

Well done to all entrants in the National Heritage Week event awards 2011. Our winners demonstrated great commitment, enthusiasm and imagination regarding the concepts and organisation of their events. We are delighted to announce the winners in each category as follows:

### **Winner of Best Overall Event and Best Interactive Event**

Event: Tyrellspass Festival

Organisers: Tyrellpass Festival Committee

The objective was to highlight the vast heritage that Tyrrellspass has to offer by creating a community family event incorporating as many elements of the heritage of Tyrrellspass as possible. The castle 600 years old gave a strong medieval theme and provided a foundation for tours, talks and walks. The event included as many free events as possible making it accessible to all. The event was 3 day festival.

There was a grand parade which encouraged young Sport and Events groups to part take and dress in medieval costume. This encouraged them to read up on the traditional dress. This led to the 600 year old castle for a crowning of our king and queen.

The bog walk was not only historical as it informed of the traditional bog cutting, but archaeological as the croghan man and other bog bodies were discussed as well as the flora and fauna. This was attended by young and old. Over 200 people attended guided tours of Tyrrellspass Castle which do not normally take place. The castle is a fortified tower house over 600 years old and the interest shown has spurred on the owners to open it more often to the public. Choral evening with local musicians and singers were held in the St. Sinians; a heritage building and one with a fascinating history. Many had never been inside before. The Sunday fete had a number of educational elements including a bee keeper with a live display of bees, arts and crafts for young children and an art/photo exhibitions by local artists and photographers.

**Judges comments:** This event encouraged access to heritage that isn't normally available and resulted ongoing heritage accessibility, engagement and education which is a key aim for National Heritage Week.

### **Most Innovative Event**

Event: I Am Wall

Organisers: Brendan McSherry, Louth Heritage Officer and Marcella Bannon, Drogheda Arts Centre

The aim was to bring the walls of Drogheda to life and to allow the people of Drogheda reclaim their Walled Town heritage. The people of Drogheda to come out and hold hands right around the line of the former town walls circuit (or as close to it as we could get). As we were told that red is the most noticeable colour, we asked the participants to wear red. 2,000 red 'I am Wall' T-shirts were printed and these were either collected by participants before the day of the event or were handed out on the day itself.

More than 2,000 people took part. They were on site by 11:45, on the Sunday morning. The signal to join hands was the now traditional ringing of the bells of all the churches of Drogheda at midday. Hands were held while an Air Corps helicopter we had borrowed flew over the town photographing the crowds below. The roar of the cannons on the Millmount, Drogheda's castle (originally a motte and bailey fortress) signalled the time to let the wall

break apart again, at a quarter past twelve. We also had demonstrations of medieval crafts and traditional building skills.

**Judges comments:** This event showed great originality. Its idea and execution demonstrate how a part of our heritage that has all but vanished (only 10% of the walls remain) can be brought back to life through human spirit and creativity.

### **Best Childrens Event**

Event: Mini Ranger Day

Organisers: NPWS, Clara Bog Visitor Centre

The free event was designed to fulfil the following objectives in an entertaining and fun manner:

- To introduce children to the function of the National Parks and Wildlife Service
- To enable children to discover the flora and fauna of raised bog habitats
- To instil a sense of pride for their local natural heritage
- To evoke a creative response to the natural world

The day long event was fully booked, and was attended by 25 children between the ages of 7 and 12 – all of whom were keen to undergo the required training to become a Mini Ranger.

The children spent the day with NPWS Conservation Rangers and Guide staff. The day started with activities in the Clara Bog Visitor Centre, after which the children embarked on a field trip to Clara Bog. The day ended with an art and craft session back at the Centre, and all the participants were presented with Mini Ranger Certificates.

The children met two local NPWS Conservation Rangers, who were to be their mentors for the day. The Rangers talked to the children about their role and function, and showed the children some of the vast array of equipment that they might use on a daily basis and explained how it all worked. The children completed a treasure hunt activity in the Visitor Centre. This activity was designed to enable children to learn basic map reading skills, and to encourage them to explore and reflect upon the Centre's interactive multimedia exhibition which explains all about the wildlife of Clara Bog. During the field trip the Mini Rangers experienced the wet and soggy nature of a living raised bog. They discovered the plants and animals that live on Clara Bog, learned how to identify a range of species and recorded their findings. The children were encouraged to use their creativity to create a wildlife scene using a mixture of natural materials and other media to form a collage.

**Judges Comments:** This is an excellent example of a very well structured well thought out educational and fun event for young children introducing them to our natural heritage.

### **Best Community Group/ENGO/Individual**

Event: St. Finbarrs Pilgrim Walk

Organisers: Drimoleague Heritage Walkways Committee

An ancient oral tradition in Drimoleague states that St. Finbarr "having admonished the people to return to Christ, went on his way to Gougane Barra". For centuries local people walked the route as a pilgrimage on 25<sup>th</sup> September each year. Three years ago the 34km

path from the Top of the Rock to Gougane Barra was re-opened, and it is being well used as a pilgrim route once again. This particular National Heritage Week event was a special re-enactment of the pilgrim walk, with contemplative stops along the way, featuring St Finbarr's life and Gospel; simple meals in local homes on the route; and a remarkable atmosphere of camaraderie and community spirit which evolved along the way. Thirty six people walked each day; the weather was perfect and the scenery was at its best. Already many are enquiring about next year's event.

Along the way stops were made each day at significant points on the route and historical facts and stories were recounted and various topographical features in the landscape were noted.

**Judges comments:** This event is an example of how National Heritage Week can be used to draw attention to local heritage and revived traditions making both accessible to all during a week when the spotlight is on our heritage both locally and nationally.