

A sample selection of volumes from the Main Manuscript Collection launched by Seán Kyne T.D.

Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands, Seán Kyne T.D., launched a sample selection of digitised volumes from the Main Manuscript Collection of the National Folklore Collection at Oireachtas na Samhna in Killarney yesterday evening (Thursday, 1 November).

The Main Manuscript Collection is the most recent collection to be digitised by the dúchas.ie team. This collection comprises 2,400 bound volumes of material collected since 1932. Full- and part-time collectors compiled the majority of these under the auspices of the Irish Folklore Commission (1935–1971). Approximately two thirds of the material is in Irish and it includes every aspect of the Irish oral tradition. The majority of the material launched yesterday consists of material collected in the Gaeltacht regions during the 1930s.

This sample selection of over 4,000 stories gives an insight into the work of the full-time collectors who worked in the Gaeltacht areas north, west and south during the early years of the Commission. Material relating to **Co. Kerry** was collected by [Tadhg Ó Murchadha](#), in Uíbh Ráthach, and [Seosamh Ó Dálaigh](#), in Corca Dhuibhne, who was from the area himself and more than qualified for the job! In **Waterford**, [Nioclás Breathnach](#) collected lore in the area of An Rinn and from story-tellers such as [Micheál Turraoin](#). In **Galway**, [Liam Mac Coisdeala](#) was put to work collecting in the areas of Eanach Dhúin and Carna including material from the famous story-teller [Éamon a Búrc](#). Further interesting material was collected by [Proinnsias de Búrca](#) in **Dúiche Sheoigheach**. In **Co. Donegal**, [Seán Ó hEochaidh](#) collected stories from his native Teileann and from all over the south of the county. Further north, [Liam Mac Meanman](#) collected stories in the Gleann Fhinne area including material from the famous story-teller [Anna Nic a' Luain](#) from Na Cruacha.

Amongst the other material already available on dúchas.ie is **the Schools' Collection**, material from each of the 26 counties that took part in the Schools' Scheme in 1937-39, as well as over 11,000 photographs from the **Photographic Collection**. [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 160,000 pages have been transcribed voluntarily by members of the Meitheal.

Government Chief Whip and Minister of State for the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands, Seán Kyne T.D., said, 'I'm delighted to be here today to officially launch this material at Oireachtas na Samhna 2018. This material is highly important in making the Irish-language folklore of Ireland available to the public. In recognition of this, this project has been funded by my Department for the last several years under the 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language.

It's clear that valuable work is being done by Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge in Dublin City University and by the National Folklore Collection in University College Dublin to preserve the folklore of Ireland and to make it visible digitally to the Irish public and to other people around the world. I wish everyone involved in this project every success.'

Seán Mac an tSíthigh said, 'This folklore collection mirrors the soul of our country, the common beliefs and understandings from which we emerged. It is the reservoir of a nation, in which the foundations of our identity and the deep roots which mould us as Irish are preserved. It's here you will find richness of language and dialect, imaginative storytelling, cultural heritage, not to mention native teaching and philosophy.

Not only do we have the opportunity through this digitisation initiative to present a valuable store of information to scholars of folklore, and a variety of other subjects, but it offers the opportunity to bestow, once more, this incredible wealth to the communities from which it came. It was these communities who preserved and sustained this knowledge and who shared it so readily with the Commission. This initiative recognizes the generosity of the storytellers, the women and men from whom the material was collected, and encourages local pride in the communities and parishes all over Ireland from which they came.'

dúchas.ie is popular both with 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.

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

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