

Press Release



Fermanagh District Council

21 July 2008

Sneak Preview at the Castle Keep

Last week, early morning listeners to the BBC's Good Morning Ulster radio programme would have heard Wendy Austin getting a sneak preview of the new displays in Enniskillen's oldest building. All visitors are welcome to get a preview of the new displays in Enniskillen Castle throughout July & August. Over £600,000 has been invested to enhance the exhibitions showing the early Gaelic Maguire history of the castle as well as the later plantation and military story.

The displays are nearing completion and the final touches are still being added but visitors are welcome to take part in this process by letting us know what they like and what they think might be improved. Some visitors have already been sharing their views of the refurbished Keep.

The Jackson family who visited the new Medieval Maguire displays which are located on the ground floor were particularly impressed by the newly refurbished vaults which are the oldest part of the Maguire's castle. Anne Jackson said:

"My son loved the displays in the old vaults. He saw the new audio visual programme and was fascinated by how this site has changed over the centuries. It gave him a chance to see it for 'real'. The crossbows and swords were a hit too."



Anne, who had visited the castle before its refurbishment went on to say:

“It’s much easier to see the old vaults now. It’s funny, there’s less on display than before but now we can really see what is here. Now there is so much to hold my and the children’s attention. The extra space is important. because now you can get close to the exhibits and they aren’t under glass so you can reach out and touch things.

I used to think this was a military site only but now I can see that its history goes much further back in to the period of the Medieval Gaelic Maguires”

Last week, Phillip Archibald visited the displays with his family. His father, William Archibald, was a Private in the Inniskilling Fusiliers and saw action in the Second World War in France, Egypt, Italy and Germany.

Speaking about the new displays on the upper floors of the Castle Keep, Phillip said:

“This is my first time to visit and I am really impressed, not only with the displays relating to my father’s time in the Inniskillings but also the remarkable stories and objects about the 1st World War. “

Phillip, who is the youngest of a family of seven sons and three daughters went on to explain:

“I didn’t know that my father had fought in the Second World War until I was about thirteen. I used to always ask him if he had ever killed anybody. He always answered – “Well, I shot my rifle a lot”. He would never answer the question straight out. He lied about his age to join up as he was only seventeen at the time but he always discouraged me and my brothers from joining the army. He said “You don’t want to see the things I’ve seen and you don’t ever want to do the things I had to do.””

William was wounded in Germany. The bullet went through his helmet, ricocheted through his earlobe and then went into his Sergeant’s back who was standing nearby. His Sergeant got three months sick leave whereas William only got three days. His father was also able to remember his time serving with the Inniskillings with some humour. Describing the accuracy of bombing from aircraft William used to tell his children: **“When the Germans were bombing – we took cover. When we were bombing – the Germans took cover and when the Americans were bombing – everyone took cover.”**

Phillip and his family have always felt a great sense of pride in what their father did. William, who died in February 2007, left his medals to his eldest son.

£600,000 has been spent on the overall refurbishment. Fermanagh County Museum was awarded grants of £50,000 from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board; £25,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund; £5,000 from the Association of Friends of Fermanagh County Museum alongside funding of £20,000 from Fermanagh District Council to refurbish the ground floor displays of the Castle Keep.

The Inniskilling Museum Trustees were delighted with their appeal for donations which realised the magnificent sum of approximately £500,000. This comprised of very generous amounts from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Northern Ireland Tourist Board, The Ireland Fund, local businesses and last but not least the Old Comrades of both the Inniskilling Regiments with whom they served with great pride over the years.

Fermanagh County Museum was designed by DesignMap working with MDM Props, both are London based companies. They were appointed following a competitive tender last December. The Inniskillings appointed the National Army Museum to design the new layout for their exhibitions.

The Castle Keep was closed from 1 December 2007 to allow the refurbishment to take place.

Normal admission charges apply.



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Notes to Editor:

Captions for images:

1. Ivan and Anne Jackson with their family in the Medieval Maguire vaults .
2. Phillip Archibald and his daughter Kathy in front of the new World War 2 diorama on the top floor of the Castle Keep.