

newsletter

Monaghan County Council Museum



Liam Bradley receives award from John Gormley TD

PRESS RELEASE MUSEUM RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

Monaghan County Museum became one of the first museums in the country to be conferred with the prestigious award of reaching interim accreditation stage in the Heritage Council's national programme for museums entitled the 'Museum Standards Programme for Ireland'.

The award was presented by the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government and Leader of the Green Party, John Gormley TD at a recent gala reception launching the programme in the House of Lords, College Green, Dublin. The award was taken on behalf of Monaghan County Museum and Monaghan County Council by curator, Liam Bradley.

The reception was attended by a large collection of professionals from the museum world including the Director of the National Museum, Dr Pat Wallace and the Chairperson of the Heritage Council, Dr Tom O'Dwyer. As well as presenting the awards, the Minister was also there to officially launch the programme and he spoke about the dedication and hard work which museums such as Monaghan County Museum had put in to receive this award.

The Museum Standards Programme for Ireland sets out a series of 34 standards of professional excellence that any participating museum must meet before being awarded full accreditation status under the scheme. Monaghan County Museum has become one of the first museums in the country to reach the milestone of interim accreditation, which means they have achieved 25 of these exacting standards. Each museum which has applied for this accolade so far has gone through a rigorous external examination to ensure all standards have been met. Only after these examiners have been satisfied has the award been given. The fact that only four other museums, many of which were national institutions were awarded with this status shows the high national standing that Monaghan County Museum enjoys.

The award is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all of the museum staff as well as the high level of support received by the museum from Monaghan County Council. The support of the local community and all of the museum's users has also been integral to this success. It is the intention of the museum to build on this success and continue to work towards the goal of having a fully accessible and socially inclusive museum in the near future.

The museum staff is now hard at work attempting to become the first local authority museum in the country to reach the level of full accreditation under the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland.

Liam Bradley Curator

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FURTHER INFORMATION

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OPENING HOURS
Monday - Friday 11am - 5pm
Saturday 12pm - 5pm



YOUNG FRIENDS OF MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM



The Young Friends of Monaghan County Museum was officially launched in May, 2007.

Since then the members have enjoyed a packed schedule of events including an outing to Hillsborough Castle and a 'behind the scenes tour' of Monaghan County Museum. Both tours proved to be interesting, educational and fun.

In addition to participating in a fun quiz and attending an archaeology presentation the Young Friends were asked to design a Christmas card for the museum. They undertook this task with great enthusiasm and creativity and the staff is delighted with the result. Hopefully, there will be more interesting activities and events to engage the Young Friends in 2008.

If you are aged between 10 and 18 and would like to join the "Young Friends", contact the museum.



Andy Hogg - Documentation Officer

ANDY HOGG

DOCUMENTATION OFFICER

Andy Hogg has been the Documentation Officer for Monaghan County Museum since 2005. Prior to that he worked in the museum on a part time basis from 2000 to 2003 and for the following two years on contract.

As documentation officer, Andy is responsible for the cataloguing of the collection, a process which includes the registering, describing, labelling and storing of all objects. Since the late 1990s, all objects accessioned to the collection are recorded on computer using 'Adlib Museum', a dedicated museum database programme on which all data associated with the entire collection is recorded. Adlib allows anyone in the museum to search for the details and location of any specific object quickly and efficiently – a real benefit to staff in the planning of in-house exhibitions or education programmes. Andy feels that in the future it may be possible for some sections of the database to be made available online.

As documentation officer, Andy works closely with the museum conservator, Noel Breakey, and assists in the very important 'First Aid Conservation' of new acquisitions. As part of their work, Andy and Noel also constantly monitor the environmental conditions in both the main museum building at Hill Street and the storage facility at Clontibret. They also liaise with the rest of the staff in the planning, organising and mounting of exhibitions and have recently set up several outreach exhibitions.

Andy says that the many different aspects of his job and the variety of items acquired by the museum ensure that he never gets bored. However, everyone has their favourite jobs and Andy's is the planning and mounting of exhibitions.

OUR SUMMER STUDENTS

Each summer the museum employs students for the summer to help with staff shortages during the holiday period. This year our two students were Gerard McElvaney and Gregory Sorushanov.

Gerard is a Chemical Engineering student at University College, Dublin. He spent most of his time in the museum in the conservation laboratory. Here he assisted in the conservation of a number of items and helped with documentation. He also became proficient in the use of the various pieces of equipment, such as the fume cabinet and ployweld machine used in the laboratory. Needless to say his knowledge of chemicals proved very useful



Gerard McElvaney



Gregory Sorushanov

For Gregory, who has just completed a National Diploma in Emedia and who is now studying Computer Science and Software Engineering in NUI, Maynooth, this was his second summer working in the museum. He describes his work as 'offering software support and development to staff members and the development of software products for the museum'. Much of his time here was spent in the development of software for managing the documentation of the books and journals in the library. He also wrote a programme which enables reports generated by the Agresso accounts system to be produced in a more user friendly simplified form.

The museum greatly benefited from the talents of the two students, and sincerely hope they will join us again next year. In the meantime we trust they are enjoying college life.

RECENT ARCHEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN MONAGHAN

In the course of exploratory work being undertaken by Monaghan County Council for a new drainage system, workmen discovered a large underground chamber almost on the doorstep of Monaghan County Museum. Following an initial inspection by the museum curator, and the on site archaeologist, Clare Ryan, from (Arch Tech Limited) a member of staff from the engineering section of Monaghan County Council bravely agreed to be lowered into the cavity. He reported that the roof was curved and built of red brick and that the walls were plastered in what seemed to be some sort of concrete.

The chamber measures between four and five metres high, about two and a half metres wide and fifteen metres long. Locally there are several legends regarding the chamber and what it was used for. The most popular one is that it is a remaining portion of a tunnel which ran from the courthouse to the jail. Monaghan Hospital now stands on the site of the old jail. The tunnel was supposedly used in the mid 1800s to transfer condemned men from the courthouse to the jail to be hanged. A sonar test has been carried out in the immediate locality to establish if indeed it is a portion of a tunnel and if it is, if other sections still exist. Whatever the results of the investigations turn out to be, it is an exciting find which will undoubtedly add something to the history of Monaghan. Until all investigations have been completed the entrance to the cavity is covered over.



Entrance to underground chamber, Hill St. Monaghan

GRAVES OUTSIDE THE GRAVEYARD

During recent excavations for a new multi-storey car park in Monaghan Town, workmen uncovered the remains of three wooden coffins. The coffins were buried very close together near the rear wall of the Presbyterian graveyard. Work was stopped immediately and following consultations with the museum and the Department of Environment, an osteologist carried out an examination on the remains inside the coffins. From his investigations, it was discovered that the coffins contained adult males and were probably buried during the 1800s in the church graveyard. It was surmised that the graveyard wall had simply been moved back several feet at some point leaving these three, probably unmarked graves, just outside the new boundary. Further investigations found no evidence of other burials in the area. The County Coroner's office removed the coffins, and following a short ceremony, reburied them in a graveyard just outside the town.



Wooden Coffins - Presbyterian graveyard

DISCOVERY OF MINE

Mine discovered at local quarry

The Museum responded to a call recently from the owner of a local quarry, who reported that the remains of a tunnel had been found by men working on a road widening project. When Monaghan County museum curator, Liam Bradley and conservator Noel Breakey, visited the site, eight miles from Monaghan town, they discovered that the 'tunnel' was in fact part of an exploratory mine dating to the 1840s. It had collapsed at both ends and was approximately 5.5 ft high, 2.5 feet wide and about 25 feet long. This area, near Clontibret, was mined for lead from the 1830s to the 1850s and the remains of other mines have previously been found. In this case a trail mine had been started and subsequently abandoned when it was realised that it wasn't going to be viable. Although the find was deemed to be of no real Archeological significance, it is still a stark reminder of the hardships endured by miners as they extracted lead from solid rock using simple pick axes. The tunnel will be refilled and recorded as a trail mine by the Geological Survey of Ireland.



Mine Shaft

WHAT'S ON.....

Remembering the Railway in County Monaghan – Oakland Centre, Glaslough
Thursday 17th January 08

These are the events that Monaghan County Museum will be hosting for Seachtain na Gaeilge 08.

Drumming workshops
29th February & 1st March

Cultural morning with Ceili dancing, Irish language and music 11th March

Living History day to celebrate Irish language and culture
12th March

All events will take place in the Gallery of Monaghan County Museum.
Admission free
Booking essential

EXHIBITIONS

Museum Gallery (further details will be confirmed at a later date)

Ages of Elegance – costume exhibition will run until 26th January 08

Take Five – a showcase exhibition from five County Monaghan artists will open early February and run until Saturday 1st March 08

Photographic exhibition from Geel, Belgium opens early March and run until Saturday 5th April 08

An exhibition exploring the links between Monaghan and New York will open mid-April and run until mid-June 08

An exhibition celebrating the railway era in County Monaghan will open early July – details to be confirmed

WORKSHOPS

There will be a series of workshops available to accompany each exhibition

Walking Tour – bookings available for the historical walking tour of Monaghan town

Historical Walking Tours of Monaghan Town

These popular tours are available with prior booking and weather permitting

- Guided Tours by prior arrangement.
- It is advisable for schools or large groups to pre-book.

If you wish to book a tour or enquire about an exhibition or event please contact us at **047 82928** or by email: comuseum@monaghancoco.ie

All exhibitions and events will be advertised in the local press, or if you require further information check out Monaghan County Council Website at www.monaghan.ie/museum/

OPENING HOURS

Monday - Friday 11am – 5pm
Saturday - 12pm – 5pm

ADMISSION FREE

We would value **your comments** about this newsletter and would appreciate **any suggestions** for future editions. Email Eileen at emckenna2@monaghancoco.ie or telephone the museum

SNIPPETS FROM OUR ARCHIVE

From the Ballybay Court Records

"Defendant on Monday 6th April 1915 in the said town of Ballybay was found drunk in the public street having been previously convicted of drunkenness within the preceding twelve months." The defendant, a lady, was fined 2/6 with costs of 1/6 and with the instruction that if payment was made within a month she was "to be imprisoned in Armagh Gaol for a period of seven days without hard labour." A note records that 1/4 was paid by the governor of Armagh Gaol on 11th July 1915.

FROM THE MINUTE BOOK OF COUNTY MONAGHAN COUNTY COUNCIL.

Read at Quarterly Meeting of 4th Dec 1899

"Sirs, the Monaghan Urban District Council have instructed me to apply to you for 'way leave' for the laying of water-main along the County Road from Togan to Monaghan in connection with the new water-works which the Council is about to construct. What is required is liberty to break the surface of the County road where it passes through the following townlands ... to lay pipes for the conveyance of the water thereunder, the Urban District Council's undertaking to fill up any cavities made by them, and to leave the road in a good state of repair after them,
Yours truly,
D. Carolan Rushe

AGES OF ELEGANCE – 1750 TO 1950

Monaghan County Museum is currently hosting an exhibition of costumes from the National Trust's Springhill collection. Entitled **Ages of Elegance** the exhibition features costumes from the two centuries to 1950.

The curator of the National Trust Costumes at Springhill, Helen McAnaney, believes that each of the dresses has its own special history. One of the earlier examples is the Polonaise milkmaid style dress dating from the 1760s, which has panels inserted in the back to accommodate a wearer with a larger figure than the original owner. Easily the most spectacular dress which dates from the middle of the nineteenth century is decorated with silver gilt thread and almost one thousand Indian jewel beetle wings. Conservators used lacquered tissue paper to replace the missing beetle wings and the result could easily be described as a stunning and unique piece of art.



Also on display is an elegant Edwardian gown and a mid twentieth century cocktail dress. All of the twelve costumes which form this touring exhibition have been meticulously restored at the National Trust's conservation studio at Blicking Hall near Norwich.

The exhibition has been enhanced by displays of hats, slippers, gloves and perfume bottles. Anyone interested in fashion, dress design, art or social history will find this exhibition both enchanting and informative. All visitors are welcome and admission is free. The exhibition runs until the end of January.

The entire costume collection is based at Springhill House, Moneymore and is supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Eileen McKenna

