

Silver Service - Fishing and Marine Narratives



1 Summary

Beginning in January 2017, a project to develop a template to train people to collect stories and narratives from senior residents in North West Connemara, the area where The Connemara Smokehouse Économusée is located, was devised. The partners in the project included the National Museum of Ireland, Teagasc, FORUM Connemara Ltd (LEADER programme Local Action Group) and Aquinas College from Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA. In summary, the National Museum of Ireland, through its Museum of Country Life in the West of Ireland, provided training in April in gathering narratives to 20 American students and 6 local people, who then interviewed 15 senior residents in North West Connemara about their experiences of the sea, either working on it, or living beside it or being influenced by it. The sea was chosen as a topic to provide potential input to the local Économusée, the Connemara Smokehouse, which smokes fish. The stories generated from this successful pilot were transcribed and photos of interviewees and some artefacts were gathered. In a future project, this material, together with additional audio material from Connemara Community Radio (www.connemarafm.com) could form the basis of an exhibition, in the form of a pop-up museum, for the Connemara Smokehouse, the local community and the National Museum of Ireland. The project successfully integrated senior residents and young people around the common cause of uncovering and preserving local heritage. We developed a successful model of how to do this.

Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Background	2
3	Methods.....	2
4	Planning and execution.....	3
5	Results and outputs	4
6	Recommendations	4
7	Contribution to NPA indicators.....	5

2 Background

For the silver service project in CRAFT REACH, Teagasc decided to collect fishing and maritime narrative from senior residents in North West Connemara, the region where the Connemara Smokehouse Économusée is based (see project outline in Attachment 1). To operationalise this project, discussions were held with the National Museum of Ireland (Folklife), Aquinas College, Michigan, USA and FORUM Connemara Ltd, about how the Aquinas College study abroad students, based in Galway from January 2017 to May 2017, might receive training from the National Museum in collecting oral histories and then with the help of FORUM Connemara CLG, identify senior residents of Connemara from whom they would collect narratives about fishing and maritime life. The idea was that these narratives and/or photos of artefacts and/or artefacts themselves, might eventually, in another project, become the basis for a pop-up museum to exhibit at the Connemara Smokehouse Économusée, elsewhere in the local community and/or at the National Museum of Ireland, (Folklife).

In total, 20 United States students and 2 United States college faculty received training. In addition, 6 local community members undertook the training. The trained personnel interviewed 15 local seniors and took some photographs both of people and artefacts. Narratives were transcribed.

3 Methods

Training in oral history collection included 1) a visit to an exhibition and explanation of fishing and maritime artefacts at the National Museum of Ireland (Folklife) in Castlebar, Co. Mayo; 2) a workshop, at the National Museum, with a local heritage group from Clarinbridge, East County Galway, who had collected fishing narratives from their community and 3) customised training on oral history collection, ethics, interviewing techniques and use of recording equipment was provided via the National Museum of Ireland to 20 students and 2 faculty from Aquinas College, Michigan during their semester-long Ireland Study Abroad Programme, in Tullycross, Connemara. Six local community members with an interest in local heritage also received training.

Senior residents who we thought might engage with the project were identified through discussions with local support groups such as FORUM Connemara GLG and Ballinakill Active Age Group, and local development organisations such as Connemara West plc.

4 Planning and execution

After the initial training and workshop at the National Museum of Ireland (Folklife), Castlebar, Co. Mayo (see photo below) the narrative gatherers received customised oral history gathering and recording training (see training schedule in Attachment 2) in Tullycross and Letterfrack villages in North Connemara. Subsequently, the young people carried out the interviews in teams of 2. This was considered desirable so that one person could concentrate on recording the interview while the other could focus on listening to the interviewee. Interviews were carried out at a location convenient to the person being interviewed. For more elderly people, this was at their weekly Active Age Club meeting. Here also, among familiar faces, the interviewees felt more comfortable. Others were interviewed at their places of work, at home or, at the campus in Tullycross where the students were staying. All interviewees signed an interview consent form (see Attachment 3).

Photo: Aquinas College students & Professors, Teagasc staff and National Museum personnel at the National Museum of Ireland, (Folklife) to begin their oral history training



The interviews were transcribed. Subsequently, the students were divided into groups of 4 and gave presentations on their experience of collecting narratives, and the content of those narratives, as part of their Research Module in their Irish Studies Programme. The students were assessed on the presentations.

It was not possible within the CRAFT REACH project to develop the pop-up museum and make the narratives available to the community, the National Museum and the Connemara Smokehouse. Neither was it possible to collate the complementary audio material available from Connemara Community Radio. Teagasc is working to see how these follow on elements might be progressed.

5 Results and outputs

In total, 20 United States students and 2 United States college faculty received training. In addition, 6 local community members undertook the training. The trained personnel interviewed 15 local seniors and took some photographs both of people and artefacts. Narratives were transcribed. The Audio files were recorded. Topics included working as a fisherman or in aquaculture; recipes; bad storms and rough weather; folklore associated with the sea; living beside the sea. This material could form the basis for an exhibition in the future, in the form of a pop-up museum, at the artisan's premises (in this case Connemara Smokehouse) and/or on Connemara West website, heritage section/or other local heritage websites, and/or at the National Museum of Ireland, (Folklife), Castlebar. In addition, elements of the narratives could become part of the learning experience for visitors to the marine-focused Économusée, The Connemara Smokehouse (www.smokehouse.ie)

Critically, the model developed by Teagasc is replicable for other artisans and other groups of seniors and young people, both throughout Ireland and elsewhere. This was a key Teagasc objective in choosing what Silver Service project to develop. The model is based on collaboration between artisans, State organisations, local development organisations and higher education institutes; it is a quadruple helix model of innovation focused at a very local level.

6 Recommendations

There are 2 specific recommendations and 1 general recommendation about how the results of this service could be used in the future.

Specific recommendations

- 1) The narrative material gathered through this project could form the basis for an exhibition in the future, in the form of a pop-up museum, at the artisan's premises (in this case Connemara Smokehouse) and/or on Connemara West website, heritage section/or other local heritage websites, and/or at the National Museum of Ireland, (Folklife), Castlebar.
- 2) In addition, elements of the narratives could become part of the contextual story for the marine-focused Économusée, Connemara Smokehouse.

General recommendation

- 1) The model of integrating seniors and young people in a community through the collection of narratives should be used in other communities and focused on other artisan's contexts. Importantly, the quadruple helix model of innovation identified here shows what is possible at a very local level when organisations with different capabilities cooperate. In addition, our experience is that the intervention doesn't have to be resource intensive.

7 Contribution to NPA indicators

This service used the existence of an artisan craft business as a driver for other heritage and culture related activities in the local community. Importantly, the service stimulated inter-generational engagement between senior residents in the community and younger people,

Through collaboration among several State organisations (National Museum of Ireland; Teagasc), local development groups (FORUM Connemara CLG; Connemara West plc) and a third level education institute (Aquinas College, Michigan, USA), a unique aspect of local heritage was captured. The service is an example of how the goals of disparate local actors can be aligned to support a creative rural economy, drawing on their unique capabilities to underpin a cultural and economic impact on the local community.

This service targeted both seniors and young people. Through its actions, the service promoted individual and community wellbeing, both by the preservation of local narratives, but also by connecting members of the community who might not otherwise enjoy much interaction.

The narrative collection training imparted critical life skills to young people; the skill of listening to, and understanding, what someone else is saying. Of trying to understand another person's life experience from their perspective. For the seniors, recalling and sharing their stories confirmed the importance of their individual experiences and narratives as an essential element of the shared culture of the community.

The service confirmed the idea that local narratives, which are so important in defining and verbalising the identity of a community, also have the potential to add economic value to artisan production by forming the basis of an exhibition for the Connemara Smokehouse, the local community and the National Museum of Ireland.

Attachment 1: Project Outline



Collecting and Presenting Narratives about Fishing and Maritime Living in North West Connemara

Objective: To collect narratives and stories from senior residents in North West Connemara about all aspects of fishing (buying, selling, catching, curing/preserving; fishing practices & technologies; role of fish in community life) and relationship with the sea (fishing; recreational use; folklore; tragedy and celebration).

Participants: Teagasc; National Museum of Ireland-Country Life; Aquinas College, Michigan; Connemara Smokehouse; FORUM Connemara Ltd.

Rationale: CRAFT REACH is an EU Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme-funded project running from 2015 to 2020 in Ireland's Atlantic Counties and linking with 8 Northern European Countries. Through the application of the Economusée model (see www.economusee.eu) the project supports artisan producers to create a learning environment for visitors to their premises. Ways in which the artisans can promote development in their localities are also supported. Particular attention is paid to how the project can utilise the large resource of knowledge and experience to be found in the retired part of the population in local communities, especially how to mobilize, deploy, engage and recover narratives and information relevant to the artisan producer from senior residents. In collecting these stories & narratives and making them accessible, an immeasurable contribution is made to the authenticity of the artisan businesses and to local heritage. In this sub project, CRAFT REACH would like to find ways to connect such narratives from seniors in North West Connemara with relevant artisan producers and/or heritage outlets in the region.

Methodology:

- Teagasc/Aquinas College/Connemara Smokehouse map out a plan with timeframes outlining a general theme of the research and send to National Museum of Country Life
- National Museum of Country Life will review existing material (based on the research theme) that might be of use to the project by way of background research.
- National Museum of Country Life will provide a training day for the Aquinas Students. Training will be a specifically devised programme on collecting oral history. The training will include:
 1. Formulation of the questions (usually 6-10 questions)
 2. Developing an informed consent sheet
 3. Completion of the consent form
 4. Identifying participants
 5. How to collect the information
 6. Video recording some of the participants in the oral history project (possibly returning to some of the more interesting participants to video them)
- The interviews will be transcribed.

Deliverables:

- Transcribed Narratives; Photos; Videos
- Exhibition of project derived material at Connemara Smokehouse and/or on Connemara West website, heritage section/or other local heritage website
- Informing the labelling of exhibits in the Connemara Smokehouse Economusée,

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Attachment 2: Oral History Training Schedule

1:00	Dave Collins introduction	
1:15	Training 'Heads up'	Oral History Ethics Interviewee welfare Interviewing Methodology Equipment Interviewing practice /Recording Review
1:30	Oral History Ethics and Context Interviewee welfare Q&A	
2:00	Interviewing Methodology Q&A	Research Questions Do's and don'ts Timeline Aide Memoire Supplimentary/Field Notes Transcription
3:00	BREAK	
3:15	Equipment/Recording Q&A	Technicalities: File types Operation Volume Positioning
3:45	Project	Discussion
4.00	Review	

Attachment 3: Interview Consent Form



Interview Consent Form

Fishing and Maritime Living in North West Connemara

Our goal is to collect memories and stories relating to the fishing and the marine in North West Connemara. The interviews will contribute first and foremost to the deliverables for the Craft Reach Project funded by the EU-Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme, and lead in Ireland by Teagasc. The interviews will also contribute to an exhibition that might be held at various locations including, but not only, Tullycross, Renvyle; Kylemore Abbey; the Connemara Smokehouse and the National Museum of Ireland - Country Life. The interviews might also contribute to an academic paper written by Bridin McIntyre and Kevin Heanue from Teagasc.

Should you agree to participate in this project, your recorded interview will be transcribed and stored with Bridin McIntyre in Teagasc for the duration of the project. All interviews will be maintained in a confidential manner, and will only be accessed by Teagasc staff, the transcription company used to type out the transcripts, and the exhibition design company. We will give you a typed copy of the interview (the transcript) to check after the interview, and will send you a copy of the interview recording and transcript for your own use.

On the close of the Craft Reach project and the exhibition, your interview, transcription and photograph will be deposited in the archives of the National Museum, and copies lodged with the Teagasc Archives and the Digital Repository of Ireland of Ireland, where they may be accessed and used by other researchers in the future.

You retain ownership of your words, but by signing this form, you grant Teagasc and the National Museum of Ireland permission to reproduce all or part of the final transcript/recordings in the following ways:

	Interview	Photograph
<input type="checkbox"/> Future publications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Public talks and lectures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Exhibitions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Print media, radio or television	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> The internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

How would you like to be identified? (please choose one of the following only):

- Full name and area (e.g. Mary Murphy, Castlebar)
- Partially anonymous (e.g. Mary, Mayo)