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## Superb new look for Museum of Free Derry

Manager of the Free Derry Museum Adrian Kerr views one of the new display cases. (1212Jb52) Manager of the Free Derry Museum Adrian

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Jean Hegarty at the Museum of Free Derry inspecting the new Bloody Sunday display case. (1212Jb53)

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By Staff reporter

The invaluable local artefacts of the Museum of Free Derry are now even more fascinating - having recently been encased in a series of impressive new display cases.

Now lining the length of the Glenfada Park building, these newly acquired display cases stand floor to ceiling in impressive glass, giving the exhibition space a more coherent, world-class appeal.

These latest additions were funded jointly by DCC and NI Tourist Board under the Tourism and Development Scheme Project. Speaking to the 'Journal, Adrian Kerr, Manager of Museum of Free Derry, explained some of the newest displays and the work in progress. One case houses a banner saying 'Queen University Civil Rights Association'.

Adrian revealed: "A guy called Hugh Doherty found this particular banner in the house on Free Derry Corner on the morning of Bloody Sunday, where it must have been stashed as everyone began to flee the shooting. He had it in the attic for many years and lent it to the museum a few years ago," he says.

An original civil rights logo hand-painted by George Sweeney and carried in many of the early marches is also on display, as is a B-Special uniform and important local newspapers.

Another new addition is the distinctive hat worn by well-known civil rights campaigner Vinny Coyle. The hat was recently donated to the museum by Vinny's son and is now displayed proudly alongside a photograph of the man himself.

"It's important to have items like this in the museum," Adrian explains, "Vinny's name may not mean very much to tourists but it means an awful lot to local people, and that's who this museum is for, first and foremost. We're telling the community's story for the community. I think local people would find a resonance in having his hat here."

Another impressive new case houses artefacts from the Battle of the Bogside period, including two particular flags with a distinct local provenance.

### Flags

“The flags hanging here are two very specific flags - they’re actually the two original flags which flew from the Rossville Flats during the Battle of the Bogside. We have a photograph of the flats alongside them and you can clearly see the flags hanging from the roof. The Starry Plough comes from the Sharkey family and the Tricolour from Leo Coyle and David Murphy, and to tell the story even better we also have things like old style petrol bombs, a gas mask, a riot helmet and CS gas canisters and rubber and plastic bullets,” Adrian said.

An empty case lines the length of one wall waiting on one very important exhibit - the now famous Civil Rights Association banner from Bloody Sunday - which is currently away being restored. An army jacket belonging to Eamon Lafferty, who was the first Provisional IRA volunteer to be killed in action in Derry in 1971, is also newly displayed.

The most moving and thought-provoking exhibits in the museum are those related to Bloody Sunday and its victims, including Jim Wray’s jacket, John Young’s shirt, a Knights of Malta uniform, a Para helmet that was worn on Bloody Sunday.

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