

Friends  
of  
Fermanagh County Museum  
Newsletter

No. 5

February 1990

1989: The Year's Review

The most popular exhibition of the year was undoubtedly 'Buried Treasure', the summer exhibition of jewellery which attracted a record attendance of 6509 visitors. Three other special exhibitions were mounted during the year and the total number of visitors for 1989 was 10,205 an increase on the

previous year when 9918 visitors were recorded. Fifty school groups visited the museum - a total of 1490 children, and 817 visitors came in 24 group visits including vintage car enthusiasts and members of historical and architectural societies.

Irish Horizons

*Twentieth Century Paintings from Fermanagh Collections*

10 March - 13 May 1989

This exhibition of mainly landscape paintings was drawn from three private Fermanagh collections, that of the Earl of Belmore, Mr and Mrs John Barr and Mr Jim Nawn. Sadly Mr Nawn, a generous supporter of the museum from its beginnings, was unable to attend the opening of the exhibition through illness and died before the exhibition came to an end. The Director of

the Arts Council Mr Kenneth Jamison performed the opening ceremonies and drew attention to how well the exhibition represented the wide diversity of Irish paintings in the 20th century, from works by Jack B Yeats, Mildred Ann Butler, Paul Henry, William Conor to those of more recent artists such as Tom Carr, Basil Blackshaw, T P Flanagan and Colin Middleton. One thousand three hundred and thirty nine visitors came to see the exhibition.





At the launch of the exhibition, Irish Horizons, are (from the left) Mrs. Desna Barr, Mrs. Sheelagh Flanagan, Mr. John Barr, Helen Lanigan Wood, T.P. Flanagan, the Earl of Belmore, Mr. Kenneth Jamison, who opened the exhibition, and Mrs. Joan Jamison (Photograph: Impartial Reporter).

Paintings  
by  
**James Sleator of Armagh**  
1889- 1950



At the opening of the Sleator exhibition were (from the left), Helen Lanigan Wood, Mr. Kieran Mullen, the sponsor of the exhibition, Dr. Brian Kennedy, Mr. Roger Weatherup, Curator of Armagh County Museum, who opened the exhibition, and Mrs. Anne Weatherup. (Photograph: Impartial Reporter)



**20 May - 17 June 1989**

This fine exhibition of portraits, still lifes and flowers by the Armagh painter James Sinton Sleator was organised by the Curator of Armagh County Museum, Mr Roger Weatherup and sponsored by Mullen's Garden Centre of Enniskillen and Lisnaskea. Mr Weatherup who opened the exhibition in Enniskillen described Sleator as not only an outstanding Armagh artist but one of international importance. Dr Brian Kennedy who compiled the comprehensive catalogue

of the exhibition, also spoke at the opening ceremony, describing Sleator's excellent portraits as a useful who's who of Irish society in the first half of this century. The exhibition was seen by 1230 people.

### **Sleator Lecture at the Museum**

Dr. Brian Kennedy of the Ulster Museum travelled again to Enniskillen on 30 May to give a talk about the work of James Sleator, an excellent illustrated lecture well attended and appreciated.

## Buried Treasure

*Jewellery Through the Ages*



At the opening of the exhibition, Buried Treasure, are (from the left), Helen Lanigan Wood, Mr. Sean Nolan, Director of the Ulster Museum and Dr. Pat Wallace, Director of the National Museum of Ireland. (Photograph: Impartial Reporter)

**24 June - 30 September 1989**

This exhibition of prehistoric, historic and contemporary jewellery drawn from the collections of the Ulster Museum, the National Museum of Ireland and the work of four of today's leading gold and silversmiths, was not only the most popular exhibition of 1989 but the best attended exhibition since the museum opened in 1977. Spanning a period of 4000 years and several continents the exhibition

ranged from superb gold ornaments of the Irish Bronze Age, many examples drawn from Fermanagh and Tyrone, personal ornaments brought from voyages to Egypt, Africa and China, historic jewellery from Medieval Carrickfergus, gold from the ill fated Armada, excellent pieces from the 17th to the early 19th century to contemporary jewellery by Bill and Christina Steenson, Graham Harron and Rudolf Heltzel. The exhibition was sponsored by LEDU, the Small Business Agency for Northern Ireland.



The private view of the exhibition on 23 June was attended by Mr Sean Nolan, Director of the Ulster Museum, who opened the exhibition, Dr Pat Wallace, Director of the National Museum, Mr. James McBarron, Area Manager for LEDU in Omagh, Mrs Winifred Glover of the Ulster Museum and the silversmiths Bill and Christina Steenson.

All the contemporary jewellery displayed in this exhibition was for sale as was an attractive selection of reproduction jewellery. This commercial venture turned out to be a successful one in generating useful income for the museum. During the last few weeks of the exhibition a "sale" was held and lovely pieces of jewellery were snapped up at bargain prices.



Admiring some of the exhibits in the Buried Treasure exhibition are (from the left), Mrs. Mary McConnell, Mrs. Carmen Gilmartin and Miss Maura McConnell. ( Photograph: Impartial Reporter)

## Shades of the East

*Dowry textiles from north-west India and Pakistan*

**20 October - 15 December 1989**

This colourful exhibition of dowry textiles opened with a special Indian evening, of music, videos and a meal of jhaffaraazi, an Indian ratatouille, accompanied by dahl, naan bread, poppadums and drinks. The exhibition was sponsored by Mr Diljit Rana of Andras House Ltd, Belfast and the textiles came originally from the remote Sind state in Pakistan and from Rajasthan and Gujerat in north west India. These richly

embroidered and appliqued marriage costumes, wall and doorway hangings, mats, blankets, bed canopies and animal trappings, all made by the bride and the women of her family, were brought with other dowry gifts of jewellery and household utensils to her new husband's home. These exhibits, all of them for sale, were collected in India and Pakistan by Mr John Gillow of Cambridge. Five hundred and sixty people attended the exhibition.





The museum staff became caterers for the Indian evening in October. From the left are Liana Lucchesi Ledwith, Iain Macaulay, Linda Gaffney, Adrian Beattie, Janie Crone and Helen Lanigan Wood. (Photograph: Impartial Reporter)

## *Coach Trip to Roscommon*



"Friends" enjoy morning coffee in the kitchen of Strokestown Park House



The sun shone brightly and the bus was full as it set out for Strokestown on our annual tour on 6 May. A brief stop to stretch our legs on the banks of the Shannon at Roosky before arrival at Strokestown Park House to be greeted by coffee and delicious home made scones served in the refurbished kitchen.

Mr Luke Dodd, the Curator of the house then led us on a fascinating tour commencing with the 17th century room in the basement and finishing up in the childrens' play room upstairs. We saw a splendid collection of furniture, reflecting the history of the house throughout the centuries. Despite the splendour of the furnishings the atmosphere was warm and homely, as though the Pakenham Mahons were still

in residence. Mr Dodd revealed plans for a Famine Museum in the stable wing, incorporating much local information about the Irish famines from the estate papers of the house.

We then adjourned to the kitchen for lunch followed by a walk in the sunshine through dilapidated walled gardens still awaiting restoration to their former glory.

On then to Boyle to visit the Cistercian Abbey and hear the learned words of our local guide Mr Frank Tivnan. We returned home by way of Sligo still enjoying glorious sunshine.



Ready and waiting for the guided tour of Strokestown Park House.

## ***From Castle to Castle***

*Next Annual Bus Trip - Saturday 23 June 1990*

Our next bus trip will take us through the idyllic scenery of Lough Erne, to the Atlantic coast between Ballyshannon and Sligo returning by way of lovely Lough Gill. We will be visiting the restored 17th century gardens of Tully Castle on the shores of Lough Erne en route for Belleek where we stop for coffee in the attractive new restaurant in the Belleek pottery factory.

Our next stop will be at Creevykeel to look at the impressive

prehistoric Court Tomb, then on to the Sligo/Rosses Point area for lunch. In the afternoon we will be visiting the Sculpture Park at Hazelwood and the newly restored Parkes Castle on the shores of Lough Gill.

Full details of this trip will be posted to you closer to the date, but if you want to be sure of a seat you may make a preliminary booking by sending us a deposit of £5 per person (non refundable, I am afraid, but transferable).



# Museum Acquisitions 1988-89

During 1989 we recorded 206 acquisitions, many of them presented as gifts to the museum and for which we are very grateful.

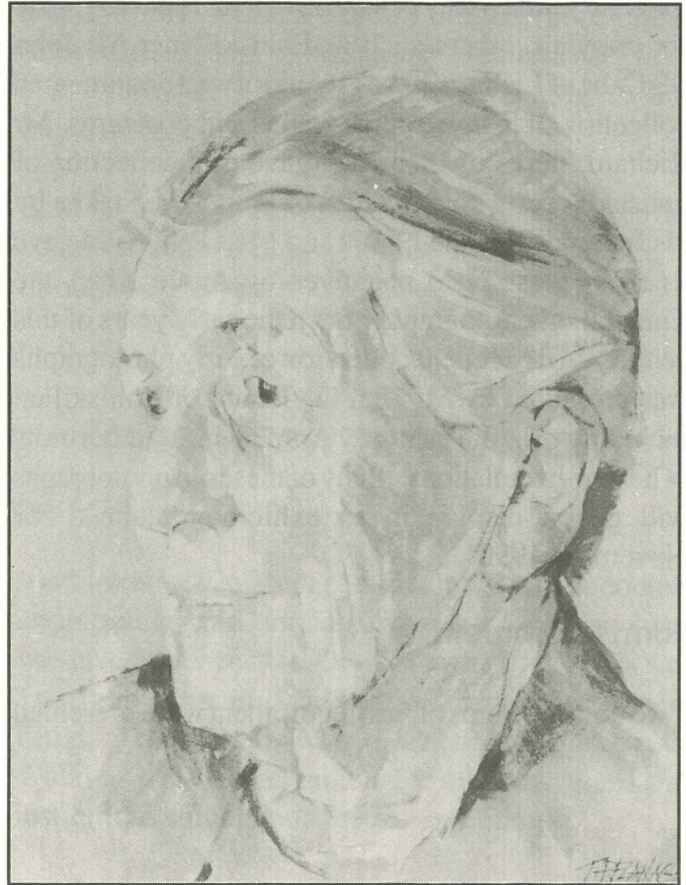
## Fermanagh's Ancient Past

Two interesting Bronze Age objects were acquired, one a bronze rapier dagger found just across the Fermanagh border in Corlea, near Ballyshannon, Co. Donegal and purchased by the museum. The other is a beautifully decorated Food Vessel found by the archaeologist Brian Williams during the excavation of a cist grave at Shanco, Tempo and presented to us by Mr John Pierce. The pottery vessel was buried with an eight year old child and the unusual thing about this is that we know exactly when this child died - in 1725 BC - because of a radio carbon date obtained from a sample of bone.

Mr Hugh Mannix presented two bronze rings of the Early Christian period, one finely decorated with a herringbone design, and both found on the surface of a crannog in Ross Lough. Two new crannogs were located this year in Lower Lough Macnean - the result of exceptionally low water levels caused by the dry summer. Robert Henshall of the Gortatole Outdoor Education Centre near Florencecourt found a stone axe on the surface of one of these and presented it to the museum.

## More Prints and Paintings

Visitors to the museum during the year will have seen some recent additions to our Fine Arts collection, among them a rare lithograph of Upper Lough Erne from Belle Isle by John Laporte purchased by the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum. A print of Lower Lough Erne by Creswick was presented by Enniskillener Mr Jack Donnelly of Dublin, along with a rare early road map of Fermanagh. Mr Alan Cathcart of Castlehume presented three interesting prints, portraits of the Marquis and Marchioness of Ely by W H Coaten and a portrait of the Fifth Earl of Enniskillen by C W Walton.



Portrait of Kathleen Bridle by T.P. Flanagan

Four paintings were purchased this year, two by Kathleen Bridle who died in May 1989 after a long and fruitful life as an artist and art teacher. One of these was an early oil painting entitled Hydrangeas, purchased by the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum, the other a watercolour, Cows Grazing Beside Lough Erne. Happily the Museum has also been able to purchase, with help from the Arts Council, a fine portrait in oil of Kathleen Bridle, painted by her former pupil and friend, T.P. Flanagan. Kathleen Bridle's easel and oil paints are also in the museum's collection, kindly presented by her niece, Madame Carole Durix.

Finally, a little of Fermanagh's past has been captured in another recent purchase - a watercolour of Campbell's barber shop by Barbara Allen. Mr. Campbell's shop has recently been replaced by the attractive Barbizon Cafe.



## Growing Photographic Collection

Thanks to your generosity, our collection of Fermanagh photographs has been growing steadily over the years. Many of you have lent us photographs for copying, others such as Enniskillener Mr John McCabe of Lisburn, have given us a well documented collection of historic photographs and postcards. Mr Richard Pierce of Lisbellaw gave us a collection of unusually early colour slides of Enniskillen taken by his father during the 1950's and Miss Rita Kidd gave us three glass plate negatives by Annie King, the Enniskillen photographer from the early years of this century. An excellent collection of early photographs was presented by Mrs Pat O'Connor of Enniskillen including original prints by Annie King and portraits of her and her relations. Many of these old photographs will go on display in an exhibition planned for November 1990.

## Farm Equipment

Two unusual items of farm equipment were presented

by Mr Alan Cathcart of Castlehume - a machine operated butter churn and hand powered wool clippers. Mr Cathcart also presented a winnowing machine used at Castle Archdale. Mr William Grey of Oghill, Killadeas gave us a Lister Blackstone potato digger and a well preserved swath turner with its original red and blue paint intact.

## Local History

Two identical pieces of armour - backplates of steel and brass - were the gift of Mr Frank McVitty of Enniskillen who found them embedded in the mud of Lough Erne at the Portora lockgates. We are continuing our researches to try to discover when and how this protective armour found its way into Lough Erne. There is surely an interesting story here.

Two coins were presented by Mr Jack Doonan, Enniskillen, both minted by the Bank of Ireland. One is a copper halfpenny of George III 1781-2, the other a ten pence token of George III dated 1805.

# *New Arts and Cultural Programme*

The first year of the museum's new arts and cultural programme is now over and it has been a year filled with activity. Under the direction of the Council's Arts and Cultural Assistant Iain Macaulay, the net spread by the programme was very wide, and events were organised for people with interests as diverse as third world issues and local history.

Particularly successful during the year were projects for traditional music and local history. The traditional music project was set up for Fermanagh's primary schools. The purpose of the project was to introduce school children to mainstream traditional music. Using some of the most renowned musicians in the province, the project brought together children from maintained and controlled schools for musical demonstrations. In the last month we received news that we have secured a major grant award to continue the project in 1990 and extend it to the county's secondary schools.

There were two series of local history workshops during the year.- The first was organised in response

to the remarkable growth of local history groups in Fermanagh. The series covered many of the technical points of collecting and recording local history, and also created a forum where professional historians and local enthusiasts could exchange ideas and experiences. The second series was entitled "From the Plantation to the Age of Industry". Four visiting lecturers talked about aspects of social life during these three momentous centuries in Fermanagh.

The programme for this coming year is equally full and ambitious. Two projects will contribute to the museum's archives. "People in Print" is an oral history project which, in the long term, should yield a social history of Fermanagh in this century. Shortly we will be embarking on a comprehensive programme of recording to fill out the museum's existing sound archive.

Alongside the arts and cultural programme we provide advice and support for people who are involved in the arts, and who wish to explore their cultural heritage.



# Our Educational Service

In March we held seminars in the museum for secondary and primary school teachers to launch educational aids consisting of booklets, worksheets and an A/V programme. The audio visual programme is an introduction to the monastic settlement on Devenish. The booklets are part of a new series called "History on your Doorstep". The first entitled "Stone Age Hunters to Saints and Scholars" is a concise illustrated guide to the Early Fermanagh display in Enniskillen Castle. The second "Rural Life in

Fermanagh" is an illustrated guide to the folklife displays in Lisnaskea Library and the third called "Devenish Island": Monastic Settlement" is a compilation of historical sources relating to this important Early Christian Monastery.

Both seminars were well supported and sales of the booklets and A/V programme have been steady throughout the year.

## *It is the Fate of Each Thing to - "Melt, Thaw and Resolve Itself into a Dew"*

We scarcely need the words of Shakespeare to bring home to us the fact that all things deteriorate, decay and eventually disintegrate. Even those objects on display in a museum are in the process of deteriorating before our very eyes ... But steps can be taken to slow down these destructive processes. It is called preventative conservation and is concerned with practical ways of limiting the damaging effects of such factors as excessive light, adverse humidity conditions, and heat.

Janie Crone, the Museum Officer, thanks to an award of £240 from the Conservation unit in London was able to attend a very worthwhile course 'Care of Collections' which dealt with museum collections - conserving objects and creating correct environmental

conditions for their storage and exhibition. The course, organised by the London Institute of Archaeology was held for a week last October at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. The course tutor was Mr Robert Child, a conservator with the National Museum of Wales as well as a consultant for other museums and institutions throughout Britain and Europe.

The course was an initiation into the horrors of such things as pest damage, insect and fungal infestations, environmental pollution and their effects, as well as an excellent introduction into the subtleties of conservation. It was a stern reminder that without proper management our collections will not survive for future generations.

## *The Association of Friends of Fermanagh County Museum*

Thank you all once again for your generous subscriptions, which have enabled us to add two important art works to our collection. Most of you will have seen these purchases displayed in the museum during the year, a fine oil painting of hydrangeas by Kathleen Bridle bought at auction for £434.85 and a rare early print of Upper Lough Erne from Belle Isle by John Lapporte acquired from a London dealer for £300.

### **Special Donation**

A special donation of £25 was received from the estate of the late Mrs Marjorie Moore, who was a very supportive member of the Friends of Fermanagh County Museum from its beginnings, and whose sudden death early in 1989 saddened all of us.



## Subscriptions

The 1990 subscriptions are now being received.  
The membership runs from 1 April 1990 31 March 1991.

## Membership Rates 1990-1991

- £5 Per person
- £2 Concession rate for senior citizens and unwaged
- £8 For family members at the same address.  
This entitles young people to FREE membership of the Young Friends of Fermanagh County Museum. See below.
- £15 Corporate rate for schools and institutions.

## New This Year

JOIN THE YOUNG FRIENDS OF FERMANAGH  
COUNTY MUSEUM

For £2 you can join the Young Friends (provided of course you are young!). Get your own Newsletter full of facts, stories, quizzes and competitions and join in outings and adventure rambles. The first event will be on Saturday 7 April and, on Saturday 26 May, there will be a special outing on mountain bikes to celebrate Archaeology Day. For further information phone Janie Crone 0365/ 25000.

## How to pay

Cheques and postal orders payable to Friends of Fermanagh County Museum, Castle Barracks, Enniskillen.

Bankers Orders should be made out to Ulster Bank, Current Account No. 52438153 (bank sort code 98.06.50), but sent to the Museum.