

Monaghan's War of Independence Exhibition Opened

In February 2020, the museum launched the exhibition 'MONAGHAN'S WAR OF INDEPENDENCE'. Opened by Cathaoirleach Seamus Coyle, the exhibition marked the centenary of the attack on Ballytrain Barracks in February 1920, considered the first action of the War of Independence in County Monaghan. The packed gallery was filled with people from far and wide who were keen to view the exhibition.



At the launch night of Monaghan's War of Independence Exhibition. Left to right: Cllr Brian McKenna, Cllr Pat Treanor, Curator Liam Bradley, Cllr Seamus Coyle (Cathaoirleach of Monaghan County Council at the time of the opening), John Murray Director of Services Monaghan County Council, Maeve Hackett Chair of the Museum Advisory Committee, Prof Terence Dooley Maynooth University, Cllr David Maxwell.

Developed in collaboration with Professor Terence Dooley of Maynooth University, the displays chart the key happenings, the major players, and the experience of the ordinary people of Monaghan during the turbulent struggle for national independence.

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New Education Resources



Group of Monaghan Old IRA at Loughbawn House, Co. Monaghan during the War of Independence



Royal Irish Constabulary constable



Monaghan's War of Independence Exhibition – contd.

The exhibits include objects and documents from the period contextualised by striking imagery, information panels and films. These short films are based on firsthand accounts of people who were active in the War of Independence and were recorded in the Marron papers which are now available digitally in the Monaghan War of Independence Files. These films, which allow the actual words of participants to be heard were made through funding received through Creative Ireland.

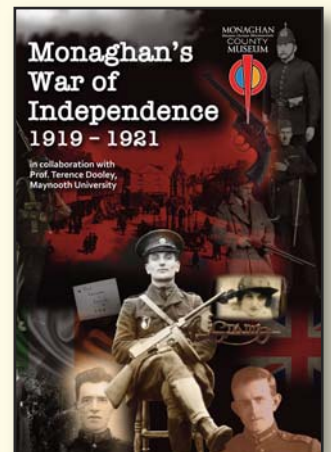
Little did we know that only a month after launching this exhibition the country would be facing a series of lockdowns and our doors would close. Now, as the country moves back towards normality, the doors of the museum are wide open and once again there is an opportunity to visit this enthralling exhibition. We look forward to welcoming you back to the museum and 'Monaghan's War of Independence'.



Left to right, Denise Henry, Collections Registrar, Monaghan County Museum, Linda and Sean O'Halloran relatives of Alice Mullen, Cumann na mBan.

Monaghan's War of Independence Booklet

Written by Professor Terence Dooley, this fascinating booklet contains additional information and is available at the museum or to download on the Monaghan County Museum's website.



Monaghan Murals

Since May 2021, anyone passing through Castleblayney is greeted by this vibrant mural in celebration of the work of photographer J. J. Clarke. Clarke was born in Castleblayney but left in 1897 for Dublin to study medicine. He was also a keen photographer and his collection of photos from circa 1900 are now held in the National Library of Ireland. Many of his photos reflected life on the streets of Dublin but he also left some striking images of his hometown.

The mural is the work of artist Omin and was inspired by one of Clarke's photographs that showed children walking up from York Street. Appropriately, it is painted on the gable end of the house which appears in the background of the photographic image. This mural was produced in partnership between the museum and the Patrick Kavanagh Centre and work is underway to develop other murals elsewhere that will reflect the history and heritage of County Monaghan. This project is funded through the Creative Ireland initiative.



Home Working Experiences

During the period of COVID-19 restrictions from late March to July 2020, the museum staff, like so much of the Irish workforce, had to work from home. This opportunity allowed us to step out of our routine work roles to undertake research in specific areas relating to the museum collection. Each staff member shares a home working highlight below.

The first reaction was to ensure that everyone was safe, that was paramount. No one really knew how virulent and potentially dangerous this new virus was. As a museum professional, I was certainly aware of the historical significance of it but like everyone in those first days, my focus was on safety, that of my colleagues and of course my family. As time went on and working from home became a reality, it brought challenges but also opportunities to work differently and we certainly grasped those as best we could. My overarching feeling about lockdown was how lucky I was to have my family and friends and how quickly life can change. As we open the doors to the museum once again and take our first few tentative steps back into the world, we look forward to welcoming our community back to the museum while never forgetting the lessons and the experience of this pandemic.



Liam Bradley – Curator



Denise Henry - Collections Registrar

Lockdown gave me an opportunity to get to know, on a deeper level, the vast collection of objects we house at Monaghan County Museum. This increased knowledge facilitated exhibition planning and research for our next exhibition to be housed in our New Museum.

Some of the object highlights that I rediscovered include some from our camera collection. Particularly our Spy Camera!

Virtual team meetings and training also formed another core area of work during lockdown. Training I attended centred on Collections Management and Environmental monitoring.

Virtual meetings facilitated conversations with other museum professionals around the country, about how we continue to care for and make our collection accessible during lockdown.

Being asked to undertake historic research in connection to the museum collection was something very different from my usual work role. However, with my love of style I was very happy to be asked during lockdown to take a close look at the museum's costume collection. The collection is very broad and includes military uniforms, christening robes, hats, glasses and my own personal favourites - beautiful ball gowns, wedding dresses and going away outfits. Many of these are decorated with collars and cuffs made of Monaghan's famous Carrickmacross and Clones Lace.

These gorgeous dresses were of course only worn by more wealthy women and beneath these dresses they were squeezed into corsets. Corsets gave them unnatural hourglass figures and, in some cases, seventeen-inch waists! Women suffered from reduced lung capacity, weakened chest and back muscles not to mention discomfort.

Like most people working from home, I had enjoyed wearing comfy casual clothes – a million miles from the 'torture' of corsets. Now, back in the museum I am delighted to put on a bit of style again!



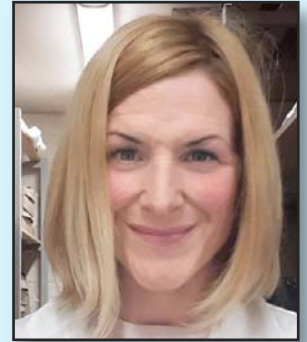
Patricia Barbour - Office Administration and Marketing

Home Working Experiences – contd.

I began working as Collections Officer for Monaghan County Museum in September 2020, taking over the responsibilities of conservation and collections care. I eased into this role by starting a condition audit of the collection, spending most of my time going through objects in storage, shelf by shelf and box by box.

I had only spent six weeks in my new role before the museum had to close due to Covid-19 lockdown restrictions, but I was able to continue working remotely on the condition audit, updating and editing the collection database with the information gathered during the audit.

Being able to work systematically through the collection this way allowed me to update collections information, find out more about the objects in the collection while also gaining additional knowledge of the social history of the area.



Anna McCann – Collections Officer



Pauline Tilson – Education Officer

In my usual role in the museum as Education and Events Officer I research and prepare educational workshops and the annual programme of events. To ensure the continuation of these workshops during the pandemic, they had to be moved online. This was a challenge, as I particularly tend to shy away from new technology! However, thanks to lockdown and the need to provide quality online content, I took courses to update my IT skills. This allowed events to be offered in different formats: Some were pre-recorded, and others were hosted through live interaction on ZOOM and other platforms.

As a result of events being moved online, we were able to reach a wider audience. This made me realise that even when things returned to 'normal' and we were back working in the museum that we could still have some events online. This will enable people who cannot ordinarily attend events in person to remain connected to the museum.

Working from home had its challenges but it allowed me to gain new knowledge of technology I would not have ordinarily used. It was also a welcome distraction from everything else that was happening with the pandemic!

When the first lockdown was announced it seemed as if the whole world came to a complete halt. The first lockdown gave people time to reflect, clear out sheds and attics and then ask questions. This led to an increased interest in the Monaghan County Museum social media posts and more research queries.

Preparing the social media posts was more challenging as I did not have access to all the resources that are available in the museum building but luckily, I have a copy of most of the Monaghan local history books at home and knew friends that owned others. #Inthistogether had been launched by the Government and people were keen to help each other.

People were also keen to read, walk and learn. Suddenly that ruin you passed while walking inside your 5km was a puzzle to be solved, who would know, the local museum surely?

By the third lockdown the transition from the office to working from home was smooth and we had full access to all our files. I have also been busy digitising a further collection that will be available on our website and assisting pupils with Junior and Leaving Certificate history projects.

Thankfully the lockdowns have not restricted curiosity!



Theresa Loftus – Research Officer



Helen Doherty – Museum Attendant

After my initial shock of the COVID-19 closures I enjoyed my home working research tasks. This included the development of the big houses and estates in Monaghan. One of these was the Castleshane Estate which is literally on my doorstep. The museum has in its collection a nineteenth century set of leather-bound maps from this estate and the digital images of these helped me understand the development of the estate landscape on my evening walks.

The recent forest clearance in the demesne allowed me to locate lawns shown on the 1869 map that stood next to the now ruined house and identify long gone features of the plantation like 'footsticks' over the river. The slow, silence of lockdown gave me time to better understand the history and development of this estate and hopefully complemented my research. That said, I am delighted to be back working with my colleagues and the public!

Recording Our Experience

During the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic the museum reached out to the community and asked the people of Monaghan to share their own personal experiences of living in lockdown.

These experiences, of how life was affected by Government imposed restrictions to stay home, could be shared with the museum through images or written accounts. The community responded with enthusiasm and we received many submissions. Through this participatory approach the personal experiences of

members of our community will help write, document and preserve the history of this unique period in the Monaghan region.

To get people thinking the museum suggested people think about how Covid-19 has changed their world under the following headings: Daily Life, Work, Shopping, Religious Worship, Communication and Contact, Spare Time, Community and Education. Many Monaghan people eagerly answered our call and here are some of the fine examples received.



'Recording Our Experience'

MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM

Monaghan County Museum are collecting stories and pictures reflecting the experience of the people of Monaghan during this difficult time of Covid-19.

If you would like to get involved, please send your story and/or image(s) to:

comuseum@monaghancoco.ie

with the subject line **'Recording Our Experience'**

All stories will be added to the museum collection and form part of an exhibition in the near future.

Please respect the government's current guidelines regarding Covid 19.

Daily Life



Work

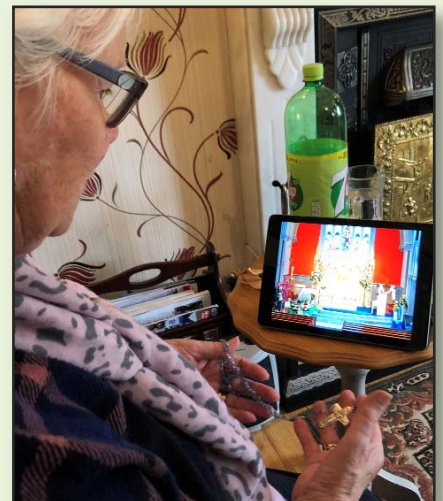


Recording Our Experience – contd.

Shopping



Religious Worship

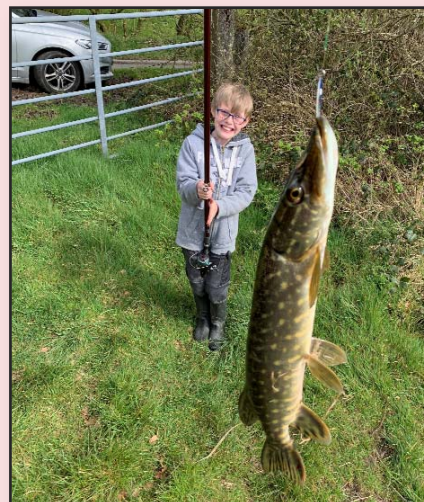


Communication and Contact



Recording Our Experience – contd.

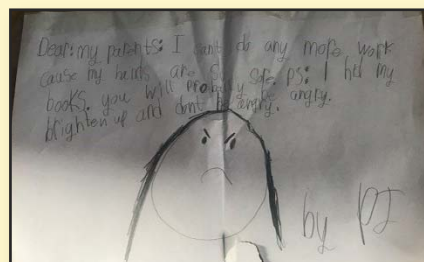
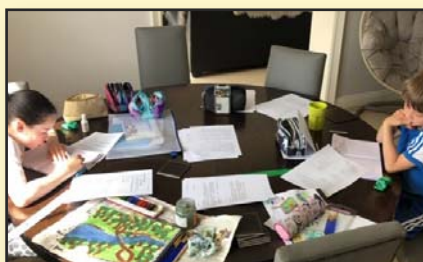
Spare Time



Community



Education



The museum is most grateful to everyone in the community for their contributions to this archive. It will serve as a resource for future generations to study and learn about our experiences of life during a pandemic.

Museum Lockdown Events

Covid-19 may have seen the usual hustle and bustle of events that take place in the museum curtailed but that didn't prevent us looking for alternative ways of reaching out to the community and making them happen:

Culture Night

As the museum was unable to welcome people into the building, instead, in September we invited people to tune in to The Song Sisters & Band live on Facebook from the museum gallery on Culture Night 2020. This energetic event proved a great success with rumours of viewers dancing in their kitchens to hits from the 70s and 80s!



Halloween

In October another Facebook Live event was organised. This time an evening of Horrible History Stories to enthrall and frighten the whole family at Halloween, which was viewed from as far away as the USA! These scary tales featured the spooktacular telling of the legend of Jack O'Lantern and that of local woman Mary Anne McConkey accused of poisoning her husband.



Museum Workshops

Winter and Christmas Art

During November the museum turned to ZOOM to offer two art workshop classes with tutor Samantha Hawe, the first themed on winter painting and the next to produce art for Christmas. Both workshops resulted in some incredible works of art.

ZOOM was also used for the Card Making Class facilitated by Sarah Magee. The young artists followed the tutorial step by step online and the results were some outstanding festive cards!



Some beautiful examples of winter canvas art



Stunning Christmas themed reindeer canvases



Following the steps to card making



Proudly displaying some beautiful finished Christmas cards

St. Patrick's Day

The museum along with our colleagues in Monaghan County Libraries joined the St. Patrick's Day fun by offering a workshop to create a giant shamrock in conjunction with Wicklow Willow. The course ran over several evenings allowing participants the chance to create their own unique St. Patrick's Day decorations.



A giant willow shamrock

Easter

The Easter online workshop also produced some wonderful and colourful art works!



Showing off their Easter wreaths

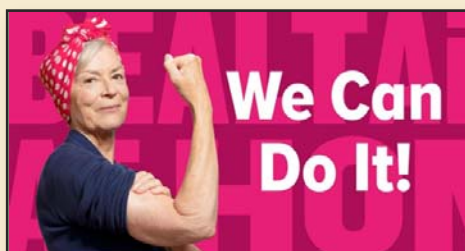
National Drawing Day

In May the museum celebrated the eighteenth annual National Drawing Day, the second year that it has been run online. Tutor Samantha Hawe themed this ZOOM workshop around Irish mythical creatures allowing the young attendees to let their imagination run wild.



Bealtaine 2021

Creativity for the more mature was also facilitated through the Bealtaine festival. This festival aims to provide opportunities for older people to get creative more often. This year Samantha Hawe ran a four-week online course over the month of May teaching the basics of sketching and painting beautiful botanicals in watercolour.



Bealtaine, encouraging older people's engagement with the arts



Back in the Museum

Archaeology Summer Camp

Finally, in July the museum was delighted to welcome children aged 6 – 12 back into the museum to our Archaeology Summer Camp. Run in conjunction with the School of Irish Archaeology the museum gallery once again hummed with activity. The summer camp aimed to introduce the profession of archaeology to children through a fun approach designed to awaken their natural curiosity. The children had an actioned-packed and creative week.



Digging in the excavation box



Bronze Age replica pottery made during the camp



Field trip to Navan Centre & Fort, Armagh.



Ready for battle!

What's the Story? A Case History

Objects in the museum all have their unique story to tell, most often tied to the people or events to which they connect. A suitcase, pictured above, housed in the museum collection, speaks of an era of travel far removed from today's online check-ins and carry-on baggage but what further tale can it tell?

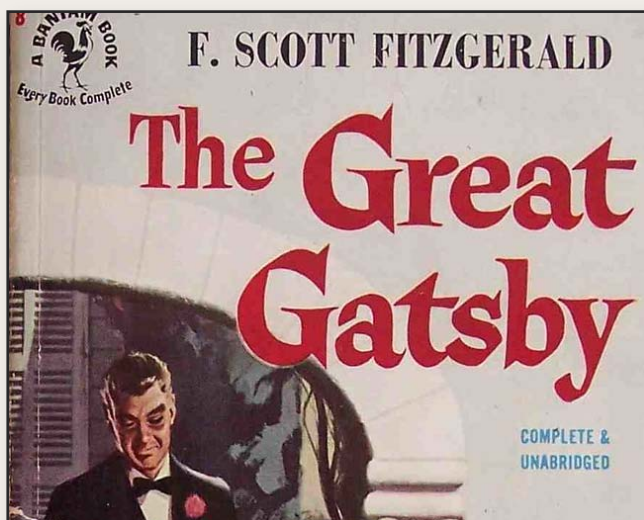


Taking a closer look, labels reveal a tale of trans-Atlantic travel, undertaken by Sir Shane Leslie of Glaslough, County Monaghan. On one such journey, Shane met his future American wife Marjorie Ide. Their fairytale wedding in 1912 took place at 'The Cedars', the Long Island estate of William Bourke Cockran. Sligo-born Cockran was married to

Marjorie's sister Ann and had become a self-made millionaire in the USA through politics and a successful legal career. It is his initials, W. B. C. that appear as a monogram on the suitcase highlighting his original ownership.

Cockran was recognised as mentor to the young Winston Churchill. Celia Sandys, Churchill's granddaughter, credits the creation of the 'special relationship' between America and Great Britain to Cockran's introduction of "...the young Winston to New York in 1895". It is even suggested that author F. Scott Fitzgerald took his inspiration for Jay Gatsby's lavish lifestyle from Cockran's socialite existence at 'The Cedars' for his novel *The Great Gatsby*!

The restrained appearance of this small suitcase may not ignite great curiosity at first glance, but the human associations that it embodies, like with most objects, is what makes it intriguing.

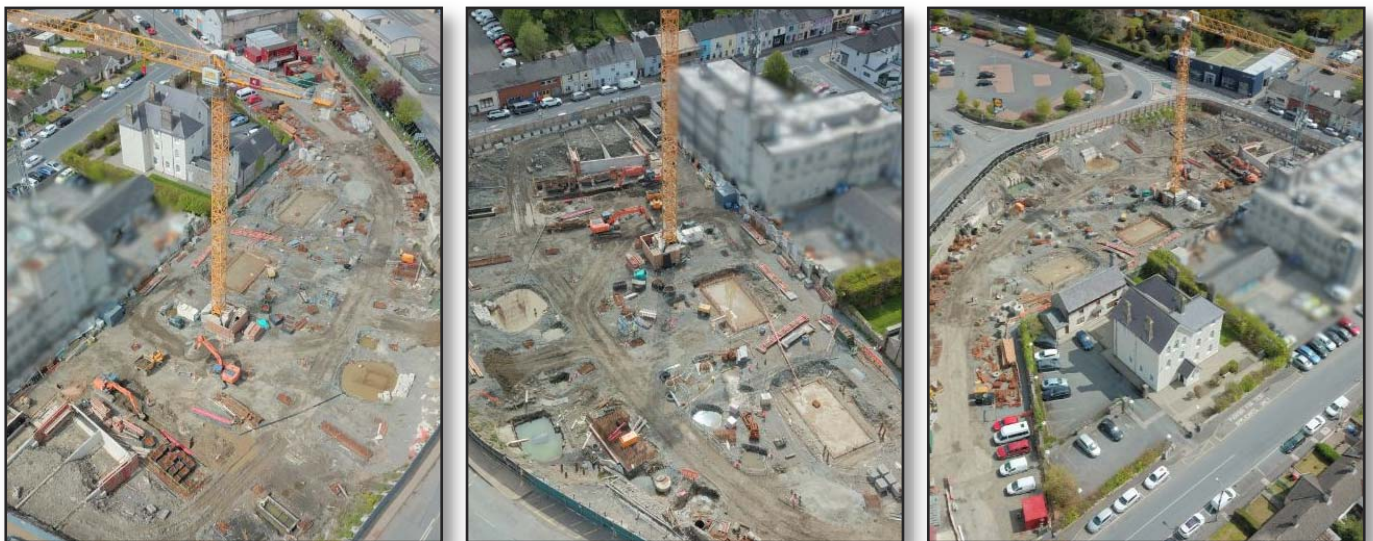


The Peace Campus, Monaghan



Work is continuing on the construction of our new home at the Peace Campus in Monaghan Town. We are busily preparing the new displays and planning our move to this state-of-the-art facility. It is hoped that the building will be completed by late 2022. We'll keep you posted! This project is supported by the EU's PEACE IV Programme, managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB) www.seupb.eu. The financial support provided through the PEACE IV Programme is €9,541,081.

For more information go to www.monaghan.ie



Aerial views of the ongoing building work of The Peace Campus, Monaghan.

Rossmore in Virtual Reality



What started out as a week-long summer camp in 2019, where participants recreated Rossmore Castle in great detail using the Minecraft platform, has evolved into a cross border project with the AmmA Creative Learning Centre in Armagh to create a completely original educational resource. Launched on Culture Night, 2021, this fully booked event allowed people to explore a full 3D replica of Rossmore Castle, plant a pollinator garden in the Walled Gardens, locate the Giants on The Giant Trail, combine chemicals in the Gas House and much more all through the Minecraft Platform.

This detailed reconstruction of a virtual Rossmore Park world in Minecraft can be used in the classroom and is cross curricular, in areas such as history, science, geography and much more. This first phase of the project has seen teachers offered online training and a resource pack to use with their students. The next phase of the project will hopefully make a version available to the general public soon.

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN FUNDED THROUGH THE CREATIVE IRELAND PROGRAMME



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
2017-2022



ONGOING MUSEUM PROJECTS



Monaghan Murals



Rossmore in Virtual Reality



Visiting with children?

Visiting with children? Checkout the new Kids' Activity Trail booklet which will help guide them in a fun way through our Collection while they learn. Pick one up at reception!

Please check Museum website for information and updates

www.monaghan.ie/museum/ and Facebook page or call us on 047 82928.

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, event or workshop 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/