

Embargo: 12:00 noon, 22 April 2015

Press Statement

Minister McHugh officially launches Meitheal Dúchas.ie and folklore material from two new counties
(Kerry and Kildare)

Dublin, 22 April 2015

Joe McHugh TD, Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, today launched Meitheal Dúchas.ie and folklore material from two new counties (Kerry and Kildare). The launch took place in Dublin City University this morning. Dúchas.ie is a joint project between the National Folklore Collection (UCD), Fiontar (DCU), and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

There are approximately 160,000 pages of folklore and handwritten local history on Dúchas.ie. This includes content from Dublin, Mayo, Donegal, Waterford, Galway, Leitrim and now Kerry and Kildare which was taken from the Schools' Manuscript Collection – a large collection of folklore gathered and written by primary school students in the 1930s. Meitheal Dúchas.ie now gives the public a chance to transcribe some of the handwritten Irish language material.

Speaking at the launch, the Minister said: "I am delighted to launch Meitheal Dúchas.ie today. This is a significant and innovative project which allows users of Dúchas.ie to engage with Irish-language material from the Schools' Collection in a new way by transcribing the folklore stories. The transcribed stories will add greatly to the search facilities on the site, as users will be able to carry out detailed searches.

"I am delighted, as well, to launch material from Kerry and Kildare, the two latest counties to be digitised and indexed by the Dúchas team. Both counties have a strong folklore tradition and this treasure from the Schools' Collection shows that. The publication of the Kerry material, in particular, will add greatly to the Irish-language material on Dúchas.ie, and interested readers can try their hand at transcribing that material by registering with Meitheal Dúchas.ie."

There are 31,125 pages from Kerry and 3,383 pages from Kildare now available.

Interest in the site Dúchas.ie (www.duchas.ie) is growing steadily as new counties come on stream. To date, the site has received over 1.85 million hits and 110,186 visits since it was launched.

ENDS

For more information, contact Clare Coughlan (clare.coughlan@dcu.ie, (01) 700 6577).

Embargo: 12:00 noon, 22 April 2015

Notes for the editor:

Dúchas.ie

Dúchas.ie is the culmination of a joint project which began in 2012 between the National Folklore Collection in UCD; Fiontar, a teaching and research unit in Dublin City University which runs its academic programmes through Irish; and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. Digital Repository Ireland also has a role in the project, as an advisor to Dúchas.ie regarding standards and operability in digital archiving. The current project, which will run until the end of 2016, is being funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with support from the National Lottery.

This partnership has three objectives: 1) to digitise the content of the Irish Folklore Collection, starting with the Schools' Collection (folklore and local tradition compiled by primary school pupils in the Irish Free State between 1937 and 1939) 2) to give the public access to that content and 3) to create a content management system for the Collection which could be added to in the future.

Dúchas.ie is an invaluable resource for those who have an interest in local history, archaeology, genealogy, linguistics and other research areas. Subjects covered include professions, riddles and proverbs, prayers, games and pastimes, and local history, amongst others. You can search the collection by place or by person; a new search by topic will be launched soon. There is also a collection of Irish surnames on the site.

Meitheal Dúchas.ie

Dúchas.ie is taking a huge leap forward and is inviting members of the public to transcribe some of the material on the site, on a voluntary basis – this includes stories and content collected in the Gaeltacht (or in Irish), which is available at <http://www.duchas.ie/ga/meitheal/>. Transcribed text from the stories can then be published in its entirety. Currently they can only be accessed as scanned images of handwritten text.

Participants will have the chance to browse each other's work and improve it if appropriate. Social media will provide a forum where participants can discuss the work and share tips. When the Schools' Collection was undertaken, the Irish Folklore Commission was relying on the goodwill and generosity of the community. Meitheal Dúchas.ie continues that tradition.

Meitheal Dúchas.ie is an opportunity to get a deeper insight into the Irish language as it was in the 1930s and to get some hands-on experience of crowdsourcing – a recognised and innovative approach enabling the digital humanities community to provide material for the public in a short space of time, especially those working in the humanities. You don't need to be a computer expert or a linguist. We are also asking for pictures of the schools (then and now) and of the students. There is a poster and brochure pack available to support teachers and lecturers who would like to get their students involved in this project - excellent material for a lesson plan.

Since Meitheal Dúchas.ie was launched on a pilot basis in February of this year, 560 pages have been transcribed and 50 members have registered.

Material from County Kerry

Embargo: 12:00 noon, 22 April 2015

There is a wealth of Irish Language material in the Kerry Schools' Collection, much of which was collected from the Gaeltacht areas of Corca Dhuibhne and Uíbh Ráthach (volumes 472-9). Many people will be interested in the large collection from The Great Blasket Island which contains many of the [songs](#) and [stories](#) which made the island famous.

Kerry is famed for its footballers, and it's no surprise that there are many football-related stories in the collection, such as [this](#) wonderful description of the build-up to a big match between local rivals Tarbert and Glin, or [this](#) description of the events of a match between Dunquin and Ventry. In the North of the County, they have a certain affinity towards the hurley and sliotar, as evidenced by this [song](#) about the [1891 All-Ireland Hurling final](#) in which Kerry, represented by the Ballyduff team, triumphed over Wexford.

From a literary point of view, it is clear that poets played a central role in the folklore and culture of the county. There are many stories from the Corca Dhuibhne region relating to Piaras Feiritéar: [this](#) story from the Great Blasket Island is one such example. There are also a number of stories relating to Aogán Ó Rathaille, including [this](#) quick-witted exchange with the local priest, and [this story](#) about a verse he composed after not being given enough to eat at a certain house while roaming the countryside. While Ó Rathaille was well known for his quick-wittedness, another Kerry poet, Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin was renowned for his back answers, often given, once again, to priests, like [this](#) or [this](#) famous example given when he was carrying a priest across a river on his back.

Daniel O'Connell is one of the many Kerryman to achieve international renown, and there are a number of stories relating to him in the Schools' Collection, including this [one](#) about how he survived an attempt on his life when someone tried to put poison in his cup in England. Another example is [this](#) story about the 'The Day of the Straws' when O'Connell spread a warning to all of the people of Ireland in a single day at a time when modes of communication and transport were extremely limited.

There are many stories in the collection relating to mysterious places such as [Cahercrovdarrig](#) and the pilgrimage to the well in the month of May. The month of August boasts one of the largest events in the calendar in County Kerry when the Puck Fair is celebrated in Killorglin: [this](#) story claims that the fair originates from when a mountain goat warned the inhabitants of the town of the coming of Oliver Cromwell. Although Shrove Tuesday has passed, there are many stories about the '[Skelligs List](#)' as well as insulting songs directed at people who didn't manage to tie the knot during Shrovetide! No collection of stories is complete without tales of ghosts and monsters, and [this](#) is a great story about 'an Carabuncail', a serpent who lives in Loch Geal, close to Cloghane in Corca Dhuibhne.

Material from County Kildare

County Kildare is closely associated with Saint Brigid and this is highlighted by the fact that both Kildare Town and County are named after her monastic settlement. This association is plain to see from the material collected in Kildare during the course of the Schools' Collection. For example, there is an account of the [origin of Kildare town](#) and its connection with Brigid in the material

Embargo: 12:00 noon, 22 April 2015

collected from the Presentation Convent in the town as well as this [story](#) which tells of the trick she played on the King of Leinster, which led to the foundation of the Curragh Plains.

Saint Brigid's day is celebrated on the 1st of February every year, and to this day Saint Brigid's crosses are made in homes and schools across the county around this time of year. [This story](#) from Rathangan gives us an insight into many of the customs and practices that were observed on St Brigid's day in years gone by.

Dan Donnelly, the 19th century boxer, is a character whose memory lives on amongst the people of Kildare (despite the fact that he was a Dubliner) to this day through the place name Donnelly's Hollow. The trace of footprints can still be seen at Donnelly's Hollow, and it is said they are the mark of Donnelly's footprints as he made his way down to the ring for his famous victory against the Englishman Cooper. Two students from the Christian Brothers School in Naas give accounts of that fight, [here](#) and [here](#).

The Bog plays a central role in life in large parts of the western half of the county, but [this story](#) from the school in Skerries would have us believe that turf was even used as building material in that area. On top of that, [this story](#) about an ancient shoe that was discovered in the Bog near Carbury proves that turf isn't the only thing to be found in the bog.

The rising of 1798 is one of the most important events in the history of Kildare and there is no shortage of stories about that eventful period in the in the Schools' Collection including [this account](#) of the Battle of Rathangan and the fate of rebel leader John Doorley and [this description](#) of the infamous event which took place at the Gibbet Rath.

The vast majority of the material collected in Kildare is in English, however there are some examples of lists of Irish words that were still in use in the English spoken at that time. Just a couple of good examples of such lists are these from [Milltown](#) and [Ballymore Eustace](#). There are also a number of lists of Place Names, but [this one](#), showing the unofficial place names of the townland of Suncroft, stands out with its comprehensive explanations and neat drawings.