

Annual Report 2016

Visitor Numbers & Attitudes

	2015	2016	% change
Jan-Feb	511	682	+34
Mar-Apr	2124	2213	+4
May-Jun	3180	3082	-3
Jul-Aug	6099	5709	-6
Sep-Oct	2931	3297	+12
Nov-Dec	533	503	-6
	15225	15486	+2

Visitor numbers grew slightly in 2016. The 2% growth contrasts with an average of 9% over the previous three years and with the wider tourism picture, though, as a niche product, we do not generally mirror wider trends. The most significant decline was in the important Jul-Aug period. An obvious (if not necessarily correct) explanation for this was the good weather in those months, which does not favour indoor urban attractions. The November decline was due to the conservation project, which meant that we were closed for most three of the four weekends of that month.

We tried daily opening in February, but it was not a success. Visitor numbers were small while the museum interior became so cold that additional heating had to be hired to bring the temperature up to a tolerable level. This lobby area was also impossibly cold. Additional protection from the elements is needed before we can contemplate extending daily opening into the winter months.

Visitor Survey

The survey was, as usual, conducted in the last two weeks of August and the first two weeks of September. The usual three questions were posed; *How did you hear about the Museum?*; *Why did you visit?* and *Would you recommend the Museum to someone else?* Survey forms are left upstairs and the sample is self-selecting. The response was lower than in previous years, 15% of the adult visitors, compared to the more usual response in the 20-23% range.

Year by Year Recommend comparisons

Recommend %	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Yes	75	70	70	65	72	75
No	6	12	12	8	8	7
Perhaps	19	17	18	27	20	18.75

Recommend by language group

Recommend %	English	German	French	Italian	Spanish
Yes	77	74	67	80	64
No	8	8	6	13	6
Perhaps	17	17	28	7	30

Given the small sample, I would not attach too much significance to these breakdowns.

How did you find out about the Museum?

	2012	2013	2104	2015	2016
Guide Book	31.25	29.1	41.3	37.19	30.65
Passing By	10.06	16.9	15.18	13.5	9.96
Tourist Office Brochure	15.26	13.00	8.54	12.69	13.03
Internet	13.86	13.04	11.71	12.02	20.31
Word of Mouth	11.32	11.7	11.71	11.58	13.79
Leaflet at Accommodation	12.01	5.65	10.44	7.79	8.43
Tour bus	2.00	7.82	6.96	4.23	3.83
Visitor Centre	3.23	1.3	0.95	3.11	1.53
Other	4.39	7.82	5.38	2.67	5.36

As in previous years, Guidebooks are the most important source of information. This year, however, the Internet, which hitherto had hovered around the 12/13% mark, is now the second most important source. Brochures at the Tourist Office and accommodation are also significant. Information from other visitor centres is, as always, poor.

Why did you visit the Museum?

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Curious about a Butter Museum	22	27	22.78	37.41	39.08
Interested in Food	22	37	20.17	35.41	36.40
In Cork to see all the sights	22	39	27.11	34.52	27.59
Interested in History	20	41	22.56	33.85	39.08
Told it was worth seeing	10	7	4.12	9.13	8.43
Other	4		3.25	7.17	4.60

The number citing a general subject interest (Food or History) is up on last year (75%-69%) while those just in Cork or curious is slightly down (67% -72%).

The two salient points emerging from the survey are the improvement in positive responses to the museum, smaller sample notwithstanding, and the significant increase in the internet as a source of information.

The French, German, Spanish, and Italian translations were updated and butter making demonstrations were extended to thrice weekly in high season.

Tours and other events

We hosted twenty eight tour groups in the year, of which thirteen were from primary schools, mainly Cork city. The adult groups included Dutch, German and American visitors.

The Museum offered free guided tours of the Museum and the Shandon area as part of the Lifelong Learning weekend in April. Guided tours of Shandon were also offered as part of our participation in the Urban October programme while we offered free admission as part of Heritage Day in August and Culture Night in September. We also participated in Heritage day through contributing to a UCC project on early foods. This involved making butter with a dash churn in the Cork Public Museum. In May also took a group from the Cork Historical and Archaeological society through Shandon.

Roll up, roll up for chance to eat 3,000 year-old bread

Sean O'Riordan

Food consumed by Iron Age people is being brought back to life following a UCC-led project. A team of international archaeologists unearthed evidence of food grown and cooked in Ireland nearly 3,000 years ago.

The findings were from animal bones and seeds found in investigations, conducted in the south-east of the country.

However, in an experimental reconstructions of Iron Age cuisine, the public will be able to see the results of ancient bread- and butter-making techniques and taste the end product at a special exhibition at Cork Public Museum in Fitzgerald Park on Saturday next.

"We have identified evidence of settlement, as well as arable and pastoral agriculture, indicating that communities were thriving in the south-east of Ireland," said UCC archaeology lecturer Katharina Becker.

"The apparent lack of archaeological site dating had previously created mystery around this period," said Dr Becker.

In the first project of its kind in this country, the findings were drawn from excavations carried out during the building of new roads and gas pipelines.

Dr Becker said: "The animal bones and seeds recovered from road and gas pipeline excavations provide direct evidence of farming practices and the diet during the Iron Age, dating as far back as 2,700 years ago.

"Cattle and pigs provided dairy and meat, barley was a staple, and we also have evidence of a variety of wheats," she said.

The team has joined up with artisan baker Declan Ryan of Cork's Arbutus Bread and experts from the Cork Butter Museum and Cork Public Museum to investigate and recreate how farmers turned raw ingredients into delicious meals

during the Celtic era.

Recipes will be based on the range of charred grains and seeds that represent the remains of the actual food-stuffs grown by prehistoric peoples and preserved in the soil for over two millennia.

The results of bread-making experiments with barley,

a lower-gluten cereal that does not offer an easy rise, and butter-making with traditional methods, will be made public in the open day in the Cork museum.

The Heritage Council-funded project, *Settlement and Landscape in Later Prehistoric Ireland — Seeing Beyond the Site*, has been compiling information recovered from archaeological excavations carried out in the south-east region in recent years.

To conduct investigations, UCC's specialists in later prehistoric archaeology and palaeoecology joined forces with Transport Infrastructure Ireland which is financially supporting the project, and an international research team comprised of specialists from Bradford University, Warwick University and UCD.

Applying cutting-edge modelling techniques, data is being examined against the evidence from the study of pollen records preserved in lakes and bogs in the south-east. It had long been assumed no such records survived in the era due to agriculture and peat cutting.

However, the team has recovered a core from a lake that stretches right back to the end of the last Ice Age, 11,000 years ago.

"The analysis of lake sediments which have accumulated over thousands of years allows us to identify the actual pollen grains from the plants that people were cultivating during prehistory," said UCC archaeology lecturer Ben Gearey.

"We can date these sequences using radiocar-

bon dating and compare them to the archaeological evidence of settlement and agriculture," said Dr Gearey.

Meanwhile, the methods archaeologists use to analyse

cereal grains and animal bones found on archaeological digs and pollen records, to reconstruct landscapes, will be explored in hands-on sessions.

"We want to give the public the opportunity to see for themselves how archaeologists and environmental specialists connect and make sense of the minute pieces of evidence found on archaeological sites to reconstruct the stories of people's lives," said Dr Becker.



Cork Butter Museum. Public are invited to taste the iron-age meals next Saturday.



Marketing & Publicity

Marketing proceeded along established lines; Cork Heritage Circle brochures distributed to Glance Promotions and to accommodation centres and our own brochures in the Tourist Office. The Cork Heritage Circle commissioned Dr Lisa O'Riordan to do a study on how the group might develop. This study was partially funded by Cork City Council and its conclusions are being considered by the group.

The Museum featured in February - March edition of CARA, the Aer Lingus inflight magazine

3 MUST-DOS ...

1 SURPRISING Take a trip to the **Cork Butter Museum** in O'Connell Square, Shandon for a quirky take on the city's delicious past.
corkbutter.museum

In May we hosted a group of American food writers, guests of Ornuu, in July an Indian TV crew shot some footage in the Museum and in October I did an interview with West Limerick FM.

Exhibition Development

This was a significant year developing the exhibition. We installed a section of a cutaway bog in October, built by the Irish Peat Conservancy Council. This will assist visitors to understand the context of our bog butter exhibit.



We also took the opportunity offered by the removal of the organic material in the collection for conservation to remove one of the large exhibition cases and re-configure part of the ground floor exhibition.







Curatorial Matters

Conservation.

Following on the 2015 condition survey done by Dr Claudia Kinmonth, which revealed active woodworm in some exhibits, all wooden artefacts were removed from treatment, under the supervision of Colm Kenny of Nos Conservation. Treatment involved freezing the material at -28c for 72 hours. The Museum is grateful for the support of the Heritage Council and Ornuia in this project. A video documentary was made of the project, which will be put on our website. Nos conservation also completed a report on the project. Three students from the Museum studies course took part in the project

The opportunity was taken to thoroughly clean the museum and to treat vulnerable timberwork in the display cases and panels. The experience gained from the will inform the conservation plan which is now in preparation, as will the atmospheric and other monitoring that we undertook this year.



An intern from the Museum Studies course, Gavin O'Brien, who was with the museum for six weeks in the spring, has prepared an Emergency Plan. This means that we now have a near completed Risk Assessment and Emergency Plan while considerable progress has been made on a Conservation Plan.

Acquisitions

We made a number of acquisitions this year. Two butter bowls, a piggin, a mechanical separator, two butter prints and an end-over churn via auction at Victor Mee. The churn was not in great condition but can be of use in the exhibition. We also acquired a Diabolo separator and churn, a pair of butter spades and a large horizontal churn in private transactions.

A butter box, a butter bowl, a twenty gallon churn, two sets of butter spades and an original Kerrygold wrapper were loaned on a long term basis to Ornuia for display in the new facility at Kerrygold Park in Mitchelstown.

Other Matters

During the year, I attended a two day Fáilte Ireland conference on Food Tourism, held in Tankardstown, Co. Meath, attended the Teagasc 1916 event at Athenry in June and attended the opening of Kerrygold Park in Mitchelstown in September. I also visited the Kerry County Museum where I met the Curator, Helen Carey. I am also a participant in City Council led group looking at customer service in Cork City. I have also completed the eighteen month Higher Diploma in Heritage and Interpretation which I was pursuing at the University of Leicester.

The Museum has changed its name to the Cork Butter Museum Company Limited by Guarantee, which can be abbreviated to Cork Butter Museum CLG. This change is necessary to comply with the Companies Act 2014. Related changes to the company's foundation documents are in hand.

Conclusion

The modest increase in visitor numbers is disappointing, given the wider tourism context. The overwhelming majority of those who visit the Museum, however, think well of what we do.

The removal of material for conservation occasioned the most significant reshaping of the

museum's exhibition. Further developments of the exhibition will be informed by contemporary understanding of visitor, which emphasises the constructive role of the visitor of creating meaning, rather than the passive recipient of a fixed narrative.