

Newsletter

Friends of Fermanagh County Museum



No. 7 - 1992



New Watergate History and Heritage Centre !



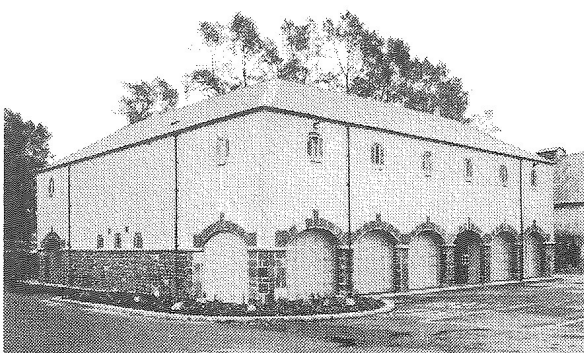
Gordon Johnson working on the Natural History Exhibition in the new Heritage Centre.

The long awaited Watergate History & Heritage Centre, part of Fermanagh District Council's latest extension to the Museum, is now complete. New displays are well under way and we hope to open this summer. The new displays will showcase Fermanagh's natural history, archaeology and folklife and will be entitled *The Story of Fermanagh: its Landscape and People*.

There is a gallery for art and special exhibitions and an audio-visual theatre for a variety of programmes which will include, *Enniskillen: Today & Yesterday*, a new video programme and a new audio visual presentation on *Fermanagh's Special Landscapes*.

The new Heritage Centre is an attractive two-storied building incorporating cut stonework and limestone trimmed windows and arches, all harmonising with the surrounding historic buildings.

Fermanagh County Museum will continue to use the Castle keep for displays and new exhibitions are planned for the ground floor of the keep, illustrating the history of the castle.



The new building.

MUSEUM NEWS

ABSA Award Winners 1991!



Staff of Fermanagh County Museum receiving the Association of Business Sponsorship of the Arts/British Petroleum award of £1,500 and a sculpture by Nigel Hall. From left to right are Adrian Beattie (Museum Assistant), Helen Lanigan Wood (Curator), Dudley Coates (Director of BP), Janie Crone (Museum Officer), R.N. MacDougall of BP Northern Ireland and Liana Lucchesi Ledwith (Clerical Officer).

New Museum Officer

Dr Greer Ramsey, a graduate in Archaeology from Queen's University, Belfast, will shortly be taking up the new post of Museum Officer in good time for the opening of the new Watergate History and Heritage Centre. A keen fisherman, Greer looks forward to living

in a county where, in recent years, he has often carried out archaeological work, both for the Ulster Museum and the Historic Monuments and Buildings Branch of the Department of the Environment.

MUSEUM NEWS

Oral History Archive

Throughout 1991, Sandra Matchett - Research Assistant with the People in Print project at Fermanagh County Museum - carried on a comprehensive programme of recording in a drive to establish a regional sound archive at the Museum. In the autumn Sandra left the Museum to take up a challenging new post with Armagh District Council, managing the new Palace Stables Heritage Centre. However, she had, by then, succeeded in building up an impressive series of recordings of the reminiscences of many colourful Fermanagh characters. We are very grateful to all those who have contributed to this archive, and would particularly like to thank the members of Belcoo and District Development Group, Killesher Historical Society, Kilmacormick History Group, and the Derrykerrib islanders.

If anyone feels they would like to contribute towards the project or recommend someone, please contact the Museum. The project is continuing under the guidance of Anita Gallagher, who replaced Sandra in October as Research Assistant. Anita, a native of Co. Down, is a graduate in History and French from Trinity College, Dublin. She has worked in the Ulster Folk Museum at Cultra and the Northern Ireland Public Records Office and recently completed a postgraduate Diploma in Museum Studies at Leicester University.

Anita is assisted with transcription by Jack Brien, who has worked in the Museum for one year under the Job Training Programme and is now employed in an ACE post.

Enniskillen: Today and Yesterday

A new audio-visual presentation entitled *Enniskillen: Today & Yesterday* is nearing completion. Through film, photography and live video interviews, the programme tells the story of Enniskillen town, its origins and history. The programme contains excerpts from the oral history archive alongside film footage of local people reminiscing about everyday life in Enniskillen earlier in this century. Early photographs, many of them collected locally, will also feature. The music for the soundtrack has been arranged by the Enniskillen born composer and pianist, Joan

Trimble, and the commentary is by another Enniskillener, the actor Adrian Dunbar.

The video programme will be permanently on view in the new audio-visual theatre at the Watergate History and Heritage Centre and, as well as appealing to local people and visitors, we hope it will prove a valuable educational resource for schools. This audio-visual production is being funded, as part of its cultural traditions programme, by the Central Community Relations Unit of the Department of Education in Northern Ireland.

MUSEUM NEWS

Young Friends Nature Walk

On 1st June 1991, 25 young people and others, young at heart, set out on an adventure walk - the first of many activities scheduled for our Young Friends. The ramble took the group through the native ash woodlands of the Cladagh Glen and across the fantastic limestone landscape of the Marlbank.

The children were encouraged to learn about the profusion of plants and trees in the Glen, keeping lists of the species they encountered and were able to identify. At the top of the Cladagh Glen, there was a quick rest stop at the Marble Arch Caves Reception Centre where the Friends took a look around the British Pteridological Society's fern exhibition. Later, the vertical cliffs, deep gorges, shakeholes and disappearing rivers of

the Marlbank were explored, along with their connections to the world of caves underground.

A stop at the old Marble Arch Primary School sparked the imagination of the children. What was it like going to school at a time when there was no road, no electricity, no running water and no central heating? An assortment of archaeological sites were visited - a burial tomb from the time of the first farmers in Fermanagh, and the remains of the isolated homesteads of early historic farming communities.

The weather was kind and many miles later a tired but happy group arrived back at the bottom of the Cladagh Glen relieved to find cars to take them home!

Educational Service

Considerable developments in the educational role of the Museum are currently being planned. A survey was recently conducted within Fermanagh's primary and secondary schools to find out how the Museum can best respond to the new curriculum. The purpose of the survey was to give schools the chance to indicate which history and heritage themes in the new curriculum are paramount. Equally important, school teachers were able to suggest how the information which the Museum holds should be packaged; whether it is presented in the traditional format of teachers' packs and worksheets, or in a more innovative way using, for example, slide packs and computer discs. The topics which the Museum will elaborate for schools will be grounded in the

new displays at the Watergate History & Heritage Centre.

Many of the Museum's recent publications were produced with teachers in mind, in particular the series entitled History on your Doorstep. We are happy to say that the first volume of this series, Stone Age Hunters to Saints and Scholars, has completely sold out.

At present, recorded material from the oral history project is being incorporated into an educational resource pack for upper primary school. The themes explored in the pack will include food, homes, farming, transport and clothing.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Maguire of Fermanagh

At a ceremony in Dublin's Heraldic Museum, Mr Terence Maguire, retired Dublin accountant, was formally verified as 'The Maguire of Fermanagh'. Mr Maguire is the first Maguire chief in over 400 years to be presented with the Maguire banner.

It has been Mr Maguire's abiding ambition to have the 17th century Maguire chalice returned to Ireland from its present sojourn in Quebec, Canada. He remains involved in negotiations for its release. Mr Maguire commissioned the silversmith Desmond Taaffe, who worked on the Cross of Cong, to make a replica of this chalice. The inscription, translated from the original Irish, reads 'Mary, daughter of the Maguire, wife of Brian Og O'Ruairc, caused this chalice to be made for her soul, for the friars of Donegal'.

This chalice is one of five chalices made for the Maguire family and Mr Maguire hopes that eventually reproductions or, if possible, the originals of all five will be circulated between the National Museum, Dublin, the Ulster Museum, Belfast, and the Fermanagh County Museum. This would create a valuable tourist attraction at Fermanagh County Museum and we are eagerly looking forward



Mr Noel Maguire of Lisnaskea and Mr Terence Maguire (on the left), the newly inaugurated Maguire of Fermanagh, at the Heraldic Museum, Dublin.

to a successful outcome for Mr Maguire's quest.

Mr Maguire plans to visit Fermanagh in June to give a lecture in the new Watergate History and Heritage Centre. We will be writing to you with further details in due course.

EXHIBITIONS

Common Clothes and Clothing

An exhibition of historic costume

A large gathering of the Friends of the Museum attended the opening of this interesting exhibition, which came from the Irish folklife division of the National Museum. In the exhibition, full-scale mannequins modelled a unique collection of everyday dress worn by country people in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The focus of the exhibition was on the array of garments worn by the different social groups which comprised Ireland's rural society at the turn of the century.

Many of the items used to craft these garments were also on display - weaving and knitting gear, a spinning wheel and samples of dyed wool and tweed.

Enlargements of old photographs taken from the accompanying book also featured strongly in the exhibition. These were supplemented with photographs from the Rose Shaw collection. Rose Shaw worked as a governess at Fardross House near Clogher. But she was also a pioneer photographer, capturing the lives of the country people of the Clogher Valley in a collection of images which has become a precious record of the early twentieth century in rural Ireland.

The exhibition was opened by Dr Patrick Wallace, Director of the National Museum, and after the official launch the audience was entertained with some traditional stories, skillfully recounted by Seamus MacAnnaidh, who is writer in residence at Queens University, Belfast, and George Sheridan, a



Friends at the opening of the exhibition.

renowned storyteller and folklore authority from Florencecourt. Guests were served a variety of traditional food and refreshments, beginning with brown bread and drop scones, accompanied by whiskey from the Irish Bushmills Distillery.

Common Clothes & Clothing was sponsored by Desmond & Sons, clothing manufacturers in Enniskillen, Irvinestown & Derry. It was attended by 5,765 people.

Our normal programme of five or six special exhibitions was suspended during 1991 to allow us to concentrate on preparations for our new displays. This inevitably resulted in a marked drop in visitor figures for 1991, from 11,400 last year to a total of 6,705 in 1991. We plan to resume our special exhibition program this autumn and, with the new attraction of the Heritage Centre, we expect a substantial increase in our visitor numbers in 1993.

EXHIBITIONS



Opening the exhibition, from left to right, Dr Pat Wallace (Director, National Museum of Ireland), Janie Crone (Museum Officer), Seamus MacAnnaidh, George Sheridan and Helen Lanigan Wood (Curator)



Some of our younger visitors enjoying the exhibition

COLLECTIONS

Acquisitions

During 1991 we added 146 items to our collections, many of them presented as gifts to the Museum. We are grateful to all our donors and to those who have helped with information.

One of the year's unusual donations was a wasp's nest, presented by Dr Brandon of Castletown - an elaborate, beautifully formed cluster of small hexagonal cells. A large collection of birds' eggs was presented to the Museum by Mr Alan Cooper of Enniskillen and added to our natural history collection. The eggs were gathered two generations ago by his grandfather.

We purchased a Belleek porcelain cup and plate ornamented with Celtic knotwork. This was designed sometime between 1922 and 1926 by a Hungarian, Madame Bereniuxs. We also bought a first period Belleek teapot stand, with a lovely floral spray hand-painted on to its body. The Curator donated a Belleek cherub holy water font which came from her mother's home.

Mrs Joan Gant presented some military paraphernalia. This donation included uniform badges from the 'North of Ireland Imperial Yeomanry' and a belt plate of 'Crom Castle Infantry'. The 'Crom Castle Infantry' was raised in 1799 as a home guard against any attempted invasion by the French.

Miss Lavinia Baird, who has recently left the county, presented a number of items to the museum. Amongst her gifts was a water-colour by T.P. Flanagan and some old Clones lace. This lace may have belonged to Mrs

John Grey Porter of Kilskeery an originator of Carrickmacross lace. Miss Baird also donated a large collection of old maps of Co. Fermanagh. Included in this map collection is a particularly interesting 19th century facsimile copy of a map of the barony of Magherastephena and Tirkennedy. First drawn up in 1609 under the direction of Sir Josias Bodley, these barony maps cover various Ulster counties with seven maps for Fermanagh. They were used to allocate land in the plantation of Ulster. Miss Baird, a descendant of the Porter family, also donated a silver gavel that was presented in 1864 to John Grey Vesey Porter of Belle Isle on the occasion of the opening of the Inishmore Viaduct.

We were also fortunate to purchase a set of Edwardian christening robes, complete with lace bonnet thought to have belonged to the Porters of Belle Isle.

A fine head sculpture of Joan Trimble by the artist Philip Flanagan was purchased jointly by the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum and Fermanagh District Council.

Painting Presented by Haverty Trust

A painting of Malin Head in Donegal by the Enniskillen born artist, Denise Ferran, was recently presented to us by the Haverty Trust. This Trust was established in 1930 under the will of Thomas Haverty, a son of the painter Joseph Patrick Haverty. The endowment generated an income of around £550 a year at that time. It was used to encourage Irish Art by purchasing works for galleries and museums

COLLECTIONS



Miss Lavinia Baird receiving a dedicated plaque in recognition of her work in Fermanagh from the Chairman of Fermanagh District Council, Councillor Caldwell McClaughry.

throughout Ireland. In the late 1950s the Trust went into abeyance, but it is now operating again, and this is the first painting to have been purchased in recent years for a museum in Northern Ireland. It was presented to the Museum by Mr J.C. Nolan, Director of the Ulster Museum, one of the two Northern Ireland representatives on the selection committee of the Trust.

We are still adding to our postcard and photographic collections, and recently

acquired several views of Enniskillen and old streetscapes of Irvinestown and Lack .

Two very interesting chairs were received this year. Mr Ian Storie of Killadeas presented an old dentist chair and glass spittoon, and the late James Campbell gave us a barber's chair from the former Campbell's barber shop on East Bridge Street .

COLLECTIONS

Conservation Programme

Conservation work is a very important part of the Museum's programme. Most of the items acquired by the museum have to be treated in some way before being archived or put on display. Among the objects currently being treated are a fine wooden cradle from the Pat Cassidy collection, a variety of special tools used in the craft of thatching and a fine collection of wooden objects - wooden bowls, plates, goblets, butter pats and butter stamps.

In the photograph opposite, the Museum Assistant, Adrian Beattie, is numbering the stonework on a nineteenth century fireplace, preparing it to be dismantled and taken away to the Museum for re-assembly. The fireplace is virtually all that remains of a house in Belcoo, once the home of the great aunt and great uncle of Frank Leonard. The brother and sister lived together in the two-storey house until the turn of the century. The house was burned in the 1920s and subsequently deserted.

The fireplace is to become a centrepiece of the folklife display in the new Watergate History and Heritage Centre.

In March of this year, Adrian Beattie spent one week at Monaghan County Museum on a conservation course. He received valuable instruction on a variety of conservation methods from Mr Noel Breakey, Conservator at Monaghan Museum.



Adrian Beattie numbering the fireplace in the Leonard house.

Adrian has already begun applying the skills learned in Monaghan to a wide variety of objects, many of them destined for the new the Watergate History & Heritage Centre.

FRIENDS NEWS

Coach Trip



The Friends at the Ulster American Folk Park

The Friends of Fermanagh County Museum went on a bus trip to the Ulster American Folk Park on 18 May 1991. The annual bus trip has become a popular outing with our friends. It is always a relaxed day accompanied by regular stops for refreshments. This year our lunch stop was at the Mellon Inn near the Folk Park where we dined well in pleasant surroundings. The Friends also visited the Ulster History Park at Gortin to see modern reconstructions of archaeological and historical sites. These include an impressive Middle Stone Age dwelling roofed with deer hide, an Iron Age crannog, an early Christian church and round tower, a Norman Motte and Bailey and several Stone Age settlements.

Kilkenny Visit

The Association of Friends of Fermanagh County Museum and the Kilkenny Archaeological Society will meet during May and June 1992 in a pair of exchange visits. On May Bank Holiday weekend the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum will visit Kilkenny, leaving on the morning of 23rd May and staying two nights in the attractive Butler House - an 18th century dower house in the centre of the old city, with a secluded walled garden - returning on the evening of 25th May. On 20th June the Kilkenny group will make a return visit to Enniskillen.

The Kilkenny trip will include visits to Kilkenny Castle, the Great Ormonde Castle in the city, the Kilkenny Design Centre housed in the former castle stables, the 13th century Cathedral of St. Canice, and Rothe House, a Tudor townhouse which is now headquarters of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society. On the way to and from Kilkenny we will be visiting Belvedere House near Mullingar and the Distillery Museum in Kilbeggan. Thanks to a grant from Co-Operation North we shall be having a wine reception both in Kilkenny and in Enniskillen, which will give us an opportunity to meet the Friends of Rothe House Museum.

This trip is limited to twenty members, so early booking is advisable. We will be writing to the Friends in due course. If you are interested in going on the trip, you can secure a place by paying a deposit of £20 which is non-refundable but transferable.

There has been a notable increase in membership of the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum. In 1991, we had 38 new members - 10 adult members and 28 junior members. We would like to thank you all for your generous contributions. Your support is very much appreciated.

Subscriptions for 1992 remained unchanged and are now being received. The membership year runs from 1 April 1992 - 31 March 1993.

Membership Rates:

£5 per person
£2 concession rate for senior citizens and unwaged

£8 family membership
£15 corporate rate: for schools and institutions