

1) Mission Statement

Mission

To give our visitors and users a sense of place by holding in trust, collecting, caring, researching, interpreting and displaying the material culture and heritage of County Kerry in a manner that is accessible, inspiring, enjoyable, and contributes to life-long learning

2) Designation

Kerry County Museum is a designated museum under the National Monuments Amendment Act (1994) and the National Cultural Institutions Act (1997), which enables the Museum to legally acquire and curate archaeological material that is of a local significance on behalf of the State.

3) Museum Background, History and Current Collection Practice

3.1 Kerry County Museum was developed in 1991 as an initiative of Tralee Town Council, and housed in the Ashe Memorial Hall in the centre of Tralee. It was developed in two phases between 1991 and 1992. The Medieval Experience, a reconstruction of medieval Tralee, was opened in 1991 in the lower ground floor. In 1992 the permanent gallery of the Museum was opened, displaying the archaeology and history of the county. The Museum has been collecting since 1991 and has amassed around 3,600 objects in the subject areas of archaeology, social and economic history, and political and military history. The Museum and its collection is owned and funded by Tralee Town Council.

3.2 While the Museum has not had a written collections policy up until now, it has been the practice of the Museum since its foundation to collect archaeological and historical material relating to the geographic boundaries of Kerry and/or its people.

3.3 The collection has been principally amassed through donations, in terms of the historical material, as well as through the legal acquisition of archaeological material, including some assemblages from excavations. Purchases have occasionally been made when funds permit, but there has never been a formal acquisitions budget. The collection is housed in the Ashe Memorial Hall and the artefacts are either on display in one of the Museum's public galleries or else are stored in one of the two on-site collection storage facilities. The Museum has actively collected throughout its existence, but the acquisition of artefacts has become more of a focus since the appointment of a Collections and Documentation Officer in 2008. While the Museum has not had a written collection policy up until now, it has strictly adhered to the practice of collecting Kerry archaeological and historical artefacts.

4) Statement of Type and Quantity of Collection

4.1 The present collection is made up of about 3,600 objects relating to the history and prehistory of County Kerry. As well as the accessioned material, Kerry County Museum currently has loans from the National Museum of Ireland, Cork Public Museum, the Office of Public Works, Kerry County Council, the O'Brien family (family of Tom Crean), the Irish Polar Trust, the Dominican Order, Tralee, and a few other sources.

Approximately 9% of the collection is currently on long-term loan from other institutions or individuals.

4.2 The Museum collection can be categorised under the following headings: *Archaeology; Social and Economic History; Political and Military History.*

4.3 ARCHAEOLOGY

The following periods are represented in the collection: Later Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Early Medieval, Later Medieval, and Post Medieval. Archaeological material, in particular a number of artefactual assemblages from excavations, forms the largest portion of the collection. This includes assemblages from Ballycarty, Cloghermore Cave, and two assemblages from the Dominican Priory in Tralee.

The Museum also possesses the Edward Roe collection, which mainly consists of material from an early eighteenth-century shipwreck, as well as the archive of the archaeological field survey of the Iveragh peninsula.

Cloghermore Cave assemblage

The archaeological excavation of a cave at Cloghermore, 6km east of Tralee, in 1999 and 2000, yielded evidence for pagan and Viking burials. The remains of at least 43 individuals were interred in the cave from the 8th to the 10th century. 275 artefacts were recovered from the cave, including: iron weaponry, tools and horse fittings, copper-alloy dress pins, antler and bone pins and gaming pieces, decorated bone combs, stone spindle-whorls and whetstones, glass, amber, and bone beads, as well as a silver hoard. The assemblage also contains plant remains and a large quantity of animal bone contained in 20 archival boxes. The human bone is mostly disarticulated and is contained within six boxes. This collection is of national importance as evidence for persistence of pagan burials long after the introduction of Christianity, as well as evidence for the presence of Vikings in the south-west of Ireland.

Ballycarty assemblage

This collection comes from an excavation at Ballycarty, 4km east of Tralee, which was carried out in 1996. The

excavation revealed a passage tomb, which was in use from the late Neolithic and Bronze Age, as well as producing evidence for occupation in the Early Medieval period. The assemblage consists of 118 objects, including stone tools and ornaments, pottery, bronze ringed-pins, as well as three archival boxes of animal bone and plant remains and two small fragments of cremated human bone. This assemblage is of regional importance for Munster.

Dominican Priory, Tralee, assemblages

The Dominican Priory in Tralee was founded in 1253 by John FitzThomas Fitzgerald. The remains of the priory are now subsurface and archaeological excavations at the site revealed walls, burials, and architectural fragments. The Museum holds two assemblages relating to the priory. An assemblage of approximately 120 artefacts and architectural fragments uncovered during excavations on the site of the medieval priory in the Abbey car-park carried out in 2000. A further assemblage of material from excavations carried out between 2005 and 2007 in Abbey Street/ Dominic Street consists of approximately 450 objects, principally consisting of pottery and architectural and sculptural fragments, as well as human remains from six burials. The two assemblages amount to approximately 570 objects, which are principally of county importance.

Edward Roe Collection

This collection was donated to the museum following the death in 2009 of Edward Roe, a local collector. It principally consists of material from two local shipwrecks, one nineteenth-century ship and the other dating from the early eighteenth century. The latter is the more important in terms of the quantity and quality of the material. A portion of the collection had come into the Museum in 2008 from another source. Together the collection consists of 143 artefacts and highlights include three felt tri-corn hats, complete Westerwald and Staffordshire vessels and intact bottles. While the collection is principally of county importance, the hats in particular, as rare survivals, are of national significance.

Iveragh Archaeological Survey Archive

The Museum holds the field notes and information

collected on all of the archaeological monuments surveyed as part of the Iveragh Archaeological Survey in south Kerry during the 1990s. This is an important resource for the study of archaeology in the county and consists of files relating to 1486 archaeological field monuments, which is currently contained in 33 archive boxes.

General Archaeological Material

There are approximately 100 archaeological artefacts that have been collected through individual donations and acquisitions made as a designated museum.

Highlights of this material include a Later Mesolithic slate point, two ogham stones, an early-medieval cross-inscribed slab, an early-medieval zoomorphic penannular brooch, a 12th-century carved head corbel, and a 14th-century hair hurling ball. These objects range in significance from being of local to regional importance.

4.4 HISTORY

There are approximately 650 historical objects in the Museum's collection, which principally consists of 19th and 20th century material. The historical material can be divided into two separate categories, social and economic history and military and political history.

Social and Economic History

Material dating from the late 18th to the early 20th century, including:

- Personal and domestic objects
- Material from clubs, societies and guilds
- Transport history objects
- Shop/Service material
- Deeds and Indentures
- Postcards and Photographs
- Coins and Medals
- Sporting History objects
- Books and maps

Political and Military History

Material dating from the 16th century to the end of the 20th century, principally including material relating to the:

- War of Independence

- Civil War
- World War I
- World War II/Emergency
- 20th century Irish politics

Most of the historical material is of local or county importance. However, some of the highlights, which are of national significance include:

- A letter relating to the payment of Sir Edward Denny for commanding 200 footmen in 1582, the year of the massacre at Smerwick
- Passenger lists for the Jeanie Johnston, 1849-1854
- Minute book of the Irish volunteers, Tralee, 1915-6
- A letter from Austin Stack and his uniform cap

4.5 OTHER MATERIAL

Geological material

The Museum holds a small number of fossils that were collected locally in the county.

Fine Art

The Museum has a small collection of 12 watercolours of Kerry landscapes by the English artist Edward Wilson.

4.6 LOANS

There are 316 artefacts on long-term loan in the Museum. The majority of material on display in the main gallery is on loan from the National Museum of Ireland, as this was the only collection available when the main Museum gallery was opened in 1992. Also on display are a smaller number of objects from Cork Public Museum, the O'Brien Family, the Irish Explorers Trust, and the Dominican Order, Tralee. Of the 206 objects that are currently on display as part of the permanent exhibitions in the Museum 125 objects are on loan, i.e. approximately 60%. Thus there is a heavy reliance on loan objects for the Museum's exhibitions.

National Museum of Ireland

The objects from the National Museum come from the Art and Industry Division and the Irish Antiquities Division, with the majority coming from the latter.

There are 71 artefacts on loan from the Irish Antiquities

Division, representing all parts of the county and various periods of its prehistory and history, including material from the Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Early Medieval Period, Later Medieval Period, and Post Medieval Period. Highlights include: a hoard of flat axes from Cordal; a Late Bronze Age horn from Lissroe; a 12th century crucifix figure from Skellig Michael; and a Sheela-na-Gig from the river Cashen.

There are 15 artefacts on loan from the Art and Industry Division, which largely consists of material relating to Daniel O'Connell, but also some objects that belonged to Roger Casement, a silver chalice from Listowel, and some War of Independence material.

Cork Public Museum

There are 30 items on loan from Cork Public Museum, which includes 28 pots from excavations in Cork city dating from the late and post medieval periods and two fragments of ogham stones from County Kerry.

Office of Public Works

There are 19 artefacts on loan from the OPW from their excavation of the early-medieval ecclesiastical site at Reask on the Dingle peninsula. This includes objects made of glass, stone and clay.

O'Brien Family

The loan from the O'Brien family relates to 56 items associated with Tom Crean. This collection, in conjunction with the Irish Explorers Trust Collection (below) and some miscellaneous items acquired by the Museum, make up a Polar collection of a quality unmatched in the country, which is of international importance.

Irish Explorers Trust

A loan to the Museum in 2008 from the Irish Explorers Trust consists of 29 objects, a portion of which belonged to Patrick Keohane, a Polar explorer and contemporary of Tom Crean.

Kerry County Council

The Museum has on loan a series of official weights and measures belonging to Kerry County Council.

Mr Con Keating

1916 Medal awarded posthumously to Con Keating and his Volunteer's belt.

Mr Guy O'Riordan

A collection of 18 items relating to John O'Riordan, a Kerry Gaelic football player, including his War of Independence medal and a Railway Cup medal are on loan.

ONE, Tralee Branch

A silver shooting cup belonging to the Tralee branch of Oglagh Naisiunta na hEireann Teoranta is on loan.

Dominican Order, Tralee

One of the most important objects on display in the Museum is the Moriarty Chalice, a 17th century chalice that is on loan from the Dominican Order in Tralee, along with a silver paten.

5) Statement of Acquisition Policy

5.1 It is the policy of the Museum to prioritise the acquisition of archaeological and historical material from or relating to County Kerry. The Museum's acquisition policy in this regard is an active one and objects are usually acquired through donation or reporting, but also occasionally through purchase. Material from outside of Kerry may be acquired passively in cases where the material fills a gap within the Museum's collection or where it is deemed to enhance an existing area within the collection.

5.2 The Museum will consider all potential acquisitions and whether they are consistent with its collection policy and whether Kerry County Museum is the most suitable place for the material.

5.3 The Museum acknowledges that the National Museum and Cork Public Museum have traditionally collected archaeological and historical material from County Kerry, while the archival service in Kerry County Library actively collects historical documents relating to the County. Kerry County Museum will work with these other organisations to ensure that the material is preserved in the place most appropriate, given its nature and provenance.

5.4 Other considerations made before an object is acquired include: the condition and conservation

needs of the object, the potential of displaying the object, the safety of the object if not acquired, and the long term storage and care of the object.

5.5 While it is the priority of the Museum to acquire archaeological and historical material from or relating to Kerry, there are a number of periods that are particularly poorly represented in the Museum's own collection. Indeed, for certain periods there is an over reliance on loan material for the purposes of exhibition. In terms of archaeological material a particularly strong effort should be made to acquire prehistoric and late medieval artefacts. Given the quantity and quality of early medieval sites in the county it should be easier, and it is also desirable, to enhance the existing early medieval holdings. This period deserves to become a focus for the Museum, to reflect the particular wealth of monumental remains in the county. In terms of historical material the Museum needs to make strong efforts to acquire objects from the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with a concentration on political, religious and social material. While the Museum holds a good collection of political and military objects relating to the period between 1916 and 1923, it would also be desirable and achievable to grow this area of the collection as another focus for the Museum in order to reflect the large number of events that took place in county Kerry during that period.

5.6 Once an object comes into the care of the Museum it will be evaluated and a decision will be made within six weeks as to whether or not it is to be acquired. This may be extended to twelve weeks in cases where the acquisition of an object would result in significant financial implications for the Museum, in terms of storage, conservation or display, in order to allow consultation with Tralee Town Council.

5.7 The Museum will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift or bequest any object, unless the Curator is satisfied that valid title to the object in question can be acquired. In particular no object will be collected which has been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin including the Republic of Ireland, or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned, in violation of that country's laws.

5.8 Where an object is offered as a gift in good faith and the prospective donor is uncertain of the identity of the legal owner/s and the Museum is unable to find this out as a result of its own reasonable efforts, the Curator shall be permitted to accept the object, provided a permanent and detailed note of the circumstances and known facts is made at the time of acceptance.

5.9 All acquisitions are to be outright and unconditional.

5.10 All donations to the Museum's collections are irrevocable upon formal and physical transfer into the Museum

5.11 If an object is deemed not to be appropriate for acquisition by the Museum, then alternative options will be outlined to the donor/seller to ensure that the most suitable home for the object is found.

5.12 The Museum does not have an acquisitions budget and purchases are only made on occasion when funds permit. Purchases are usually made from auction houses or from individuals. In the case of auctions the Museum will communicate with other public museums, libraries and archives in Ireland to ensure that there is no competition between State institutions. However, finance for acquisitions is mainly reserved for the payment of finder's rewards, which the Museum is obliged to pay as a designated museum in the case of the discovery of archaeological material in the county. The Museum communicates with the National Museum of Ireland with regard to the discovery of archaeological objects and for advice on the amounts to be paid to finders. If the Museum has difficulty in paying a reward it has the facility of applying to a fund to assist designated museums, administered by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

5.13 It is the Museum's policy generally not to accept material on loan from individuals in cases where donation or purchase is clearly the more appropriate option. Loans are generally only made for a finite period for exhibition or study purposes. In the case of exhibitions, the Museum recognises that it is preferable

to borrow from other publicly funded institutions, before it borrows from private organisations or individuals. Only in very special circumstances will material be accepted on loan for reasons other than exhibition or study, as such loans have an impact on the Museum's resources and finances and are a liability. No object will be received on 'permanent loan,' a term which has no legal status. The period of all loans will normally be agreed in writing between the Museum and the owner of the object at the time of deposit. Where the term of a loan has expired, it may be renewed or extended for further finite periods, at the discretion of both the owner and the Museum.

5.14 It is the Manager/Curator's responsibility to ensure that the Collections Policy is adhered to. This is done through regular communication with the Collections and Documentation Officer, and by checking and counter signing the Museum's acquisitions register. It is the responsibility of the Collections and Documentation Officer to ensure that the Collections Policy is implemented on a day to day basis. Tralee Town Council must approve any changes that are made to the Museum's Collection Policy.

6) Limitations

6.1 Kerry County Museum will abide by any State law regarding archaeological sites and artefacts, including: the National Monuments Act 1930 and its amendments in 1954, 1987, 1994 and 2004; the Cultural Institutions Act 1997; and any subsequent Acts that come into law. The Museum recognises the authority of the statutory bodies and their responsibilities.

6.2 The Museum will collect material from any period in the past relating to human occupation in Kerry.

6.3 There are a number of museums and archives also collecting in county Kerry and Kerry County Museum works with these other institutions to ensure that there is no duplication in the areas of collecting. Thus Kerry County Museum does not actively collect in the areas of agriculture, folklife, furniture, art, tourist ephemera, or literature and it does not collect large quantities of documents or books.

6.4 The Museum will not acquire an object or objects that the Manager/Curator considers to be impractical to house in the Museum's existing limited storage facilities.

6.5 The Museum only actively collects archaeological and historical objects that have a connection with the geographical area of county Kerry. As stated in Section 5.1, the Museum may passively acquire objects outside of this area if they fill an existing gap within the collection or where they are deemed to enhance an existing part of the collection.

6.6 As the Museum does not have a conservator on its staff, it will not acquire objects where there is a conservation need that would have a cost implication beyond the means of the Museum.

6.7 The Museum currently has two historians and one archaeologist on its staff and thus has the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the needs of its acquisition policy. The Museum currently does not have the skills or knowledge necessary to collect outside of the areas of history and archaeology.

6.8 The number of acquisitions made each year must reflect the availability of staff time to complete the necessary documentation, cataloguing, conservation, storage and research of the objects.

6.9 Kerry County Museum is committed to treating human remains in accordance with the National Museum of Ireland's policy on human remains. At present however, there is not a suitable store available within the Museum to house human remains separately and so they are currently kept in a demarcated area within the main collection store.

7) Obligations

7.1 It is the Museum's policy to keep all files relating to acquisitions and possible acquisitions up-to-date on an on-going basis. Museum staff will complete all documentation relevant to its acquisitions, including entry forms, acquisitions forms, and any additional documents that may need to be completed in order to

transfer the title of an object at the time an object's acquisition. All correspondence and completed forms are filed together in a fire-proof filing cabinet on-site.

7.2 The Museum practices preventative conservation and all objects are kept in environments suitable to their material and condition. The Museum endeavors to have any objects that are acquired which are in need of urgent treatment professionally conserved as a matter of priority. It is the practice of Kerry County Museum to consult with the National Museum of Ireland before the conservation of artefacts takes place. Licenses will be applied for before any archaeological object is conserved.

7.3 The security of the collection is a priority for the Museum. The entire collection is kept on-site within the Museum building. The storage facilities are locked at all times and all artefacts on display, with the exception of some large heavy objects, are kept in locked glass cases. The galleries and storage areas are alarmed and the alarm system is monitored permanently by a security company. Any person who wishes to access the storage facilities must sign in and out and must be accompanied by a member of staff.

7.4 The Museum endeavors to give as much access to the collection as is safe to do so considering its staffing and space constraints. Currently all objects in the collection, with the exception of any that may be on loan, are available to researchers and members of the

public for examination by appointment. The Museum only permits material to be examined within the Museum building during normal working hours and under staff supervision. A person who may require extensive access to the collection may be required to present a letter of reference and must give at least one month's notice before the intended period of research.

7.5 While the Museum is not in a position in terms of space or finance to display all of its collection at any one time, it does endeavor to rotate the objects that are on display in its permanent galleries on a regular basis. All objects put on display are accompanied by a label containing the following information: object name; known or approximate date; provenance if known; accession number; and the donor's/finder's name if applicable. In circumstances where space permits the label may also contain a short text providing contextual information about the object. In its programme of temporary exhibitions the Museum will strive to include objects from its own collection where suitable.

7.6 Since the Museum was founded it has actively engaged in the research and publication of its collection. The material that is published and the areas of the collection that are researched by Museum staff are strategically tied to their individual expertise. The staff also actively encourages and assists Museum volunteers and external researchers to research and publish material from the Museum's collection.