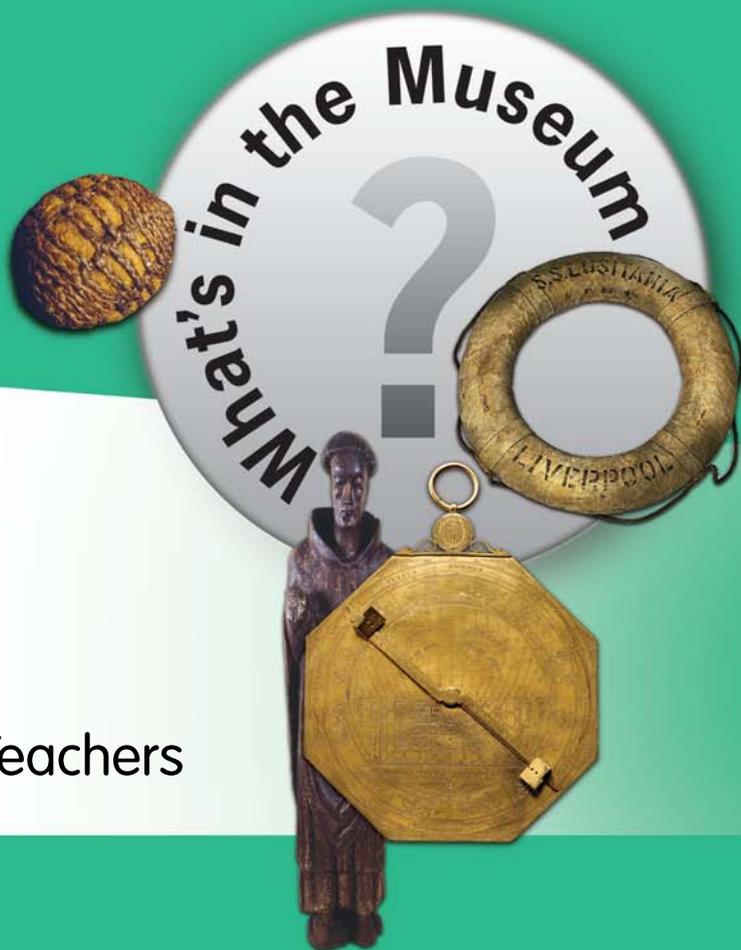


**'What's in the Museum?'**  
Resource Pack for Primary Teachers



Education & Outreach Department © 2010

**museum**

National Museum of Ireland  
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

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## INTRODUCTION

The **'What's in the Museum?'** introductory pack is for Primary teachers who wish to bring their students on a self-directed visit to the National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts and History.

The pack was developed by the Education and Outreach staff. Their experience in how students learn in the Museum is the basis for the information in the pack.

### The pack aims to:

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1. Provide teachers with essential resources and information to enable them introduce the Museum and its collections of material heritage to their students.
2. Enable teachers to introduce key concepts, for example:
  - Why do people and museums collect?
  - What can be learned from objects as visual sources of evidence?
  - What are the other functions of museums? For example, museums collect, store and conserve collections. They also put collections on display, and interpret and communicate those collections through exhibitions and learning programmes.
3. Give practical advice on bringing groups around the Museum:
  - How to make the most of your Museum visit
  - What to do when you are at the Museum
  - How to encourage students to look, observe, describe and analyse objects
4. Provide information on 10 artefacts in two galleries
  - Visual information
  - Social, cultural and historical contexts
  - Glossary of relevant terms and further reading and resources section

## CURRICULUM LINKS

The key curriculum links the teacher can make on a museum visit using the **'What's in the Museum?'** resource pack are within the History curriculum; however, there are important opportunities to make links across a range of curricula and use the visit as a way of integrating a range of subjects:

### SESE History

- Working as an Historian
- Time and Chronology
- Using Evidence
- Communication
- Continuity and Change over Time
- Life Society Work and Culture

Other subject links:

### SESE Geography

- A sense of space and place
- Human and natural environments

### English

- Cognitive skills: speaking and listening skills

### Visual Arts

- Looking at and responding to art
- Drawing
- Construction
- Fabric and Fibre

### Mathematics

- Shape and Space
- Numbers and Measures

### SPHE

- Myself and the wider world: developing citizenship



## BEFORE YOUR VISIT

1. If you can, try to visit the Museum before bringing your group. Feedback received from teachers shows that this can make a huge difference to how groups experience the Museum and how important advance preparation can be. An advance visit will also familiarise you with the gallery layout and other facilities.

If it is not possible to visit in advance, it is strongly recommended to visit the Museum's website.

Suggested pages include:

### **Curator's Choice and Out of Storage**

<http://www.museum.ie/en/exhibition/curators-choice.aspx>

<http://www.museum.ie/en/exhibition/list/out-of-storage.aspx>

### **Explore and Learn**

<http://www.museum.ie/en/list/schools-and-colleges-arts-history.aspx>

### **Conservation**

<http://www.museum.ie/en/list/studios.aspx>

2. Book your visit through the Education & Outreach Department well in advance. We cannot guarantee that you will have access to galleries if you do not book in advance.
3. Have a classroom discussion about the visit. Here are suggested questions/ topics for discussion:

### **Where are we going?**

Show your students images of the National Museum of Ireland, Decorative Arts and History Collins Barracks. Explain what kind of museum it is – use the background and historical information contained in this pack and other information is available either through a pre-visit to the museum or from the museum's website.

### **Why are we going?**

Feedback from teachers shows that students who understand why they are visiting the Museum, or who recognise that there is a purpose to their visit, respond better and have a more meaningful learning experience. For example, is the visit a fact-finding exercise to build on back in the classroom? Is it a reward for hard work on a particular project in school?

### **What do museums do? What do students think about when they think about museums?**

Ask the question in advance of the visit. Record the students' answers. Words like 'old', 'boring', 'dark' and 'rare' might be used. Compare these with a post-visit discussion – have they changed their views about museums?

### **Why do people collect? Why do museums collect?**

A discussion about collecting and collections can be very constructive – asking the students about their own collections is a good starting point in talking about national collections and why it is important for us as a nation to collect artefacts that relate to Irish history and heritage. Encourage students to think about family collections, for example, photographs, mementos, holiday souvenirs and 'rite of passage' objects, for example, communion rosary beads or a birthday present.



Primary School students in the 'Out of Storage' Gallery



## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR MUSEUM VISIT

### Practical issues

- Teachers must book self-directed visits through the Education & Outreach Department. Booked groups will have precedence over groups who arrive unannounced.
- Think about how long the Museum visit should be – we recommend that the optimum time for the self-directed gallery session is 45 minutes to 1 hour maximum. You can spend time afterwards in some of the other galleries in the Museum or in Clarke Square.
- Structure the time you have available. As with a normal lesson, be clear about the intended learning outcomes and organise the visit into a beginning, middle and end.
- The Museum asks that a minimum ratio of one adult per 15 students is adhered to and we recommend this as best practice for all school group visits.
- If you are visiting with more than 15 students, we ask that you split your class into two smaller groups accompanied by one adult minimum per group and one group can start in 'Curator's Choice', while the other group starts in 'Out of Storage' swapping rooms at an agreed time during the session.
- When you arrive at the Museum, please report to the main reception and present your Booking Confirmation Form. In the event that you do not report to reception, other booked groups may get precedence over your group when entering the galleries. Not reporting to reception is also in contravention of the Museum's Child Protection Policy. For more on this policy go to:  
<http://www.museum.ie/en/list/policies.aspx>
- There is limited storage for coats and bags at the Museum reception area, so large groups are advised to bring as little as possible with them into the Museum. Groups arriving by bus should store bags and coats on the bus. There is a lunch room that can be booked through the Bookings Office, where bags and coats can also be stored while in the Museum.
- Clipboards for notes and drawing can be provided only if they are requested in advance when booking the visit. Remember to provide students with pencils and notepads if you wish them to take notes during the visit.
- Plans of the galleries 'Curator's Choice' and 'Out of Storage' are included in this pack.

## Making the most of your Museum visit

### Getting Started

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- A factsheet on Collins Barracks is included in the pack. We recommend you start your visit in Clarke Square and talk about the building and its history. If the weather is not good you might prefer to start in the first gallery, 'Curator's Choice', which is on the first floor.
- Once in the gallery 'Curator's Choice', gather your group of students in the space near the entrance, where you will find yourselves next to the St Molaise statue and the Fleetwood Cabinet.
- There is space here for a small group to sit on the floor, which will help to focus the group. There are similar spaces throughout each of the galleries to sit and have a discussion.
- When you are in the galleries, please use them as your temporary 'classroom', for example, ask questions, have discussions, encourage plenty of interaction. Be aware that it is a public space and you may be sharing it with other members of the public. It is our experience that public visitors enjoy encountering groups in the galleries. Please respect other visitors' right to enjoy and share the space with you.



## Making the most of your Museum visit

### What to do in the Galleries

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- As stated in Curriculum Links, the visit provides great opportunities to make links across a range of curricula and use the visit as a way of integrating a range of subjects.
- A child-centred approach, using the 'spiral' curriculum and 'scaffolding' methodologies - where students are encouraged to make connections between their own collections and those that they see on display - work best in the gallery context. Students can be encouraged to build on prior knowledge through observation, discussion, listening, analysing and coming to decisions as a group.
- Encourage students to make links between the objects on display to things that they themselves own, for example, the Worth Gown is a formal dress for special occasions; what do they like to wear on special occasions?
- Each of the 10 factsheets gives a range of suggested questions you can ask students, drawing on their observational imaginative and empathetic skills as well as prior knowledge.
- Encourage your students to understand the concept of multiple views or truths; students can learn that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to some questions and that the same sources can be interpreted in different ways.
- Encourage your students to understand that objects can reveal stories – through looking at an object we can find out:
  - How old it might be**
  - What materials were used in its construction**
  - What was it used for**
  - Who, or what kind of person might have owned it**
- The Primary Curriculum SESE History Teachers Guidelines provides useful information on learning from artefacts:  
[http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary\\_School\\_Curriculum/Social\\_Environmental\\_and\\_Scientific\\_Education\\_SESE\\_/History/History\\_Teacher\\_Guidelines/Approaches\\_and\\_methodologies/Using\\_artefacts/](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/en/Primary_School_Curriculum/Social_Environmental_and_Scientific_Education_SESE_/History/History_Teacher_Guidelines/Approaches_and_methodologies/Using_artefacts/)
- Allow the tour to be interactive and participative – before giving your students all the facts about an object, ask them questions first.
- It can be great fun for students to guess what an object might have been used for, or what kind of person might have owned it, before providing them with the correct information. You could even play a game with your group, asking them to 'vote' following a series of guesses, on the answer they think is the right one – to do this however, ensure they can't see the panels or labels which would give this away!

## A Brief History of Collins Barracks

- Originally named the 'Barracks, Dublin', it was the first purpose built barracks in Ireland and Britain. Unlike most barracks, it was designed to house both cavalry (soldiers who fight on horseback) and infantry (foot soldiers) regiments.
- It was first occupied in 1707.
- By 1710 there was accommodation for 1,500 soldiers and stables for 150 horses.
- The Barracks was a huge complex of 17 acres (just under 8 hectares) with four squares.

### The Barracks in the 19th century

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- During the 19th century the 'Royal Barracks', as it was now called, underwent substantial changes. Large arch gateways and stone guardhouses were built at the corners.
- The river Liffey was aligned in 1830 and the spacious area in front of the barracks became a drilling (training) ground.
- A parliamentary report in 1880 found that there was a higher death rate for people living in the Barracks than for those living outside it. The report found that that 1% of the people living at the Royal Barracks died in a single year.
- Between January 1879 and October 1887 there were several outbreaks of typhoid in the barracks. Typhoid is a deadly disease spread by unclean water.
- In 1887 a parliamentary enquiry recommended demolishing some of the buildings.
- In the late 19th century sanitation was improved. A canteen and cook houses were built on site and each soldier now slept in a single iron bed.
- Many soldiers who were stationed at the Royal Barracks took part in wars that were led by the British Empire, such as the Crimean War (1853-56), Queen Victoria's colonial wars in India, South Africa and Egypt and World War One (1914-1918).

### The Barracks in the 20th century

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- Irish independence in 1922 meant that the British Army left the Barracks. In December 1922 the Barracks was handed over to the Irish Free State Army under the command of General Richard Mulcahy.
- It was no longer known as 'Royal Barracks' but renamed after the former commander-in-chief of the Irish Army, Michael Collins, who was killed in August of 1922.
- Throughout the following decades Collins Barracks was used by the Free State Army and, until 1997, by the Irish Defence Forces.

## A Brief History of Collins Barracks

### Events in Focus 1798 Rebellion

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- During the 1798 rebellion executions were carried out at the Barracks (and at Arbour Hill, which is situated behind the Barracks).
- Rebels were held in the old provost prison (which it is said was situated in the north east corner of Clarke Square, today the extension building featuring the 'Soldiers & Chiefs' galleries).
- One of the prisoners was Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763–1798) who was detained here in November 1798 and sentenced to death by hanging after being charged with treason. Before the sentence was carried out Wolfe Tone died in his cell on the 19th of November from a neck wound.

### Easter Rising 1916

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- During the Easter Rising in 1916, the 10th Royal Irish Fusiliers, stationed at the Royal Barracks, were sent out to fight the insurgents who were positioned in the General Post Office and other key locations in Dublin city centre. One of the first battles of Easter 1916 took place in front of the Barracks.
- Following the surrender, the 2nd Sherwood Foresters from this Barracks supplied the guards to escort the leaders of the Rising to and from the military courts.
- After the Rising, fourteen of the leaders were executed at Kilmainham Gaol and anonymously buried in Arbour Hill. Today, there is a memorial on this site, which is open to the public.

You will find more information on the history of the Barracks and the life of the soldiers in the 'Barracks Life Room'. This room also provides computer interactives, reconstructions and replica uniforms to try on.



Top image: Detail from the plan of the city of Dublin by John Roque, 1756.  
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Bottom image: A view of the Barracks of Dublin, 1796 by James Malton.  
Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



## GALLERY OVERVIEW

### 'CURATOR'S CHOICE'

- The gallery displays 25 objects which have been chosen by different curators as their own personal favourites for both personal and historical reasons.
- These artefacts relate to the political, social and economic history of Ireland, or are associated with particular figures in Irish history.
- One of the themes of the Gallery is that every object can tell a story, or several stories and that through these stories, objects document our history.
- Curators are the people in the Museum who acquire objects and select objects for exhibition. The reasons for their choices are explained in direct quotes, which you can read on the graphic panels.
- Curators also devise and plan exhibitions, research the artefacts in their collections, work with conservators to care for their collections and work with museum educators to communicate the collections to the public.
- Museum conservators are responsible for the long term care of the collections. Conservators ensure that the collections on display and in stores are kept in a safe condition; they treat objects to prevent further damage and they investigate objects to find out how they were made, for example through microscopic examination or x-ray.

Themes that you can explore in this gallery with students are:

- The story or stories that objects can tell
- How we can 'read' or deconstruct an object to find out its history
- How objects end up in museums
- What do museums do?
- What is a curator?
- The gallery can also stimulate discussion on personal collections or favourite or important objects. Students could be asked to talk about an object they own that they feel tells a story about them. For example, they might own objects that mark important events or milestones such as an important birthday, the passing of an exam or participation in a competition, or a wedding.

Gallery Overview  
**'Curator's Choice'**

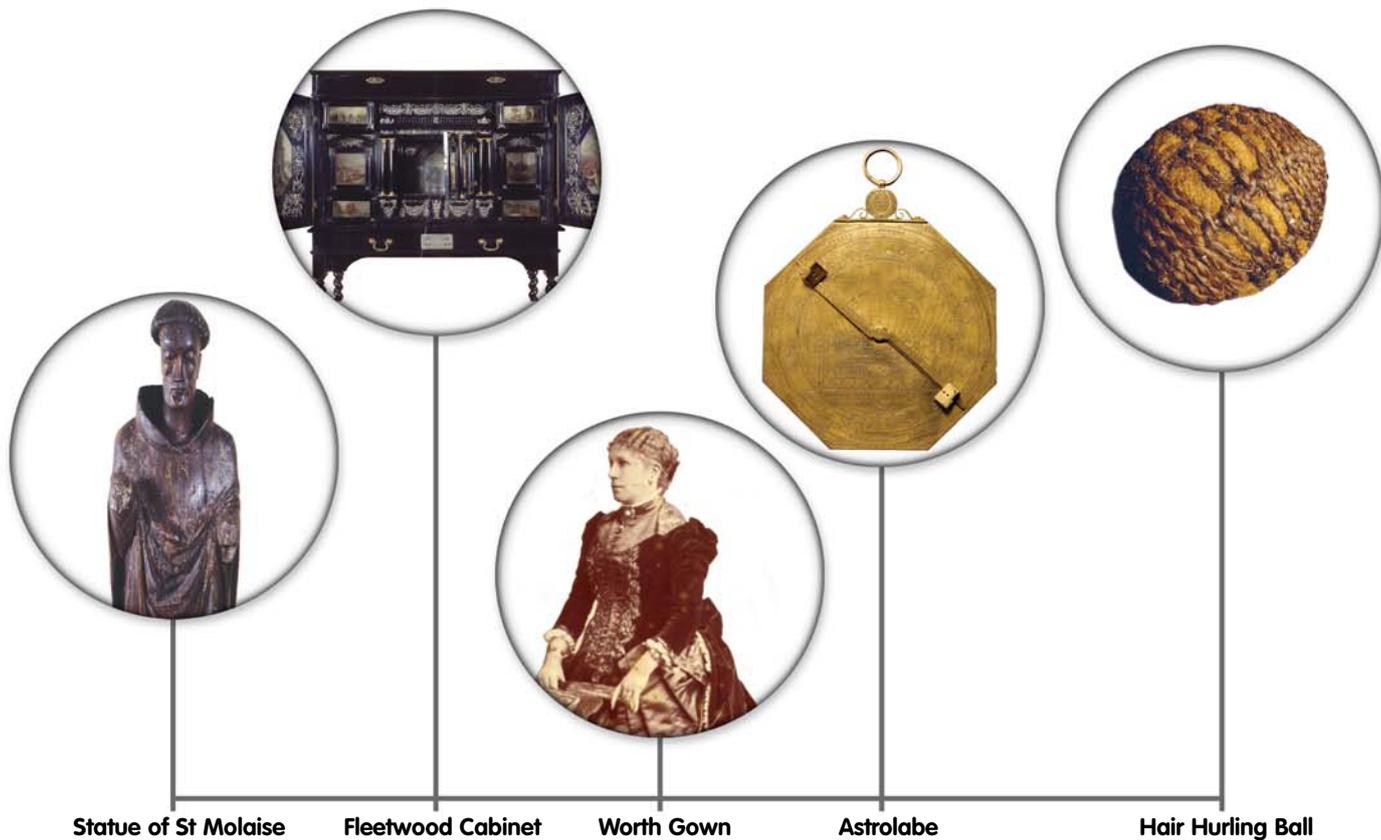
At the Museum you can also:

Book the workshop, **'If Things Could Talk...'**

This workshop aims to explore the purpose of museums, the role of the curator and the meanings that we invest in objects.

For more information go to the website-

<http://www.museum.ie/en/list/schools-and-colleges-arts-history.aspx>



## GALLERY OVERVIEW

### 'OUT OF STORAGE'

- This exhibition is intended to evoke a museum storage facility – notice the gallery design and the way in which the objects are displayed.
- The exhibition's title also refers to the fact that much of what is known as the 'Art and Industrial' collection was kept in storage for many years before this exhibition opened in 1997, when the Museum at Collins Barracks opened.
- The gallery also aims to show the variety and breadth of the 'Art and Industrial' collections, and convey the evolution of the collection over the past two hundred and fifty years.
- The Science and Art Museum, Dublin was established by an Act of Parliament in 1877 and the first objects registered in 1878. The nucleus of the Museum's collection was that of the following three museums:  
The Royal Dublin Society  
The Royal Irish Academy  
The Museum of Irish Industry
- These earlier collections were run mainly by wealthy gentlemen of leisure, who travelled the world to bring back artefacts as souvenirs and trophies of their journeys.
- People also donated artefacts to these collections motivated by philanthropy and also by a desire to be remembered.
- The Museum as we know it today then went through further changes, influenced by political and social events – the table shows the evolution of the collections from 1877 to the present day and objects on display which reflect the changing collecting policies:

When	Collection/ Museum	Key Collecting Policy	Examples of Artefacts on Display
1877	Science and Art Museum, Dublin	To acquire objects to encourage an understanding of art and the role of design in manufacture	Art nouveau glass, the Japanese palanquin and the samurai suit of armour
1899	National Museum of Science and Art	To collect objects to encourage rural and home industries  There was a greater emphasis on collecting Irish objects, as control of the Museum moved from London to Dublin	Examples of lace  To record Irish history the Museum accepted the donation of the life buoy and oar from the Lusitania
1922	National Museum of Ireland	To acquire Irish material and objects relating to Irish history	Parnell Freedom Box The Great Seal of Ireland Pugh glass Examples of Beleck

## Gallery Overview 'Out of Storage'

Themes that you can explore in this gallery with students are:

- Collections and collecting – ask your students if they collect things
- If they collect things, what criteria do they use when deciding whether to keep something in their collection or not keep it?
- Understanding their own collecting criteria should help them to understand the reasons behind the Museum's collecting policies over time and how political and social changes influenced these policies

For example, Asian art became fashionable towards the end of the 19th century and this is reflected in what the Museum's collected at that time. After independence there was a desire to reflect the best of what was Irish and 'hide' what was seen to be British.

- You could discuss the different ways objects end up in Museums – through donations, purchase, or through being 'found' and then donated, as in the example of the life buoy from the Lusitania.
- Unlike many of the other galleries in the Museum, what is on display in 'Out of Storage' is from abroad as well as Ireland. For example, there are objects from Spain, Italy, France, Germany and Greece as well as objects from China, Japan, Iran and India.

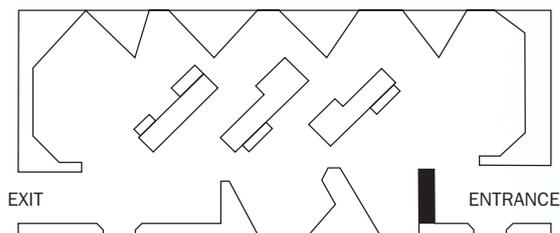
Older students might be asked what they think about objects that have come from other countries – should they be returned to the country of their origin? Or is it a positive thing that we have examples of objects to represent a range of cultures?



## Statue of St Molaise



### Floorplan - Curator's Choice 1



### Location:

The statue is straight in front of you as you enter the 'Curator's Choice' Gallery.

## The Story Behind the Object

This is an oak statue of St Molaise. The back of the statue is hollowed out. It dates from the 13th to 14th century. The maker of the statue is unknown. St Molaise was an Irish bishop who founded a monastery on the island of Inishmurray, Co Sligo in the 6th century. He died in 638 AD. Molaise is the patron saint of the island. His feast day is celebrated on the 12th of August. The statue was found in 'Teach Molaise', a large piece of masonry known as 'St Molaise's Bed' on Inishmurray. The statue was donated to the Museum in 1949 for safe keeping when the last of the islanders left Inishmurray to live on the mainland in 1948. Inishmurray lies five miles off the northwest coast of Sligo. It is no longer populated.

*'I chose this statue because it demonstrates the importance of popular religion and the existence of a sculptural tradition in Ireland'*

Colleen M. Dube, Curator

## Things to Think and Talk About

### Learning from Looking

- What is the statue made of and how was it made?
- Is there much detail in the statue? Look at it closely from both sides. Describe it.
- Is the statue lifelike? What words would you use to describe it? For example, does the statue look friendly/ scary/ powerful/ serious?

### Geographic Context

- What counties are situated on the west coast of Ireland?  
Answer: From the north-west to south-west: Donegal, Leitrim, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Kerry, Cork
- Can you think of any islands near your home town/area?

### Truth vs Myth

- The back of the statue is hollowed out. This has probably been done to prevent the statue from warping.
- There is a story, however, told by the islanders that (during penal times in the 18th century) the statue was used as a boat to allow Catholics to escape their persecutors.
- Another story told by the islanders was that in the early 19th century the figure was stolen by soldiers, carried out to sea and used for rifle practice after which it was thrown overboard and set adrift. The next morning it was back in the church.
- What do you think of the above stories?
- Do you believe any of these stories?
- Is the statue big enough to hold people?
- Do you think it matters whether the stories are true or false?
- Why might someone invent stories like these?
- Historians and museum professionals try to discover the 'real' story of objects. Why do they do this?

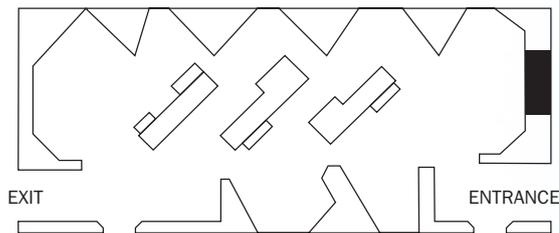
### Imagination and Empathy

- Why do you think someone might have carved a statue like this?
- Do you think the statue would have been saved if it had been left on the island?  
This might help to trigger a discussion on how and why things come into the Museum.

## Fleetwood Cabinet



Floorplan - Curator's Choice 2



**Location:**

The cabinet is immediately on your right as you enter the 'Curator's Choice' gallery.

### The Story Behind the Object

This portable cabinet is a fine example of 17th century Flemish furniture. It incorporates the skill of the cabinet-maker, the silversmith (there are ornate silver panels with fruit and foliage) and the artist. There are 10 painted panels based on scenes from one of Ovid's collection of poems 'Metamorphosis'.

Behind the painted panels are concealed compartments, which would have been used to store coins, jewellery and botanical specimens. To have a piece of furniture from this period in an Irish museum collection is quite rare as very little Irish-owned furniture from the 17th century has survived. One of the reasons that so much was lost is due to Ireland's turbulent history during this period, from the Cromwellian conquest of Ireland (1649-1653) to the Williamite War (1689-1691).

*'This cabinet is a very fine example of the cabinetmaker's craft incorporating the work of the silversmith and the artist, but the reason I have chosen it is because of its associations with a significant figure in Irish history'*

Paul Doyle, Curator



## Things to Think and Talk About

### Acquisition

Oliver Cromwell gave this cabinet to his daughter Bridget on her marriage to her second husband General Charles Fleetwood in 1652. After Bridget's death in 1662 it ended up in the possession of Sarah Burkitt, her niece. The cabinet remained in the Burkitt family until 1862 when Alexander Horace Burkitt sold it to his sister. She subsequently left it to a relative of her husband, Miss Frances Margaret Andrews of Terenure Road, Dublin. In 1931 Miss Andrews bequeathed the cabinet to the National Gallery as a gift (see the plaque on the front). In 1932 the cabinet was given on loan and transferred from the National Gallery of Ireland to the National Museum of Ireland.

### Provenance

Sometimes the provenance of an object is important or interesting, for example, in the case of the Fleetwood Cabinet. Sometimes the object is important for another reason, but the way it was acquired is not remarkable, for example the Museum bought it at an auction or received it from a donor.

### Ways of Collecting

- Objects can enter museum collections in a number of ways, for example through purchase, donation, loans and exchange.
- Do you, your family members or friends collect anything?
- How do you acquire objects?

### Learning from Looking

- What type of person might have owned a cabinet like this?
- How would you describe the cabinet, what words might you use? Students can be directed to discuss the shape and structure of the cabinet and the silver decoration, paintings, motifs and carving.
- Can you see how the cabinet has been put together? (The cabinet features wooden inlays and joints.)

### Imagination and Empathy

- Do you think this is an appropriate wedding gift?
- What wedding gifts do people give each other in Ireland today?
- What do you think was stored in this cabinet?
- If the cabinet was closed, would it look different? Encourage students to notice how the cabinet looks plainer when closed. Why?
- Encourage the students to imagine Bridget showing her friends this cabinet, opening the plain exterior to reveal what was inside. Imagine her friends' reactions.
- Do you keep collections of things in boxes? If so, what kinds of things do you collect and how do you store them?

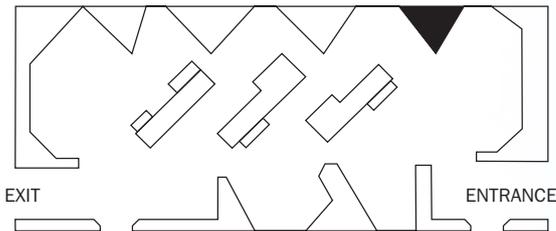
# Gallery: Curator's Choice

## FACTSHEET 3

### Worth Gown



#### Floorplan - Curator's Choice 3



**Location:**  
You will see the dress on your right as you enter the 'Curator's Choice' gallery.

### The Story Behind the Object

This dress was worn by a Mrs Meagher, wife of the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Thomas Meagher, on the day of his inauguration in 1885. It would have been worn as a formal outfit at a time when rooms were dimly lit by gas and candle light. Electric light only became available in the 1890s. This dress cost about £60.00 pounds when it was made. Today the equivalent amount would be about €4,000. The National Museum bought the dress on 27 July 1966 from the grand-niece of Mrs Meagher, a Miss B. Egan, of Sandycove in Dublin. The Museum paid £25.00 for the dress. Today the equivalent amount would be about €380.

*'The sheen of this gowns' satin and the brilliance of its brocade captivated me'*

Colleen M. Dube, Curator



## Materials, Fashion and Shape

# Things to Think and Talk About

This dress, made from satin and velvet, was made by English-born Charles Frederick Worth (1825-1895). Worth was one of the first high-fashion designers and he is credited with being the first fashion designer to put labels onto the clothing he manufactured. The dress has a bustle at the back, a typical feature of Victorian dresses. Mrs Meagher would also have worn a corset underneath her waist coat. Corsets were made from whale bone and later from spring steel and aimed to give women a slim waistline.

## Learning from Looking

- Does this dress look old? Look at the materials vs the design, for example, the material looks perfectly preserved but the design looks old and from another era.
- Describe the shape of the dress and its different parts.
- Discuss the materials of the dress. Are they natural or man-made?
- Why is there so much material?

## Imagination and Empathy

- What does the dress tell us about the person who wore it? Discuss the cost of the dress, its construction and details.
- How would someone wearing this dress spend their day? For example, would this be suitable for housework or exercise?
- How did Mrs Meagher get it on and off? Mrs Meagher would have had servants to clean the house and probably help her dress.
- How might Mrs Meagher have felt wearing this dress?
- Imagine the swishing sounds the heavy silk skirts would have made – what sounds do you hear?
- Can you think about occasions when you wear special clothes?
- How do you feel wearing these clothes or special outfits? What other things can clothes tell us about people?

### **You could talk about:**

Clothes that conform, for example, school uniforms, sports kit, business suits, army uniforms or street styles

Clothes that 'show off' – clothes like the Worth Gown, party clothes, 'debs' dresses and suits, fashion labels

Clothes worn for practical reasons – raincoats, or wellington boots

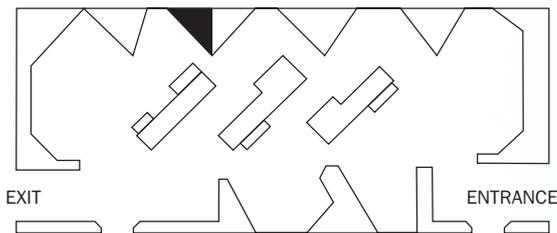
Visit the gallery 'The Way We Wore: 250 Years of Irish Clothing and Jewellery' which is on the third Floor of the Museum where themes raised here are developed.

- People dressed differently in Mrs Meagher's time. What else was different then?

## Astrolabe



### Floorplan - Curator's Choice 4



### Location:

Enter the 'Curator's Choice' gallery, walk along the wall on your right-hand side, pass the dress, musical instrument and you will see the astrolabe on your right.

## The Story Behind the Object

This astrolabe was made by Erasmus Habermel for Dr Franciscus Paduanis, physician to Rudolph II (1552-1612), Holy Roman Emperor, Archduke of Austria and King of Bohemia. It was made in Prague in the late 16th century. The astrolabe was the main astronomical instrument before the telescope, used by astronomers, surveyors, travellers and navigators from the seventh to the eighteenth century. An astrolabe was a scientific instrument that had many functions. With it you could measure heights, distances and angles, you could find out your latitude (your north/south position) and tell the local time. You could also use the astrolabe to locate the positions of the sun, moon, planets and stars and even predict future astronomical events.

*'I chose the astrolabe to illustrate the high level of mathematical skill required by early explorers and astronomers'*

Michael Kenny, Curator

## Things to Think and Talk About

### Did You Know

The astrolabe was expensive and difficult to manufacture, often taking a whole year to make. It was considered a sign of prestige to own one. It is believed that the astrolabe was first used in Egypt. Records of astrolabes in use in Europe go back to the 10th century. In Muslim countries they were used to tell the times for prayer. Astronomy is one of the oldest sciences. It originated in the ancient world, before the 5th Century.

### Learning from Looking

- Describe this object – what materials were used to make it? What does it look like? What shape is it?

It is an octagonal shaped object made from copper gilt. It looks like gold. There are patterns, symbols and numerals etched into the surface.

### Change and Continuity Through Time / Building on Prior Knowledge

- Try asking students to name the modern day equivalent instruments or tools that do all the things the astrolabe could do, for example, what do we use to:
  - Measure heights and distances
  - Ascertain your latitude (your north/south position)
  - Tell the (local) time
  - Measure angles
  - Ascertain latitude (north/south position)
  - Predict future astronomical events
  - Locate the positions of the sun, moon, planets and stars.
- Talk about the above but imagine you have no modern technology at your disposal – how did ancient people solve these problems? For example, time (daily and seasonal) and location were estimated by looking at the sun, moon and the star.

### Imagination and Empathy

- Imagine you are on board a ship travelling in uncharted seas. How would using an astrolabe be different to using satellite technology, for example, a global positioning system (GPS) today? For example, it would involve complicated mathematics and specialist knowledge to use.

### In the Museum

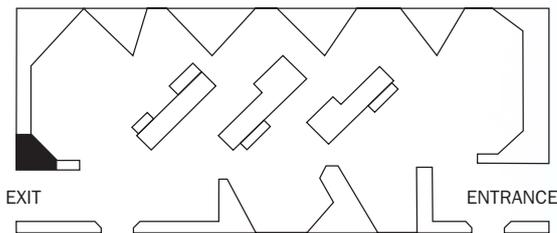
- You can see more scientific instruments in the 'What's in Store?' exhibition which is on the ground floor of the Museum.

# FACTSHEET 5

## Hair Hurling Ball (Sliotar) and Camán



### Floorplan - Curator's Choice 5



### Location:

Go straight through to the back of the 'Curator's Choice' gallery. You will see the hurling ball next to a rifle.

### The Story Behind the Object

This hurling ball was found in a bog near Sneem, Co Kerry in the mid 1980s. It came into the Museum in 1985. This ball has not been carbon dated yet but generally balls like this date from between the 15th to the 19th century. It has been intricately decorated with plaited interlacing. Hurling balls would have been made as tokens of affection – love tokens – by young women and given to young hurlers for the Mayday celebrations and hurling contests. In today's game of hurling the ball or sliotar is made of cork and thread with a leather covering. In the past they were made from a variety of materials such as wood and rubber. Cow and horse hair were also often used. The camán is made from ash.

***'I have chosen the hair ball for its association with a former Mayday custom involving young people and romance. I admire the intricacy and skill employed in the making of the ball with the use of natural materials'***

Clodagh Doyle, Curator



## Things to Think and Talk About

### Making a Sliotar

- Soft hair of the body of the animal would have been gathered for the centre using large brushes. Then hair from the mane and tail was plaited and wound around itself to make the main body of the ball. Note that there is an image referring to this technique on the exhibition panel to the left of the display case.
- It was into this plaited animal hair that some human hair would have been added by the woman who made the sliotar.

### Learning from Looking

- Describe the shape of the sliotar and camán on display.
- Do they look like those you would play with today? What differences are there?
- What materials are these objects made from?
- How long do you think it would take to make a sliotar made of hair?

### Imagination and Empathy

- Talk about romance and relationships and the type of gifts people give today.
- Do you make things for people? Has anyone ever made anything for you?
- Do you think buying a card has the same meaning as making one?

### Traditions and Festivals

- Talk about the customs related to the Mayday festival.
- What other contemporary Irish and local festivals are based on a time of the year? Do we celebrate them today in the same way as in the past, or differently?
- Have you ever been to a festival?
- What festival today is normally associated with love and tokens of love?

### Did You Know

- The study of the sources of words and how their meanings can change over time is called etymology. The word 'sliotar' comes from the Irish word for hair, 'liotar'. Can you think of any other object where its meaning is revealed in its name?

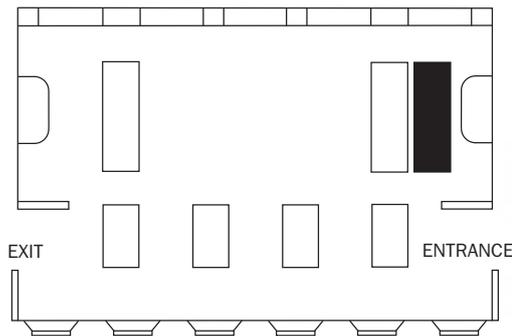
### In the Museum

- Look out for jewellery made of horse hair in the exhibition, 'The Way We Wore: 250 Years of Irish Clothing and Jewellery', which is on the third floor of the Museum.

## Palanquin



Floorplan - Out of Storage 1



**Location:**

Go to the centre of the gallery. Facing the wall with tall display cases, the Palanquin is to your right on top of the shelf, above the sign with a number 6.

### The Story Behind the Object

This palanquin from Japan was bought by the National Museum of Ireland (then the Dublin Museum of Science and Art) in 1893. It is a kind of carriage designed for the transport of one passenger. This particular palanquin dates back to the middle of the 18th century, which is known as the Edo period (1600 – 1868). Edo (Japanese for 'river gate') is what Tokyo used to be called. It is made from lacquered wood. Lacquer is made from the sap of an Asian tree (*Rhus vernicifera*) and is applied to the object in many different layers. Painting something in lacquer is a very time consuming process because the lacquer takes a very long time to dry. Metal dust was sprinkled onto the wet lacquer – this is how the surface appears to look burnished.



## Things to Think and Talk About

### How did it work

The palanquin's passenger would have got in and out through a sliding door on one side, which can be seen from the upper level of the 'Out of Storage' gallery. Six servants called 'hammals' would have carried the palanquin, taking turns, two at the back, two at the front, and two resting. A team of six hammals could travel about thirty miles from sunrise to sunset. If a longer journey had been planned servants would be sent off days in advance to station themselves at ten mile intervals along the road. By this system a journey could be continued day and night at the rate of about one hundred miles in twenty-four hours.

### Decoration

The decorative patterns on the palanquin would have had an actual meaning in 18th century Japan. The circular pattern with what looks like a shamrock or love hearts inside a circle is called the 'Mitsuba Aoi'. This is actually the coat of arms of the Tokugawa family who reigned Japan during the Edo period.

### Imagination and Empathy

- What do you think this object might have been used for?
- Do you think it would have belonged to a wealthy person?
- If so, what about it makes you think that – the size, the colour, the decoration, the function?
- Do you think it would have been hard to carry?
- How many people do you think would it hold?
- Do you think it was for an adult or for someone younger?
- Which symbols might have been used in an Irish family crest or on means of transport used in Ireland?

### Drama Activity

- Ask students to imagine how they would feel if they were either one of the occupants of the Palanquin or one of the people carrying it. Using the information we have about how the carriers worked and imagining the lives of those being carried – give students time to discuss this and then ask small groups to 'play back' to the larger class.

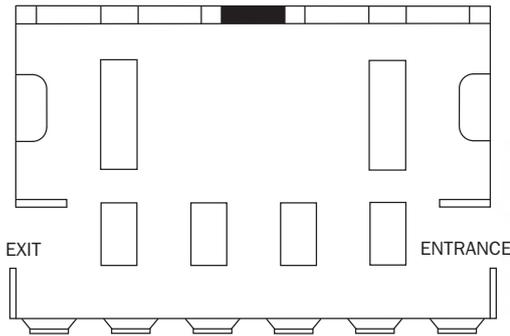
### Did You Know

- The Irish designer and architect, Eileen Gray (1878-1976) used ancient Japanese lacquer techniques to create modern decorative objects such as tables and screens. Eileen Gray eventually became to be recognised as a very important designer and architect of the 20th century. There is an exhibition on Gray's life and work on the third floor on this Museum, where you can see a small lacquer panel by Eileen Gray dating from 1917, which depicts the Irish legend, 'The Children of Lir'.

## Bailey Teapot



Floorplan - Out of Storage 2



**Location:**

Go to the centre of the 'Out of Storage' gallery. Facing the wall with tall display cases, the teapot is in front of you on the top shelf, above the sign with a number 5.

### The Story Behind the Object

This teapot was made in Glasgow by Bailey & Co around 1880. It was bought by businessman Frederick Vodrey (b.1845 in Staffordshire – d.1897) who ran China and Glass Warerooms in Mary Street in Dublin. The teapot was bought as an advertising sign and Vodrey placed it in the shop window to advertise the pottery he was selling in his shop. In 1873 he went into partnership with an English potter, Herbert Cooper. Cooper and Vodrey ran the first Irish art pottery from the rear of 37 Mary Street. In his art pottery Vodrey employed local craftsmen and women to produce affordable ceramics for his shop. The interest in the revival of Celtic language and culture influenced many of the designs produced in the art pottery. The National Museum acquired this artefact in 1949.



## Things to Think and Talk About

### Learning from Looking

- Describe the shape of the teapot. What kind of pattern is it decorated with?
- Do you think this object was used as a teapot?
- Can you see any other interesting teapots in this gallery?  
(In case 6, on shelf 3 there is a teapot shaped like a cauliflower, made about 1760 in Staffordshire, UK.)
- Ask students to look at ceramics in this gallery, focusing on different kinds of decoration. Look at:  
**Form** (shape) – is the shape simple or intricate?  
What words would you use to describe shape?  
For example, soft, angular, curvy, sharp, round, square etc.  
**Surface decoration of the object** – is it plain or patterned? Some objects are decorated with images inspired by nature, for example flowers or leaves.  
Ask students to pick a ceramic object that they like/ their favourite.  
Ask them to explain why they have chosen this object. Is it because of the decoration or the shape?

### Imagination and Empathy

- Do you think you could use the Bailey teapot to make tea? If so, how many cups of tea would it hold?  
Students could have fun guessing how many cups of tea this pot could make; also it could be a starting point for a story, for example, imagine this teapot belonged to a giant...
- Frederick Vodrey presented his collection of art ceramics and pottery to the Museum about 1886. This collection represents a lot of different styles such as Neo-Classical, Neo-Celtic and Art Nouveau. Ask your students if they could present an object which belonged to them to the Museum, what would they like to see on display in the Museum?
- Dublin was expanding very quickly at this time with much suburban building, and as a result there was a growing demand for everyday household goods. What kind of household objects is there a big demand for today?

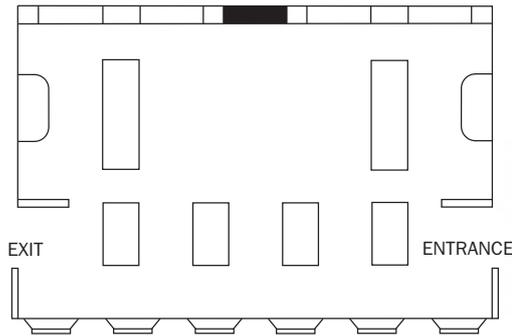
### Research Activity

- Ask the students to break into groups to use the touch-screen computers in this Gallery. They can search objects in a number of different ways:  
By location  
By material (for example ceramic, metal, wood)  
By timeline

## Life Buoy and Oar



Floorplan - Out of Storage 3



**Location:**

Go to the centre of the 'Out of Storage' gallery. Facing the wall with tall display cases, the life buoy and oar are in front of you at the centre of the top shelf.

### The Story Behind the Object

The Lusitania was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sank off the Irish coast on 7th May 1915. The life buoy was picked up by the Dublin fishing trawler, the *Dean Swift*, a fortnight after the disaster. The oar (from a lifeboat) was washed up on a beach off the west coast of Co. Clare in August 1915 and then donated to the Museum. The Lusitania, owned by the Cunard line, was one of the largest, fastest and most luxurious ocean liners in the world in 1915. It was built in Scotland. It had a capacity of 2,000 people and a crew of 850. On 1st May 1915, the Lusitania set off on its maiden (first) voyage from New York to Liverpool, a journey that would take seven days crossing the Atlantic. The cost of a one-way ticket in first class was \$4,000 at a time when the average wage was \$20 a week.



## Things to Think and Talk About

### Historical Context

Since February 1915, Germany had declared the waters around Great Britain as a war zone and had announced that ships would be sunk without warning. The Cunard company's advertisement announcing the scheduled departure of the Lusitania included a warning to travellers that they were going 'at their own risk'.

### The Sinking of the Lusitania

The wreck lies approximately 7 miles (11 km) off the Old Head of Kinsale Lighthouse in 300 feet (91 m) of water. Unlike the Titanic which took more than two hours to sink, the Lusitania went down in just 18 minutes. There were sufficient numbers of lifeboats, but the launching procedure was chaotic because the crew were not very experienced. Nearly 1,200 people lost their lives in the disaster. Although it was spring, the water was still cold, and many people died from exposure.

### Did You Know

One of those who lost his life was Hugh Lane, the founder of the Hugh Lane Dublin City Gallery. Lane was on his way back from New York with two paintings by artists Titian and Rubens. They sank with the ship but because they were stored in waterproof lead containers they may still be intact at the bottom of the ocean.

### Learning by Looking

- Take a good look at the objects. Is there any writing or symbols on them that tell us anything more about them?

### Working as a Curator/ Historian

- Sometimes we have to combine information we already know with what we see. A curator researching these objects might go and look up those words and see whether he or she would find additional information.
- Where could you search for more information? (For example, libraries, reference books, internet, museums, universities or archives).
- Do you think that the oar and life buoy are important historical artefacts, which should be kept in the museum? If so, why?

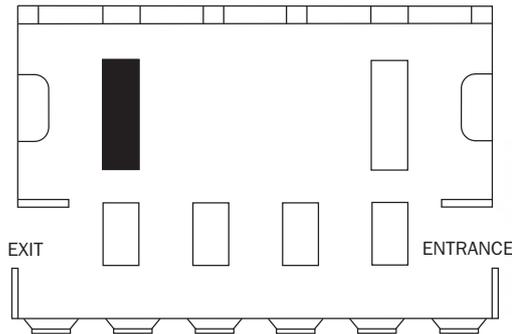
### Imagination and Empathy

- Does it surprise you that in spite of the announcement in the newspapers people sailed on the Lusitania? Do you think you would have sailed?
- Can you imagine what it might have been like to be on board the Lusitania in May 1915?

## Samurai Suit



Floorplan - Out of Storage 4



**Location:**

Go past the AV stations into the centre of the 'Out of Storage' gallery. You will see the large samurai suit in front of you (above a model train).

### The Story Behind the Object

This is a replica of a samurai suit, which was made in the 19th century. Suits such as this would have been worn in Japan from the late 17th to the 18th centuries. At the end of the 19th century in Ireland, as in other European countries, there was a great interest in Japanese and Chinese art, which became very fashionable. Museums such as the Victoria & Albert Museum in London and this Museum collected a lot of Asian art such as the palanquin and this samurai suit.

## Things to Think and Talk About

### Historical Context

The Samurai as a grouping or social class had begun to evolve in the 12th century as soldiers and body guards. The Samurai probably made up only around 10% of the population at this time, but by the 18th century they were the rulers of Japan. As rulers, the Samurai were the only people allowed to carry swords and enjoyed great power. A Samurai also lived by a strict code called 'The Way of the Warrior'. 'The Way of the Warrior' placed great emphasis on loyalty, vengeance, personal honour and 'Seppuku' (honour suicide). Samurai also dressed in a distinctive way and as such were instantly recognisable. There are 23 parts in the samurai suit and each part had its own special name, for example, the 'Helmet of Kabuto' - made of iron with 20 studded panels around the sides and a decorated gilt panel at front and back and two decorative horns in front.

### Learning by Looking

- Take a closer look at the samurai costume on display. How many different parts do you see?

### Making Comparisons

- How does the samurai suit compare to a British Army uniform of the 18th century or a contemporary uniform of the Irish Defence Forces?

### Codes of Honour

- 'The Way of the Warrior' and related rules could be linked to duelling codes (see factsheet 10) or rules existing in the school environment.
- Do you think that any of the rules from 'The Way of the Warrior' are relevant in Ireland today?

### Originals and Replicas

- The samurai suit on display is a 19th century replica, acquired by the Museum knowingly as a copy.
- One of the jobs of a curator is to ascertain if an object is an original. How do you think they might try to find out if something is original or a replica?
- Objects that are acquired today by the Museum are mostly originals. Handling collections might contain replicas for educational purposes. You could discuss whether museums should only collect originals or whether replicas should be part of a museum collection.
- Is an object more valuable when it is an original object?

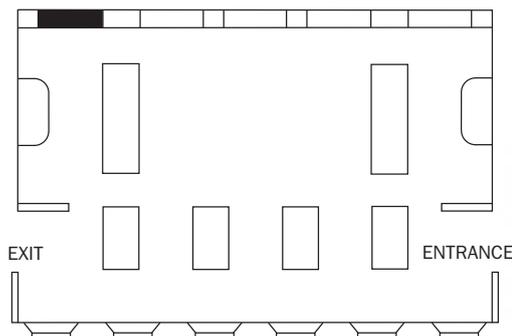
### In the Museum

- Look for more replica Samurai suits in the 'What's in Store?' exhibition which is on the ground floor of the Museum.

## Duelling Pistols



Floorplan - Out of Storage 5



**Location:**

Go to the very back of the 'Out of Storage' gallery and see a display cabinet with weapons to your right. The duelling pistols are on the bottom shelf, the second pair of pistols from the right.

### The Story Behind the Object

This pair of silver mounted flintlock pistols was made in Dublin, about 1768. The stocks are decoratively carved as are the lock plates and cocks. On the silver serpentine back plates you will find grotesque masks. Underneath the barrel there are wooden steel-tipped ramrod pipes attached, which were used to load the gun from the front end of the barrel. To load the gun, a set amount of powder would have been poured into the barrel from a powder horn (or powder pouch, an example of which you find inside the pull-out drawer underneath the pistols); a wad was inserted into the barrel and a ball. This was then rammed into the barrel using a stick, the ramrod.



## Things to Think and Talk About

### Historical Context

Duelling with pistols reached its peak between 1770 and 1830.

Duels were fought for a number of reasons:

To avenge an insult

Defend a lady's honour

Charges of cowardice

Cheating at cards and dice

Duelling was practised by the gentry but also by the legal profession and army officers. Daniel O'Connell and Henry Grattan were famous Irish duellists. In 1815 Daniel O'Connell mortally wounded John D'Esterre of the Dublin Corporation in a public duel spurred on by political and social differences. As a result of his guilt O'Connell gave D'Esterre's family monetary support for the rest of his life. To kill someone in a duel was illegal although few convictions were ever made. Phoenix Park was one of Dublin's most popular duelling spots along with Sandymount Strand and Clontarf.

### Rules of Duelling

At the Clonmel Summer Assizes in 1777 a code was adopted '*for the government of duellists, by the gentlemen of Tipperary, Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Roscommon and prescribed for general adoption throughout Ireland*'.

The code had 26 rules. It was not necessary to either kill or wound one's opponent in a duel, the act of taking part kept one's honour intact.

However, at times duels could be lethal whether accidentally or intentionally. A surgeon was often brought to the duel.

### Why did Duelling Stop?

There was a public backlash against it after too many infamous duels. The introduction of a police force in 1822 was another reason. In 1844 Queen Victoria passed a law making it illegal for British Army officers to fight in a duel. The Rigby family claimed that the pistols, which they manufactured, were so accurate that people were seriously injured more often.

### Learning by Looking

- Take a look at the duelling pistols. How are they decorated and how do they compare to the other guns in this display case? They are not as rough as the blunderbusses above them and more ornate. They also have a shorter barrel.

### Imagination and Empathy

- What type of person might have owned such a gun?

### Activity

- Re-enact a duel: visit the 'Blaze Away' exhibition on the ground floor where you find more information on rules and procedures relating to duels.

## Glossary

This Glossary introduces key terms, which you might come across in one of the galleries on which this pack is based. These definitions contain a short explanation of concepts relevant to the museum.

### **Art Nouveau**

A style of decorative art, architecture, and design prominent in Western Europe and the USA from about 1890 until the First World War and characterised by intricate linear designs and flowing curves based on natural forms.

### **Acquisition**

A possession, prize, property or purchase which has been bought or gained. In the museum, it means an item which has been obtained by being bought or donated.

### **Bequeathed**

Pass (something) on or leave (something) to a person or other beneficiary by a will. The Museum can be the beneficiary of a bequest.

### **Botanical specimen**

An individual real plant used as an example of its species or type for scientific study or display.

### **Bustle**

A device for thrusting out the skirt at the back of the waist. From the 1860s to the 1880s this was usually a framework worn under a woman's skirt at the back to support and display the full cut and drape of a dress, so as to achieve the fashionable shape of the period.

### **Conservator**

The conservator is responsible for the long term care of their collections. Conservators ensure that the collections on display and in the stores are kept in a safe condition; they treat objects to prevent or limit further damage and they investigate objects to find out how they were made, for example through microscopic examination or x-ray.

### **Curator**

The Curator is the person in charge of a museum collection. The word 'Curator' has its origins in the Latin word Cura meaning 'to care'. The curator makes decisions regarding what objects to collect and put on display as well as researching objects and sharing that research with the public.

### **Duelling**

A prearranged fight between two gentlemen according to an accepted code with pistols or swords.

### **Inauguration**

A ceremony to mark the admission of someone to office or the introduction of a system, policy or period.

## Glossary

### **Motifs**

A decorative image or design, often repeated to form a pattern.

### **Neo-Celtic Art**

The neo-Celtic style was inspired largely by the art of Early Christian Ireland, encompassing metalwork, manuscript illumination and architecture up to 1400 A.D. While the style was mainly a nineteenth-century phenomenon, its roots lay in the eighteenth-century, when the appreciation of Ireland's ancient cultural and artistic past was first expressed as a coherent movement.

### **Neo-Classical Art**

From 1850, new archaeological discoveries in Greece and Italy inspired a revival of interest in classical art, influenced by ancient Greek or Roman forms or principles. The style employs architectural elements, such as columns, capitals and pediments taken from classical Greek and Roman buildings and the distinctive shapes of various classical objects.

### **Plaited interlacing**

The combining of two or more sets of elements crossed intricately together to form a continuous surface.

### **Provenance**

Provenance refers to the place or source of origin of an object. The word Provenance, comes from the French word *provenir*, meaning 'to come from'. This word is used in museums to refer to the history of ownership or location of an object. When the story of how an object was acquired is interesting, it is included in the Factsheets.

### **Radiocarbon dating**

An accurate means of measuring the age of an organic object. All organic objects contain carbon isotopes called carbon-12 and carbon-14. The age of an object is determined by measuring the relative proportions of carbon-12 and carbon-14 that the object contains. The ratio between them changes as radioactive carbon-14 decays and is not replaced by exchange with the atmosphere.

### **Replica**

A copy or reproduction of a work of art.

## After your Visit

Here are some ideas for following up your Museum visit back in the classroom.

### Discussions

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Have a classroom discussion based on the same questions suggested for a pre-visit discussion (see page 5 of this pack). Have the students changed their views about museums and collecting?

Ask students to write up a short article or review about their visit. Encourage them to describe the building and what they saw in the galleries. Questions you could pose include:

- What was their favourite object or exhibition?
- Was the Museum what they expected?
- Would they recommend the Museum to their family or friends?

Ask the students to research any issues or questions that came up during their visit.

Bring in a 'mysterious' artefact (for example, a candle snuffer, a thimble or a shoehorn) and practise inquiry-based learning techniques to help students uncover the mystery. Encourage students to look at the shape of the object and the materials it is made from.

Ask students to bring in an object or collection from home that is special to them (for example a favourite toy or item of clothing) and have a session where students talk about these objects or collections.

### Activities

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#### **Create a school or classroom museum**

Ask students to start a classroom museum by bringing in (unwanted) items from home, or think about investing in items from second-hand shops or car-boot sales. Suitable objects could include old clothes or shoes (to show how manufacture and styles have changed), household items that are now less in use such as hearth furniture, bellows, old irons, or light bulbs (to show how technology has affected our daily lives). Artefacts that relate to festivals or ceremonies provide good starting points for learning and discussion.

Ask fellow staff members if they have objects, photographs or other material that might illustrate the history of the school.

Students need to think about how they will display their museum objects and how they will label them and write up information panels..

#### **Story telling or creative writing or drawing**

Use the objects you saw at the Museum as the inspiration for a storytelling or imaginative writing session. Encourage the class with an imaginative exercise such as:

- I'm an object on display at the Museum, what is my story?
- Tell a group story. Go around the class asking each student to provide a sentence in the story. Write the story down as it builds – it doesn't need to make sense but allows students to let go and use their imaginations!

Students can then choose two to three of the objects they saw in the Museum. Ask them to write, draw or tell a short story about these objects. For example, imagine if a giant owned the Bailey Teapot and went travelling across the seas, using the Astrolabe to guide herself... Or what if the Fleetwood Cabinet was really a magic cabinet, what would be contained inside?



Trying on uniforms in the 'Barracks Life Room'



## 'What's in the Museum?'

Resource Pack for Primary Teachers

Education & Outreach Department  
National Museum of Ireland – Decorative Arts & History  
Collins Barracks  
Dublin 7

[bookings@museum.ie](mailto:bookings@museum.ie)

[www.museum.ie](http://www.museum.ie)

