



CARLOW COUNTY MUSEUM

PROGRESS REPORT DECEMBER 2015

Introduction:

Carlow County Museum is housed in the former Presentation Convent on College Street, just off Tullow Street, the main street of Carlow Town. The building is in a prime town centre location and is part of a complex that also houses the Tourist Office, the County Library. The Museum gives a snapshot of the wonderful history and heritage of the county.

Carlow County Museum has four exhibition galleries; three of the galleries house the permanent exhibitions while the fourth gallery is used for temporary exhibitions. The Museum has free admission and is open all year round and has between sixteen and twenty thousand visitors on an annual basis.

The Museum is entered through the Tourist Office which is operated by Carlow Tourism on behalf of Fáilte Ireland.

Among the notable items on display is the famous and magnificent 19th century hand carved pulpit from Carlow Cathedral. The pulpit has been included in the book 'A History of Ireland in 100 Objects' by Fintan O'Toole, winner of the Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Awards 2013 'Best Irish-published Book of the Year'. The pulpit is over 20ft tall and is made entirely of oak. Also on view is the original gallows trapdoor from the Carlow Gaol which was used during the 19th century for public executions. Also on view is the wooden smoking pipe of Captain Myles Keogh, who was killed at the infamous Battle of Little Big Horn in 1876. One can find out about the great 19th century scientist John Tyndall who was the first person to discover the greenhouse effect and has a peak in the Alps named after him. The Museum is home to the remains of the last cigarette smoked by Kevin Barry, a medical student from Co. Carlow who was executed in 1920 in Mountjoy Gaol, Dublin at the age of 18 for his role in the Irish War of Independence.

The special ongoing exhibition is 'Journeys in Time – The Archaeology of the Carlow By-pass' which reveals the many archaeological treasures found along the route of the M9 Carlow By-pass including the Museum's smallest object, an Iron Age glass bead which is less than

2mm. This exhibition is in association with the National Museum of Ireland and the National Roads Authority. Since 2003 the Museum has been 'Designated' by the National Museum of Ireland to collect and display archaeological objects from the county. The Museum is one of only twelve museums in the country to have this status.

Museum Board:

Carlow County Museum first opened to the public on afternoon of Sunday 2nd December in 1973 on College Street. The Museum was founded and operated by the 'Carlow Historical & Archaeological Society' (CHAS), then called the 'Old Carlow Society'. They operated the Museum for nearly thirty years until 2002 when Carlow Town Council took over the operations of the Museum and working in partnership with CHAS it undertook the re-development of the Museum.

In 2005 to maintain and develop the partnership the Board of Carlow County Museum was established. The Board consists of seven members, three Members of Carlow County Council, three representatives of the Carlow Historical & Archaeological Society (CHAS) and a County Manager's nominee. The Curator of Carlow County Museum acts as Secretary to the Board.

The Chairperson is chosen from the three Members of the Town Council and the three CHAS representatives. As agreed the position of Chairperson alternates on an annual basis between the Members of the Town Council and the CHAS representatives. The present members of the Board are: Cllr. Anne Ahern, Chairperson; Cllr. Fergal Browne, Cllr. Walter Lacey, Mr. Gary Hughes, Mr. Martin Nevin, Mrs Noreen Whelan and Eoin Lyng.

Local Authority Museum Award:

Carlow County Museum was selected as outright winner for Best Local Authority Museum in the 'Excellence in Business' awards organised by the Public Sector Magazine in 2014. The local authority was recognised by the Public Sector Magazine for their outstanding achievement in developing Ireland's newest county museum.

According to the Public Sector Magazine 'Carlow County Museum is a fine example of a community coming together in partnership with their local authority. Together they have brought the past into the present and they have created something very special for the future.'

Glór na nGael National Recognition Award:

Carlow County Museum won a national Recognition Award from Glór na nGael. All museum information panels are bilingual. Irish versions of all its brochures and publications are available. The Museum hosted a session of 'Comrahá 2014' and holds the weekly 'Is Leor Beirt', Irish conversation circle. The exhibition 'Scéal na Gaeilge 1899 – 2014', the story of the Irish language in Carlow since 1899, impressed the adjudicators as being a positive contribution to the use of the Irish language.

The award was presented at a special event in Barberstown Castle in April 2015. Councillor Denis Foley, Leas-Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council, Councillor Walter Lacey, representing the Museum Board, Dermot Mulligan, John McDarby and a delegation from Glór Cheatharlach were in attendance.

Museum Standards Programme of Ireland (MSPI):

Over the past decade the Heritage Council's developed and is implementing the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI). This important initiative, with participants from a wide range of Irish collecting institutions, sets out to raise standards of collection care across Irish museums and galleries. This programme, the first of its kind in the Republic of Ireland, sets out to improve all aspects of Ireland's museum practice. National institutions, county/city museums, community run museums, private museums and voluntary museums are all encouraged to join and participate.

There are thirty-four agreed minimum standards for the programme. Participants normally have up to five years to achieve all the standards. Carlow County Museum is part of the MSPI Programme and is the first and only museum in the county to be part of the scheme. The Museum will apply for Accreditation in September 2017.

Local Authority Museums' Network (LAMN):

On Wednesday 25th November last Heather Humphreys Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, launched the new Local Authority Museums Network Strategy 2016 – 2019 'Preserving the Past – Shaping the Future'. The Local Authority Museums Network (LAMN) represents the twelve Local Authority Museums across Ireland.

Minister Humphreys said "Local authorities throughout Ireland play a vital and proactive role in promoting and preserving culture and heritage, ensuring the best possible quality of life for their communities. Through

their Museum services they strengthen local communities by underpinning a sense of identity and pride of place. In this way, these museums contribute to the development of sustainable economic activity in local areas.

The LAMN comprises Carlow County Museum; Cavan County Museum; Clare Museum, Cork Public Museum, County Museum, Dundalk; Donegal County Museum; Galway City Museum; Kerry County Museum; Limerick Museum; Monaghan County Museum; Tipperary County Museum and Waterford Museum of Treasures.

Conservation Agreement

The Carlow Historical & Archaeological Society have agreed to make available to Carlow County Museum an annual subvention – not exceeding €1,000.00 in any one year – towards the cost of restoration, conservation and display of an artefact or artefacts in the Museum's collection.

While it is the decision of the Museum as to which artefacts are to be treated, CHAS expresses a wish that artefacts contained in their collection be included for treatment, together with any artefacts that the Museum has acquired since with financial assistance from Carlow Historical & Archaeological Society.

The first item chosen is a 19th century illuminated address presented to Anna Parnell by the Killeslin and Graigue branch of the Irish National League which was purchased by the Society and the Museum at auction in recent years. The illustration has been conserved and it presently being framed and will be displayed next year. Anna was the sister of Charles Steward Parnell.

Irish Museum's Association (IMA) Conference:

Dermot Mulligan, Museum Curator presented a paper at the Irish Museums Association's Annual Conference 2015 – 'Museums in Society: Navigating Public Policy' in the Ulster Museum in Belfast in late February. The paper explored the development of Carlow Town's 'Cultural Quarter' with particular reference to the development of the new Museum premises and how the development of Carlow Town Council 'Carlow 800' plan facilitated this. The conference is the main event of the IMA and was attended by in excess of one hundred delegates from right across the island's museum and heritage sector.

Irish Conference of Medievalists:

The 29th Irish Conference of Medievalists (ICM) took place from Wednesday 1st to Friday July 3rd last in the Newman Building, Belfield Campus, University College Dublin (UCD). The ICM showcases the latest research in both Irish and international medieval studies.

Carlow County Museum sponsored a 'Medieval Carlow' session with Dr. Linda Doran (UCD) speaking on the 'Vikings in the Carlow Corridor'; Cóilín Ó Drisceoil (Kilkenny Archaeology/ Maynooth University) spoke on 'William and Isabella Marshal in Ireland' (built Carlow Castle) and Dr. Margaret Murphy (Carlow College) spoke on 'Medieval Carlow: origins, growth and decline'. The session was chaired by Dermot Mulligan.

Lucinda Sly – walking tour & plaque:

Last March was the 180th anniversary of the execution of Lucinda Sly and John Dempsey at Carlow Gaol for the murder of Walter Sly. Lucinda was the last woman publically hanged at the Gaol. There is considerable interest in the story as many of the areas associated with the story are still in use and also the popularisation of their story through Maidhc Dainín Ó' Sé's book 'Lucinda Sly' in Irish and the translated version 'Lucinda Sly, A Woman Hanged' by Gabriel Fitzmaurice. The Museum has undertaken a number of bi lingual walks around the town over the past number of years usually starting in the Museum under the gallows trapdoor from which they were both hanged. On Saturday 14th March last the Museum with Féile na Gaeilge with the kind assistance of Carlow Shopping Centre and the Carlow Farmers Market organised a walking tour of Carlow Town led by Gabriel Fitzmaurice and Dermot Mulligan. The tour was also joined by members of the John McKenna play 'Lucinda Sly' play which debuted later that month.

On the steps to the Governor's House in Carlow Shopping Centre on Monday March 30th at 2.30pm at the exact 180th anniversary of the hangings Cllr. Fergal Browne, Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council unveiled a plaque to their memory. A short prayer service was conducted by Rev. Olivia Williams and Mons. Brendan Byrne followed by a minute silence. The plaque is erected inside the shopping centres front entrance which was formerly the Gaol entrance.

Carlow Castle:

In 2013 Carlow Town Council marked the 800th anniversary of the construction of Carlow Castle. Presently a 3D printed model and historical reconstruction illustration of Carlow Castle is on display in the Cathedral Parish, College Street. Both the 3D model and illustration are based on the time period of the late 14th century when Carlow was the

administrative Capital of Ireland. The 3D printed model of the castle was made by Bryan Leech, Lecturer in Industrial Design and Design Students at IT Carlow. The illustration of the Castle & surrounding areas was undertaken by Uto Hogerzeil, historical reconstruction artist. Both were commissioned by Carlow Town Council in 2013 as well as a brochure 'Carlow Castle – Medieval Stronghold on the Barrow' by Dr. Margaret Murphy. Both the model and illustration will have their permanent home in the Museum but will visit other public buildings in the meantime.

As a result of the Carlow 800th celebrations Carlow County Museum has worked with the Office of Public Works to update the information board at Carlow Castle to incorporate the historical reconstruction illustration and update the text to reflect the research of both Dr. Margaret Murphy, Carlow College and Dr. Kieran O'Connor, NUIG.

Bell for St Columbanus:

This year is the 1400th Anniversary of the death of St Columbanus who was born in the shadow of Mount Leinster, probably in the Myshall area. He is buried in Bobbio, Italy. He was a major European missionary and founded a number of important monasteries in France & Italy. A bell cast in Italy to mark the anniversary was in Ireland and was carried along the 'Turas Columbanus - The Columban Way'. The Museum worked in co-operation the Myshall St Columbanus Committee to arrange for the bell to visit a number of locations in Carlow town on Friday March 20th. The bell visited Carlow College, IT Carlow and Carlow Cathedral as well as the Museum. The bell spent a number of days in the south of the county and in particular in Myshall & Drumphea.

'Is Leor Beirt' & 'Comhrá15':

The Museum has been hosting 'Is Leor Beirt', the weekly cupán tae and chat as Gaeilge on Wednesday mornings organised by Glór Cheatharlach. The idea is for people to drop in and over a cup of tea talk in Irish. Numbers vary but on average ten plus people attend and it is noticeable the variety of people from the town and surrounding areas that are interested in conversational Irish.

The Museum was the host venue for 'Comhrá15' on Wednesday October 6th last. The aim of the annual Comhra is to keep an Irish language conversation ongoing around the world for 170 hours continuously. Glór Cheatharlach coordinated the Carlow hour and was broadcast live across the Seachtain na Gaeilge Youtube channel from the Museum.

An Post Rás:

The Museum's biggest outdoor event this year was held on Sunday May 17th last when the county was host to the An Post Rás 2015, Ireland's International bike race. Stage 1 of the eight day race was from Dunboyne, Co. Meath to Barrack Street in Carlow town. The cyclists, professional, semi-professional and amateurs travelled 154.4 km to the finish line on Barrack Street, Carlow town via Hacketstown, Clonegal and Ballon. The stage finish and departure were coordinated by Carlow County Museum. The Museum had previously coordinated a similar stage finish and start during the 2013 race as part of the Museum's 40th anniversary exhibition on Mike O'Donaghue who won the race in 1973.

After passing through Hacketstown, Clonegal and Ballon the race undertook a circuit of the town from Walls Forge Roundabout to the finish line on Barrack Street (Carpenters Pub/ Rattlebag Café). The stage was won by Italian Francesco Reda of Team Idea Conad with Austrian Lukas Postlberger of Tirol Cycling Team in second place. As this was Stage 1 of the race Francesco Reda won not only the stage but was also the race leader (yellow jersey). After the full eight days, Lukas Postlberger who was second in Carlow won the overall race. The finish into Carlow was considered one of the most devastating first stages of the race since the 1990s with over an hour between the first and last cyclist. It was noticeable the large and supportive crowds that came out to welcome the race throughout the county.

Teams travelled from France, Britain, Austria, USA, Italy, New Zealand, Canada, Australia and Belgium. In total up wards to five hundred people were involved in the race including the cyclists, team mentors, race officials, marshals and the Gardai. They all over nighted in Carlow town and the county and was worth in the region of €40 – 50,000 to the area. The race was preceded by a charity cycle 'Race the Rás'. On the stage end podium Cllr. Fergal Browne, Cathaoirleach of Carlow County Council welcomed the race to the county.

On Monday May 18th Stage 2 departed from the Post Office on Burrin Street in the town at 11.00am. The cyclists had gathered at the Town Hall car park and were paraded to the start line by the Presentation School Band. The race then passed along Burrin Street, out the Kilkenny Road (R448) and exited the county at Paulstown enroute to the stage finish in Tipperary town. The Rás committee is staffed entirely by volunteers from around Ireland. Carlow County Council supported this initiative. The Museum received assistance from Carlow County Council staff, Civil Defence, Carlow Gardai, Carlow Sports Partnership and a

large number of volunteers, business and organisations along the race route as well as the businesses on Barrack Street and Tullow Street. Ms Cora Brennan of Global Cycles, Barrack Street was the Carlow 'Miss An Post Rás'.

As part of the race Carlow County Council's Road Safety Art Competition 2015 was organised by the Council's Road Safety Officer in conjunction with Carlow County Museum, Carlow Sports Partnership and An Post Rás. The theme was about safe cycling and for the art work to contain a historical aspect of the county. Students in all primary schools in the county were invited to participate. Eleven schools submitted entries. The top five winners were presented with an An Post cycling jersey on the stage end podium as part of the stage finish on Sunday May 17th. The rest of the awards were presented on Saturday 20th June last at a special ceremony in the Museum.

Eddie Dawson, from Ballon and the Assistant Race Director of the An Post Rás, presented specially commissioned plaques to special award winners: Reuben McCarthy, Tullow Boys' N.S.; Sarah Murphy, Ballinkillen NS; Niamh Raftery, Ballinabranna NS and Jay Condrón, St. Joseph's NS, Carlow.

Cllr Anne Ahern, Chairperson of the Museum Board, presented plaques to: Best 1st Class, Clare Ní Éilí, Gaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuairisc; Best 2nd Class, Molly Dempsey, Holy Family Girls' NS; Best 3rd Class, Ben Clancy, Bishop Foley NS, and Best 4th Class, Bríd Doyle, Scoil Moling, Glynn.

Mr. Dan McInerney, Acting Chief Executive, presented plaques to Best 5th Class, Katie Moore, Bennekerry NS; Best 6th Class, Pádraig Thompson, Tinryland NS, Second Prize Overall Emma Kinsella, Rang 6, Clonegal NS and First Prize Juliet Ní Dhuiginn, Rang 6, Gaelscoil Eoghain Uí Thuairisc.

Vouchers for Art supplies were won by St. Joseph's National School and Bishop Foley National School.

BBC Radio Ulster:

BBC Radio Ulster have been recording a variety of stories relating to World War 1 and in particular to life in Ireland at the time and connections to the war. Stories include the harvesting of sphagnum moss for use in surgical dressings when cotton was in short supply; the story behind the song 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary' and an internment camp in Oldcastle in Co. Meath. One such story is about the Carlow's 'Governey's Boot Factory' which during that period made boots for the

army. The factory had been started in 1903 by Michael Governey, owner of Corcoran's Mineral Waters.

Elizabeth Rice from BBC Radio Ulster travelled to Carlow County Museum where in front of our Boot Factory display she recorded Dan Carbery and Paul Maguire, County Carlow Military Museum talking about the factory. Dan as well as being a Museum Volunteer and former Chairperson of the Museum Board is a descendant of Michael Governey while both of Paul's parents worked in the factory. Follow the link:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p036nb8w>

NRA Monograph Book Launch:

On Thursday 23rd July the Museum hosted the book launch by the National Roads Authority (NRA) of 'A Journey Along the Carlow Corridor - the archaeology of the M9 Carlow Bypass'. This is part of the NRA road scheme monographs and is number sixteen in the series. The book was launched by Dr. Maurice Manning, Chancellor of the National University of Ireland. Speeches were held in Carlow College Information and Training Centre, Tullow Street followed by a reception in Carlow County Museum and an opportunity for people to view the 'Journeys in Time – the Archaeology of the Carlow By-pass' exhibition.

The Carlow Corridor describes the results of archaeological investigations undertaken in 2006 at 57 sites discovered in advance of the construction of the M9 Carlow Bypass. The scheme encircles the eastern side of Carlow town. The excavations afforded the opportunity to track changes in the local environment and landscape over the millennia, from the dense woodland of the Mesolithic era to the modern-day intensive agricultural landscape. Indirect evidence of Carlow's earliest settlers in the Mesolithic era was recovered through the finding of stone tool sites, supplementing results of previous surveys along the Barrow river valley.

The discovery of the earliest houses yet identified within the county attest to the presence of settled farming folk in the area during the Neolithic. A booming economy in the Bronze Age is manifest through the domestic, ritual and industrial sites of an extensive and complex cultural landscape. The route avoided upstanding medieval sites; however, archaeology relating to the hinterland of such sites affords intriguing insights into the rural life in the county during the medieval and post-medieval periods. The book is lavishly illustrated and provides the reader with a description in summary form of all the excavated sites. Major findings have been selected, with essays compiled and presented

in chronological order, to highlight the principal results. The full complement of radiocarbon dates for the project is incorporated.

Heritage Week 2015:

Heritage Week 2015 ran from Saturday 22nd to Sunday 30th of August inclusively and the Museum on behalf of Carlow County Council coordinated the countywide publicity on the various events for Heritage Week. It has done so since 2004. This included the publication of a brochure containing a list of the various events. Electronic versions of the brochure were also posted onto the Carlow Local Authorities and Carlow Tourism websites as well as being circulated through social media outlets. Advertisements were placed in each of the local newspapers. Irishtv.ie attended a number of the events and broadcast them on their Carlow Matters programmes.

As in previous years the Museum in partnership with the Kilkenny Heritage Office organised a joint radio campaign on KCLR 96FM. Similar to previous years a number of packages were pre-recorded by KCLR and broadcast in advance of a particular event to encourage more people to attend. Events chosen in Carlow were 'Lucinda Sly – A Woman Hanged' with the Museum and staff of Carlow Shopping Centre; 'Eastwood House and the Moneybeg Demense' by Myles Kavanagh, Bagenalstown and a 'Guided Walk of St. Moling's Pilgrim's Way, St Mullins' with Bridie Lawlor. Live interviews throughout the week were arranged with Seamus Murphy of CHAS; Mary White, Blackstairs Ecotrails and Brigid Fox of Myshall Muintir na Tire. On Wednesday August 26th KCLR 96FM broadcast their morning show hosted by John Masterson live from the Museum.

On Saturday 22nd August CHAS held their successful 'Carlow - A Journey to the Past' in the Town Park. Carlow County Museum were asked to undertake their 'Junior Diggers' event as part of this event. Over the course of the day Museum staff and volunteers coordinated a series of archaeological digs with children under twelve years of age.

On Monday and Thursday the Museum organised two public lectures. On Monday August 24th Dr. Linda Doran presented a lecture on 'Medieval settlement hierarchy in Carlow and the 'Carlow Corridor' 1200-1550'. This was hosted in St Mary's Church of Ireland Church, Carlow Town. On Thursday 27th August Carlow native and archivist with the Military Archives Noelle Grothier presented a lecture on 'Carlow during the Revolutionary Period (1913 -1922): Sources for Research' in the chamber of Carlow County Council.

On Wednesday 26th the Museum led a 'Lucinda Sly – a woman hanged' walking tour of the town and the condemned cells of Carlow Gaol.

Carlow Volunteer Centre 'Be Involved' Transition Year Programme:

For the third year the Museum is partaking in the 'Be Involved' Transition Year Programme with St. Leo's College. The programme is coordinated by the Carlow Volunteer Centre. On one afternoon per week during the school year students volunteer in a variety of locations throughout the town. Students get a practical look at how the Museum works and undertake research into an object from the collection. Students gain valuable work experience which may help shape their future career and allow them to boost their CV's.

Staff:

The Museum has two full time staff, Dermot Mulligan and John McDarby, and shared staff member, Martin O'Rourke, with the Library for building maintenance. There is presently one Tus participant, Paula Pela. It is hoped that in early 2016 there will be a second person available under this scheme. The Museum has availed of the Jobbridge Internship Scheme since opening in 2012 and is presently trying to fill this vacancy. The Museum has between fifty and sixty volunteers who assist in manning the galleries during opening hours. Volunteers tend to spend a half a day in the Museum once a month.



Dermot Mulligan,
Museum Curator

9th December 2015

