

Accessing Ireland's Heritage

Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, launched *'Museums Matter: Accessing Ireland's Heritage'*, jointly funded by The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism and The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, at the National Library on 28 May at 6.00pm.

The National Library of Ireland is the first venue to host *Museums Matter: Accessing Ireland's Heritage*, a cross-border collaborative exhibition initiated by the **Irish Museums Association (IMA)**. Highlighting the richness and diversity of museum collections across the island of Ireland, the exhibition demonstrates the wealth of enjoyment and inspiration that museums have to offer to people of all ages.

Dr Marie Bourke, Chair of the **IMA**, states: *'Many people in the north and south of Ireland enjoyed visiting museums as schoolchildren. Perhaps they saw the Tara Brooch and Ardagh Chalice at the National Museum or paintings by Vermeer and Jack Yeats at the National Gallery, or participated in living history projects at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. At the IMA, we felt that we could present a glimpse of the wonderful treasures in our collections, providing colourful images of the objects we look after, and let people know better what we do and what we can offer them.'*

Images from collections across Ireland – including folk life, archaeology, costume, natural history, transport, marine life, science and technology, fine art and the decorative arts – show the potential for museums to create opportunities for learning and engagement with the communities they serve. This exhibition will tour to libraries, museums and arts centres in Ireland over the next four years. In keeping with the theme of the project, local venues will add their own precious objects to the display, just as a programme of activities will open up the collections to a much wider audience.

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated booklet filled with images illustrating what museums do, their training and volunteering programmes, the richness of their collections and the buildings in which they are housed. Information on the exhibition and associated activities is available on the **IMA** website: www.irishmuseums.org.

The exhibition is funded by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, and Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, the Irish Museums Association, and Museums Council of Northern Ireland.

The **Irish Museums Association** is a voluntary body founded in 1977. It is dedicated to promoting the interests of museums and the museum community (those who work in and are interested in museums) throughout Ireland, north and south. It aims to service the needs of the Irish museums community, by supporting the work of everyone involved with museums in recording, protecting, conserving and promoting Ireland's heritage.

The first phase of the 4-year Exhibition Touring Programme comprises:

<u>2008</u>	<u>Venue</u>	<u>County</u>
May	National Library of Ireland	Co. Dublin
June-July	Linen Hall Library, Belfast	Co. Antrim
July-August	Ulster American Folk Park	Co. Tyrone
Sept-October	Lisburn Library	Co. Antrim
November	Old Museum Arts Centre, Belfast	Co. Antrim
<u>2009</u>		
Dec –January	Carnegie Library Bangor	Co. Down
Feb-Mid/March	Tower Museum	Co. Derry
Mid/March-Mid/April	University of Ulster Riverside Theatre	Co. Derry
Mid/April-May	Fermanagh County Museum	Co. Fermanagh
June-Mid/July	Donegal County Museum	Co. Donegal
Mid/July-August	Galway City Museum	Co. Galway
Mid/Sept-November	Ballymena Museum	Co. Antrim
<u>2010</u>		
Dec-January	Bagenal's Castle, Newry	Co. Down
Feb-April	Museum of Country Life	Co. Mayo
May-June	Dundalk County Museum	Co. Louth
July-August	Áras an Chontae, Tullamore	Co. Offaly

The exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated book, activity sheets (that can be downloaded from the IMA website), a/v presentation, handling collections, and a schedule of talks and workshops.

For information on the exhibition,

contact Niamh NicGhabhann

Tel + 353 1 6633579;

Email: ima@ngi.ie;

Web: www.irishmuseums.org

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*The **IMA** aims:*

- **to promote professional practice in museum management, collections care and visitor services**
- **to provide a platform for anyone interested in Irish museums to provoke debate on museum ideas**
- **in co-operation with other professional bodies and central and local government, to achieve a sustainable level of museum provision and operation in Ireland**

www.irishmuseums.org