

Schools' Collection material from Co. Laois now available on www.duchas.ie

Folklore and local history from Co. Laois is now available to read on www.duchas.ie.

The Schools' Collection, an important component of the National Folklore Collection, UCD, contains the folklore material recorded by pupils between 1937 and 1939. It consists of over half a million pages recorded by around 50,000 primary school pupils in the 26 counties.

All volumes from the Schools' Collection will be available online in a new repository of Irish folklore, dúchas.ie, by the end of 2016. Folklore material from Dublin, Mayo, Donegal, Waterford, Galway, Leitrim, Kildare, Kerry, Sligo and Limerick has already been made available on the site since the end of 2013. dúchas.ie is the result of a partnership, established in 2012, between the National Folklore Collection (UCD), Fiontar (DCU) and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The site will be of interest to a great many Irish people and to the Irish diaspora. 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 or by person, and a search facility according to topic will be made available in the near future.

Over 70 schools in Co. Laois took part in the scheme and 17 large volumes of material were compiled.

The Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs, Joe McHugh, TD, said, 'This is yet another important step in this innovative project as material relating to traditional life in Ireland in years past will be made available to the general public. This new material will enable researchers and many others to contrast life as it is today and life as it was over 80 years ago.'

The site dúchas.ie is developed by Fiontar, the Irish-medium teaching and research unit in DCU, and the National Folklore Collection in UCD, one of the largest folklore collections in the world. The project is jointly financed by UCD and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht with support from the National Lottery.

The Digital Repository of Ireland acts in an advisory role in the work of dúchas.ie relating to standards and interoperability in digital archiving.

ENDS

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Notes for the editor:**Stories from County Laois**

County Laois has a long-standing, rich and varied history. Each era has left its mark on the county - the Gaelic Lords, the Normans, the monks, the Huguenots, the landlords and the Land Leaguers. It is therefore no wonder that a particular emphasis is placed on issues such as land and power in the accounts found in the seventeen volumes from County Laois in the Schools' Collection. In [this account](#), a link is made between the taoiseach *Leigheadh Laoighse* and the name *Laois*.

There are plenty of accounts to be found in the Schools' Collection in which major historical events are described and oftentimes local place names are also mentioned in these stories. The Rock of Dunamase for example, has a very rich history and the dwelling is closely associated with the county's history. According to [this account](#), the place was named *Dún Másc* because of the taoiseach *Maisge* who built a fort on the site. In 1170, Diarmaid Mac Murchadha (Dermot MacMurrough), King of Leinster, presented Dunamase and his daughter (Aoife) to Strongbow. In return, Strongbow and his army were to help Diarmaid regain his lands. Strongbow's descendants remained seated there for many years until the O'Moore clan (chief clan of Laois) claimed the land. Eoghan Rua Ó Néill (Owen Roe O'Neill), a member of the O'Neill dynasty, took ownership of Dunamase after that, however, in 1650 Cromwell's army attacked the castle and today only its ruins survive. There is an interesting [account](#) about the castle's history, written in Irish, in which the building is described as "*fuar follamh agus ag imtheacht 'na fhothracha*" ("cold, empty and falling to ruin"). It is said that each of the five counties that surround Laois can be seen from the fort on a clear day.

Seven families, known as "The Seven Septs of *Loígis*" are primarily associated with County Laois. The O'Moore clan were the chief clan of the county and reigned over the Rock of Dunamase during the fourteenth century. More information about the other chieftains associated with Laois over the years can be found [here](#). Sir Francis Crosby's plan to kill members of the Seven Septs is described in the interesting story entitled, "The Massacre of Mullaghmast". But did he succeed? Continue reading [here](#) to find out.

The Lalor clan, a clan who descend from the chieftains who were in power before the Norman era, are still well known today. They host an annual clan gathering to celebrate their heritage. James Fintan Lalor (1807-1849), the orator, writer and revolutionary who achieved national fame, is highly regarded. He was a member of Éire Óg and the following statement of his is well known:

"Ireland her own, and all therein, from the sod to the sky.

The soil of Ireland for the people of Ireland."

Read more about his fascinating life [here](#).

Ballyfin Demesne is famed these days as the location of choice for an overnight stay favoured by the famous, such as Beyoncé and Jay -Z, Kim and Kanye (if the rumours are true!). An account of the landlord named Coote who owned the demesne long ago and built the manor house that is now a well-known hotel can be read [here](#). The landlords of Ballyfin Demesne and similar are described in the following stories: "[The Landlord](#)", "[The Local Landlord](#)" & "[The Landlord](#)".

Eleven men were hanged in Mountmellick during the 1798 Rebellion. They were members of the Society of United Irishmen. A monument in memory of the men now stands on Wolfe Tone Street in the centre

of Mountmellick with the names of those executed inscribed on it. An account of the hanging can be found [here](#) and a description of the monument [here](#).

This is only a taster of the rich material from County Laois. There are many more interesting stories to be found, click this [link](#) to enjoy reading more from the collection.