



Kieran Foley

email kfoley@munster-express.ie

FOLEY ON FILE

Culture on the coast

The old Irish seanfhocal 'Ní neart go cur le chéile' is included on a Covid-19 information board at the entrance to the Tramore Coastguard Cultural Centre. This adage tells us that 'There is no strength without unity' and this is certainly apt for describing what has been achieved at this remarkable location.

The aim of the Coastguard Cultural Centre is to develop art, culture, and heritage for the community of Tramore and the surrounding areas. Prior to Covid-19, this multi-purpose community facility was a hub of activity with regular exhibitions being held in its impressive upstairs art gallery. This space was also used for art classes, yoga, children's activities, book launches, intimate musical sessions, and many other activities. Downstairs, the Coastguard Cultural Centre's café has garnered a well-earned reputation for a mouth-watering array of treats.

The building, which boasts enviable panoramic views over Tramore Bay, originally served as Tramore Coastguard Station from 1874 to 1922. It was home to Tramore Garda Station from 1924 to 1988. Unoccupied throughout the nineties, it was badly damaged in a fire in 2000.

In 2002, the Office of Public Works (OPW) commenced work to restore and preserve the property. Every effort was made to retain the architectural and historical integrity of the building and it was officially opened in 2004.

Now, another chapter of the building's history is being written due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Proactive in a pandemic

Project Manager at the Centre Colin O'Brien had just assumed his new position in February when the Covid-19 pandemic struck.

Unsurprisingly, this presented a whole host of challenges. However, he says members of the Board of Tramore Development Trust (which manages the Centre) were keen to make the best of a bad situation.



Tramore Coastguard Cultural Centre – a jewel in Tramore's crown. PHOTO: COLIN SHANAHAN.

Channelling a 'Keep Calm and Carry On' attitude, it was agreed that lockdown presented an opportunity to embark on some improvements to the interior

meet up with their friends," explains Colin.

Although numbers were restricted due to social distancing, a 'can do' atmosphere prevailed as

walls. However, along with the rest of the country, Tramore finds itself back in another lockdown.

The Café remains open seven days a week but is now

which are on display within the Centre, albeit in a more restricted manner.

Creative collective

There is an eye-catching array of impressive items on

of high-quality products are available, including jewellery, glassware, soaps, clothing, metalwork and woodwork, skincare, knitwear, art, and ceramics.

Considering most craftspeople generally work in isolation, the aim is to try to develop a supportive network which allows for increased collaboration. The initiative has proved so successful that the collective is now in contention for a coveted award in the Micro Enterprise category of the Irish Business Design Challenge (voting can be completed at www.ibdc.awards.com)

If successful, funds will be used by the 'Coastguard Creatives' to further develop their collective, especially in relation to retail display and their website.

Earlier this year, thanks to the assistance of a LEO grant, the 'Coastguard Creatives' were able to establish an impressive website (www.coastguardcreatives.ie) through which online purchases can be completed.



"Ag cur na ruaige ar Covid - Daithí Kimber and Derek Kelly, Waterford putting the world to rights. PHOTO: COLIN SHANAHAN.

of the building.

By the end of May, the Café was operating as a takeaway using a sash window overlooking the bay. In late June, the Centre had returned to some semblance of normality in a newly refreshed building.

"People had been in lockdown for quite some time, so many were waiting for an opportunity to come back and

all involved proactively and enthusiastically adjusted to their new circumstances. Along with a team of hard-working staff, the Centre also has the valued support of Tús and CE scheme workers.

In September, the Centre played host to an art exhibition by Emma Power and Fern Wright. Currently, paintings by artist Janet Sibley adorn the Centre's

solely operating its takeaway service once again. Last week, even on a blustery October morning, there were plenty of people availing of this service, stopping to breathe in the fresh air and to admire the stunning views of Tramore Bay.

Colin explains that having the takeaway service in operation also means people can still view the crafts

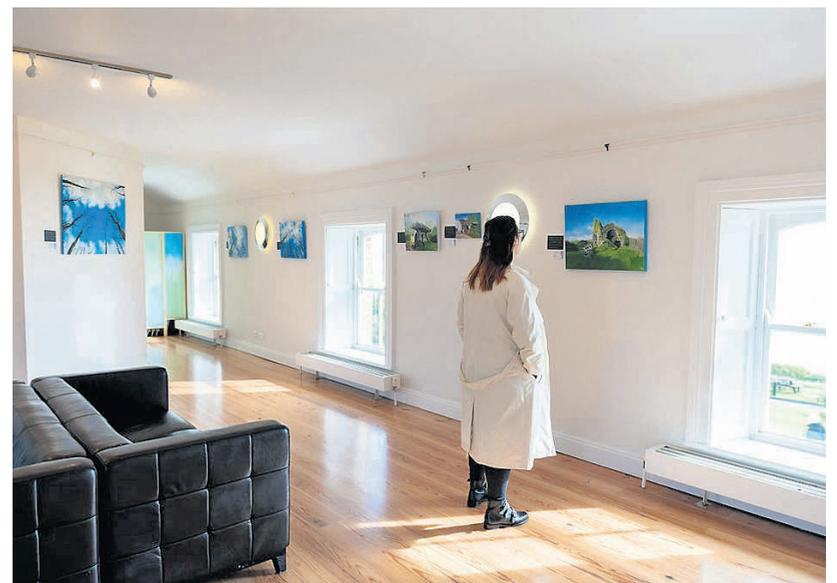
display within the building, which showcases the work of a progressive group known as the 'Coastguard Creatives'.

This craft collective, comprised of local craftworkers, designers and artists and facilitated by Marie Power of 'The Sea Gardener', is an initiative by Tramore Development Trust and Waterford Local Enterprise Office (LEO). A wide range

A click and collect service is also in operation at the Centre.

Marie Power says there has been a great reaction amongst the public.

"Within the last few weeks, there's been a noticeable increase in people being conscious of buying local," she says.



The impressive upstairs exhibition space. PHOTO: COLIN SHANAHAN.

Continued on page 21