



SAMHAIN

shadows, sounds
& stories

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museum

National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann



**Age &
Opportunity**
Life is for
Living.





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INTRODUCTION:

Age & Opportunity

At Age & Opportunity we support people in the adventure of growing older. For many years we have focused on the growth and new opportunities that ageing presents, and while we continue to do this, we are also conscious that ageing has other dimensions.

We recognise that ageing can also be a time of loss and Samhain presents us with an opportunity to reflect on this and to recognise and celebrate our resilience.

Samhain: shadows, sounds & stories is a powerful reflection of our ability to deal with death and loss, while continuing to engage with living and being a part of our communities.

Karen Smyth

Chief Executive Officer
Age & Opportunity



The King's Stables, Co. Armagh

INTRODUCTION:

Poetry Ireland

Observing the work of our Samhain participants over the past two months brings to mind Seamus Heaney's wonderful lines from his poems 'The Badgers':

*How perilous is it to choose
not to love the life we're shown?*

We admire the passionate engagement of the Samhain participants and we revel in the power of poetry, music and photography to capture and convey this glorious sense of wonder at life itself.

We are delighted to work once more with our partners Age & Opportunity and the National Museum of Ireland and we congratulate all those involved.

Maureen Kennelly

Director, Poetry Ireland

INTRODUCTION:

National Museum of Ireland

Objects connect us with our past. They act as tangible expressions of the values, beliefs and customs of our ancestors. They help us understand how previous generations celebrated and reflected on human mortality.

The wealth of the collections of the National Museums of Ireland – Archaeology and Country Life, inspired participants of Samhain in 2014 to explore how past cultures dealt with the cycle of life and death and the passing of seasons.

Samhain: shadows, sounds and stories marks a special coming together of people, museums and organisations, from the north and south of Ireland, to gain a deeper understanding of our shared past.

I am delighted that the Museum is a lead partner in this thought-provoking, partnership project.

Ragnall Ó Floinn

Director, National Museum of Ireland



Bronze trumpet, Loughnashade, Co. Armagh



Bronze vessel, Navan Fort, Co. Armagh

BACKGROUND:

Samhain: shadows, sounds & stories

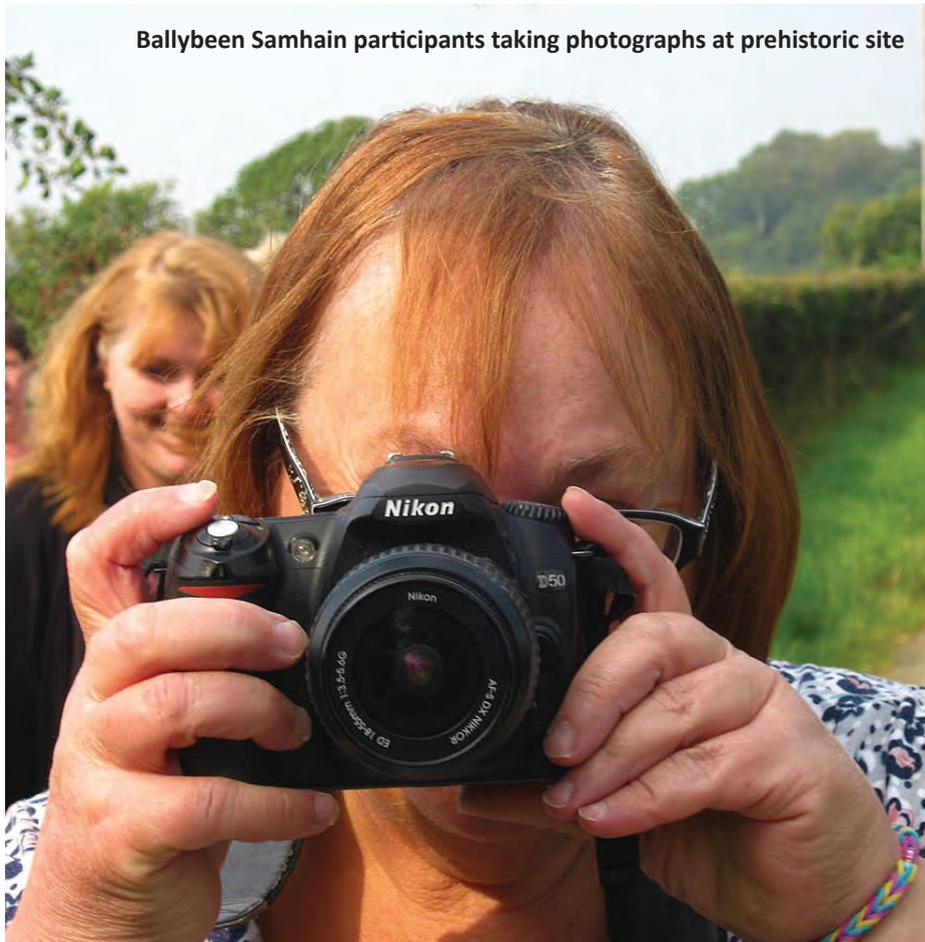
Long before its association with Hallowe'en, Samhain (pronounced 'saowin') was the Celtic harvest festival marking the end of the 'lighter half' of the year and the beginning of the 'darker half'.

Samhain: shadows, sounds & stories is an exhibition of photographs, soundscape and creative writing exploring how previous generations marked the passing of seasons, the cycle of life and death. The exhibition was created by three groups of older people keen to realise their individual and collective creative potential. They came together in Dublin, Mayo and Belfast to collaborate with professional musicians, composers, poets and photographers, along with the staff of the National Museum of Ireland and the Ulster Museum to explore and respond to the themes of Samhain.

Throughout millennia our ancestors created monuments and held ceremonies to mark the passing of seasons and the cycle of life. Exploring objects and prehistoric sites help us to understand how our ancestors marked these cycles of change. Aspects of the beliefs and rituals associated with these cycles are revealed through artefacts such as the bronze horn from Loughnashade, Navan Fort, Co. Armagh and the gold boat from Broighter found on the shores of Lough Foyle, as well as prehistoric sites such as Ballynahatty 'Giant's Ring', near Lisburn.

We invite you to look, listen and explore the groups' creative responses to archaeological sites and Museum artefacts associated with the ancient rituals of the Celts, Samhain traditions and the eternal themes of dying, death and loss.

Samhain is a collaborative venture between the National Museum of Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Poetry Ireland. Now in its third year, it is funded in 2014 by the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht; the National Museum of Ireland; Age & Opportunity; Poetry Ireland and Mayo County Council Arts Office and supported by the Ulster Museum and Music Network.



Ballybeen Samhain participants taking photographs at prehistoric site

SHADOWS:

Samhain at the Ballybeen Women's Centre with Belfast Exposed and the Ulster Museum

Mervyn Smyth, professional photographer with Belfast Exposed – Northern Ireland's principal gallery of contemporary photography - designed a bespoke photography training programme for the Samhain photographers from the Ballybeen Women's Centre in Belfast. The group planned to visit and capture the sites and landscapes where important ancient objects were discovered and rituals and ceremonies were performed by peoples of the Celtic era.

Before venturing on a series of site visits, the group was welcomed at the National Museums Northern Ireland – Ulster Museum. The Ulster Museum is home to a rich collection of art, history and natural sciences. There the Museum staff encouraged the Samhain photographers to investigate and consider the objects and artefacts on display at the Museum.

The sites featured in the *Samhain: shadows, sounds & stories* exhibition were the Beaghmore Stone Circles, near Cookstown, Co. Tyrone; the site where the Broighter hoard was unearthed near Limavady, Co. Derry; the 'Giant's Ring' at Ballynahatty, near Lisburn; the King's Stables and Navan Fort, Co. Armagh. On each site visit, Archaeologist Cia McConway helped the group to re-imagine the Celtic origins, functions and importance of each site. Each of these encounters influenced how the Samhain photographers experienced, viewed and captured aspects of each site and landscape.

Under the guidance of Belfast Exposed, the Samhain photographers carefully selected their own unique images to edit into the final exhibition, demonstrating creative photography and expertise in image selection to offer the viewer a unique insight into the past and present of each landscape.

Context of Samhain photographs

The photographs in the exhibition were taken during field trips to the following archaeological sites, whose monuments and artefact finds have revealed information about the beliefs and rituals of people in Ireland's prehistoric past.

On the shores of Lough Foyle, Brighter in Co. Londonderry is the find site of an Early Iron Age votive hoard, possibly dedicated to the Celtic Sea God Mannanán Mac Lir. The hoard consists of a number of gold artefacts including a gold boat, torcs and miniature cauldron.

The Beaghmore Stone Circles at Cookstown, Co. Tyrone is another large complex ritual site and consists of seven stone circles, stone alignments and also burial cairns used during the early Bronze Age.

'The Giants' Ring', at Ballynahatty Co. Down is the largest enclosed ceremonial space in Ireland consisting of a very large earthen enclosure or henge site, and the remains of an earlier passage tomb. This site was used in the Neolithic and early Bronze Age.

'The King's Stables', an artificial pond, probably constructed for ritual purposes and dating to the Late Bronze Age, is very near the ritual site and hillfort of Haughey's Fort, and close to the find site of the bronze trumpets at the lake of Loughnashade and also Navan Fort, Co. Armagh.

Emain Macha also called Navan Fort, Co. Armagh, was the legendary royal capital of Ulster and one of the most complex archaeological ritual sites in Ireland. It includes Late Bronze Age and Iron Age mounds and ditches.



Site where the Brighter Hoard was discovered, Limavady, Co. Londonderry



Site where the Brighter Hoard was discovered, Limavady, Co. Londonderry



Site where the Brighter Hoard was discovered, Limavady, Co. Londonderry



Site where the Brighter Hoard was discovered, Limavady, Co. Londonderry



Beaghmore Stone Circles, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone



Site where the Brighter Hoard was discovered, Limavady, Co. Londonderry



Beaghmore Stone Circles, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone



Beaghmore Stone Circles, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone



Beaghmore Stone Circles, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone



The Giant's Ring,
Ballynahatty,
Co. Down



The Giant's Ring,
Ballynahatty,
Co. Down



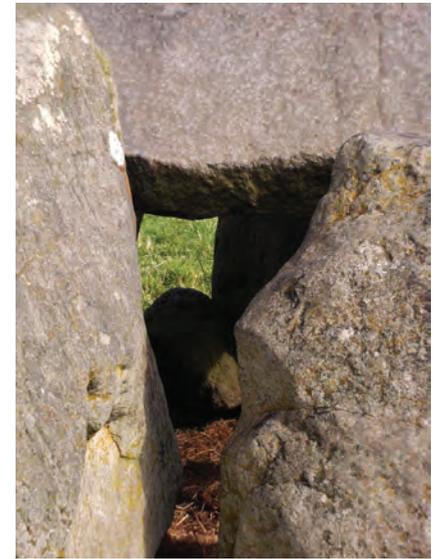
The Giant's Ring,
Ballynahatty,
Co. Down



The Giant's Ring, Ballynahatty, Co. Down



The Giant's Ring,
Ballynahatty,
Co. Down



The Giant's Ring,
Ballynahatty,
Co. Down



The King's Stables,
Co. Armagh



Mound 'B' at Navan Fort,
Co. Armagh



The King's Stables,
Co. Armagh

'Fertility Tree' at Navan Fort,
Co. Armagh



Navan Fort, Co. Armagh



The King's Stables,
Co. Armagh

Navan Fort, Co. Armagh





Samhain group of musicians working with composer Elaine Agnew

SOUNDS:

Samhain at the National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology

The National Museum of Ireland - Archaeology is the national repository for all archaeological objects found in Ireland and home to over two million artefacts. Here the group of musicians worked with professional composer Elaine Agnew and choral specialist Robbie Blake. Together they explored the medium of sound and music to create a soundscape. A soundscape is a combination of natural and environmental sounds. Whilst a landscape includes the broad view of everything that is within vision of any space, a soundscape is the audible elements of that setting.

This soundscape connects some of the Celtic objects on display at the Museum of Archaeology to the landscapes where these objects were discovered in Northern Ireland. Under the careful guidance of Museum staff, the group investigated ancient objects displayed in the Museum specifically, the bronze horn found at Loughnashade near Navan Fort, Co. Armagh and the gold boat and hoard found at Brougher on the shores of Lough Foyle. The content and design of this soundscape are inspired by the imagined sounds of prehistoric Ireland evoked by these objects.

Keynote sounds consisting of tuned and un-tuned percussive instruments, voices and other sound sources, not always consciously heard but always present, set the tone: shimmering chime bars contemplating the stillness of time, percussion duets with heartbeat rhythms, an ocean drum revealing the shores of Lough Foyle, short songs with lyrics inspired by important objects, the haunting sounds of a solo violin, accompanied with the grace of an Irish harp. The soundscape provides the invisible link between the visual and aural elements of this exhibition.



Samhain Group of Writers with author Terry McDonagh

STORIES:

Samhain at the National Museum of Ireland - Country Life

The National Museum of Ireland - Country Life is home to the national collection of objects representing the traditional way of life in Ireland since 1850. Customs, traditions and folklore associated with Samhain and reflected in the Museum's Folklife Collections were explored by a group of writers under the guidance of author Terry McDonagh and the staff of the Museum.

Some of the resulting works were inspired by childhood memories of Samhain and its customs: bobbing for apples, rings in barmbracks, face-shaped turnips, masks, pumpkins and trick or treat. Others were prompted by resurrected tales of strange happenings, fairy interventions, shawl-wrapped keeners, the *cailleach* and troublesome *Pucaí*. Dire warnings suggesting the potential mischief of black sloes, haws and strange lights on bogs also feature.

Samhain can disturb - it can be full of tomfoolery. The group's creative writing reflects their emotional and experiential contemplations on Samhain.

To mark the first day of Samhain, the complete body of written work was performed by the writers on 1 November 2014 at the National Museum of Ireland – Country Life. In this guide, extracts are presented from this body of written work.

“ Open the door
to mischievous figures
calling for food and coins
in masks of cloth...

Anne Coutlee

“ I recall his weekly visit, though his visit at Samhain terrified me. His stories of fairies and siógs had us children petrified...

Pat Mongan

“ My brother and Samhain celebrated their birthdays together. Did he come with siógs or was it the puca?

Ann Cresham

“ “Stay in! Stay in!”
The dead cavort outside.
No place for humans.
Devilment and Diabhalaíocht abound...

Pat O’Hora

“ What will guide us when we slip from summer to winter, from waking to sleeping, from light to dark, from life to death...

Marlene O’Connor

“ Soon we will be seated by the blazing turf fire. The brack will be cut and the one who gets the ring will be teased...

Mary McCombs



“ The trees were bending back and forth in front of me like giant arms ready to scoop me up in a leafy embrace

Maura Flynn

“ The year has secretly turned again.
Conkers seasoned in soot and smoke,
ribald youth, apples, nuts, barmbrack,
ducking, daring, giggling, cheating, fighting...

Paddy Geraghty

“ Every Samhain Great Aunt Gráinne boils potatoes for departed souls; sets them out on best plates with butter, salt and pepper; goes to bed. This year, first time, morning came, potatoes were gone...

Mary Jo Ryan

Turlough Park object image

“ Apples with a choice of flavours
from the orchard, set by our grandfather.
Hazelnuts from haystacks snaffled
basin-ducking and snap-apple.

Noel Burke

“ As a child Hallow E'en was so exciting.
Darkness, eerie feelings and the sense of wonder,
Neighbours children, games, food and fun.
Now it fills me with terror,
mystery is gone, long nights, no sun

Anna Browne

Turlough Park object image

SAMHAIN:

Participants 2014

National Museum of Ireland – Country Life

Turlough Park, Castlebar, Co. Mayo

Anna Browne
Noel Burke
Anne Coutlee
Ann Cresham
Maura Flynn
Paddy Geraghty
Mary McCombs
Pat Mongan
Marlene O'Connor
Pat O'Hora
Mary Jo Ryan Duncan

Ballybeen Women's Centre

Dundonald, Belfast

Jan Aitken
Jean Cross
Lorraine Gordon
Beryl Harvey
Eilish Kelly
Eileen Linder
Victoria Logan
Frances McCoy
Elizabeth McKeown
Linda Stitt

National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology

Kildare Street, Dublin 2

Margaret Clarke
Marguerite Colgan
Anthony Fitzsimons
Esmé Lewis
Brendan MacHugh
Daniel McCarthy
Elizabeth McCloskey
Tomás McDaid
Mo Murray
Elizabeth O'Carroll
John J. O'Carroll
Betty O'Farrell
Maureen Reidy
Rose Smyth
Una Sweeney

SAMHAIN:

Artistic Team

Samhain Artistic Adviser

Elaine Agnew

National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology

Kildare Street, Dublin 2

Elaine Agnew

Composer & Lead Facilitator

Robbie Blake

Facilitator

Nóirín Ní Riain

Guest Facilitator

National Museum of Ireland – Country Life

Turlough Park, Castlebar,
Co. Mayo

Terry McDonagh

Author & Lead Facilitator

Eddie Lenihan

Storyteller & Guest Facilitator

Ballybeen Women's Centre

Dundonald, Belfast

Mervyn Smyth

*Community Photography
Coordinator, Belfast Exposed
& Lead Facilitator*



SAMHAIN:

Acknowledgements

Samhain is a collaborative venture between the National Museum of Ireland, Age & Opportunity and Poetry Ireland. It was funded in 2014 by the Department of Arts, Heritage & the Gaeltacht; National Museum of Ireland; Age & Opportunity; Poetry Ireland and Mayo County Council Arts Office.

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**National Museums of Northern Ireland
- Ulster Museum** www.nmni.com

Music Network www.musicnetwork.ie

Belfast Exposed www.belfastexposed.org

Ballybeen Women's Centre Dundonald, Belfast
www.ballybeenwomenscentre.org

Navan Centre & Fort www.navan.com

Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre, Limavady
www.roevalleyarts.com

Northern Ireland Environment Agency
www.doeni.gov.uk/niea

Richard and Leona Kane, Brighter Gold
Rapeseed Oil

Cia McConway, Archaeologist

Marie Brett, Visual Artist

Professor Gabriel Cooney, Professor of Celtic
Archaeology, University College Dublin

Fiona Gryson, Harpist

Jessie Keenan, Dancer

Alexis Nealon, Audio Artist, Sound Designer/
Programme & Live Engineer

SAMHAIN:

Project Team

National Museum of Ireland

Lorraine Comer, Head of Education, National Museum of Ireland

Siobhán Pierce, Education & Outreach Officer, National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology & Natural History

Aoife O'Toole, Education Assistant, National Museum of Ireland – Country Life

Evan McGuigan, Intern, Education & Outreach Department, National Museum of Ireland – Archaeology

Neasa O'Shea Brady, Intern, Education & Outreach Department, National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts and History

Age & Opportunity

Ciarán McKinney, Head of Arts & Cultural Programme, Age & Opportunity

Poetry Ireland

Maureen Kennelly, Director, Poetry Ireland

Jane O'Hanlon, Education Officer, Poetry Ireland

Artistic Adviser

Elaine Agnew

Project Manager

Aisling Roche



Beaghmore Stone Circles, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone



museum

National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann



*An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta*
*Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht*

**Age &
Opportunity**

Life is for
Living.



Poetry
Ireland
Éigse
Éireann



COMHAIRLE CONTAE MHAIGH EO
MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL



Ulster
Museum
explore/engage/enjoy

N
music
network