

newtownhowwhatwhere?

a project by Alan Phelan

This project is a living and dynamic archive. It stems from a dialogue that is rooted in the memories, stories and ideas of the history of the area in Galway city once called St Stephen's Island but is now known by several different names - Newtownsmith, Woodquay, Waterside or Barracalla.



This dialogue began as a way of negotiating knowledge of the area which was the result of archive research completed for the Erasmus Smith Trust (Erasmus Smith is pictured left, aged 79). This is an educational trust founded in the mid 17th century that was funded by rentals from confiscated lands after the Cromwell's campaign. The Trust no longer owns land in the area and the memory and understanding of this odd absentee landlord is quite distant. What remains is a deep local passion for history and archived information that has never been made publicly available.



The process began as a series of public meetings that culminated in a public research room which was presented at the Tulca Visual Arts Festival at the Galway Arts Centre in October 2003. Several volumes of print-outs from the archive database were presented containing summaries and transcriptions of records from the Galway area that dated back to the 1660's. These were made available and visitors who were asked to make notes on forms provided of records that were of interest or with questions related to certain records. These notes were used as a way of finding participants for the second stage of the project and also as a way of determining areas of interest from over a thousand archive database records.

Right: A map from 'A survey of the Estate of the Right and Honble and Honble the Governors of the Schools founded by Erasmus Smith Esquire. In the Parish of St. Nicholas and East Liberties of Galway, by Thomas Sherrard'. Containing 20 maps with annotations listing tenants and plot size – the map here is a general survey of Newtown Smith, 1785.

This was an art project in reverse in that it began with a public presentation or exhibition with no final artwork until now. After this development phase of the project it progressed towards this web site with the video taping of short interviews with thirty-six individuals associated with



Left: The Research Room at Galway Arts Centre



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the area. Some were from the original meetings but many were gathered through networks of families and friends who are or who have lived and worked in the area.

The work is multifaceted and utilises various multimedia technologies to dynamically relate to over 1,000 records culled from the Erasmus Smith Trust Archive database with the video interviews. The additional short video "Republic of Woodquay" was conceived of and made with several of the interviewees in response to the issues that arose during the interviews.



Top, right and below: The Research Room at Galway Arts Centre

A gallery presentation of the work is also planned at the Galway Arts Centre in October 2004 during the Tulca Visual Arts Festival which will exhibit the video clips as well as the web site.



About the Artist

Alan Phelan has worked in a variety of media and situations since completing his studies in photography at RIT, New York in 1996. He has collaborated with several artists, professionals and communities on artworks, curatorial and writing projects. Recently he has drawn on various museum and archive work experiences to apply these methodologies and structures areas to art projects. This has included the creation of personalised interpretative strategies, fabricated biographies, and recycling historical or factual information to create new relational dynamics.

For more info check www.alanphelan.com
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Left: Galway Grammar School, 1659-1958. Plan for the school house, showing front elevation, by Richard Morrison, architect.

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credits

Thanks

There were an enormous amount of people who helped this project along over the last year and a half. Below are credits for various parts of the production and hopefully too many people have not been left out. An enormous thanks must go to Sheila Gallagher whose support, enthusiasm and support for the project and her family who have endured films crews, meetings and other nuisances. Thanks Bú, Mary, Clare and Bernard.

Video Interviewees:

Derry Buckley, Maureen Burke, Maeve Bryan, Cáit Conor, Frank Costello, Andy Feeney, David Flanagan, Freda Flanagan, Sheila Flanagan, Frank Gallagher, Sheila Gallagher, Sheila Jordan, Tom Joyce, Garry Kelly, Owen Kennedy, Zaizudoin Hamid, Jimmy Hegarty, Claire Howley, Fr. Michael Holland, Leslie Lyons, Jim Maxwell, Bú Nally, Martin McGagh, Eileen Naughten, Mary Francis Ní Cognaile, Siobhain Ní Ghallehoir, Claire Maloney-Kennedy, Billy Murray, Jo O'Conner, Maureen Parslow, Alan Phelan, Martina Quinn, Malachy Roche, Jackie Uí Chionna, Marese Walsh, Martina Walsh.

Thanks also to:

Michaele Catayan, Mary Conroy, Anthony Cullinane, John Dolan, Tess Emerson, Suzanne Fared, Marcella Finerty, Una Fleming, Brendan Holland, Frank Kavanagh, Noel Kelly, Aidan King, Elaine King, Lex, Wendy Lynch, Ann Marshall, Colm O'Donnellan, Owen O'Malley, Jeff Smyth.

For further information:

A book has recently been published by the Coracle Press titled "Faithful to Our Trust, a History of the Erasmus Smith Trust and the High School, Dublin", written by W.J.R. Wallace.

Available by contacting:

email: archives@highschooldublin.com

telephone: +353 1 492 2611 x131

Information also available at:

www.highschooldublin.com/erasmus.htm

Concieved and Directed - Alan Phelan

Video Production:

Dig Productions

Producer - Garry Kelly

Lighting Camera - Martin McGagh

Sound - Trevor McKenna

Stills - Ian Davis and Paul Davis

Props - Sheila Flanagan

Locations - Sheila Gallagher

Equipment - Galway Film Centre - Shea Dooher

Editor - John Murphy

Bags - Brando Design

Thanks also to Dave Hegarty

Copyright Clearance

MCPS for Bedrich Smetana, "Ma Vlast", performed by the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, 1959

Web Site Production

Nexus451 www.nexus451.com

Project Manager - Niall Curran

Database Development - Vincent Smyth

Graphics - Mick O'Dwyer

Flash & Video Interface Development -

Adam Clare

Erasmus Smith Trust

Thanks for various permissions granted by the Board of Governors of the Schools founded by Erasmus Smith Esq.

Administrator - John Davis

Governor - Susan Parkes

Historian - Ronnie Wallace

Funding

This project is funded by the Department of Communications, Marine, and Natural Resources Commission for an Artwork in Connection with the Rollout of Broadband Communications Infrastructure.

Kieran Duffy, Bill Morrissey, Éanna Ó

Conghaile, Sabine Gunther

The Galway Arts Centre

Michael Dempsey, Thomás Hardiman, Siobhán Singleton