

All in a Day's Work

Mervyn Horgan – Manager of Lifetime Lab @ Old Cork Waterworks

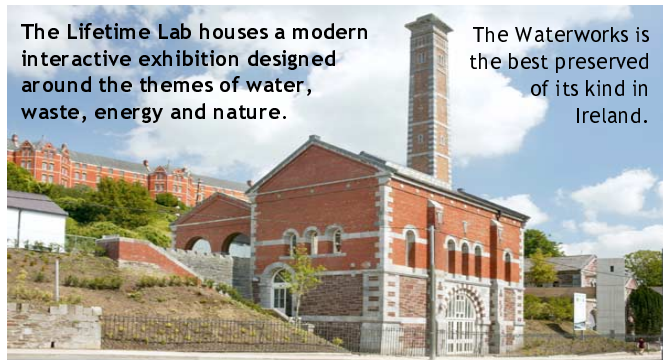
PROFILE

Mervyn Horgan is Manager of Lifetime Lab @ Old Cork Waterworks, on the Lee Road in Cork City. It is a unique attraction for visitors of all ages with its modern interactive exhibition and beautifully restored buildings and equipment.



The Lifetime Lab houses a modern interactive exhibition designed around the themes of water, waste, energy and nature.

The Waterworks is the best preserved of its kind in Ireland.



Images courtesy of Lifetime Lab

Where do you work?

I work at Lifetime Lab @ Old Cork Waterworks. We are fairly lucky as it's a beautiful venue. Some of the site dates back to the 1750s but most of what still stands dates to the 1840s and still retains many of the Victorian features. We have the added bonus of being next to the River Lee, alongside a salmon weir. As the seasons change, you can spot all the different wildlife that frequent the river. We even have a pair of otters close by and a Peregrine Falcon uses our chimney as an observation post from time to time.

Have you always been interested in what you do?

I have always had an interest in the environment and the sustainable aspect of business - more so as it's the right thing to do. I'm also a big believer in the role of education to help people make informed decisions.

What training did you do for your job?

I began way back working in hotels so picked up on people skills fairly early on, and to be fair received a lot of training and mentoring from Failte Ireland and others along the way. It wasn't until my late 20's that I looked at my qualifications and realised I needed to go back

to college to keep up. Now I strongly believe in further training and education. It's important to keep yourself upskilled and aware of what a modern business requires to operate.

Describe your typical day.

It's very very varied from day to day. Lifetime Lab has school groups most days of the year, along with outreach visits and other events. This week I'm visiting schools with our MathWorks primary maths workshop. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we have a large conference on site. On Thursday a senior group has booked a tour in the morning, with a teacher's workshop and science club in the afternoon and a corporate group are in the conference room for a training course on Friday and Saturday.

What are the best and worst parts of your job?

I enjoy that our days are very varied and that no two days are really the same. Sometimes we have to turn schools away from some of our programmes because we're full. That's never a nice thing to have to do.

Do you enjoy your work?

Immensely and even more so this year as it's our 10th

anniversary in 2015. We are looking forward to hosting a few events to celebrate.

What equipment do you use at Lifetime Lab?

We can use everything from a piece of string and lemon for an experiment to driving an electric vehicle for our school visits. The different school visits all need a different set of equipment, depending on the theme. In February we have Engineers' Week so it will be lots of building and maths. For March we have the Explorers programme in partnership with Galway Atlantiquaria and the Marine Institute so we'll be using a lot of ocean props and maps, while our primary science workshop is going to focus on electricity for the rest of the year.

Do you work alone or as part of a team?

Again I'm very lucky to have such a strong team at Lifetime Lab. Their enthusiasm really makes the job enjoyable and we can achieve a lot more by working together. We also work closely with Discover Primary Science, SEAI, UCC, CIT, Cork Electronics Industry and we have a very



interesting pilot robotics programme with EMC this year.

What advice would you give someone who would like to do the same job?

I suppose don't be afraid to learn a new skill. The way the world works is changing at a very fast pace. Who would have thought we would be using mobile phones or mini computers to play music and search the internet? It seems phone calls are the last thing they are used for! I'd also say be prepared to listen to advice. You don't need to act on it, just be aware that people may have different approaches.

What is best piece of advice you have ever had?

Always listen to the people with grey hair, take their advice on board and respect the experience in life they have amassed.

Visit Lifetime Lab @ Old Cork Waterworks www.lifetime-lab.ie