

Nuachtlitir Iarsmalann an Iúir agus Mhúrn

Newry and Mourne Museum Newsletter

SPRING/SUMMER 2005

Newry and Mourne in the 1940s – New Exhibitions

Thanks to a grant of £10,000 from the Northern Ireland Museums Council and the Big Lottery Fund, Newry and Mourne Museum is to research the effects of the Second World War on the local area.

‘War and Opportunity on the Border’ will examine the unique wartime experience of Newry and Mourne, focusing on issues such as rationing, cross-border smuggling, the black-out and the experiences of temporary settlers like soldiers and evacuees. A number of fascinating stories have already been uncovered through interviews and research in local newspapers. For example, a number of German soldiers were captured in Newry and Bessbrook after escaping from prisoner of war camps in mid-Armagh, while in 1945, policing was required of long and restless queues outside shops in Newry that were once more selling oranges! This research will culminate in a booklet and a touring exhibition on both sides of the border later this year.

YOUR MUSEUM NEEDS YOU! If you have memories from the war years we would love to hear from you. Were you on active service or did your family house children evacuated from Belfast? Do you remember the American GIs based in Greencastle and Kilkeel, or did your parents talk about rationing and the smuggling of food across the Border?

If you would like to contribute information or artefacts to the ‘War and Opportunity on the Border’ project please contact us on 028 30 313182 or at museum@newryandmourne.gov.uk.

THEIR PAST YOUR FUTURE

As a forerunner to this project, Newry and Mourne Museum is hosting a travelling exhibition in July from the Imperial War Museum, London. The exhibition, *‘Their Past Your Future’*, interprets the effects of the Second World War on the lives of men and women throughout the British Isles through panels, objects and an audiovisual display. A number of additional panels prepared by Newry and Mourne Museum will also be displayed, focusing on particular experiences of men and women from the local area. The exhibition will be displayed in the auditorium of **Newry Town Hall** from **4th–29th July**.

Bagenal's Castle - Restoration Begins

We are delighted to report that restoration is now underway at Bagenal's Castle and the Victoria Bakery Warehouse situated on Abbey Way, ensuring the preservation and continued use of Newry's oldest surviving building. For those not familiar with the project, the Castle was built on the site of a 12th century Cistercian abbey in the 1570s, following the granting of the abbey lands to Nicholas Bagenal.

Newry and Mourne District Council was awarded a grant of £1.5 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund to help fund restoration, which is estimated to take 14–16 months. The building will house Newry and Mourne Museum, a networked Tourist Information Centre with retail unit and a café, providing an enhanced education and history resource for the local community and an important visitor attraction for the area.

Education Events

As part of its **Politics of Reconciliation** project, the Newry Dundalk Cross-Border Education Programme has organised a series of lectures for April - May 2005. Several have already been held in the County Museum, Dundalk and proved to be very successful and well attended.

The following lectures will take place at the
Sean Hollywood Arts Centre and Museum, Newry at 8pm:

12th May: *"Relations between Ireland and the UK since the Agreement"*
Professor Paul Arthur, University of Ulster.

19th May: *"The Choreography of the Northern Ireland Peace Process"*
Dr. Paul Dixon, University of Ulster.

26th May: *"The changing structure of conflict in Northern Ireland and the Good Friday Agreement"*

Dr Jennifer Todd, University College, Dublin

All lectures are free of charge

PLAY FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

In May, UPSTATE LIVE theatre will produce a play for primary schools in Warrenpoint and Dundalk. **"Two Houses"** tells the story of two families, landlord and tenant, in early 1840s Ireland. This will be a great opportunity for children to experience live, quality theatre and to learn and reflect in new ways. The performances will take place on:

9th-13th May in Dundalk Town Hall at 11am
16th-20th May in Warrenpoint Town Hall at 11am

ARCHAEOLOGY DAY WORKSHOPS

To celebrate Archaeology Day in June, school children can become “archaeological detectives”, searching for buried artefacts and making their own Bronze-age style coil pots. The workshops will take place over three days in the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre and Museum in two sessions:

14th June – 9.45-10.30am and 10.45-11.30am

15th June – 9.45-10.30am and 10.45-11.30am

16th June – 9.45-10.30am and 10.45-11.30am

For more information or to book a place for any of these events, please contact

Declan Carroll on 028 30 257 912 or 00353 429 327 056, email

museum@newryandmourne.gov.uk

New to Our Collections

Our Museum Collections have expanded considerably in the last few months following a number of generous and interesting donations from Hal O’Brien, Irwin Major, Peter O’Hanlon, Donal O’Donnell, Joan Dawson, Julie-Ann Anley, Gerard Brady, Mearns Pollock, Ann Boyd, Eddie Campbell, the Gray family, Jim Magee, Colin Whiteside, Hugh O’Rourke, Michael McParland, Hugh Irvine, and E McKay.

These include: a plethora of documents relating to schools, churches and businesses in the area, local festivals and events and many old newspapers. Donations relating to the Second World War include an ARP badge, original blackout material, rosary beads which belonged to a US soldier based at Greencastle, Identity Cards required for cross border travel, a photograph of Jerretspass Home Guard and a poignant letter written by, Bertie King, an RAF pilot originally from Newry, shortly before he was killed in action. A number of photographs and documents connected with Mourne Grange School, Kilkeel and railway-related artefacts such as tickets and timetables from the 1940s and 1950s were also donated.

Other donations consist of: a pedlar’s certificate for a pavee from Killeen, Co. Armagh, clothing coupons, old postcards of Rostrevor and Kilkeel, and four silk handkerchiefs made for the Coronation of the abdicated King, Edward VIII. A laundry box from the Central Laundry, Newry and a 1950s bi-lingual street sign for James Connolly Park are further additions, along with a large brown glass ‘jerboam’, electric irons and a bed warmer from the 1960s /70s, a wooden tobacco box with enamel liner, an unusual square-shaped Art Deco period cooking pot and a £1 note signed by footballer, Pat Jennings. A timely donation includes the press pack and associated documents commemorating the papal visit of the late Pope John Paul II to Ireland in 1979, along with a book on “The Life and Letters of John Martin”.

Among our most interesting donations are two metal socket bayonets. Preliminary research suggests that these date from the 18th century and are likely to have been attached to a Brown Bess Musket.

**As always, THANK YOU, to all our kind donors!
Your support and generosity is much appreciated.**

Border Town Exhibition Preview

The Border Town Preview Exhibition is now on show in the Museum. On display is a small selection of artefacts and documents donated to the project over the past year, giving a taster of the main exhibition planned for the new Museum. These relate to Home Rule, World Wars I & II, Civil Rights, local businesses, arts and culture, local churches, the Reside Collection, education and domestic life.

At the very successful opening event in February, local historian, Anthony Russell, gave an excellent talk on the development of Newry in the 20th century while local photographer, Billy McAlpine, presented an enjoyable slide show featuring images he has captured of Newry over the past 50 years. The exhibition has attracted much media and public interest, resulting in generous coverage on BBC Radio Ulster's *Evening Extra* in early March. The Border Town Project is ongoing and we are keen to hear from anyone willing to donate artefacts or share their memories of life in the Newry and Mourne area.

If you would like to contribute to the Border Town Project, please contact Project Research Officer, Dr. Ken Abraham at museum@newryandmourne.gov.uk

Funding News

Following on from the funding mentioned in our previous newsletter, the Museum has recently obtained an additional grant of £535 from the Northern Ireland Museums Council for the conservation of a further five items. Priority on this occasion has been given to four 19th-century Kilmorey rental books which are indispensable to genealogical research. The fifth item selected for conservation is a satirical drawing, entitled '*The Edward Street Choir*', which features employees of the Edward Street Railway Station, Newry, as well as Pat McKeivitt, a mover and shaker in Newry drama and music circles during the post-war period. Dating from 1939, this drawing will be on view to the public at the NIMC-funded touring exhibition, *All Change – the Social Impact of the Railways*, which arrives at Newry and Mourne Museum in September, 2005.

If you have any stories or artefacts relating to the local railways, whether it be memories of seaside excursions by rail to Warrenpoint or family members who worked on the railways, please do not hesitate to contact us on (028) 30 313 182 or email museum@newryandmourne.gov.uk

Museum Archive

THE CROWN MOUND FARM

Amongst the Museum's Reside Collection are a lease and map relating to the Crown Mound Farm in the townland of Sheeptown, on the outskirts of Newry. Dating from 29th September, 1807, the lease details how Robert, Viscount Kilmorey, leased Crown Mound Farm to Dennis Caulfield, a merchant in Newry, for 41 years. The terms of the lease include a rent of £20 14s. 4d. per annum and Caulfield was also required to build within three years: *'One Good New Dwelling House, with Brick and Lime, or Stone or Lime, and Roof the Same with good Oak or Fir Timber . . . which House shall Contain in the Front Thirty Feet . . . in Depth Fourteen Feet, the Side Walls to be Raised Ten Feet High above the Ground'*. The leasee was also to make ditches on his land and plant trees of ash, oak, beech and elm.

The watercolour map illustrates the Crown Mound Farm as it existed in April, 1888 and was drawn after the death of Denis Caulfield Brady, a descendent of the Dennis Caulfield named in the 1807 lease. It shows the Anglo-Norman motte and bailey, the Crown Mound, from which the farm takes its name, and the arrangement of fields and farm buildings. The Clanrye River is shown bordering the farm on the west. Property maps of this type often accompanied leases and were sometimes exceptionally well executed, providing fascinating topographical details. This particular example is of great value to the local historian and archaeologist, providing an historic illustration of a highly significant archaeological monument and its context in the 19th century landscape.

NEWRY ELECTION SCANDAL

Documents recently acquired by the Museum shed light on a fascinating and controversial episode in Newry's electoral history. The ballad, "**A New Song to an Old Tune**" dates from the election of 1831 when the candidates for the Parliamentary seat for the borough of Newry were the Honourable John Knox, and Denis Maguire, Esq. Within it are several amusing, even scurrilous, descriptions of Newry men who would no doubt have been all too recognisable to contemporaries —

*" there's little Jack Trainor, and long Jacky Reid
The one sells bad whiskey, the other bad seed."*

It culminates in a cry of support for Knox :

*"for Kilmorey's our Landlord, and KNOX is our man
Our Member he'll be – prevent it who can?"*

Perhaps this was one of the "*atrocious ballads now daily sung in our streets*" referred to in a letter published in Newry's Commercial Telegraph of March 4, 1831. Apparently, "*one fellow that wears a Scotch cap and assumes a Scotch accent is particularly conspicuous*"! After five days of public polling, the vote was declared in favour of Knox.

The election of 1832 proved to be more controversial. Maguire stood once again; opposing him was Lord Marcus Hill, brother of the Marquis of Downshire. Polling took place over Christmas with supporters for both candidates involved in rioting, window smashing and general disorder. Support for Maguire appeared to be strong but Lord Marcus Hill won the seat. The votes cast for each candidate differed by only one or two votes until the polling day of 26th December, when the votes cast for Hill numbered 123, for Maguire, 65. There were claims from Maguire's supporters that this was a result of bribery - perhaps some voters had received an unexpected goose for their Christmas dinner! Following a Parliamentary investigation, it was declared that while corrupt practices **may** have taken place, the result would stand.

At that time, voting was not done by secret ballot. The second document acquired by the Museum was printed by Maguire's supporters, and lists the names of those who were expected to support him but who voted "for a sprig of the.... house of Downshire . . . and against DENIS MAGUIRE the man of the people's choice." It indicates the strength of feeling which surrounded the election of 1832, and is of important genealogical value. The names of these electors are listed along with their occupations and the street in which they lived, providing a unique snapshot into life in Newry in the 1830s.

Denis Maguire later became a Town Commissioner and Justice of the Peace, while 1835 eventually saw success for the independent interest with the election of Denis Caulfield Brady, future Chairman of Newry Navigation Company.

Tell me about . . .

Just one of the many services offered by Newry and Mourne Museum are **Reminiscence Sessions**, where staff encourage participants to recall past experiences, often prompted with artefacts and old photographs. For four weeks in April, Education Officer, Declan Carroll and Museum Assistant, Emma Wilson conducted Reminiscence Sessions with residents of Our Lady Of Mercy Nursing Home, Newry. Residents enjoyed sharing their memories of school days, work and family life. Museum Curator, Noreen Cunningham also participated in a Reminiscence Session with pensioners at the McGrath Centre, Newry.

Make Friends!

In November of last year, the Friends of Newry and Mourne Museum came into being. This group aims to encourage a wider enjoyment of the Museum's facilities, participate in activities, attend lectures and evenings and contribute towards funds to add to the Museum's collections.

If you are interested in becoming a Friend of Newry and Mourne Museum or would like more information, please contact Rita Morgan, the group's Secretary, on (028) 30 261 055 or at ritamorgan@aol.com

Museum Volunteer News

If you have an interest in learning more about the work the Museum does, and feel you could spare few hours a week, why not become a Museum Volunteer? We are fortunate to currently have two volunteers. Sheila Walsh has been with us for a number of years and at present, is helping us research Newry and Mourne in the 1940s. Queens University student, Lee Purdy, has recently joined us and has already contributed to several research projects. She has written the article below on Newry's first police force, the Town Watch:

Newry's Town Watch

Among the Museum's collections are a number of letters from the 1850s relating to Newry's Town Watch. The main duties of the Town Watch were to patrol the streets, particularly at night, light and maintain the oil and gas street lamps and ensure the streets were kept clean and clear from obstruction.

The majority of the letters, written to the Town Commissioners, complain about the condition of the streets of Newry, remarking on the amount of horse manure and broken stones not properly removed! Other letters report a man and woman found to be drunk and disorderly in Market Street as well as the fate of one Watchman, knocked down by a boy on a galloping horse resulting in a broken collarbone. Another matter referred to is the need for greatcoats to be supplied to Watchmen so that they could endure harsh weather conditions. The Watchmen were also provided with a rattle to attract assistance if needed.

Prior to the reorganization of the Irish Constabulary in 1836, the Town Watch was the only recognized policing body in Newry. These letters provide a fascinating insight into the duties and experiences of these men.

New Museum Website

For further information on the Museum and to find out about the latest exhibitions and events, visit our new website at www.bagenalscastle.com.

Dates for Your Diary:

EXHIBITIONS

4th-29th July – Their Past Your Future

Touring exhibition on the Second World War from the Imperial War Museum

September – All Change: the Social Impact of the Railways

The impact of the railways on life in Ulster

EVENTS

12th, 19th & 26th May at 8pm – Politics of Reconciliation Lecture Series

These free lectures take place in the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre and Museum

FOR SCHOOLS

9th-13th May – “Two Houses” a play by UPSTATE LIVE theatre based on 1840s Ireland
(Dundalk Town Hall, 11am)

16th-20th May – “Two Houses” a play by UPSTATE LIVE theatre based on 1840s Ireland
(Warrenpoint Town Hall, 11am)

14th-16th June – Archaeology Day Workshops

Two sessions at 9.45-10.30am and 10.45-11.30am

For further information or to make a booking, contact us at (028) 30 313 182 or email

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