

Daoine agus Áit: Connecting Our Communities.

Over the summer of 2021, members of the Clare Community Archive Network (iCAN) worked together to create a Heritage Postcard Collection under the theme of 'people & place'. Four community groups in Clare, Clarecastle, Shannon, Kilkee and Scattery Island heritage groups participated in a series of creative workshops to equip and inspire them to document their local heritage through photography and creative writing. Participants were encouraged to explore their locality with fresh eyes and experiment with different creative techniques. Each group then chose some of their imagery and text to feature on the front of their postcard. On the reverse, each group's community archive website, social media and email are detailed, serving as an open invitation for both senders and recipients to connect with our iCAN communities in Clare, see Clareheritage.org

Each card in the collection is unique and instilled with a pride of place. It is intended that these postcards will 'open the door' to our local heritage for the communities and their diaspora. The postcards will be distributed for free in each locality during Heritage Week so that they can be used to connect with family and friends at home and abroad. After Heritage Week, each of our members will use 100 cards for a discrete project that aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation amongst older people and minority groups. This project was co-funded by the National Museum of Ireland, and by Clare County Council through the Creative Ireland Programme and the Healthy Ireland Keep Well Campaign.

Each participating iCAN member involved their community in different ways: from inviting ideas or photographs through social media to 'Design a Postcard' competitions for schools. The postcards will be distributed in the community for free and also utilised by each group for a project that aims to reduce social isolation and promote inclusivity. Each iCAN community has taken an approach to this project that worked for them. Some groups involved their local schools as they went through the design process. Other groups are planning to involve local care homes and groups that support the elderly in the next phase of this project - which is to use 100 cards to reduce social isolation - so inter-generational engagement is definitely an aspect of this project.

Through website and social media posts, physical posters, Parish newsletters, Community Notes and press releases. During Heritage Week Clarecastle are hosting events to showcase the project (subject to Covid-19 protocols). The postcards will be distributed or made freely available at locations in each community. For the smaller, rural communities, everyone will become aware of this project as their postcards are being hand delivered.

Daoine agus Áit: Connecting our Communities is a project of iCAN, an initiative of the National Museum of Ireland, delivered in partnership with the Heritage Officers for counties Clare, Galway & Wicklow. The project participants had the support and guidance of the heritage professionals represented by these organisations, as well as that provided by the two creative professionals engaged to facilitate the workshop series.

Shannon highlighted how one of the few remaining vernacular cottages in the region stands firm against the encroaching modern city architecture, while Clarecastle involved the local schools in a significant way. Whether it is through the imagery or the creative writing/text, each postcard in the collection does consider or celebrate aspects of our local heritage that are seldom seen, recognised or acknowledged.