

Press Release

Emigration Memorial Unveiled in Centenary Square

Last Wednesday saw the installation of the latest in a growing list of public art features in Longford with the unveiling of the “Emigration Memorial” in Centenary Square.

The theme of emigration was considered appropriate it is located adjacent to the site of the old Cunard Shipping line ticket office.

The monument, made from bronze and limestone by Mayo sculptor Rory Breslin depicts one life-size male figure standing looking east and holding his passage ticket in his hand. Behind the male figure is a female figure seated on her suitcase looking west and also holding steamship ticket. This orientation symbolises the fact that Longford emigrants who purchased their “passage” from the ticket office travelled to every corner of the world.

The setting is 19th century but the figures are dressed in 21st century clothes to signify that emigration is still a sad fact of every-day life.

The bronze figures currently have a light green colour or patina which will change in time to a very dark green/brown colour. The figures are mounted on a Kilkenny limestone plinth bearing an inscription by the Ardagh writer Catherine Lynch: “Some leave by choice, Some by necessity. All are missed. Always welcome home”

According to County Arts Officer Fergus Kennedy the commissioning of public art is a worthwhile exercise on many levels as statues and bespoke street furniture enhance the appearance of any town or village and it is no coincidence that all of the National Tidy Towns Winners use public art to improve the appearance of their towns.

Appropriately selected, and well made statues and monuments can be a source of community pride and can also be a very useful branding tool for a village, town or county. While public art is expensive particularly at a time of severe financial cut-backs the Arts Officer was at pains to emphasise that this piece, and any other public art features in Longford, was not paid for by local rate payers, it was one hundred percent paid for by funding from the Department of the Environment.

The commemorative art piece was unveiled by Town Mayor Cllr. Peggy Nolan and County Mayor Cllr. Sean Farrell. Cllr Nolan speaking on behalf of both Mayors said that she” hoped that the people of Longford would take this piece of art into their personal and collective ownership which will guarantee that it will stand for generations to come commemorating all the sons and daughters of Longford who have emigrated and continue to emigrate all over the world”.

Ends

30/08/12