

# Newry and Mourne Museum Newsletter

Spring/Summer 2004

## Major £1.5 million Heritage Lottery Grant for Bagenal's Castle Awarded

Newry and Mourne District Council has been awarded £1.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund to restore Bagenal's Castle. Over the centuries, the building has been used for a variety of purposes since it was first built by Nicholas Bagenal in the 1560s. The castle passed into the hands of the Needham family in 1712 and from the 1830s it housed McCann's Victoria Bakery. The funding will help to restore both the 16<sup>th</sup> century castle and the adjoining 19<sup>th</sup> century warehouse and the refurbished building will become the new home of both Newry and Mourne Museum and the Tourist Information Centre.

The total cost of the restoration project will be £2.3m, with the remaining finances provided by Newry and Mourne District Council, Building Sustainable Prosperity, Local Strategy Partnership and other funding. The exhibitions in the new museum will tell the story of the castle and its site, reflecting the development of the town of Newry and the wider area from Cistercian times to the present day, while any features revealed by excavation will be glassed over to permit public viewing.

### Stitches in Time

A new exhibition on lace making will open in Newry and Mourne Museum in May and continue until October. "*Stitches in Time – the history of local lace making*" will explore the history of and the various techniques applied to Irish lace making. Museum Assistant, Emma Wilson and Museum volunteer, Sheila Walsh have been researching the history of lace-making in local areas such as Carrickmacross and the Convent of Mercy, Newry, whose lace was once prized and sought after all over the world. The exhibition will explore the history of the craft and displays will include locally made lace items with associated patterns and bobbins, dating from the mid nineteenth century to the present day. It will also include an interactive display allowing visitors to trace or design their own lace pattern.

### Cross Border Education Programme

It has been a busy few months for the Museum's Cross Border education programme. The six week **Genealogy Course** in January and February, culminating with an outing to the Public Records Office in Belfast in April, proved to be very popular. Instructors from the Ulster Historical Foundation provided guidance for those wishing to delve into their family history. In February and March, a **Spring Lecture Series** focused on the subject of '*Loyalism and Patriotism*' with speakers including university lecturers and Observer Journalist, Henry McDonald. The ongoing **Oral History Project** involves school children from the Newry and Dundalk areas interacting with pensioners from a number of local community groups. These informal yet informative Reminiscence Sessions are based on a series of questions about life in years gone by. Each session is recorded and will form an important part of the Museum's Oral History archive.

**The Carlingford Lough Maritime Festival**, which ran from 22<sup>nd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March was a great success. The festival celebrated the shared history of the region through talks, a conference and living history demonstrations, attracting large audiences throughout the week. Eighteen speakers, including local historians and academics from all over Ireland, came to both Newry and Dundalk to talk on all topics relating to Carlingford Lough, including archaeology, folklore, emigration, the Newry Canal and its history. The culmination of the festival was the recreation of Carlingford's Viking past through a Viking village, with demonstrations of how the Norsemen would have lived and fought

**New to our Collections** The Museum has been delighted to receive a number of interesting and important donations in recent months. These include a large assortment of coins and tokens from local man, Michael Meagher. Mrs. Marie O'Donnell has kindly donated a number of personally made lace items and patterns which, along with recently acquired lace commissioned from Miss Mary McMahon will significantly add to the Museum's Textile Collection. From one of our most generous donors, Peter O'Hanlon, the Museum has acquired a range of noteworthy domestic artefacts, amongst which are a late Victorian vacuum washer, a metal bed warmer, a money canister, several oil lamps and a coffee grinder from the 1950s. The Museum has also acquired a model of the SS Opepe, made and donated by Mr Jack McAleavey, and from Liam Rafferty, a 1950s laundry box used to send clothes to the Newry Steam Laundry.

We offer our sincere thanks for these generous donations which are of immense importance, enabling our Collections to grow. We gratefully appreciate your support. Emma has recently written a short guide for those considering donating an object, verifying what the Museum collects as well as detailing what actually happens to an object after its donation.

**If you would like a copy of this leaflet or if you have an object which you would like to donate, please do not hesitate to contact us by dropping in to the Museum, or contacting us at (028) 30 313 182. New Museum Assistant for the New Year**

The Museum welcomed its new Museum Assistant, Emma Wilson, in January. Emma has several years experience of working in a range of museums and heritage sites including The Historic Dockyard in Chatham, Kent, The Palace Stables Heritage Centre, Armagh, The Irish Linen Centre and Lisburn Museum and for living history company, Northern Period Productions. She holds an MA in Modern History and English and an MA in Museum Studies, qualifications which will be of enormous benefit to her work in Newry and Mourne Museum.

#### **New Exhibitions - Can YOU Help Us? Border Town Project**

Research is now well underway for the *Border Town* exhibition for the new museum, which will explore the impact of political and economic events on the Newry and Mourne area in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Valuable research material includes Major Reside's unique collection of press cuttings relating to events in the 1970s and 1980s and other items from his Collection, along with

early 20<sup>th</sup>-century local newspapers from the Museum's archive. Selection of relevant sources held at the Public Records Office in Belfast has also begun. A number of local people have been kind enough to allow us to record their memories, opinions, insights, recollections and experiences of life in the Newry and Mourne area in a series of interviews. We have also received donations of political archival material and artefacts, including election literature from political parties, government publications and domestic items from everyday life. One interesting artefact is a facsimile of a German medal struck to commemorate the sinking of the *Lusitania* in 1915. A useful addition to our archival collection is a minute book of the 'Newry Urban District Housing Scheme' dating from 1911, which reflects changes in the social history of Newry.

**We are keen to hear from you!**

**If you think you could add to these objects or would like to share information with us, please do not hesitate to contact us on (028) 30 313 182.**

**New Exhibition on Sport** One of the first exhibitions to be displayed in our new museum at Bagenal's Castle is to be on the subject of sport in the Newry and Mourne area. The range of sporting activities participated in and followed throughout the region is vast and it is hoped that the exhibition will focus upon as many of them as possible.

However, we need your help! Do you have any memories of important sporting figures or sporting events concerning Newry and Mourne? Or do you have items (contemporary or past) relating to a sport which you follow or take part in – such as kit, photographs, medals, trophies, programmes, supporters' accessories such as scarves and pins, for example? If so, then the Museum would love to hear from you. We would sincerely welcome such sporting material, either in the form of a donation, or if you prefer, a temporary loan for the duration of the exhibition. You can rest assured that your sporting memorabilia will be given a careful home in the Museum until its safe return!

#### **Funding and Conservation News**

Newry and Mourne Museum has successfully secured funding from The National Arts Collections Fund, supported by the Esmee Fairburn Foundation, enabling the acquisition of a series of six paintings by local artist, Jasper McKinney. He has based the paintings on the 1568 map of Newry and the plans of Bagenal's Castle, describing them as '*my excavations; the remains of images and thoughts hidden within time and later exposed*'. The paintings will be an excellent educational resource at the new museum showing the various layers of history that have impacted on the castle and its site and we would like to thank the Art Fund for their generosity.

The Museum has also been successful in winning grant assistance of up to £650 (50% of the total cost) from the Northern Ireland Museums Council for the conservation of three highly important documents from the Reside Collection, along with the development of a Conservation Plan which will set out a 5 to 10 year strategy to meet further conservation requirements. The documents selected are a map (attached to a lease) of the property of the Bell family in County Armagh dating from 1784; an 1810 survey of the Rostrevor estate; and a leather-bound volume comprising a detailed rental of the estates of the Earls of Kilmorey in Newry and South Down. These documents provide a wealth of information concerning townlands, tenants, cultivation methods and estate buildings and are outstanding sources for local history and genealogy in the Newry and South Down area.

## Dates for your Diary

### Archaeology Day

**19<sup>th</sup> June** -Restricted access will be given to the ground floor of Bagenal's Castle and archaeologists and draughts people from Environment and Heritage Service will be on hand to explain the various techniques used to survey the site. The event will take place at 10.30am, 11.30am, 12.30pm and 2.30pm. Numbers are restricted to 20 people in each group and limited to ticket holders only . Tickets can be obtained from the museum.

### **21<sup>st</sup> June**

Interactive workshop for children focusing on techniques used by archaeologists.  
10am - 3pm.

**EXHIBITIONS 10<sup>th</sup> May – 15<sup>th</sup> October** **Stitches in Time - the history of local lace making** will explore the history of lace making, particularly in local areas in and around Newry and south Armagh.

### **1<sup>st</sup> November – 27<sup>th</sup> November** **County Down at War**

This touring exhibition of local interest will focus on the experiences of Soldiers of Down in the Great War. The 13<sup>th</sup> (County Down) Battalion of The Royal Irish Rifles formed part of the 108<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the 36<sup>th</sup> (Ulster) Division and fought in a number of famous campaigns including that of the Somme in 1916. The Battalion was largely raised in County Down with quite a number of recruits from the Kilkeel, Newry, Banbridge and Rathfriland areas.