

CULTURE DIVISION

Interactive
Newsletter



Cultural Venues

Libraries, Regional Cultural Centre, County Museum, Archives Service

We've welcomed over 25,400 visits to libraries since re-opening Bundoran, Twin Towns, Letterkenny, Buncrana, and Leabharlann Phobail Ghaoth Dobhair in mid - late June. Our members certainly have missed us, and we are delighted to be back in action. Initially libraries were offering a Browse & Borrow service only, and are now also offering computer access, study spaces and copying. We hope to gradually extend further but the procedures to ensure public and staff safety are complex and demanding, and it simply is not possible to return to what used to be normal any time soon.



Photo Credit: Donegal County Museum

We do understand the frustration for those waiting to visit their local library and can assure you we are working on the next phase of re-openings, carrying out risk assessments and putting measures in place such as extending self-service options, putting screens in place, and generally minimising touch points and face to face contact - while still providing what is and will always be a service with a personal touch, whether in the library, or online.

The Regional Cultural Centre and the County Museum opened in August and have exhibitions on display (further information later in this newsletter), and the Archives Service will open to researchers by appointment shortly. All the recommended safety measures are in place in each venue.

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After the Interval Survey

In March, in line with Government advice towards restricting the spread of COVID-19, cultural venues in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland closed their doors and live, public facing cultural activity ceased. Where previously we had all manner of cultural events open to us enriching our daily lives, it is only now, seven months later, that we are slowly starting to see live events re-emerge.

The *After the Interval Survey* conducted by Indigo, has sought audience views on missing cultural events, booking tickets during lockdown, returning to live cultural events with social distancing, and experiencing culture in different formats. The data covers seventeen cultural organisations, including eleven from Northern Ireland and six from the Republic of Ireland. Similar surveys were carried out by Indigo in England/Scotland/Wales and in Italy.

Over 500 people filled in the survey circulated by An Grianán Theatre in Letterkenny. The responses suggested the theatre was on the right path with plans to reopen, and the measures being taken, also that it's very important to communicate clearly to the community all that is being done to ensure the safety of visitors, staff and performers. 66% of respondents said they would consider coming to a cultural event in a venue if they felt sufficiently confident that the required social distancing and hygiene measures had been put in place.

Many respondents expressed their support for the theatre and for all cultural venues and programmes, stating how important culture is to the respondents and their families. Comments included *'Live arts events is the thing that I have missed most during lockdown', 'I wish all involved in the arts good health and the motivation to put on performances for us again. We are ready for them', and 'I feel the theatre and RCC are part of the heart of Letterkenny. We need to keep that heart going strong! Best of luck'.*

Heritage

The challenges faced by the culture sector were highlighted recently by The Heritage Council that undertook a survey to help understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on the heritage sector in Ireland. The survey found that the heritage sector has faced temporary business closures (52%), job losses (20%), loss or postponement of work (66%), lack of revenue funding streams (46%), staff well-being issues (20%) and increased home working (45%) as a result of COVID-19 restrictions. Some heritage sites have seen increased pressure from visitor numbers and many organisations have been busy developing new on-line content. Two-thirds of heritage sector workers believe that there will be a renewed appreciation of heritage following the lifting of COVID-19-related restrictions. During the lockdown, many people sought to explore and engage with the natural, built and cultural heritage in their locality and their engagement with heritage improved people's mood, contributed to their well-being and was a source of learning. The Heritage Council's survey findings can be consulted [here](#).

The Culture Team



Culture Night

Culture Night, the all-island public event that celebrates culture, creativity and the arts, takes place on Friday, September 18th. In response to the restrictions posed by the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, this year's programme will be presented in both live and online events allowing for people at home and abroad to connect with Donegal culture.



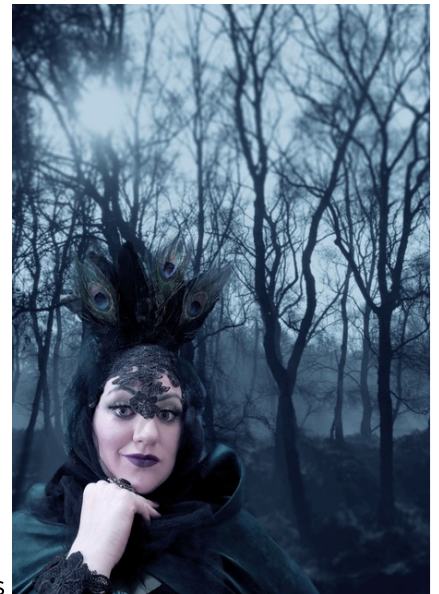
Artlink presents 'Signs of Biodiversity' at Artlink at Fort Dunree, Buncrana, on Culture Night

Among the programme highlights is a series of short videos commissioned by Culture Division on ways in which you can care for the Nature and Biodiversity in Your Back Garden. The films feature gardens and local experts including Liz and Ralph Sheppard on their farm at Carnowen House, Raphoe; Elizabeth Temple at Salthill Gardens, Mountcharles; George McDermot, Buncrana Town Gardener; Joanne Butler at OURganic, Gort a'Choirce and Aengus Kennedy of Nature North West, Ramelton.

Donegal County Museum will present its *Railways of County Donegal* exhibition where the public can discover more about the Londonderry & Lough Swilly (L&LSR), County Donegal Railways (CDR) & The Great Northern Railway (GNR). The exhibition features the photographs of A.M. Davies, who travelled the lines around County Donegal during the 1950's and 1960's.

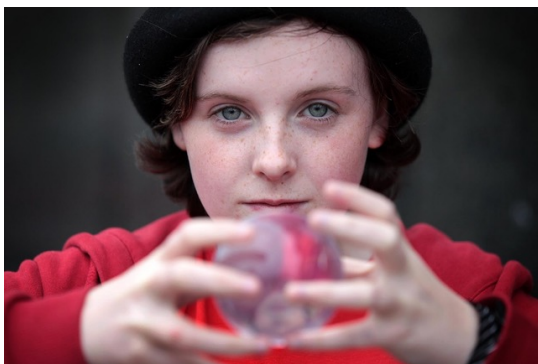
The Regional Cultural Centre's current exhibition on plastics - *Can't Live With It, Can't Live Without It* - will feature newly created artworks by Ed Devane, as well as an exhibition of new work by painter Liz Doyle.

An Grianán Theatre are pleased to host the first performances of a new comic drama by Louise Conaghan - *The Morrigan* - while Central Library, Letterkenny presents Jessica Harkin's *Family Magic Show*, as well as a series of special guided tours of the Library's unique Donegal Studies section.



Louise Conaghan will present her hilarious comic drama 'The Morrigan' at An Grianán Theatre, on Culture Night

Full Programme and Information is available on the Donegal County Council website and on www.culturenight.ie



Jessica Harkin will present her 'Family Magic Show' at Central Library, Letterkenny, on Culture Night





Science week at Bundoran Library. Photo Credit: Paul McGuckin

Culture Night

Central Library and Europe Direct Information Centre presents two events for Culture Night on the 18th of September.

Behind the Scenes in the Library; during this short 20 minute tour, you will learn about the resources we have available for you to trace your Donegal ancestors or research the history of the county.

The Jessica Harkin Family Magic Show; Jessica Harkin is an award winning professional magician. Prepare to be amazed by Jessica's illusions and sleight of hand in a thirty minute show that promises to get your Culture Night off to a magical start.

Social distancing guidelines will be adhered to and masks will be worn at all times during events. Booking is essential, to book contact Central Library on 074 9124950.

Healthy Ireland at your Library

As part of the *Healthy Ireland at your Library* programme we are delighted to announce that leading psychologist Dr David Coleman will be providing a free talk via Facebook Live on Saturday 26th September at 11.00am. The topic for the talk is 'Dealing with Anxiety in Children and Teenagers.' To register your interest please contact the library service through our [Donegal County Library Facebook page](#).



Psychologist David Coleman. Photo Credit: Barry McCall

Science Week

Science Week 2020 will take place from the 8th to the 15th of November. The core theme for Science Week 2020 is 'Science Week - Choosing our Future', focusing on how science can improve our lives in the future and in the present. Keep an eye out in the coming weeks for details of library events during Science Week.



wainfest

Children's Arts & Book Festival

Wainfest

Wainfest Children's Arts and Book Festival takes place from the 3rd to the 11th of October. Even though the re-imagined festival will be mostly available online it still promises *Fun from Afar*. This year's line-up brings authors, illustrators, music, theatre, science, wizards, cinema and nature into homes and schools throughout Donegal. The full programme and more information will be available at wainfest.ie from the 22nd of September.

Would you like to join one of our online book clubs?

We have always connected members of the community through our book club meetings in the library. At this time of social distancing it is more important than ever to stay in touch with one another so we are moving our chats and meet-ups online. We currently have three online book clubs. For more information on dates and times and how to join, please contact Belinda at bookgroups@donegalcoco.ie.



PLASTIC: Can't Live With It, Can't Live Without It **24 August – 19 December**

The National Science Gallery brings its first ever touring exhibition to Donegal. The RCC will host a very special exhibition that features the work of over thirty national and international artists, designers and scientists, as well as a newly commissioned work by Donegal based sound artist Ed Devane. Plastic plays such an important role in modern life that to stop using it completely is not an option. It has changed our daily lives and our environment more than any other material. The exhibition features many engaging and interactive exhibits and questions how we can utilise this wonderful, terrible material while changing our approach to it, so that it doesn't choke our oceans and ruin the planet.

This exhibition is free and suitable for all the family but booking is required. To book your guided tour visit [here](#) or ring (074) 912 9186.



PLASTIC Exhibition at the RCC

OUTSIDE IN: Recent Work by Liz Doyle **15 September – 30 October**

Liz Doyle is a contemporary painter and printmaker based in County Donegal. Texture and surface play a big part in Doyle's work, where vivid colours and shapes form land masses, vessels and landscapes. Processes such as pouring and the taking of 'prints' by lifting areas of wet paint from one work and transferring it to another result in vibrant colours and rich surfaces.



Ye Vagabonds and Cormac Begley

ARTIST TALK

24th September, 6.30pm

'Forgotten Places'

During the initial lockdown, Wild Swans in conjunction with Bbeyond, invited artists to collaborate in the project 'Forgotten Places', a series of performances which took place in Girona, Spain and Fanad, Co.Donegal in August 2020. The project offers an introduction to performance art with ten performances by Donegal and Spain based and Bbeyond artists.

This event will include an online screening of the video documentation of Wild Swans and an interactive Q&A session with the artists and filmmaker.

There are limited spaces so please register for the event by email to:

jeremy@regionalculturalcentre.com

MUSIC: Online and Offline Concerts

The RCC will continue to support the local music scene with an action packed programme of music streams featuring local favourites Mark Black, Maria McCormick, Without Willow, Sheerbuzz and Patsy Gallagher (Goats Don't Shave) as well as physical concert programme presented in association with our neighbours An Griánan Theatre and launched by Ye Vagabonds and Cormac Begley on September 26th.

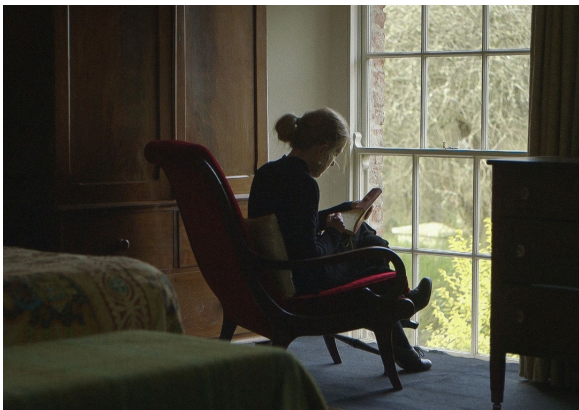
More information about all these events [here](#).



20th Donegal Bay and Blue Stacks Festival

The 20th Donegal Bay and Blue Stacks Festival will take place from Friday, September 25th to Sunday - October 18th. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the festival dates have been extended to avoid unnecessary concentration of events and the programme will also be a blend of live and pre-recorded online performances.

The festival is delighted that its live programme will include three, first time performances of new works - Margaret Hannon's *Sister Black*, Kate O'Callaghan's *Small Behaviours* and Brian Walsh's *My Wife, Her Cat and Other Stuff*, which will be performed by Conal Gallen. The programme also includes a performance by Rosemary Lynch of her show *Zandra Queen of Jazz* - based on the life and times of Alexandra Mitchell, late of Coolmore House, Rossnowlagh. These shows will take place in the Balor Arts Centre, Ballybofey and the Abbey Arts Centre, Ballyshannon.



Actress and playwright Margaret Hannon in a scene from her own show, *Sister Black*.
Photo Credit: Charlie Doherty

The online programme is headlined by Maura Logue and David Ison's new four part drama series, *Drumshee Days*, which will be broadcast every Friday night over the festival at 8.00pm. Further online programming will include, from Treehouse productions, a series of four filmed performances by artists from the North West - Mirenda Rosenberg and Alan Finan from Donegal, with Aoife Boyle (Reevah) and Connor McGowan (Ergo The Jackal) from Derry, which will go out on Tuesday nights during the festival.



Michael and Conor Murray of the Murray Brothers Quartet

The Festival's music programme will include the eagerly anticipated *Omós do Billy Finn* concert at the Abbey Arts Centre, featuring master piper Robbie Hannon, Ballyshannon singer Shauna Mullin and virtuoso Ardara fiddle player, Damien McGeehan and a brilliant double bill at the Balor Arts Centre featuring the Murray Brothers Quartet and Megan Nic Ruairí. The festival's closing event will include a live zoom 'In Conversation' with London-based, Irish novelist Helen Cullen and Galway poet Elaine Feeny, hosted by Donegal poet Denise Blake.

Full Programme Information is available now on the [festival website](#).



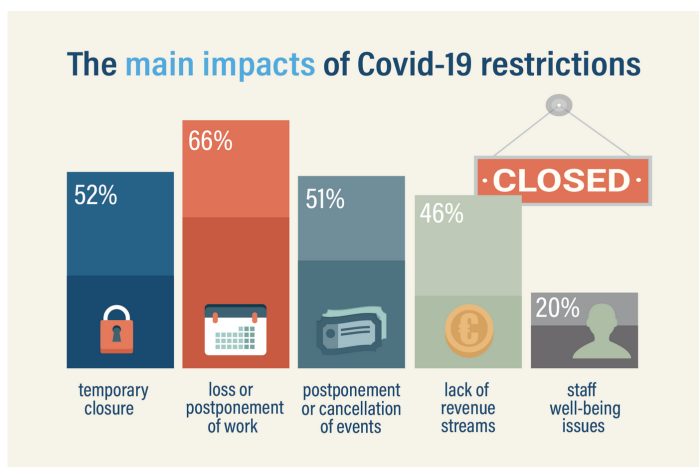
Kate O'Callaghan (right), Seamus Devenney (left) and the Donegal Camerata String Quartet, with leader Victor Yelamo (3rd. right)

Thatch Repair Grant Scheme

There has been a tremendous response to the Thatch Repair Grant Scheme with forty five applications from across the county. The aims of the grant scheme are to provide specialist advice to owners on the conservation of their thatched structures and to allocate funding for small-scale thatch repairs. Twenty-nine offers of funding for residential dwellings, rented accommodation, outbuildings and businesses have now been made under the scheme. The scheme provides much-needed support to thatch homeowners and valuable employment for local thatchers in these challenging times.

COVID-19 & The Heritage Sector

The heritage sector has faced business closures, loss of income, job losses and increased home working as a result of the COVID-19 restrictions. Some heritage sites have seen increased pressure from visitor numbers and many organisations have been busy developing new on-line content. The Heritage Council undertook a survey to help us understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on the heritage sector in Ireland and its findings can be found [here](#).



*Impacts of COVID-19 on the heritage sector
Image courtesy of The Heritage Council*



*House on the Brae, Ramelton
Photo Credit: Joseph Gallagher*

Ramelton Historic Towns Initiative

Donegal County Council's application for Ramelton to the Historic Towns Initiative was successful and has been awarded €200,000 in funding from The Heritage Council and The Department of Culture, Heritage and The Gaeltacht. Donegal County Council is committed to investing an additional €50,000 towards the conservation works this year and there will be financial contributions from local property owners also. The application was prepared by the Heritage Officer and the Conservation Officer of Donegal County Council in partnership with the Ramelton Georgian Society, Dedalus Architecture and local property owners and residents. The initiative will result in conservation works to fourteen historic properties along Castle Street, at the Market Cross and the House on the Brae on Bridge Street, will contribute to the overall quality and character of Ramelton's historic streetscapes, and will support the work of the Ramelton Georgian Society. On-site works commenced in Ramelton in late August and will be completed by the end of November 2020.

National Heritage Week

A big 'Thank You' to all the people, heritage organisations and community groups that undertook projects for Heritage Week (August 15 – 23). Thirty-five projects were undertaken in County Donegal and they can be viewed on the [Heritage Week website](#). All of the projects registered will be considered for the National Heritage Week Awards. The winners will be announced later this year.

Donegal County Museum Reopens

The Museum re-opened on Wednesday 26th August. We have worked hard to ensure a safe and enjoyable visitor experience and we are ready and waiting to welcome you back to enjoy our fantastic range of exhibitions. These include our new exhibition – ‘The Railways of County Donegal’ featuring the images of A. M. Davies from the County Archives Collection, which are a poignant record of the final days of the railways in Donegal.



Killygordon Railway Station. Courtesy of the Donegal County Museum collection

“Reimagine...”

Donegal County Museum is collaborating with An Grianán Theatre and the Regional Culture Centre, Letterkenny on ‘Reimagine...’ an Irish Architecture Foundation project supported by the Creative Ireland Programme’s National Creativity Fund. ‘Reimagine...’ is a community-led architecture and design programme, which brings together local communities, architects, designers and planners to develop projects which will enhance the local built environment of each town involved in the project. The Letterkenny project LKCD.ie is being delivered by Pasparakis Friel Architects in consultation with Donegal County Council and is focused on highlighting and developing the physical linkages between the Museum, the Theatre and the Regional Culture Centre. It will include the installation of temporary way-finding markers and signage.



Virtual St Catherine's

Virtual reconstruction of St Catherine's Church, Killybegs. Courtesy of Niall McShane, Intelligent Systems Research Centre, Ulster University

CINE Project – Virtual St Catherines's Website

During Heritage Week in August the Museum launched a [new website](#) which allows people to visualise the built heritage of St Catherine's Church and graveyard in Killybegs from a new perspective.

As part of the [CINE project](#), Donegal County Museum in partnership with Ulster University's Intelligent Systems Research Centre, has been working with Killybegs History and Heritage Society to promote and preserve the medieval history and heritage of St Catherine's church and graveyard.

Visiting the online exhibition, you can explore a complete virtual reconstruction of the church and graveyard, view 360 degree image tours and see 3D digitised artefacts. This project has been funded by the EU's Northern Periphery and Arctic programme 2014-2020 (ERDF).

Decade of Centenaries exhibition

We are researching the story of Donegal during the War of Independence, the Civil War and Partition for our next exhibition. If you have any family stories, artefacts or photographs associated with this period which you would like to share please contact the Museum.



Digitisation of Donegal Grand Jury Archives

The County Donegal Grand Jury Archive is now free to view online. The Archives Service collects, preserves and makes accessible archives relevant to the county's history, culture and society. Over twenty one years we have built up an impressive collection of archives of both public and private origin. Among our key collections is the Donegal Grand Jury Archive, dating from 1753 to 1898. It is our oldest public collection and is of great significance for local, family and academic history.

The Grand Juries of Ireland are believed to have been in existence since Norman times. They were the predecessor bodies of modern local authorities and had a wide variety of public functions, including contracting out roads works; construction and maintenance of infirmaries, dispensaries, courthouses, schools and the County Jail; and collecting the rate ('county cess'). Diverse 'services' sometimes included translation of Irish, culling of certain animals and transportation of prisoners.



The last Donegal Grand Jury 1899. Courtesy of Donegal County Archives

The Donegal Grand Jury records include presentments (records of works to be done); accounts; minutes of meetings; correspondence and memoranda; also photographs of the last Grand Jury. They reveal much about life in 18th and 19th century rural Ireland. The original records are held at the County Archives in Lifford. The microfilms of the original records (and the catalogue) have been digitized and can now be viewed online at no charge. View the collection [here](#).



The Fanad Health Club committee, c1931, discussed in the Facebook presentation 21 Years 21 Archival Treasures.

Courtesy of Donegal County Archives

Rural District Councils

As part of the ongoing Decade of Centenaries commemorations the Archives' Rural District Council minute books from 1917 - 1925 are in the process of being digitized and will be uploaded over the next few months, and made available free to view on the [Archives web pages](#).

Celebrating 21 Years

The Archives Service is celebrating twenty one years this year. As part of that celebration and to celebrate Heritage Week the Archives streamed live a presentation entitled *21 Years: 21 Archival Treasures*, highlighting key collections acquired over two decades. This presentation is available to watch on the [Archives Facebook page](#).

Oral History project

Our Museum and Archives *Peace IV Echoes of the Decade* project is ongoing and an oral history project based on the themes of the legacy of the Decade of Centenaries has got underway. More information on this project will be shared over the next few months. Please follow the Archives on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#) for all the latest news.