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CLADDAGH RING

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EMBLEM OF IRELAND

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The wax works figure of Walt Disney
wearing the Claddagh ring.
(Image from claddaghrings.com)



Cover image from Borujewellery.com

The Claddagh Ring



As one of the most recognisable pieces of jewellery in the world, its origin is indeed intriguing:

Its history largely centres on Richard Joyce, from the ancient fishing village of Claddagh in Galway, who, circa mid-1600s was captured by pirates and sold into slavery in the West Indies. While there he gained vast knowledge in the art of goldsmithing. Desperate to one day be united with his love, Margaret, back home, he secretly gathered a tiny piece of gold each day and eventually had enough to craft a beautiful ring. In 1689, after 14 years in slavery, Joyce returned home. There, his first love, Margaret, accepted the beautiful ring which Joyce had called the Claddagh ring. Consisting of a heart, hands and a crown fastened in a band, the *Fáinne Chladaigh* or the Claddagh ring represents love, friendship and loyalty. It can be worn in a number of different ways to denote the wearer's relationship status. On the left hand, if worn with the heart pointing in, it means the wearer is married, if the heart is pointing out it means the wearer is engaged. On the right hand, if worn with the heart pointing in, it means the wearer is in a relationship, if the heart is pointing out it means the wearer is single.

Over the years Claddagh rings increased in popularity and were often used as wedding rings in the west of Ireland. Such was the case as recounted by Martin Haynes, Middle St., Galway as part of the Schools' Folklore Collection: "when this King of Claddagh was getting married he wore the Claddagh ring and when he died he left it to the next King". The rings thus became heirlooms as they were passed from generation to generation, but predominantly in the female line.

As an indication of the esteem in which the Claddagh ring was held, history tells us that it was worn by Queen Victoria, Queen Alexandra and King Edward VII. In modern times, when American Presidents John F. Kennedy and Ronald Reagan visited Ireland in 1963 and 1984 respectively, they were gifted Claddagh rings. Similarly, Prince Ranier and Princess Grace of Monaco were gifted Claddagh jewellery when they visited Ireland in 1961.

While filming *The Quiet Man* in 1952, John Wayne and Maureen O'Hara, were said to be privileged to receive Claddagh rings. Walt Disney cherished his Irish roots and proudly wore his Claddagh ring. Interestingly the Claddagh ring can be seen on the finger of his wax works figure at Madame Tussauds, Orlando.

In 2020 Galway City Museum acquired what is believed to be the oldest Claddagh ring in existence. It dates from c.1700 and was made by the aforementioned Galway goldsmith Richard Joyce. It is on display in the Galway City Museum, which fittingly overlooks the Claddagh area from which the iconic ring takes its name.

References:

www.claddaghrings.com
www.claddaghdesign.com
www.mountjewellers.com
www.galwaycitymuseum.ie

DID YOU KNOW?

Over 200 Claddagh rings were reclaimed at ground zero after the 09/11 attacks.

An original Claddagh ring from c.1700 (left) on display in the Galway City Museum and a modern version (right) (from galwaycitymuseum.ie)



The Old Claddagh Ring

"The old Claddagh Ring, sure it was my grandmothers.
 She wore it a lifetime and gave it to me.
 All through the long years, she wore it so proudly.
 It was made where the Claddagh rolls down to the sea."

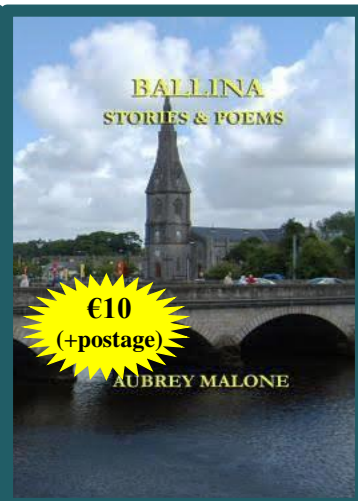
Opening lines from *The Old Claddagh Ring*
 by P.B. Kelly, originally from Ballina, Co. Mayo

BOOK OF THE WEEK

BALLINA STORIES AND POEMS

€10 (+postage)

Available from
 Reception or from North
 Mayo Heritage Centre
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The
 North Mayo
 Heritage
 Centre

The North Mayo Heritage Centre wishes to recruit a Community Services Programme (CSP) Manager

We are currently seeking a Manager for the North Mayo Family Heritage Centre. The Centre is located at Enniscoe, Castlehill, Ballina, Co Mayo. The Heritage Centre manages a Community Services Programme, the Family History Research Unit, Museum, Conference Centre, Organic Garden and annual Cultural and Training programmes.

Duties of the post include:

Managing the work of the POBAL funded CSP including staff and volunteers
 Organising and overseeing the services, activities and funding of the Centre
 Overseeing the financial management of the company with Directors
 Compiling Business plans and funding applications on behalf of the Centre
 Any other business assigned by the Directors from time to time in line with the work of the CSP.

The ideal candidate will:

Have experience in managing staff and financial management
 Have at least 3 years experience of working in a community setting
 Be flexible and self-motivated
 Have good people and organisational skills
 Have good IT and communication skills

Salary is in line with and subject to continued funding from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Community Services Programme. For full job specification please email nmhcrecruitment@gmail.com

Applicants should submit a covering letter with their CV by
 5.00pm, Friday 7th October
 to nmhcrecruitment@gmail.com



An Roinn Forbartha
 Tuaithe agus Pobail
 Department of Rural and
 Community Development

