

Virtual Tours Of Selected Historical & Archaeological Sites In County Clare

County Clare, IRELAND, 27th Aug 07

Clare Museum is set to become the first local authority museum in the country to develop Virtual Tours of selected historical and archaeological sites. The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism this week allocated EUR10k to the Museum, under a new pilot scheme to assist local and regional museums.

The project will enable visitors to the Ennis-based Museum and museum section of the Clare County Library website **www.clarelibrary.ie** to navigate through panoramic 360 degree photographs of well-known Clare sites and monuments. Each virtual tour will be accompanied by an audio commentary.

Among the locations under consideration for inclusion in the project are Brian Boru's Fort in Killaloe; the monastic settlement on Iniscealtra, Mooghaun Hillfort, Scatterry Island in the Shannon Estuary; Ballykinvarga Fort in Kilfenora and St. Brigid's Well near Liscannor.

The Virtual Tours concept has been developed by Senior Executive Librarian Anthony Edwards, who already has experience in utilising modern technology to bring history and heritage to new audiences. Mr. Edwards recently completed an online venture with Nova Scotia Libraries in Canada to bring Clare's heritage into people's homes via the library website.

Commenting on the Virtual Tours project, Mr. Edwards said, *"Many of the sites chosen are difficult to access and remain unseen to the majority of people for various reasons. By providing these virtual tours, members of the public will be given a chance to experience these unique monuments and locations for themselves. In addition, providing access to the tours through the museum's website will make the material available to those who cannot access the sites for geographical or physical reasons."*

"The sites chosen have a body of folklore, history and archaeology relating to them, which will be linked by audio tape during each tour, and also included on the website", he added.

Clare County Librarian Noel Crowley, *"When completed in November, the Virtual Tours project will complement what is one of Ireland's leading sources of genealogical and historical information at www.clarelibrary.ie. It will also further enhance one of Ireland's most significant collections of archaeological, historical and geological exhibits at Clare Museum. It is hoped to have this new facility available by next November."*

Welcoming the new project, Museum curator John Rattigan stated, *"This will be another first for local authority museums in Ireland, and will undoubtedly set a new trend in bringing Clare's heritage to the people of Clare."*

Clare County Library's website has recorded almost 2.4 million direct hits since it first went live in 1998. According to a survey by www.top100ireland.com, the website is ranked at number 41 in an online poll of Ireland's 400 most popular websites.

Recent additions to the Clare web portal include the *Library Forum*, *Surnames Database*, *David Rumsey Maps*, *The Reading Challenge*, *Monuments of Clare; Standing Stones, Ecclesiastical Remains, Windmills & Tumuli - Clare Monuments*; and *Census Search Forms 1841 & 1851*.

<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/>

Clare Museum, Ennis, 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 artefacts 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 artefacts never seen before in public.

<http://www.clarelibrary.ie/eolas/claremuseum/>