

Gift of Historic Turbine to Galway City Museum



The Mayor of Galway Cllr. Catherine Connolly and Mr. John Tierney, City Manager recently accepted a turbine, which was generously donated by Thomas McDonagh Ltd. for Galway City Museum. The turbine generated electricity for the industries which flanked Galway's canals between the 1930's to 1980's. The official hand over of the turbine took place at **Rynn's Engineering** at Galway Docks and was attended by City Council officials and management of the McDonagh groups along with members of the press.

The Mayor of Galway Cllr. Catherine Connolly said that the new City Museum / Músaem Cathrach na Gaillimhe would be a great boon to Galway and to the entire region. It would be a wonderful educational and recreational resource for Galwegians and visitors alike, and she hoped that it would be accessible to all with only nominal entrance fees and provided in the same spirit as the library services which local authorities had a duty to provide, and provided so well. Accessibility for all and a resource for the entire region was what the City Council would seek to achieve through the museum development. The museum would be a Designated Museum conforming to the highest international standards.

Mr. John Tierney said that Galway had a vast treasury of excavated finds discovered in over twenty years of excavation. The City Council was (and still is) to the forefront on funding these excavations and he looked forward to the publication of an impressive book on these excavations

which is forthcoming shortly. Galway could provide a high standard designated museum of world class significance to house these vital pieces of Galway's heritage. Galway City has for many years employed archaeologists on an ongoing basis for every project where mitigation was required.

Mr. Jim Higgins, Galway City Heritage Officer said that the presentation of the turbine by McDonagh Group was a valuable addition to the City's collections. Galway has a very long history of water power management and ancient industry. An ancient horizontal mill dating back to the early Christian period (5th to 12th century) had been found and excavated in Knocknacarra in the 1970's. Milling and rights to waterpower was a constant source of political intrigue throughout the medieval period and Galway's system of waterways was one of the most intensively industrialized ones in Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries. The gift of this turbine to the city emphasized the importance of our industrial archaeological heritage.

Mr. Thomas McDonagh Snr. outlined the history of the 1930's turbine and its use on the waterways behind Bowling Green. Galway had one of the earliest electricity supply stations and turbines such as this made a valuable contribution to Galway's industrial strength. McDonagh's had water powered generating plants on several of the canals and at their fertilizer plant, where Jury's Hotel now stands.

Mr. Paul Duffy of Galway County Council gave an account of the history of waterpower in Galway and described the donation of the turbine as one of the single most significant pieces of industrial archaeology presented so far to the museum. Galwegian engineers had been responsible for a vast number of technical innovations and their contribution direct and indirect to the Shannon Electricity Scheme, the development of railways, electricity generation and so on was extremely significant.

Mr. Duffy also said it is time Galway's industrial heritage found its place in people's minds and in the history of the city. While Galway was famous for its medieval stone carvings, its contribution to industrial archaeology was also of worldwide significance. Galway was lucky to have other features such as its old waterworks of 1867, its electric generating plant of the 1930's, Galway City Council should be proud of these important features of its heritage.

Mr. Michael Ryan of the McDonagh Group Ltd. thanked **Pat Rynn of Rynn Engineering** for their excellent work in restoring and storing the turbine, and said that the McDonagh group was proud to be associated with the project and wished Galway City Council and the Mayor well in the completion of the museum which would be a wonderful attraction in the city. It is hoped to have the new museum open by February 2005. The services of Mr. Ciaran O'Connor and Gerry Harvey, Architects, are provided free by the Office of Public Works. The work on the museum is at an advanced stage. The constructors for the work are Sisks and Son Ltd., Tobins and Company, Homan O'Brien Associates are the Structural Engineers and Bruce-Shaw are the Chartered Surveyors. The museum which is officially entitled Músaem Cathrach na Gaillimhe / Galway City Museum is funded by Galway City Council, E.U. Access Funding and the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism. The event was organized by Mr. Michael Ryan of the McDonagh Group and the Heritage Office of Galway City Council.



Restoration of Mutton Island makes wonderful progress

The Mutton Island project has got off to a good start and work is ongoing on the restoration of the lighthouse and its ancillary buildings. We hope to publish more about this site later. We have had the pleasure of several walks over the island and its buildings in the company of Bill Scanlon former lighthouse keeper and a former predecessor of ours in Galway City Museum.

The Mutton Island grant will allow us in conjunction with Galway Civic Trust to conserve the building. The grant from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government was successfully applied for by the Heritage Office. The work which is being carried out so far has been carried out under the direction of Mike Davis who has done excellent work on many heritage sites throughout the city. The work has involved the clearance of much of the loose slate and rubble which has accumulated over the years and the making safe of sections of the roof which were in poor condition. We hope with the help of the Maritime Museum, Dún Laoghaire, Bill Scanlon and the Commissioners of Irish Lights to have an exhibition on the history of the Lighthouse and those who manned it early in 2005.
Aisling Conneely