

**The complete Schools' Collection and material from Co. Cork and Co. Offaly launched
by Minister of State, Seán Kyne, on www.duchas.ie**

The entire Schools' Collection on www.duchas.ie has been officially launched by Seán Kyne TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs, at the National Ploughing Championships in Screggan, Co. Offaly (Wednesday, 21 September).

The Schools' Collection, an important component of the National Folklore Collection, UCD, contains the folklore material recorded by primary school pupils between 1937 and 1939. It consists of almost half a million pages recorded by around 5,000 primary school pupils throughout the 26 counties. These pages are kept in the Collection's archive in UCD. The volumes from the Schools' Collection have been published on duchas.ie on a county by county basis since the end of 2013. Now with the publication of material from Co. Cork and Co. Offaly, all volumes from the Collection, covering all 26 counties that took part in the Schools' Scheme, are available to the public in digital form on duchas.ie.

duchas.ie is the result of a partnership, beginning in 2012, between the National Folklore Collection (UCD), Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge (DCU) and the Department of Arts, Heritage Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. The objective of the project is to digitize the National Folklore Collection and make it available to the public online.

The site is popular both with Irish people and the Irish diaspora. Users are located 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, duchas.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.

A special feature of the site is Meitheal [Dúchas.ie](http://duchas.ie), a crowdsourced transcription initiative. At the beginning of 2015, the public was invited to help duchas.ie by transcribing the text of the Irish-language stories in the Schools' Collection. Since the start of this year, every story in the collection, both Irish and English, is available for transcription and a dedicated community of transcribers eagerly undertake this work. To date the voluntary transcribers of the Meitheal have transcribed over 35,000 pages – which makes Meitheal [Dúchas.ie](http://duchas.ie) one of the most successful crowdsourcing projects of its kind in the world.

Seán Kyne, TD, Minister of State for Gaeltacht Affairs, said, 'I am delighted to launch the two final counties of the Schools' Folklore Collection. This wonderful resource is now available to the public in its entirety. It is of great importance not only as a primary source for the academic researcher but also as a treasure trove for everyone around the world who has an interest in Ireland.'

The duchas.ie project is developed by Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge, 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 Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs with support from the National Lottery.

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

ENDS

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Notes for the editor:

Stories from Co. Cork and Co. Offaly

Over 90 schools in Co. Offaly took part in the scheme and 21 volumes of material were compiled. In Co. Cork, over 450 schools took part and 125 volumes of material were compiled.

Co. Cork

Saint Gobnait of Ballyvourney is renowned, and indeed 'few, if any of our minor Irish saints are held in such popular veneration as St Gobnait' according to this [story](#). It is said that the saint had a beehive and she often used the bees to protect the people. This [account](#) tells how she used the bees to get rid of soldiers who were trying to take cows from the farmers of Ballyvourney. Another [story](#) says that she was a princess who took religious vows. She was told by her guardian angel to travel until she came upon nine white deer. She came upon three in one place, and six in another, but in Ballyvourney is where she found the nine. The same story tells of her bowl, or iron ball, that has a cure in it. There is also an interesting story of Gobnait spending time on Cathaoir Gobnatan in Gortnatubbrid. According to this [story](#), a castle was being built in the area by a group she did not like. Every night she would throw the bowl and destroy whatever they had built that day.

The Blarney Stone is a major tourist attraction and, of course, there are several references to the stone and to the castle in the collection. According to this [story](#) the stone is a piece of the Stone of Scone given by the Bruces to Cormac Láidir Mac Cárthaigh. In another [account](#), Mac Cárthaigh saved a woman and she offered him in reward his choice of power, wealth or eloquence. He chose the latter and she told him to go home and kiss a particular stone, the Blarney Stone. With regard to the castle itself there are several stories relating to its construction while this [story](#) tells how the castle dwellers repelled the forces of Cromwell. It is also said that the Mac Cárthaigh family threw all their riches in a lake to keep them from their enemies and that Mac Cárthaigh himself appears every seven years – whoever sees him will receive all the wealth.

Co. Offaly

Clonmacnoise is well-known the world over, and the material from Clonmacnoise school has an array of [stories](#) relating to that monastic sites and its holy wells, high crosses, round towers and chapels. There are many other stories in the collection that have a religious theme, as is evident in the material from Lemanaghan which has a number of stories relating to the local patron St Manchán. This particular [story](#) tells how his great milk-yielding cow was stolen from him. The saint found the cow by following the marks left by her hooves on the stones. St Manchán never gave milk to the people of Lemanaghan after that. Not a drop of milk was ever sold by the people of that parish since that day. Another story can be read [here](#) about how St Manchán and St Ciarán divided their lands. Ciarán said that he would throw his cap in the air and from where he was standing to where it landed was his. He threw the cap in the air and a gust of wind blew it a great distance to the border between Offaly and Westmeath. Every year on his feast-day on September 9th there is said to be a great wind or 'St Ciarán's Wind'.

The Schools' Collection contains many lists of Irish words in use in the local English dialect, and this [list](#) from Rashinagh is a good example of such. Offaly, and indeed Ireland as a whole would not, in general, be famed for wine or wine production, but this [story](#) from Banagher shows that sloe wine was made in that area at the time, and it also gives an explanation of how it is made. Along similar lines, amongst the material from Shannon Harbour is a [story](#) about various famous pubs around County Offaly, 'The Blue Ball', 'The Thatch' and 'The Cat and Bagpipes' to name but a few. The Grand Canal would have played a central role in life in the Shannon Harbour area, as is evident from this detailed [account](#) of that canal.