

MEDIA RELEASE

'MONUMENTS OF COUNTY CLARE' PROJECT OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

County Clare, IRELAND - Some of the world's most important and recognised archaeological artefacts have been documented in a unique project now made available by Clare County Library on its website clarelibrary.ie. 'Monuments of County Clare' provides descriptions, explanations and visual representations of dozens of artefacts including one of the world's most famous megalithic monuments - Poulnabrone. Mr. Tony Killeen, Minister for Labour Affairs officially launched the project in the De Valera Library, Ennis, County Clare, Ireland on November 17th 2006.

County Clare has the highest number of archaeological artefacts of any county in Ireland to the extent that the county has been described as one vast open-air museum. In June 2005, Clare County Library obtained funding under the Government's National Digitisation Strategy and Information Society Fund to provide detailed information on dozens of monuments throughout the county.

The featured monuments have been categorised using Dúchas classification. They include 5000 year-old Portal Tombs, the historic towns of Bunratty and Killaloe, medieval alters, 23 surviving crannógs and nineteenth century batteries used by the British Government to defend against a possible Napoleonic attack. Also featured are hundreds of graveyards, windmills at Lifford and Castlequarter, 220 holy wells, over 100 twelfth century castles, megalithic tombs, 150 old stone churches, 12th century high crosses, round towers and 224 recorded surviving ringforts.

'Monuments of County Clare' can be accessed through the archaeology page on www.clarelibrary.ie. Individual web pages are assigned to each monument containing the monument classification, its townland, parish and monument number. Web links also enable web users to locate each of the monuments on the 1842 6-inch Ordnance Survey Maps, which were recently digitised and placed on the Clare County Library website.

According to Noel Crowley, Clare County Librarian, "The 'Monuments of County Clare' project will be an invaluable tool for students, researchers, tourists, the Clare Diaspora, and the history and archaeology community throughout the world. It represents another significant step by Clare County Library in promoting the study of local history at home and abroad."

Mr. Crowley paid tribute to the many individuals and groups who have participated in the project. "The entire project would not have gone ahead without the digitisation grants we received from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge those who assisted in searching the Clare County Library website for existing text and photographic material relating to each monument, the Clare Local Studies Project for typing up material for online publication, and those who gave us permission to use extracts from various books and related documents", Mr. Crowley concluded.

Clare County Library's website www.clarelibrary.ie has recorded over two million direct hits since it first went live in 1998. According to a survey by www.top100ireland.com, the website is ranked at number 33 in a poll of Ireland's 300 most popular websites. Recent additions to the portal include Churches with Round Towers in Northern Clare by T. J. Westrop; New Literature of County Clare; Standing Stones, Ecclesiastical Remains, Windmills & Tumuli - Clare Monuments; and Census Search Forms 1841 & 1851.

The website - regarded as one of Ireland's most significant sources of genealogical and historical information - also features information on Origins of Heraldry, Parishes and Church Records, Griffith's Valuation Index for Co. Clare 1855, Land Owners in Clare 1876, The Bodyke Evictions, and biographical notices from the Clare Champion newspaper 1935-1985.

For more on the Clare County Library Service log on to www.clarelibrary.ie.

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Note to Editor:

- Noel Crowley, Clare County Librarian is available for interview. Please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy Public Relations on 086-8534900 or email media@dunphypr.com.
- Pics available on request.
- The National Digitisation Strategy is a two year programme to develop digitisation expertise in the public library staff of local authorities, to establish a digitisation unit in each library authority, to put in place local websites illustrating the history and culture of local towns and cities, and to use the digitised content to stimulate ongoing use of the Internet within each community.
- Participants: Frances O'Gorman: data sourcing and project co-ordinator; Elaine Saunders: typing, proof-reading and image scanning; Ciara Barry: proof-reading and monument web pages data population; Rainer Kosbi: basic monument web pages creation; Liam O'Boyle: monument web pages style development and project staff training; Maureen Comber: preparation of project material for online publication; Anthony Edwards: design of project web-pages and structure of online publication; Jackie Dermody-O'Brien: monument web pages data population; Connie Guthrie: monument web pages data population.
- Acknowledgements: The Information Society Fund through The Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government, for funding; National Monuments Section, Dept. of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government (formerly Dúchas) for permission to use its datasets; Mr. William Gerrard Ryan for permission to use his M.A. thesis, Archaeological and historical monuments in the Barony of Bunratty Upper; Mr. Paul M. Kerrigan for permission to use extracts from his book, Castles and fortifications in Ireland 1485-1945; Clare Local Studies Project for typing The Ordnance Survey Letters of County Clare by John O'Donovan and Eugene Curry and The archaeology of the Burren: prehistoric forts and dolmens in North Clare by T.J. Westropp.

Mark Dunphy
Dunphy Public Relations
Clonboula,
Connolly,
Ennis,
County Clare
IRELAND
www.dunphypr.com