

MEDIA RELEASE

OVER 1700 SCHOOLCHILDREN RECEIVE UNIQUE HISTORY LESSON AT CLARE MUSEUM

Ennis, County Clare, IRELAND, Tuesday 12th December 2006 - More than 1700 schoolchildren visited Clare Museum as part of their curricular studies during 2006. The students came from 36 different National and Secondary Schools in Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Kerry, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Meath and Offaly.

The number of school field trips to Clare Museum has increased year on year since the abolition of admission fees for all school children in early 2002. During 2006, 1748 school children visited the local authority-ran Museum. Approximately 69% of visiting school children came from Clare with Ennis C.B.S. accounting for just under a quarter (416) of all visiting students. School trips were also organised by Cloughleigh NS, Clondrinagh NS, Rice College, Holy Family NS, Caherea NS, Ennistymon Community College, Cratloe NS, St. Patrick's Comprehensive School, Coolmeen NS, St. Senan's Community College, Gaelscoil Mhicil Ciosog, Tulla NS, St Caimans, Doora NS, Ennis Community College and Clarecastle NS. Meanwhile, all 37 students of Cloonaha NS visited the Ennis-based Museum in January.

Visiting schools from outside the county included Scoil Pio Naofa, Ballybunnion, County Kerry; Leugh NS, Thurles, County Tipperary; St. Brendan's NS, Westport, County Mayo; Mount Bolus NS, Tullamore, County Offaly; Caherline NS, Caherconlish, County Limerick; Stamullen NS, County Meath; Bell Clare NS, Tuam, County Galway; and Ballymurphy NS, County Roscommon.

John Rattigan, Curator of Clare Museum said, *"This has truly been a phenomenal year for visitors to the museum and is a reflection of the wide ranging and unique collection of artifacts and exhibits on display. Clare Museum is a wonderful heritage and tourist attraction and I hope that even greater numbers of schoolchildren will visit us in 2007. The museum is an*

excellent resource for the curricular needs of schoolchildren and helps to illustrate that history is not a thing of the past.”

The involvement of younger members of the community in the local Museum is particularly evident in the hugely successful Clare Museum website quiz, which is held in association with Clare Education Centre. Children from all over Clare take part in the monthly quiz based on the captions that accompany the artifacts displayed at www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum/index.htm. Students answer the questions, which are placed on the Clare Education Centre website, by visiting the museum site from their school computer.

Commenting on the quiz, Mr. Rattigan said, *“With a ratio of one Internet-enabled PC to every nine students in Ennis schools, the challenge for the museum was to find a way of using its website to help promote the collections as educational resources for the community. With prizes awarded to the winner of the quiz, the initiative has proven very successful with schoolchildren. It has also provided them with a method of learning local history in a way that is educational and entertaining while simultaneously improving their IT skills.”*

Clare Museum is open all year round and will be expecting many more visitors in the run up to Christmas following the huge public response to its recent exhibition of artifacts uncovered along the route of the N18 Ennis Bypass. The month-long exhibition features a full collection of archaeological finds dating from the Bronze Age to modern times. The free exhibition also represents a final opportunity for the public to view the artifacts before they are sent for final storage at the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

“Clare Museum’s policy of hosting regular high profile temporary exhibitions is set to continue in the near future. An exhibition celebrating the life of Dr Brendan O’Regan - one of Ireland’s most noted peace ambassadors and initiators of commercial and industrial initiatives - will be held early next year”, Mr. Rattigan concluded.

Clare Museum, which is funded jointly by Clare County Council and Ennis Town Council, will publish its annual visitor figures for 2006 later this month.

School bookings can be made by contacting Clare Museum at 065-6823382. Worksheets and further information about the museum can be found on the museum web site www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum/index.htm.

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Notes to Editor:

- To arrange an **interview** with Mr. John Rattigan please contact Mark Dunphy of Dunphy Public Relations on 086-8534900 or media@dunphypr.com. **Photographs** of Clare Museum are also available on request.
- Clare Museum is located in a restored former convent built by the Sisters of Mercy congregation in 1861. The museum exhibition "*The Riches of Clare: its people, place and treasures*" occupies two galleries and incorporates the traditional method of displaying original artifacts from the county with modern interpretive tools such as colourful display panels, audio visual and computer interactive presentations, models, some replicas and commissioned art pieces. The collection comprises a large display of archaeological material of local provenance on loan from the National Museum of Ireland, the De Valera Museum collection transferred from the Clare County Library, and locally collected artifacts never seen before in public.
- 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.