

A selection of work by Armagh photographer Michael J. Murphy launched on dúchas.ie

The National Folklore Collection's photographic collection consists of some 80,000 photographs, the majority of which were taken by members of the Irish Folklore Commission (1935–70) and its successors. Aspects captured in the photographs include vernacular dwellings and other man-made features, livelihoods, crafts, commerce, transport, the sea, education, the practice of religion, food, dress, festivals and rites of passage, storytellers, musicians, pastimes and sport. Already there are over 12,000 photographs digitized, catalogued and available on dúchas.ie.

Over **100 newly digitized photographs** taken by [Michael J. Murphy](#) (1913–1996) between 1950 and 1970 in his native south Armagh have been added to dúchas.ie. Murphy was a full-time collector with the Irish Folklore Commission from 1949 until he retired in 1983. Murphy was exceptional among his fellow collectors for his extensive use of the camera in his field work. With it he documented images of his informants and the material culture of their lives, capturing a valuable visual record that complements his writing. Murphy compiled some 1,300 negatives in the course of his field work throughout Ulster and Co. Louth. More than a third were taken in his native county and a substantial portion of these have now been digitized.

Welcoming the announcement, the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Catherine Martin TD, said “There is so much we can learn from this material, about the history of our country and our people. It is clear that the work which Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge in Dublin City University and The National Folklore Collection in University College Dublin does helps to preserve Irish folklore and to make it available to the people of this country and to people around the world.”

Adding to this, the Minister of State for the Gaeltacht and Sport, Jack Chambers TD, said “The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted how important digital material like this is to the people of this country. The Collection is a very important cultural resource and the people of Ireland benefit greatly from using it, amongst them academics, writers, singers, historians and members of the media. It is an honour for me that my Department can support this initiative. I congratulate the staff of Dublin City University and University College Dublin and I wish them continued success with the project.

Amongst the other material already available on dúchas.ie are c.26,000 pieces of folklore from the **Main Manuscripts Collection**, material collected by Irish Folklore Commission collectors from 1935 onwards. New material from this collection is added on a quarterly basis. In addition to this, there is the **Schools' Collection**, material from each of the 26 counties that took part in the Schools' Scheme in 1937-39. **Meitheal Dúchas.ie**, a transcription project, began in Spring 2015 and is one of the most successful crowdsourced projects of its kind in the world. To date, over 330,000 pages have been transcribed voluntarily by members of the Meitheal.

The dúchas.ie website is popular with both people living in Ireland and the Irish diaspora. Users are found in Britain, the USA, Australia and Canada, as well as in many other countries. For specialist researchers in the fields of folkloristics, local history, archaeology, genealogy, linguistics, and a range of other disciplines, dúchas.ie offers considerable research potential. The site can currently be searched by place, by person and by topic, and it has material from almost every parish in Ireland.

The Dúchas project is the result of a partnership, beginning in 2012, between the National Folklore Collection in UCD, UCD Digital Library and Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge, the Irish-medium teaching and research unit in DCU. The objective of the project is to digitise the National Folklore Collection and make it available to the public online. The project is co-funded by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, with support from



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the National Lottery and by University College Dublin. The project has also benefited from the financial support of the National Folklore Foundation.

The newly digitized photographs can be accessed at www.duchas.ie/en/ppl/cbeg/79506041/ where there is also an information leaflet about Michael J. Murphy.

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