the D.O.E. who believe they are the remains of old barracks buildings. From time to time old walls like these have been uncovered. They are now carefully mapped to work out where earlier buildings had stood on this historic site.

The Maguire Chalices

One of the best attended events in the museum during last year was a lecture on the Maguire chalices given by Terence, The Maguire of Fermanagh on September 19th.

In a well illustrated lecture Terence Maguire spoke about his efforts to locate the chalices, in particular the 16th century gold chalice. The Maguire takes up the story:-

Cúchonnacht Maguire was the 11th King of Fermanagh and he ruled from 1527 to 1537. He died in a clan dispute and was buried in Devenish but later his body was disinterred by the 'Friars Minor' and buried in their abbey in Donegal.

In the year of his inauguration he commissioned a chalice to be made. Exactly who he gave the chalice to is uncertain although it seems probable that he gifted it to the monks of Donegal. In 1601 the Franciscan abbey was attacked and looted by English soldiers.



Maguire chalices and patens with an enlarged photograph of a 15th century Maguire cup in the background. (Photo courtesy of The Maguire).

Myth enters the story at this stage. Four miles from Preston there is a place of pilgrimage called Fernyhalgh. It has been a holy place for centuries. The earliest written record of Fernyhalgh is in the register of Archbishop Zouche dated 8 January, 1348, the granting of a licence to Thomas, son of Gilbert Singleton - "to have Divine Service by a fit chaplain in Fernyhalgh." From that time on references to Fernyhalgh appear in the 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th century.

There is a lovely old legend about the Ladyewell Shrine of Fernyhalgh and the beautiful gold chalice of King Cúchonnacht I of Fermanagh. A wealthy young Irish merchant called Fergus Maguire, the youngest son of a chief of Fermanagh was sailing home with his galley laden with silks and wines when he ran into a terrible storm which threatened to sink his vessel. Fergus tied himself to the helm and battled the elements for several days and prayed to God for the deliverance of his crew and cargo. Eventually the storm abated and Fergus was carried below to his cabin to rest. Whilst sleeping he heard a heavenly voice telling him to go to Fernyhalgh where he would find a 'crab tree' having coreless fruit overhanging a well and there he must build a chapel.

Fergus set off on his travels and at last after many weeks he found the tree, built the chapel to Mary and left there the little gold chalice of his father which bore the inscription - 'COSUS MAGUIR, REX FERMANAE ME FIFE MCCCCXXIX. The church was destroyed by fire during the Reformation but the Cúchonnacht chalice survived.

The story of Fergus Maguire could probably be told about other shrines, such legends abound in England and Ireland. The truth as to how the little gold chalice came to be in Fernyhalgh is an unsolved mystery. The reader may draw his or her own conclusions from this article.



The Maguire of Fermanagh and Madame Maguire, holding the 16th century gold chalice and paten.

About one hundred years ago a Father McKenna of Enniskillen wrote to the 'Ulster Journal of Archaeology' noting that the chalice had been given to the church at Fernyhalgh by a Miss Harrington but how she came by it or what her connections were with the church I cannot tell. I did read elsewhere of a Miss Alice Harrison who was headmistress of the school at Fernyhalgh until about 1760. She was a convert and I wonder would this lady be the same woman to whom Father McKenna refers. Perhaps Miss Harrison/Harrington had a link with 1601 when the Donegal abbey was attacked - who knows !

But the story of the chalice does not end here. The Maguire convinced the Rt. Rev. John Brewer,

Bishop of Lancaster, that its proper home was in Ireland and last year it was returned with the words 'Res clamat domino' - this icon cries out for its master. Its first public exhibition since it disappeared in 1601 took place in Enniskillen Castle on the 19th September 1992 and in the Spring it will be exhibited again at Enniskillen Castle courtesy of The Maguire.

Terence Maguire has launched an appeal fund in order to get the oldest Maguire cup copied by a silversmith. He himself has funded the production of exquisite replicas of three other Maguire chalices. The Friends Association has donated £25 to the appeal fund and if others would like to contribute please contact the museum.

The Pope's Valentine

Mr Joe Smyth, a research assistant at the museum on work placement from Lakeland Community Enterprises, came across a most unusual story while helping to catalogue a collection of old newspapers. It was published in the Enniskillen Advertiser, 8th April, 1869, and tells of a practical

joke played on his Holiness Pope Pius IX.

"Six young ladies in an English boarding school - two of them hailing from the North - purchased a very pretty valentine, which they sent directed to 'His Holiness the Pope, Rome'. Accompanying

the valentine was a letter, signed by all the young ladies, stating that they had seen His Holiness's condemnation of chignons and long dresses, and had been so impressed by it that they had given up both. The young ladies waited patiently, and in due time received a letter from Cardinal Antonelli acknowledging receipt of valentine and epistle, which had afforded his Holiness much gratification. The letter was in French. The young ladies were delighted to get an epistle from such an exalted prelate. However, another post brought back their valentine with the Pope's blessing beautifully written upon it in Italian. His Holiness had not been accustomed to such

souvenirs, and thought it would be doubly valuable returned with his benediction. The young ladies were immensely pleased, and are now having the documents lithographed for preservation - the originals to be given to the girl who suggested the affair. It may be added that neither of the young ladies has either taken down her chignon or shortened her dress one-eighth of an inch; the whole matter having been entered into as a joke, although it may seem to some that for a few girls to hoax His Holiness Pope Pius IX, and his great Lord Cardinal of a secretary, was hoaxing in rather high quarters."

European Arts Festival

The European Arts Festival was a nationwide celebration to mark the United Kingdom's Presidency of the European Community in 1992. Funding was made available for various projects

and events, and one such event in Enniskillen was a print workshop run by a Belgium printmaker Nora Van Beek Smith accompanied by Jim Allen from the Belfast Print Workshop.

Print Workshops

Over two days in November teachers and school groups were shown various techniques involved in print making, particularly the skills of etching. The groups were given a chance to produce their own works which required preparatory marking of aluminium plates, inking, and finally passing the plates through the press which printed them onto paper.

Both Nora and Jim showed examples of their work and that of other contemporary print makers, explaining the wide range of techniques that can be employed to produce different effects. The workshop coincided with the opening of an exhibition of Fermanagh prints.

The Search For Ancient Amber

Another project associated with the European Arts festival was the joint production of an attractive colour brochure by all the national and regional museums in Northern Ireland. Each museum was asked to highlight some aspect of their collection which demonstrated contacts with mainland Europe. In Fermanagh the choice

was amber beads - not at first sight an obvious connection, but certainly one which proved the oldest.

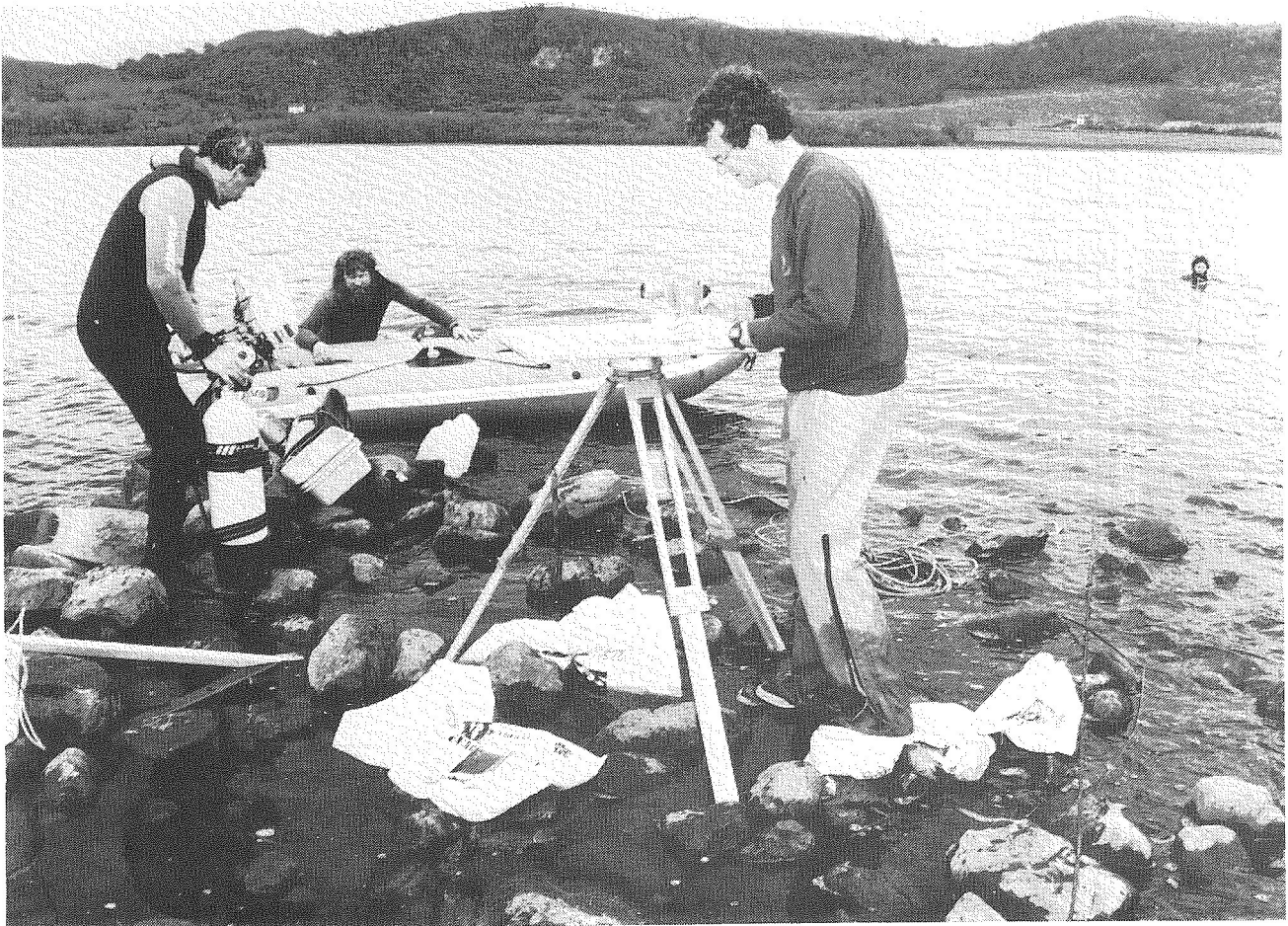
The amber beads - part of a necklace, were discovered in 1939 buried in a bog at Killycreen West, near Belcoo. Who placed them in the bog

or why they were hidden remains a mystery, but whatever the reason they were buried a long time ago, as they are nearly 3000 years old.

What is even more remarkable is that no amber occurs anywhere in Ireland, so it had to be imported, probably from Denmark. Scientific tests on a number of Irish beads show that the

amber came from a Baltic source, perhaps exchanged for copper which was mined in Ireland at this time but is not found in Denmark.

Wet, Muddy and Miserable ? - Diving in Lough Macnean



Members of IUART working on a crannog on Lower Lough Macnean. (Photo courtesy of The Fermanagh Herald).

For many people the idea of diving for archaeological material or wrecks conjures up images of blue waters, balmy evenings and tall tales. Unfortunately the reality is often closer to wet weather, muddy water and cold hands.

Despite this and with an enthusiasm that must be admired, the Irish Underwater Archaeological Research Team (IUART) worked on a project in

May 1992, investigating the crannogs on Lower Lough Macnean. Among the team was Greer Ramsey, from the museum who is also Training Officer for IUART. They discovered a quern stone used for grinding grain, an iron knife, woodworking tools, a medieval cloak pin, as well as submerged wooden platforms and wooden posts which were probably part of an enclosing barricade.

Acquisitions

Once again we are indebted to all those who have helped us during 1992; those who gave us objects, those who provided information and especially those who allowed us to record their memories for our oral history archives. This year we have registered over 200 items.

Among many of the objects donated by Mr Cahir McKeown was a number of items relating to the Irish National Foresters including membership books, photographs and a large banner.

Transport material of various kinds also featured prominently this year, particularly in the donations of Mr Michael McBrien, Enniskillen which included railway lamps, timetables and a working ticket punch.

A major donation of lace and clothing was given by Mrs Johnston (nee Tisdall), Newtownbutler. Similar material from Mrs H Pierce, Enniskillen, highlights the importance of traditional crafts

such as lace making and it is one of the crafts featured in our new permanent displays. Should any of this material need to be repaired, the museum has a pristine treadle Singer sewing machine well over 150 years old formerly used in Galligan's Drapery shop in Enniskillen and presented to us by the Galligan family.

On the subject of crafts, where would the modern woodworker be without his 'Black & Decker' accessories? A fine collection of traditional 'hand powered' woodworking tools was donated by Mr Edmond Richey, Enniskillen, including planes, spokeshaves and gouges.

Each year the museum manages to acquire a number of important Belleek items and 1992 was no exception. Mrs Brien, Ballinamallard, donated a first period 'hot water cover dish' and we also received several other pieces including an ornate centre piece from the Langham family, Tempo Manor.

Hidden Letters and Secret Inventions

Perhaps the most unusual enquiry to come to the museum this year was from Philip McCaffrey of Enniskillen. Mr McCaffrey was renovating property near Forthill Street when he discovered a collection of old letters hidden along with a comic and a couple of books behind plaster board.

The letters, over twenty of them, are quite remarkable. They were sent in 1918 from the Air Inventions Committee in London to a B J Mallon with an address "c/o Tamlaght Post Office". Mr Mallon had been trying to interest the Committee in an invention he had devised to assist aircraft flight, a device like a modern slip indicator which would show the pilot whether a turn had

been properly executed. However the Inventions Committee were not convinced that it would work and the letters, all officially stamped, point out various technical problems with his indicator. Mr Mallon, apparently undeterred by these unenthusiastic responses, kept on writing, hence all the letters!

At this point the story becomes more of a mystery. Who was B J Mallon? Where did he live? Why were the letters not sent to his home address? Can anyone help? Perhaps someone has copies of the letters Mr Mallon sent to London or can throw some light on this fascinating story.

Educational Service

'Fermanagh Folk' - a new resource for schools.

The 17th of June 1992 saw the official launch of 'Fermanagh Folk' a teaching pack based on taped interviews of people from the county. The pack, aimed at primary schools, contains a cassette, a transcription, suggested lesson plans, worksheets and enlarged early local photographs. This resource pack was the fruit of a great community effort and many of those who gave generously to the project were there to witness its successful launch. It is hoped that such valuable work will continue, as a great deal of information

can be collected in this way.

The fieldwork for this project was undertaken by Sandra Matchett with the tapes transcribed by Jack Brien. The pack was researched and produced by Anita Gallagher and Nigel Brady with artwork by Karen Power Brazil. If anyone is interested in purchasing a copy there are still a few available at the Museum priced £5.00 (a must for all teachers!)



The Chairman of Fermanagh District Council, Mr Caldwell McClaughry, (sixth left) at the launch of Fermanagh Folk. Also in the photograph are (from left) Sandra Matchett, Helen Lanigan Wood, Karen Power Brazil, Nigel Brady, Anita Gallagher, Eamonn Bradley, Mark Adair and Imelda McLernan. (Photo courtesy of The Impartial Reporter).

Fermanagh County Museum leads the way in computerisation.

This summer we installed a computer programme designed specifically for museums. We are the first museum in Northern Ireland to install this programme and aim to be the first with acquisition registers fully computerised!

For the past six months Jack Brien, thanks to an ACE employment scheme, has been busy transferring our records on to computer and to

date has managed to catalogue all the objects acquired since 1982. The advantage of the system is that it allows information to be retrieved very quickly whereas in the past it would have been necessary to search laboriously through paper records. When our work of computerising is complete we shall be able to operate more efficiently particularly when dealing with enquiries from the public.

Flints and finds from Topped Mountain



Jim Ledwith, Greer Ramsey and Fred Carroll examining finds from Topped Mountain. (Photo courtesy of The Fermanagh Herald).

A popular walk in Fermanagh is the one to the summit of Topped Mountain where there is a fine Bronze Age burial mound of stones. During the last century excavations uncovered a dagger with gold binding, human bones and a decorated pot, dating to around 2000 BC.

During the summer of 1992 further finds from the land immediately surrounding the burial mound were reported to the museum. Several of

the objects were made from flint. They include a type known as a 'hollow scraper' probably used to strip bark from twigs, perhaps to make arrow shafts. There was also an unusual sharpening stone with a narrow groove.

Topped Mountain is a prominent landmark of the county. Perhaps it was for this reason that our ancestors chose it as a burial place.

Friends News

This year the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum visited Kilkenny in May, a weekend visit in glorious sunshine. It was a great success with a packed itinerary and balanced mix of archaeology, art and architecture. Sites visited included Fore monastic settlement, near Castlepollard, Kilkenny Castle, the Cistercian

Abbey of Jerpoint and the impressive museum at Rothe House, Kilkenny's Tudor town house.

Rothe House was the venue for a party given by the Kilkenny Archaeological Society at which Fermanagh was presented with a painting by the Kilkenny artist Colm Ó Cochláin.

On the way home the coach stopped at Kilbeggan Distillery Museum. Whether this fell into the realms of a social or educational visit is open to debate! According to Mrs. Jean Agnew 'their coffee shop has the best apple pie in Ireland' - a judgment made before the whiskey tasting?

In June the Enniskillen Friends had a chance to return some of the warm hospitality shown to them when the Kilkenny Archaeological Society visited Fermanagh. The Kilkenny group visited numerous sites including Castle Coole, White Island, the Belleek Pottery and the Marble Arch Caves and the weekend was rounded off with a party at Enniskillen Castle. Both of these visits were sponsored by Co-Operation North.



The Friends on a walking tour of Kilkenny city guided by Mrs Maura Kenealy of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society.

Friends to Visit Derry, 19 June 1993

This year the annual bus trip will take us on a visit to the Tower Museum in Derry where we'll see the superb ultra-modern high-tech exhibition "The Story of Derry". We'll visit the new craft village, the acclaimed Orchard Gallery, St.

Columb's Cathedral and we'll walk along the famous walls. So keep Saturday June 19th free for this one-day excursion and book your place early to be sure of a seat.

Young Friends

We have not forgotten you!

Events and outings are being planned soon, you will have your very own Newsletter, as well as invitations to illustrated talks and exhibition openings.

We are inviting your contributions to the Newsletter. Can you draw? Have you an interesting story to tell? Are you involved in activities or projects at school, at home, in the holidays? Are there things you'd like to find out about?

If you would like to contribute something please get in touch with Janie Crone, Fermanagh County

Museum, Castle Barracks, Enniskillen.

Membership of the Young Friends of Fermanagh County Museum costs £2. If your parents pay a family subscription to the Friends (£8), you get free membership of the Young Friends.

Summer Outing to Florence Court

Find your way out of the Forest. Discover the Pleasure Grounds on an Adventure Trail. Lunch at Florence Court House.

If you and your friends are interested - contact Janie Crone, at the museum (0365-325000).