

Preamble

This year the Butter Museum was honoured by the visit of the Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, T.D., on the 12th of November to mark both the retirement of David Bird and Michael Dowling from the Board of the company and the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Butter Museum. The event was made possible through the good offices of the chairperson and it was agreed that the event was a success.



Dr Claudia Kinmonth presenting the Taoiseach with a copy of her book Irish Country Furniture and Furnishings, 1700 – 2000. The presentation was made as part of the Taoiseach's visit to the Butter Museum in November. Also in shot are, David Bird and the chairperson, Michelle Cashman,

The chairperson and board member, Ms Margaret Moran, were guests of the Cathoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Mark Daly, at Leinster House in July. Senator Daly had visited the Museum with members of his family in December 2021.

The end of the Covid restrictions and return to full opening was another landmark in the life of the Museum.



On a sad note, however, we lost Don Humphreys, who died suddenly just before Christmas. Don played many parts in the Museum, from Fire Officer to Butter Maker, but it is, perhaps, his extraordinary gift with primary school children for which he will be best remembered. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.



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Don in characteristic mode making butter outside the Museum as part of the Cork on a Fork event in August.



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Visitor Numbers

	2018	2019	2021	2022		% of 2018
January	215	0		210		97.67
February	388	0		225		57.99
March	928	1218		697		75.11
April	1325	1605		1060		80.00
May	1964	1980		1016		51.73
June	1970	2529		1611		81.78
July	2752	2822		1949		70.82
August	3485	3188		2664		76.44
September	2293	1963		1628		71.00
October	1397	1357		1434		102.65
November		609		684		112.32
December		172		302		175.58
	16,717	17,443	4,169	13,690		

Visitor numbers have recovered substantially from the decline over the previous two years. The 2022 numbers were 78% of the 2019 figures, which was our best every year, and 81% of the 2018 numbers. This is broadly in with the general improvement in tourism figures during the year, which is expected to be 75% of the 2019 figure.

Places of Origin of Visitors

The table below gives the place of origin of visitors since 2015, excluding the pandemic years of 2020 and 2021. These are proportionate figures so perhaps one should not read too much into them but the comparative decline in German visitors and the increase in North American visitors since 2015 is striking. The monthly figures in the Table B shows the importance of the North American visitor.

Table A

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2022
Irish	23.86	23.33	22.03	18.93	20.08	20.3
GB	13.45	14.84	15.72	14.16	14.46	14.2
German	15.73	13.82	13.56	11.00	9.08	10.8
French	9.63	12.10	10.93	8.08	7.41	7.23
Spanish	6.07	4.99	6.27	5.44	6.15	4.8



Italian	2.37	1.97	2.24	2.27	5.5	4
North American	15.81	16.67	16.53	25.52	20.4	26.9
Other	10.60	13.29	12.72	14.61	15.31	17.10

Table B

Monthly Place of origin by %

	Ir	GB	Ger	Fr	It	Sp	Other E	N. American	Other
Jan - Feb	46	25	2	2	3	4		11	10
Mar- Apr	21	13	7	7	4	7		27	15
May	17	10	11	5	4	3		36	14
Jun	14	9	9	5	2	4		33	12
Jul	20	13	14	18	10	8		28	21
Aug	15	10	10	13	8	6		22	16
Sep	13	15	9	6	4	3		33	19
Oct	19	14	11	9	2	2		26	18
Nov	19	11	7.1	5.25	3		6	26	25
Dec	19	22	28	2			5	28	21

After March, at least one in four visitors is from North America. For three of those ten months one in three visitors is from North America.

Tours and Events

Tours from Cork primary schools were scheduled to resume in June but, unfortunately, this did not happen due to the illness of the organiser. We did, however, have one tour from a local secondary school, three tours of German visitors organised by Abbey Tour, a tour of American university students and three groups of Irish adults.

The Museum did a guided tour of Shandon in April as part of the Lifelong Learning Festival. Unfortunately, our contribution to Cruinniú, the children's festival, which was to host children in Direct Provision for butter making in the Butter Museum came to nothing due to organisational misunderstandings. However, it is an area we will look forward to exploring further. Attendance on Culture Night in September continues to drop. There were 128

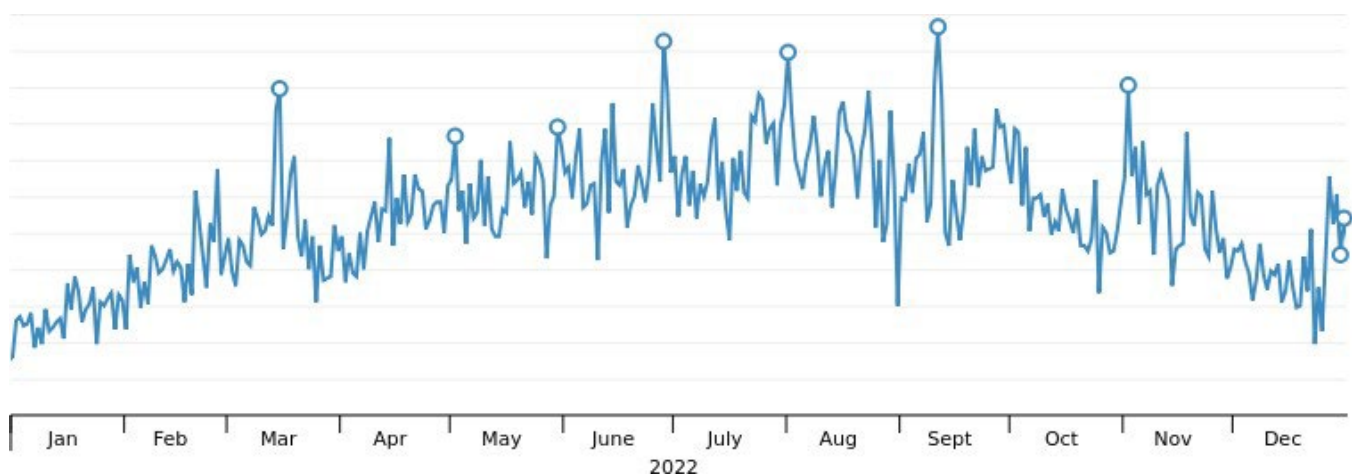


visitors this year compared to 415 in 2014. This decline reflects the greatly increased number of events available in the city on that night.

Butter making demonstrations resumed from June, on Wednesdays and Saturdays. The average attendances have been around twenty people, fewer than in previous years but that is to be expected. We also did a bread and butter making demonstration on August the 17th outside the Museum in O'Connell Square, in association with Máire Ní Mhurchú of Activity Days Ireland. This was our contribution to the "Cork on a Fork" food festival. It was a success. On Heritage Day we had a number of butter making demonstrations in the Cork Public Museum, as we have done in previous years.

Web traffic and Social Media

The graphic below shows the pattern of visits to our website over the year. The average daily number of unique visits was 110. This compares with an average of 70 daily unique visits in 2019 and average of 55 daily visits in 2021. The peak of 213 visits in September may be associated with Culture Night. There is a similar September peak in both 2019 and 2021. The average daily return visit to the website in 2022 was 5.4, suggesting that the home page is primarily a notice board for people looking to establish opening times, demonstrations, admission prices et cetera.



Average Unique visits to website 2022.

We have installed a notice Board on our website which will allow us to give notice of forthcoming events

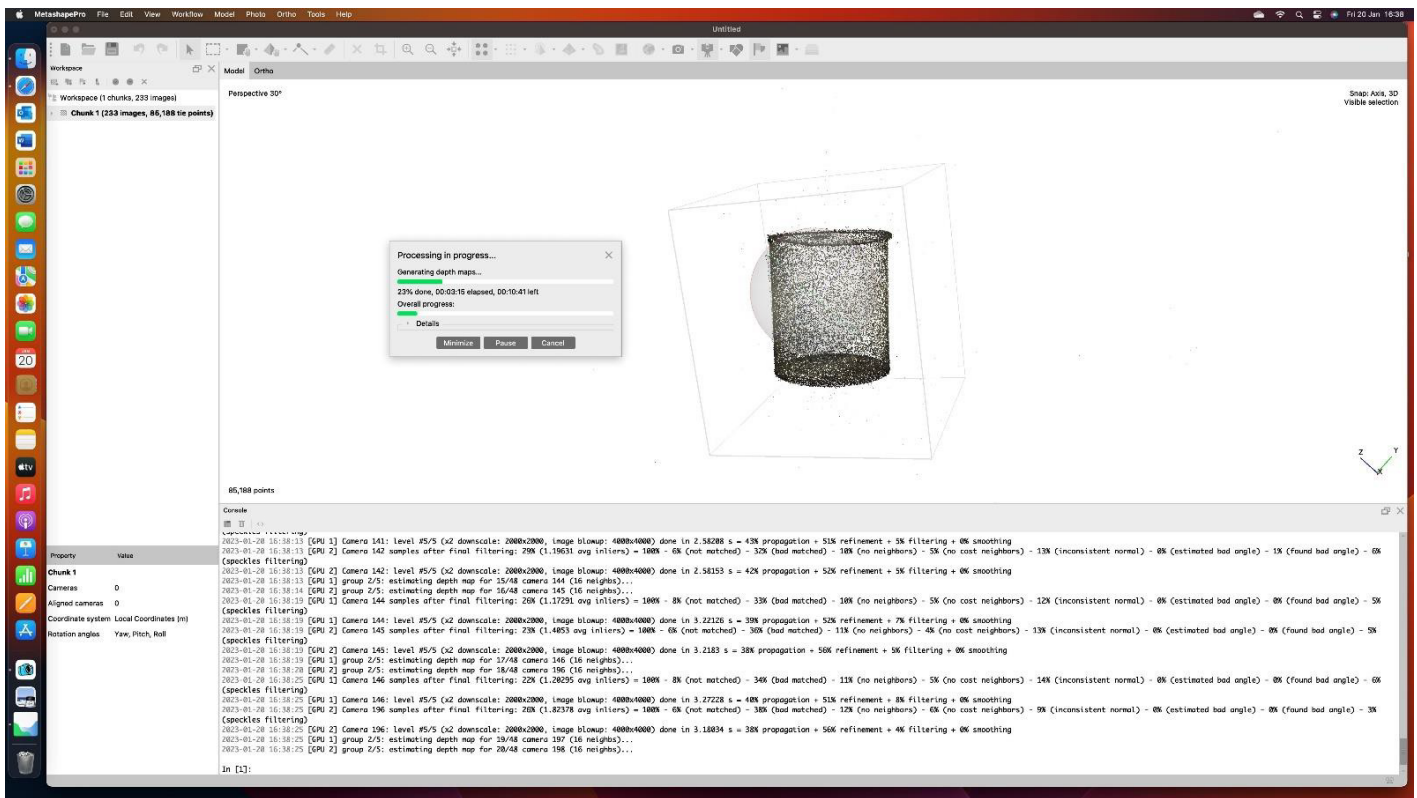
Digital Development

Digital strategy is, firstly, to create short films for social media which either enhance access and understanding of the collection, such as those which we did with Claudia Kinmonth in 2021. or to create a brief record on some aspect of dairying history which has been neglected. Examples of these would be the short films on Cleeves and the Travelling Creamery. The second aspect of the programme is to acquire the expertise and technical capacity to digitally capture the collection with the intention of projecting the collection beyond the confines of the physical Museum.

The Board has agreed new opening hours to facilitate this work, which is time intensive. March – May and Oct-Nov, the Museum is open to the public from Wednesday to Sunday. Jun – Sep the Museum is open daily. Dec – Feb the Museum is open at weekends only, or by appointment.

We have created 28 short films since the inception of the program in 2019. These are now housed on our Vimeo page. We intend to continue this programme into 2023 but at a reduced pace.

The digital capture program is still in the phase of building expertise and resources. Funding from the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sports and Media has allowed us to buy a powerful Mac Studio computer.



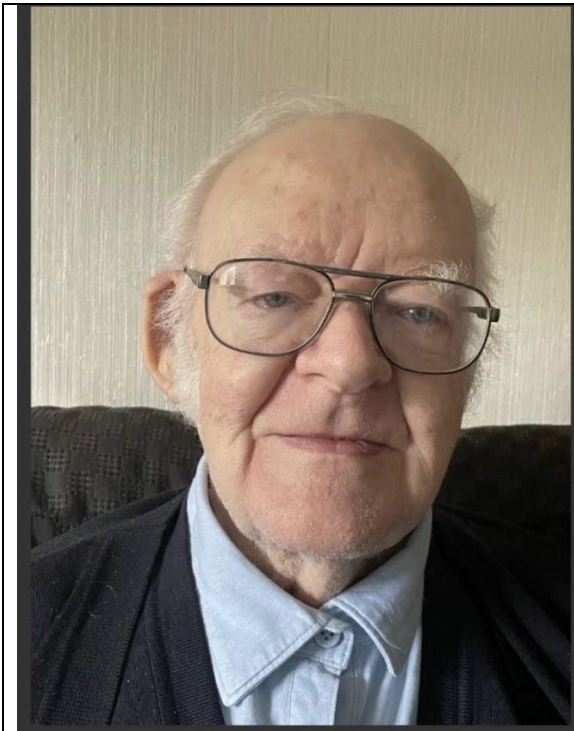
Screenshot from the process of 3D capture of the Barrett butter tin acquired this year, Dominic Moore, who received a Higher Diploma in Digital Humanities from UCC in is taking an online course [Remaking material Culture in 3D](#). He also attended a UCC 3D Scanning course by Dr Pat Tanner.

Six short (2 mins 20 sec) films were completed in 2022.

The Firkin Crane

This is a piece on the history and use of the Firkin Crane building featuring images from the July 1980 fire and an interview with Don, who grew up in the neighbourhood and remembers the original building and the fire. The piece has been posted on Twitter and will be integrated into the permanent exhibition.

Bog Butter parts 1 & 2



In early March I interviewed Prof Chris Synnott (left), who is one of the authorities on bog butter, on the subject. The conversation, which was about an hour long, has been edited down to two films, accompanied by images of bogs and bog butter. The films were released on social media

Glenmore Creamery

This is a piece themed around an incident in 1916 when a consignment of nine boxes of butter from Glenmore creamery, en route to Belfast, were looted from Amiens Street railway station during the Rising. The affair is recorded in a file in the National Archives, a digital copy of which we have acquired.

Butter Boxes

A revised and updated version of one of our earliest pieces.

The Firkin

A piece on the disputed question of the correct weight of a firkin

The Museum is also working with Stephen O'Connell, formerly of LooksLoud productions, who did our animation of the butter making process, exploring possibilities for the animation of our schools material. This work will continue into 2023.

Social Media



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Twitter

31 Dec 2021 1059 followers;

31 Dec 2022 1,802 followers

Instagram

31 Dec 2021 453 followers

31 Dec 2022 602 followers

November was a turbulent month on Twitter as the ramifications of the Musk takeover caused many of our existing and potential followers to migrate to Mastodon. We lost followers during the months September-October and gained very few during November; this has caused us to miss our Year's End goal. By December however, with the platform settling down, we were back on track and had re-established our monthly goal numbers. We are pleased to see we have exceeded our Year's End goal on Instagram. We have also established a presence on Mastodon and are pleased to see we have a healthy start-up following of 102.

Heritage Council Project

During the year, we worked with the Nano Nagle Centre to build on the successful Playful Cork Programme of 2021. Feedback from that programme suggested that there was a gap in provision in the scheme for younger children and children on the autism spectrum. We saw this as an opportunity to look at the wider picture of provision for this sector in museums and visitor attractions generally. We received funding from the Heritage Council to work with the Occupational Therapy Department in UCC to explore the issue. The outcome was a set of specialised guides for almost all the visitor attractions in the city and a larger report on the general issue.

We were committed to match funding of 10% of the cost of the project (c €1.100), but the project came in below budget and that funding was not called upon.



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Exhibition, Acquisition, Conservation

28lb empty tin, Barretts Butter, acquired at auction.	Acquired at auction
Ceramic skimmer, probably Wedgewood	Donation
Lombardstown butter wrapper	Donation
Barrowvale butter wrapper	Donation
Butter Scraper	Purchase
Read Cup Creamery Manager's Medal	Donation
Creamery Diary	Donation
Butter working table	Purchase



28lb tin of butter produced by Barretts of Cork “The Best Keeping Butter in the World”

An exhibit on measuring butterfat in cream was finally installed in the new exhibition case. The wooden artefacts, which had been sent to conservation to the freezer in the National Museum, were returned in January and integrated into the main exhibition. A creamery

diary, which was donated to the Butter Museum by the butter wrapper collector, Mike Carey, came back from conservation at Muckross House in Killarney in September and may be added to the exhibition. We were given a similar diary this year.



Butter Parchment from Bennettsbridge, Co. Kilkenny. An unusual piece in that it is printed by Eagle Printers, in Cork, and is for 2lbs.

Staff from the National Museum visited the Museum in November to inspect the material that we hold on loan from them. They were satisfied with the environmental conditions in the Museum, despite the fluctuating temperatures upstairs. Arising from this visit, we bought an ELSEC 765 environmental monitor. This will allow us to measure light levels and also to calibrate the existing environmental monitors.



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Work on the installation of the images of two iterations of Joseph Beuys' Irish Energies series is ongoing. Both prints are now in our possession. A new back wall in the bog butter room is being constructed to mount the images. It is expected that the work will be completed by the end of March.

Property Maintenance & Administration

The Georgian wire lunette windows over the entrance doors were replaced, having been damaged over the years. The company that installed the automatic doors, Boon Edam, finally accepted that the 2019 installation was defective. The doors were re-hung. There has been no recurrence of the previous problems of doors failing to open or close.

Fire safety compliance is ongoing. All electrical items with plugs have been inspected; fire doors painted with fire resistant paint, lintels sealed, extinguishers tested and staff trained in their use. It appears there remains only Fire Warden and Evacuation training and that is in hand.

Point of sale software was installed in October, which will ease the administrative burden. The flat roof was surveyed for potential use as a solar panel location. The estimated cost for a full system is €30,000. The report has been passed on to our landlords, Cork City Council.

Ms Miriam Lyons joined the team this year, initially as a temporary cover. However, meant that anticipated staff illness meant that her contribution to the work of the museum was much greater than initially anticipated. Ms Lyons continues to be a valued member of the team.



The 2019 refurbishment did not progress to the shortlist phase in the EuroMies Architectural Competition, and I have heard nothing further on the ArchDaily award so I must assume we were not successful there either.

Marketing and Publicity

The Taoiseach's visit was covered in the Farmers' Journal, with an accompanying article. We also had a redesign of our brochure to incorporate the 2019 refurbishment and created a postcard featuring the refurbishment. An end over churn in our collection featured in the year's first edition of Archaeology Ireland. Two of our butter boxes appeared in the RTE Afternoon Show, as part of a feature on Claudia Kinmonth's new book on Irish country furniture.



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“...ENGAGING AND MULTI-FACETED...”
THE NEW YORK TIMES

THE BUTTER MUSEUM



Cork's unique museum: the story of Ireland's most important food export and the world's largest butter market.



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Conclusion

The twenty fifth anniversary year of the opening of the Butter Museum has been one of change. Don Humphreys' death cast a pall over the closing few weeks of the year. His contribution to the achievements of the Museum will remain. Two former chairmen have left the Board of the Museum. We have finally moved on from the disruption of the global pandemic and have substantially restored our visitor numbers. The collection and exhibition continue to develop, as does our digital programme. Work remains to be done on our outreach capacity but the Museum continues to develop.

Peter Foynes

Jan 2023



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