



REPORT: Visitor Experience Development (VED) **An Súcán:** *“Claochló sa Teanga is sa Tír / Revolutions in the Irish Language”*

A Museum of the Irish Language and Gaelic Revival,
 Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh:

This report summarizes the layouts, themes, graphic designs, audio-visual exhibits now ready for implementation in the museum.

The delivered VED is the result of much joint work between the Súcán team members, the Mirador Media team and several subject matter experts.

VED funding sources: Údarás na Gaeltachta, Grousemount Windfarm Community Fund

An Súcán is one of a suite of cultural initiatives of Coiste Forbartha Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh, intended to develop our villiage as a cultural tourism destination located on the Slí Gaeltacht Muscraí close to the Wild Atlantic Way tourist route and to Gougane Barra.



Introduction:

The concept of developing a Museum of the Irish Language and Gaelic Revival in Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh began in 2019, when Coiste Forbartha Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh CTR was gifted the funds to purchase the building in which Coláiste na Mumhan was first established in 1904, centrally located next to the church in the centre of the village.

The Súcán museum is one of a suite of cultural development initiatives intended to develop Béal Átha'n Ghaorthaidh as a destination located on the Slí Gaeltacht Muscraí close to the Wild Atlantic Way tourist route and to Gougane Barra.

The museum building itself will be available for community use as well as providing an education resource for local residents and visitors alike.

There exists potential for the development of joint product offerings with Coláiste na Mumhan to increase interest in learning of the Irish language.

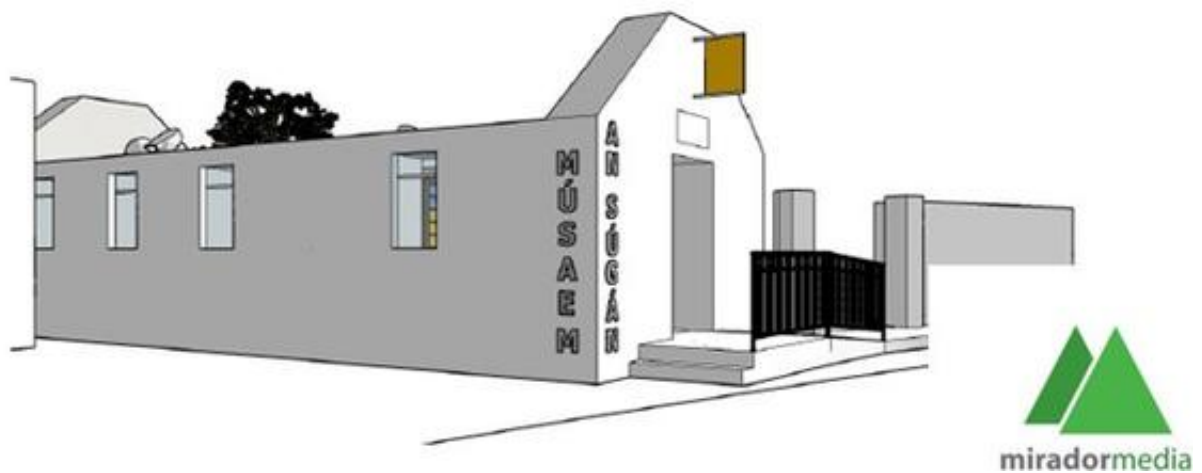
The appendix to this report provides a timeline of events that led to the application for funding for the Visitor Experience Design and its commencement in January 2023.

Visitor Experience Development (VED)

Mirador Media were asked to produce a scoping document for the VED so that the Súcán team could fully understand the intended content of the proposed consulting work. The scoping document was funded through a SICAP Social Enterprise Development Grant.

50% VED funding was secured from Údarás na Gaeltachta and the balance was secured through a multi-annual grant from Grousemount Windfarm Community Fund.

Work on the VED began in January 2023, and was completed in May 2024.



The Visitor Experience Development Delivered.

The delivered VED is the result of much joint work between the Súcán team members, The Mirador Media team and several subject matter experts who offered their advice along the way, including:

Dr Gabriel Doherty, UCC Department of History

Dr Neil Buttimer, Language and Celtic Studies Scholar UCC and other places.

Roy Foster Historian, Professor of Irish History, Oxford University

Diarmaid Ferriter, Professor of Modern History, UCD

Maire McCafferty, UCD PhD Student UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore.

VED Results

The size of the building and the requirement that material be bilingual places constraints on the ambition of the VED. The lack of available physical objects and artefacts was actually a help in this regard. This museum is a “repository of stories”.

On entry to the building, the visitor is greeted by this text (bilingual)

In the early 1900s, Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh became a hotbed of Irish language activity. People came from all over the island and further afield to learn the language. Many of them went on to play a significant role in the struggle for independence and all that followed.

Their personal stories and their thinking are strands in the bigger ‘Súgán’ – the story of the Gaelic Revival, the Irish language past and present and the many cultural elements that were woven together to shape the Ireland we know today.

You are very welcome!

The vivid faces of Béal Átha an Ghaorthaidh are eager to meet you...

Museum Overview:

A short walkthrough video may be downloaded [HERE](#)

(This is a 116MB file. It is recommended to download it before running the video which lasts for approximately 1 minute and 20 seconds)

As the visitor moves through the museum, he/she will encounter various thematic displays, some of which are static and some of which are interactive audio/visual display types. Most are associated with an identified historical figure, associated in some way with the overall themes of the museum.

These major themes are:

“Ancient Faces”

Origins and Connections

Golden Age

Literary Tradition

How to kill a language

“Vivid Faces”

One Village

Language(s) of Rebellion

Vivid Faces

An Fáinne

Imagining the Nation

“Face of the Nation”

Waking Irish

Why does it matter?

Faces in the crowd

Shaping the nation

A language for the Future

General Description of the Building

A “bird’s eye view of the layout is shown below

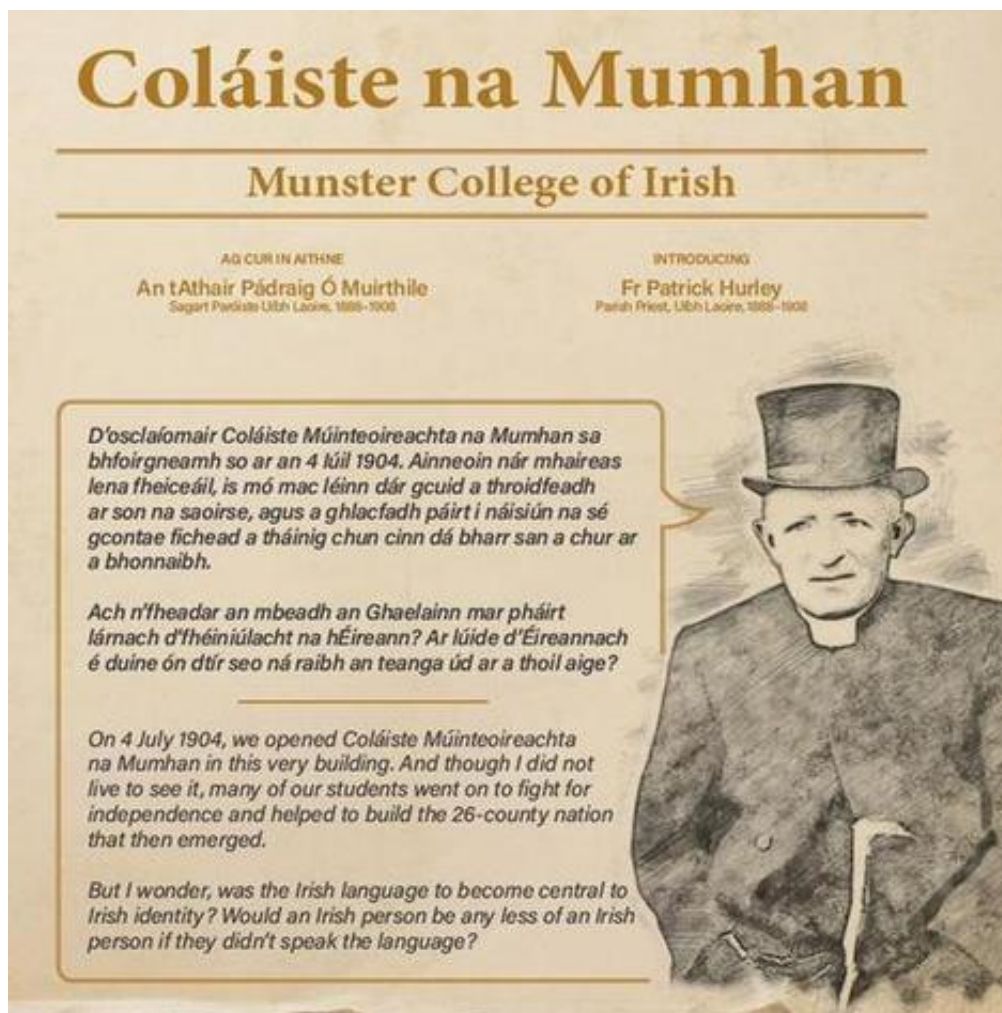


The building is a heritage structure, dating back to the 1820's it was originally the village boys school but was to become Coláiste na Mumhan, opening its doors for the first time on July 4th 1904. The schoolroom appearance will be restored, including wainscoting and a vaulted timber ceiling

Bi-lingual Display Panels :

There are 9 wall mounted display panels in the different zones. Each features a “character presenter” that is an historical personality, chosen because relevance to the presented material, and to Ballingeary and the Coláiste. Where there is extra material to be presented, pull-out “leaves” are provided. QR codes will be added to allow the visitor to access further detail on-line.

An example of a display panel design shown below, including the pull out information leaves.



Đang trưởng thành thì ra 1993, 94, 95
 lại phải đi ăn bụi bặm và chửi rủa
 Ba ở gần nhà rồi đi đâu xa xa đi ăn
 ở đâu xa xa rồi ăn. Bụi bặm ăn thì
 chửi rủa thì ăn và ăn bụi bặm.

[illegible]

This is a photo from the early 1930s showing the building you are now standing in. The Colosseum (outlines the building and) in 1914 it moved to a new site nearby.

[illegible]

Tá mórtaos orm thar aon ní eile as Coláiste Múinteoiríreachta na Mumhan a bhunú. Thuigear-sa féin sa bhliain 1903, agus thuig an tAth. Risteard Ó Dálaigh-saineolaí teangeolaíochta ón Astráil-amhlaidh, ná féadfaí modhanna nua ceannródaíochta chun an Ghaeilinn a mhúineadh a scaipeadh choíche gan múinteoirí a bheadh oile i gceart chuíge. Sin í an uair a d'oscailoim ar an coláiste oiliúna nua do mhúinteoirí i nge Scoll na mBuachaillí. Bhí 60 mac léinn againn an chéad bhliain úd, agus 266 scoláire fé 1910!

What I'm most proud of is the founding of Colaiste Muinteoiríochta na Mumhan. In 1903 Fr Risteard Ó Dálaigh—a linguistics expert from Australia—and I realised that without properly trained instructors, pioneering new methods of teaching Irish would never spread. That's when we opened the teacher-training college here, in the old boys' school. We had 60 students that first year and 266 by 1910!

The full set of display panels can be viewed [HERE](#)

Audio and Visual Exhibits

There are a number of Audio and Audio-Visual Exhibits throughout the Museum some of which are interactive.



The Whispering Tree

Delivered by “Piaras Béaslaí”, the visitor is introduced to the Fáinne and is invited to sit under the tree and listen to various sounds in Irish in poetry song and speech. The related display panel may be viewed on the previous link. Further information [HERE](#)



Timeline of Irish –The Clock

The clock face shows key events in the timeline of Irish. When the clock key turned, it moves the hands of the clock to the next “key event” and triggers a short AV presentation on that period which appears on the clock face itself, now revealed as a small AV screen. More detail of the clock and the related materials can be seen [HERE](#)

The literary Tradition- Interactive Bookcase



A bookcase mounted with a screen which allows visitors to explore the richness and sophistication of the Irish literary tradition from earliest times. The spines of the books will show a range of titles. Information is obtained by pressing some book spines—

An tAth. Peadar O Laoghaire is the “host”.

More detail for the interactive bookcase may be seen [HERE](#)

Each entry also has a “for children” entry to maintain interest of our younger visitors, [HERE](#)

How to kill a Language- The Murder Machine



Pearse referred to the education system as ‘The Murder Machine’, arguing that it stifled creativity as well as the language. The Murder Machine is a metaphor for everything that was done to extinguish Irish over the centuries, from legislation to education to shame. The desk is an old school desk with a hinged lid. When the visitor lifts the lid this reveals a screen inside. This will be a touch screen, activated using a stylus in the form of an old fountain pen sitting in the inkwell on the desk. More information [HERE](#)

Vivid Faces-Wall Mounted Touch Screen



Here we are introduced to the main characters in the story, the ‘Vivid Faces’ of the Gaelic Revival. Visitors can select any of the characters on the screen to reveal more in-depth information about them. *(The image shown here is for illustrative purposes only. The final image will show the characters below)*

1	Piarras Béaslaí	11	Máire Ní Chinnéide
2	Osborn Bergin	12	Shan Ó Cuív
3	Cathal Brugha	13	Douglas Hyde
4	Fr Patrick Hurley	14	Richard Mulcahy
5	An tAth. Gearóid Ó Nualláin	15	Tadhg Ó Scanaill
6	Liam de Róiste	16	Eilín Ní Chróinin
7	Tomás Mac Curtáin	17	James Lucey Ahern
8	George Clancy	18	Fr Augustine
9	Muriel MacSwiney	19	Terence MacSwiney
10	Peadar Ó Laoghaire	20	Thomas MacDonagh

The biographical information of the Vivid Faces presented can be viewed [HERE](#)

The “Guess Who” Game (Flip Down Board Game)

This is designed to highlight 12 key characters of particular importance



locally. A flip down board game based on the classic “Guess Who” is mounted into a period school desk. Beside the game a touch screen allows visitors to discover more about each character. A second chair in front of the desk provides a

place for players to sit opposite each other as they play.

The idea is for one player to select a character while the other tries to guess who it is by asking a series of questions about them. The game is aimed at young and old, and could easily be played by a parent and child as well. The result will be that the players rapidly become acquainted with who’s who and what they did.

Guess Who Characters:

1. Tadhg Ó Murchadha	7. Daniel Corkery
2. Fr Séamus Ó Ceallacháin	8. Patrick Pearse
3. Kathleen Cruise O'Brien	9. Claude Chevasse
4. Peadar Macken	10. Siobhán a' tSagairt
5. Mag Welsh	11. Fr Risteard Ó Dálaigh
6. Kuno Meyer	12. Áine Ní Raghallaigh
	13. Prof Carl Wilhelm von Sydow

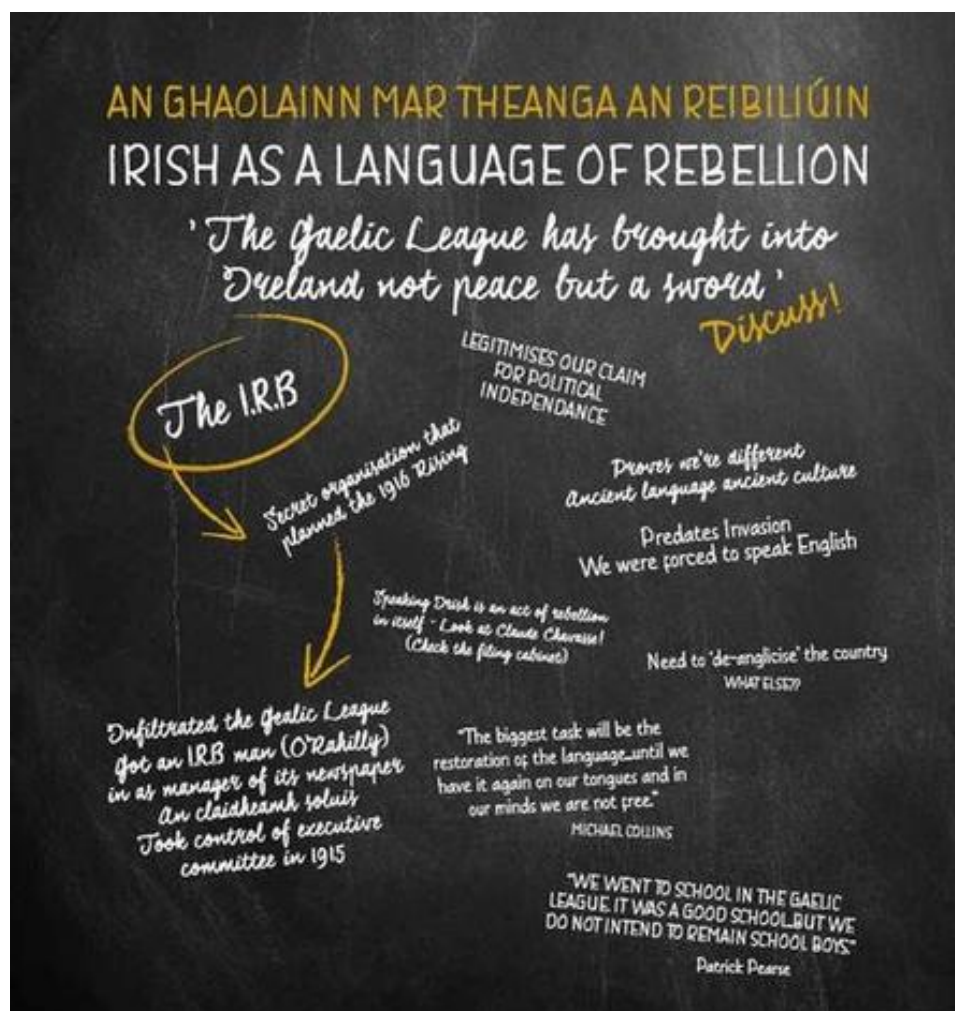
The Guess Who Game cards can be viewed [HERE](#)

The Guess Who Characters Biographical Sketches can be viewed [HERE](#)

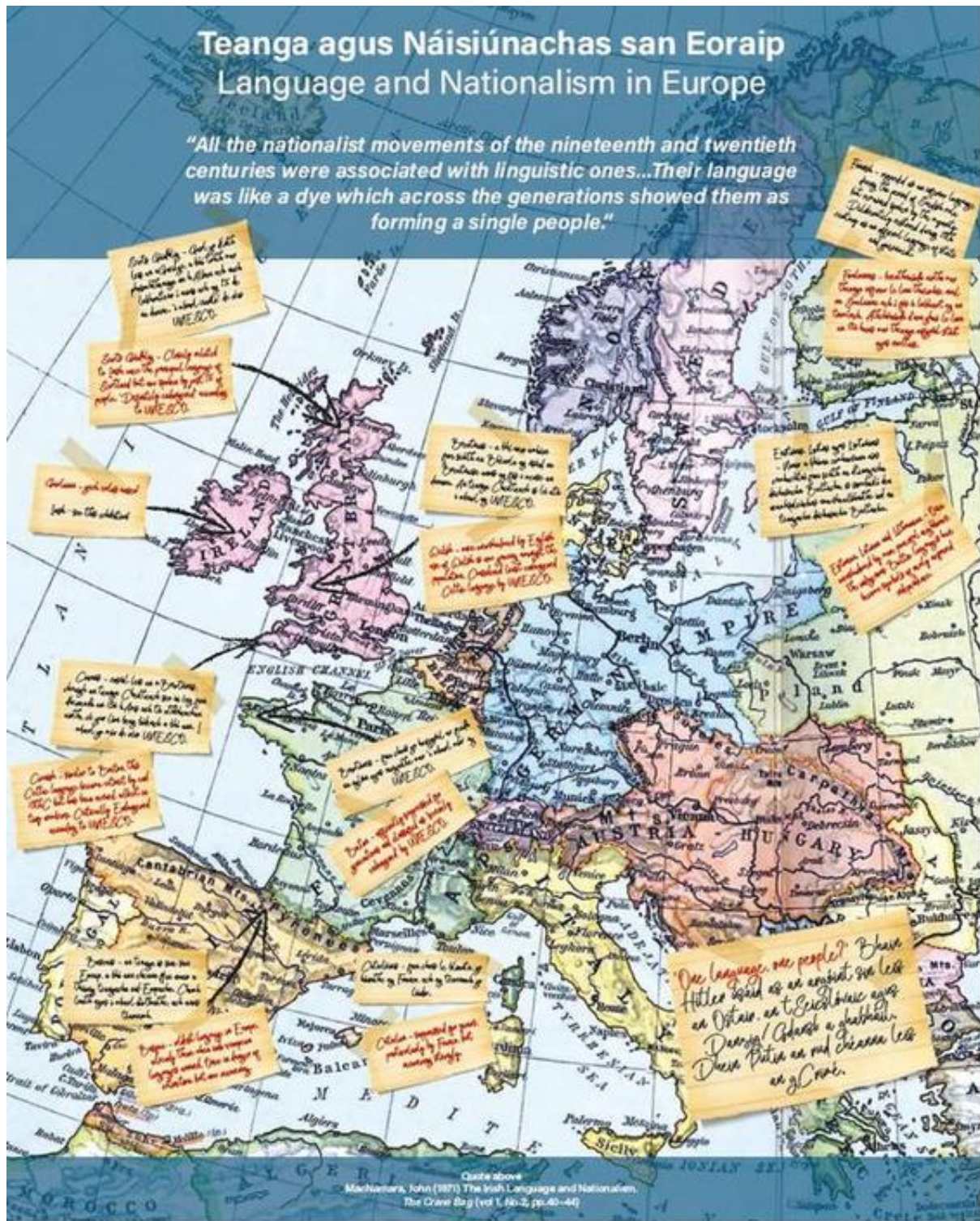
Languages of Rebellion – Blackboard

Presented as if teaching notes for the lecturer. In front of the blackboard the lifelike fibreglass figure of a teacher sits in a chair (emulating the existing photograph of the school room)

Notes on the blackboard describe the use of Irish as a language of rebellion.



How does that compare with the experience elsewhere? Beside the blackboard a wall hanging banner map of Europe/world shows callouts where minority languages played/play similar role.



Filing Cabinet



The filing cabinet allows the visitor to “delve deeper” on a variety of subjects. This will be in the form of simple “dossiers” filed in an old-style filing cabinet and could include anything from printed information, old photographs, extracts from literature or newspaper reproductions. One sheet each, Irish one side, English the other. Included material will be added to and refreshed over time. The initial topical material may be viewed [HERE](#)

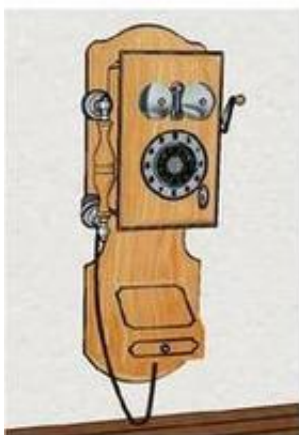
The Telephones

Two wall-mounted telephones provide audio material to which the museum visitor is invited to listen.

Imagining the Nation – vintage phone

The story here is how Gaelic culture/language was used to create an identity for the new state.

An old-fashioned phone, in keeping with the period décor, is attached to the wall. Visitors pick up the phone and dial a number to “eavesdrop” on a



conversation between two characters. Each piece 1-1.5min. Small caption-board type panel beside the phone provides instructions and introduces the characters.

The “Imagining the Nation” characters and conversations may be viewed [HERE](#)

Shaping the Nation – giant mobile with built-in screen

Shaping the Nation looks at the modern State's relationship with the first national language today. In contrast to the vintage phone, the medium here is a modern communication device, an oversized mobile phone with a built-in



screen. This will have a screen on which the conversationalists/imagery appear. All conversations are with people today, not characters from the Gaelic Revival.

The “Shaping the Nation” characters and conversations may be viewed [HERE](#)

End-wall Projections

The end-wall, where the mobile phone is located has a distinctly modern feel.

The visitor may activate a topical theme by selection of a card and placing it in a slot as shown below. When not “activated” by a visitor, the wall cycles through vintage images of Ballingeary with short accompanying captions. The projector is a wall-mounted one, above head height, to avoid visitors blocking the beam. This projector can also be used for meetings and lectures, again projecting onto the end-wall. This interactive is “shared” between the “One Village” theme and “Face of a Nation.”



The current collection of “one village” images may be viewed [HERE](#)

Face of the Nation – Topical Questions

The Themes and Stories outline for “Face of the Nation” identifies a series of “topical questions” to be discussed in this area. Some of these are deliberately provocative but are designed (hopefully) to make people think and maybe talk. The layout of the text will be designed for impact.

The current topical questions scripts (which will be expanded no doubt!) may be viewed [HERE](#)

The Corridor

The small corridor leads to Siobhán’s Kitchen (refer to birds-eye view earlier). The walls here will be pasted with newspaper extracts, adverts for the Coláiste, quotes from the various pamphlets etc. On the left as you climb the steps is a light box. (A disabled stair lift is provided, which also gives access to the disabled toilet facility). The light box introduces the visitor to Siobhan a’ tSagairt and explains that many of the most famous scholars of the day made their way into her kitchen – to where the visitor will go next. The light box image is shown below.

Siobhán's Kitchen (An Cistín)

(Refer to birds-eye view, at the rear of the building)

The visitors have entered the Kitchen and are now in a dimly-lit space (candles/oil lamps), laid out as a traditional kitchen from the 1900s. After a few moments the sound of voices in conversation (in Irish) begins to grow and the (video) figure of Siobhan a' tSagairt gradually appears against the wall to the left of the hearth, chatting animatedly to someone as she knits. She notices the visitors, puts down her knitting, rises and welcomes them in Irish. These scenes are delivered entirely in Irish, with subtitles popping-up to assist the



visitor.

The currently proposed scripts can be seen [HERE](#). (These will change and be expanded over time.)

Conclusion

The Súcán Team are very pleased with the outcome of our joint work with Mirador Media. The material presented here will be added to over the life of the museum. We believe that it will create an innovative, educative and engaging visitor attraction worthy of the Nationally Important Local Story it tells.

Thanks to: The Mirador Team:

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