



# CEALCANT

THE 1930s  
SCHOOLS' MANUSCRIPT COLLECTION  
IN  
COUNTY DONEGAL



**Eithne Ní Ghallchobhair**



Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall  
Donegal County Council

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



© County Donegal Heritage Office, Donegal County Council, 2017  
All images are © National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the County Donegal Heritage Office, Donegal County Council.

ISBN 978-0-9927708-2-2

The Donegal Heritage Series is edited by Joseph Gallagher, Heritage Officer, County Donegal Heritage Office, Donegal County Council. This booklet in the series was sponsored by Donegal County Council/Comhairle Contae Dhún na nGall & The Heritage Council/An Chomhairle Oidhreachta under the County Donegal Heritage Plan.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The author and the County Donegal Heritage Office, Donegal County Council would like to sincerely thank the following people who helped in the producing this booklet:

Dr. Críostóir Mac Cárthaigh, National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin; Úna Matthewson and all the staff in the Donegal Central Library in Letterkenny; Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig, Liam Dolan, Séamus Gallagher, Greg Gillespie & Paula Harvey; the students and teachers who took part in this project, and all the curators of our heritage who passed on their tales, songs, poems and lore. Thanks are also extended to the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin for their kind permission to reproduce images from the 1930s Schools' Manuscript Collection.

Go raibh maith agaibh uilig go léir.

### **COVER PHOTOGRAPHS:**

Illustration by Prionnsias Ua Braonáin, January 9, 1939 courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin & Postcard of National School by Glen Lough courtesy of Donegal County Archives.

### **BACK PHOTOGRAPH:**

Illustration by Seaghan Mac Cuinneagáin, Dunkineely School, Killaghtee courtesy of the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin.

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

	Page
Introduction	02
Use of Language	09
Storytelling	10
Arts & Crafts	14
Customs & Beliefs	17
Monuments & Ruins	22
Folk Medicine	26
Placenames	30
Songs, Poems & Prayers	33
Historical Events	38
House & Home	44
Hidden Treasure	47
Accounts of Days Gone By	49
Conclusion	53





## INTRODUCTION

In 1937 the Department of Education in partnership with the Irish Folklore Commission and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation initiated a scheme whereby children in the higher classes in national schools across twenty six counties of Ireland would record and collect folklore material from older members of their communities.

This material was to be collected outside school hours. Every school taking part in the scheme was to undertake its own project which was to be supervised by a teacher working in that school. Instructions as to how the project should be carried out were sent to each participating school along with a list of potential themes including story-telling, songs, poems, prayers, local customs, weather lore and games played. Relevant details concerning the collector and the informant were to accompany any material written in official notebooks supplied to the schools. The result was phenomenal. Over 50,000 children from 5,000 primary schools participated in the project and approximately 740,000 manuscript pages were filled by both students and teachers before being returned to the Irish Folklore Commission. This anthology was later christened 'The Schools' Manuscript Collection'.

Over 320 schools participated in the scheme in County Donegal. The original notebooks form part of the Irish National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin. Images on microfilm of the original material collected in Donegal are held in the Central Library in Letterkenny. Both the original material and the images on microfilm may be viewed by the public by appointment. The Manuscript Collection can also be accessed on the [www.duchas.ie](http://www.duchas.ie) website, a collaboration between the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin, the National Folklore Foundation, University College Dublin Digital Library, Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge, Dublin City University and the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

197

## COMISIÚN BÉALOIDEASA ÉIREANN

CONNTAE Síng na nZall PARÓISTE TER BOZARNA  
 PARÓISTE SÍO A' RÁI

Daoir an Sgíobópa Peadar Mac Conaill (13 $\frac{1}{2}$  bli.)

Seolta an Sgíobópa Scol. Naomh na h-Ág Breacais.  
Ard a' Ráí Co. Síng na nZall.

Dó reilobar ríor an Sígal fo ar an  
12<sup>ú</sup> Bealtaine, 1936 ó Beal-áireop

Seinleas Uí Mhuinnis (dop. 80 bliadain.

Suim-beala Fionnghuala atá in a cónnail Breacais

áir a paróistí áir a cónnail ar an Breacais

Dó cuála pé (r) an Sígal fo 60 bli.

Dáir ó fin ó Peadar ó Mhuinnis (dop. 54) a bí in

a cónnail ar an Breacais.

## Óinníall Kubesic Rusó.

There was a king living one time who had a son and a daughter. The son was the eldest and was going to have all the place. The king wanted the daughter to have it, and he told the boy that he would have to marry another king's daughter, and he knew well that she would not take him. He got a year to get her, and a day to marry her, and set out next morning. He walked on until he came to a bridge, and out from under it came a little red haired boy with one thick hair in his head. The little boy asked the man where was he going, and he told him all about what he was going to do. Then he asked him would it be any harm him to be with him and he said, "no," that he would



Most students did record details about themselves and their informant(s). However, there is the odd exception, including one amusing entry under the theme 'Games Played' written by Enie Stuart, Corradoeey School, Convoy<sup>1</sup>, who had no need to record details, as, he wrote at the end of his entry based on how to play tug o' war, "*I knew all this myself.*"<sup>2</sup>

An account written by Shemus McLaughlin, Drumaweir School, Moville Lower, describes how he set about collecting folklore one evening after school:

***"On Friday evening after I got my dinner, I went away to look for folklore. I went to Ballymacarter to an old woman called Mrs. McGuinness. She was born in Ballymacarter. Her age is 79 years of age. I asked her did she know any local happening. She said she did, so this is what she told me . . ."***

Mrs. McGuinness recounted how the people of Greencastle had saved a mother and her four children from a house that had gone on fire many years earlier in the town, an incident that clearly had an impact locally.

Collecting folklore was not an easy task for many children, particularly those living on farms, as their help was often needed when they returned home from school. Moreover, the informants were not always available until their own day's work was done. Eibhlín Bean Uí Bhaoighill, a teacher in Letterfad School, Inver, wrote a letter dated January 13<sup>th</sup>, 1938 to the Secretary of the Department of Education which was later attached to the end of the Letterfad School collection. In this letter, Eibhlín states that there are many more stories yet to be collected by the children in her area. She suggests that these could be collected during the long winter nights since the farmers who know the stories don't have time to tell them until their day's work has been completed. This, she adds, leaves the task of collecting folklore quite longsome.

---

1 Every school name is followed by the name of the civil parish within which that school is situated. Names of schools and parishes situated within the Gaeltacht are written in Irish. Names of schools and parishes situated outside the Gaeltacht boundaries are written in their anglicised forms. Where a civil parish is split between Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas, the civil parish name is given in English.

2 All entries quoted in this publication appear without editorial interference.

322<sup>a</sup>Seoil kéim-íada  
kéim-íarra.

Dún-na-níall

13. 1. '30

An Rúnáidí,

Oifis an Oid. Nais.,

Baile-ara-Chao.

A Cára,

Tá tuillead

sean-sealtac ar fáil go fóill.  
 agus ticefaid leis na paisidí seolta  
 isó a bailigead m' na h-oidceamra-  
 fáca seo. feirmeoirí uilig a bfuil na  
 sgeartaí acu agus ní bíonn faill  
 acu suide síos le sgeartaí a m'ime  
 aco 'san oidce indiaró obair an se  
 a críochnú. fágann sin an  
 bailigead fadalaic 'a déanam.

Mise, le meas,

Eibhlín Uí Bhaighill



Many teachers participating in the project were well aware of the wealth of folklore surrounding them. The fact that Eibhlín Bean Uí Bhaoghíll took the trouble to write to the Department of Education illustrates her own enthusiasm for the project and her mindfulness as to the deficiencies within her school's collection in comparison with the wealth of folklore yet to be collected in the region. Nevertheless, as it stands, the collection from Letterfad School is outstanding, with songs, fairytales, sagas and descriptions of local customs written in both Irish and English.

Niall Mac Suibhne, Míin na Manrach School, Teampall Cróine, wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Irish Folklore Commission dated April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1938 adding at the end of the letter, "Cuir chugainn le do thoil cóip-leabhar eile". Such was the amount of material collected another notebook was required. The collection from Míin na Manrach School is noteworthy with material written by both teacher and students. Sadly, this collection comes to an incomplete end in the middle of a story written in Irish in Niall Mac Suibhne's handwriting.

Niall Mac Suibhne, O.S., Míin na Manrach, An Clochán  
Lúth, Co. Dhún na nGall, a bhé á sguabh  
mo thuas, nuair a thosaíl tinnas an bháis  
é, agus níorbh fháid é chríochnú.

Cilleadh Míin; ndéire 'n Abáin, 1949.

A bhainteach a chuir an t-ábairt do chugam

Oct. 1951.

S. Duilearga

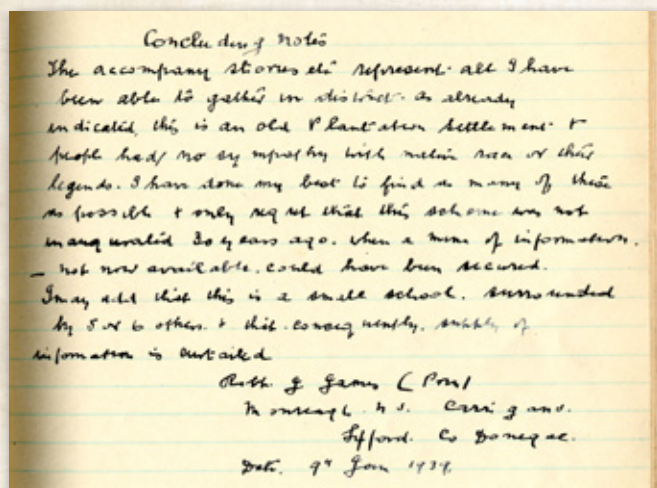
Bhí Míin Mac Suibhne ar an t-ábairt a thug  
lámh chomharta don Chomisiún Béaloidese i  
d'Ír Chonáil. Dúisá beagán ab eadh é. P.P.

A postscript to the Míin na Manrach School collection written by Séamus Ó Duilearga, a founding member of the Irish Folklore Commission, dated 1951.

© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin



Not all students were fortunate enough to have such a wealth of folklore alive in their areas. A note written by Robert James, a teacher in Monreagh School, Taughboyne, dated June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1939 excuses, what he perceives as being, a lame collection and cites the reasons for this in a concluding note in his school's project.



© National Folklore Collection,  
University College Dublin

Some students were clearly in a position where they could collect a greater amount of material than others and, subsequently, a number of collections stand out above others. Schools from Rann na Feirste, Loch an Lúir, Gaoth Dobhair and An Ghaeltacht Láir have outstanding collections of stories, songs, poems, placenames and proverbs in Irish. The Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) Doagh Branch has an exceptional collection of material. The collection from Gaddyduff School, Clonmany, has a delightful collection of fairy tales written in English. It must be noted, however, that a collection which may appear wanting as regards the quantity or quality of material may be of significant value to the community in which it was collected.

The following commentary and excerpts aim to serve merely as an introduction to the Schools' Manuscript Collection in Donegal. Due to the large volume and scope of material collected by children and teachers in the county over eighty years ago, it would be impossible to discuss every topic and every school's entry within the limits of this publication. I have, however, endeavoured to give a representative account of it – materially, linguistically and geographically – and hope, at the very least, that it will give a taste of our extraordinary literary and oral heritage.



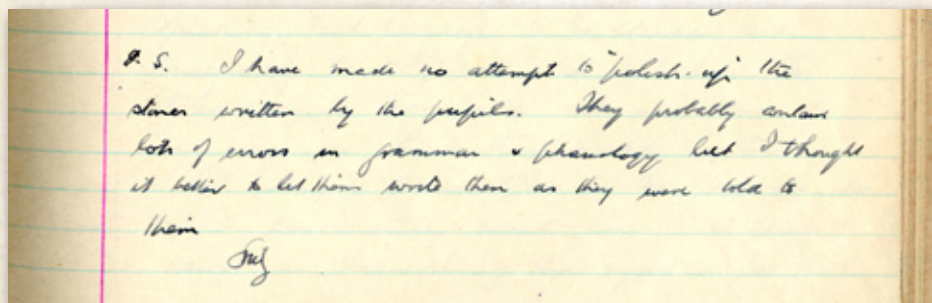
Illustration of Carrowreagh Old School from the Carrowreagh School Collection, Burt.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

## USE OF LANGUAGE

A considerable proportion of the material collected in the Gaeltacht regions, as they existed in the 1930s, was collected and written exclusively in Irish. Many schools in Donegal submitted material written both in Irish and in English. Other schools, particularly those in the east of the county, submitted material in English alone. Ulster Scots is found in a number of entries from schools in north-east Donegal.

The language found in the Schools' Manuscript Collection often reflects the dialects of communities where material was collected; however, there was a tendency among some students and teachers towards writing 'standard' English. Since this scheme was inaugurated under the auspices of the Department of Education (as well as the Irish Folklore Commission), it is not difficult to appreciate the hesitancy of teachers to submit material that they perceived as being grammatically questionable.

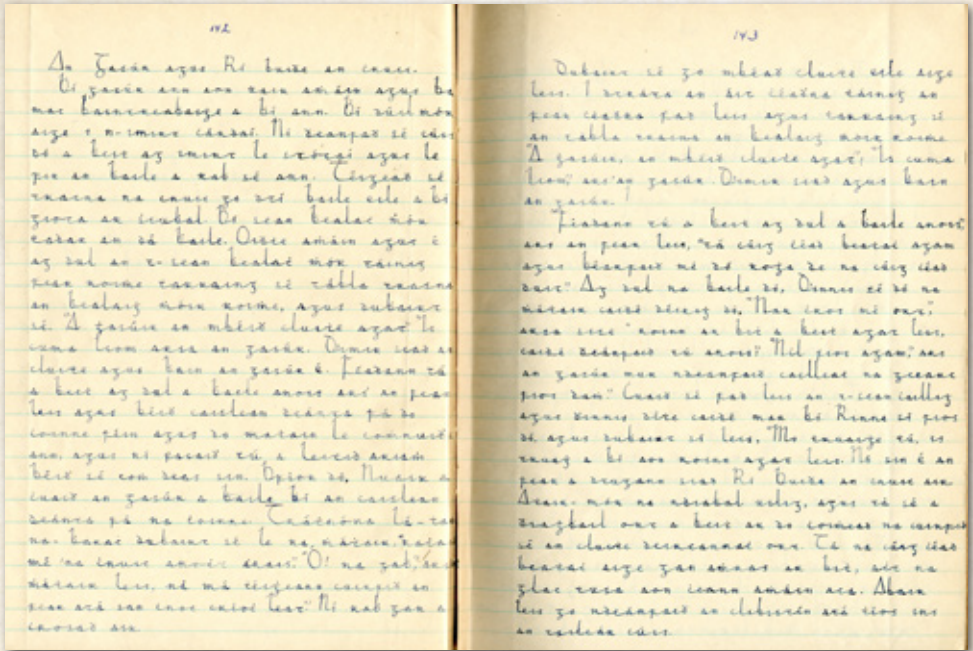
Séamus MacGabhann, a teacher in Kerrykeel School, Tullyfern, was clearly aware of the importance of recording material as spoken by an informant. This is indicated by a note he wrote at the end of his school's collection dated January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1939:





# STORYTELLING

A significant amount of material collected in this category relates the adventures of Fionn MacCumhaill agus Fíanna Éireann. This is especially true in west Donegal. Stories such as 'Fionn agus na Carraigeacha', 'Ardrí na gCros' and 'Fionn agus an Bás' - stories that survived in the Irish oral tradition for centuries - appear time and again throughout the Collection. Other stories such as 'An Coileach, an Cat agus an Dréimire', 'Imeachta Shéimí Uí Fhrighil agus an Slua Sí', 'Eachtraí Jacky leis na Fáthaigh', tales recounting the antics of An Gobán Saor, An Fear Beag Ribe Rua and Ridirí na Craoibhe Rua are all to be found. Stories are frequently located in the areas where they were collected, such as 'Fear na Rosann a's na Síóga' and 'Fear an Tearmainn agus an Seachrán a Tháinig Air'.



Entry of Tomás Ua Duibhidhir, Cróibh, Cill Charthaigh.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

While longer tales are more frequently found written in Irish, this is not always the case, as illustrated by 'The White Dog with the Eight Feet', 'Ashpit Jack', 'Why the Sea is Salt', 'The Talkative Princess' and 'A Fairytale of Moville'.

43

The White Dog with the  
eight feet.  
long long ago, there  
lived a king, and a  
queen and she had  
one son. The mother died  
and the king married  
again. The son grew up  
to be a fine prince  
and him and she went  
out hunting every day.  
The step-mother got jealous  
of him.  
She said that it  
was not fair for him to  
be taking for the son out  
with him every day  
and for to leave him  
with her that day.  
So the son stayed with  
the step-mother that  
day. And so they both  
began to play card  
and she win the first  
three games. so she left



Shorter stories offer a glimpse into the humour of the time. These are typically based on local people - old characters whose antics lived on in community folklore. Entries entitled 'Local Heroes' invariably tell of 'great mowers', 'great walkers', 'great jumpers', 'a powerful swimmer', 'a noted dancer' and such like. William McColgan, Carnamoyle School, Muff, wrote an account of the strongest man in his townland and, should any man doubt his story, there were witnesses to testify to his strength:

***"The strongest man about here is Dan Farren. He lives at Ture, Parish of Muff, Co. Donegal. He lifted an eighteen stone bag of corn with his teeth in Jim McCallion's barn at Iskaheen, Muff, Co. Donegal. There were more than twenty men watching him."***

An entry from Beltra School, Clonmany, recalls how Éamon Ruddy from the Isle of Doagh could "at a running jump clear a twelve foot plank on level ground". Not alone this, the same man could "perform all kinds of feats in the water and carry a man of 14 stones on his back". The student who wrote this entry did not write his/her name.

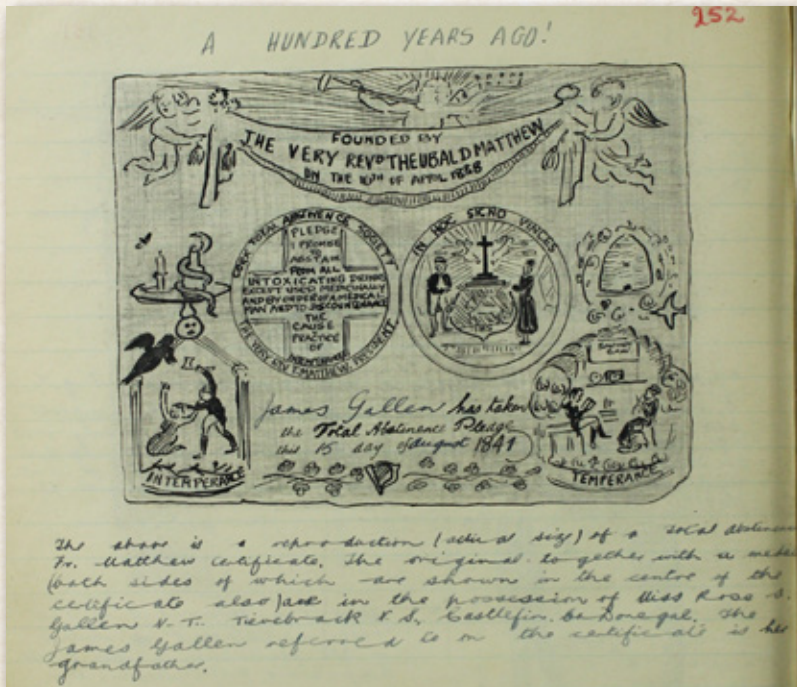
Curiously, considering the age of the collectors, the making of poitín was a hot topic. Proinneas Ó Baoighill, Mín na Croise School, Gleann Cholm Cille, wrote a story entitled, 'Peadar Mór agus an Poitín' recounting a story of poitín-making in his area. Bríghid Ní Lúdhóg, from neighbouring Learga na Saorthach School, Inishkeel, wrote a similar version recounting the same episode.

Máighread Ní Fhrighil, Frosses School, Inver, wrote the following account:

***"In the parish of Inver a long time ago the people used to make their own whiskey. This whiskey was called 'poteen'. It used to be sold very cheaply on since no duty had to be payed on it. The British Government tried to stop the making of 'poteen' but failed to do so. They got up a special police force called the Revenue or still hunters. In every townland there was a still or 'sheebing' house and this police force hunted through the country by day and night in search for 'poteen'. The people used to try every trick to fool the 'Revenue' and succeeded always except on a few occasions."***

Máighread added a few short anecdotes about poitín-making locally bringing her entry to a close with:

*"The church succeeded in ending the evil custom but the English police and 'Revenue' men would never succeed in ending the evil. Indeed they were often very glad to get a bottle of 'poteen' for their own use."*



Replica of Total Abstinence Certificate by Donnchadh Mac Congáile, Tievebrack School, Donaghmore  
 © National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin



## ARTS &amp; CRAFTS

367

## "Candle Making"

In this district in olden days, people made their own candles. They took for the wick the inside of a rush with a narrow strip of the covering left on, to make it stronger.

At that time most people ~~had~~ killed animals for their own use, and they used the fat ~~from~~ for making tallow.

Then they took the rush and dipped it in the tallow, and left it out to harden. This candle was not as thick as a pencil. When it was hard they again dipped it in the tallow, and continued this work till the candle was thick enough.

The woman who told me this, promised to make me a candle as soon as she gets tallow.

Frances Buchanan,  
Claggan,  
Churchill.



Homemade candles, soap, ropes, creels, rush lights, walking sticks and heads for walking sticks were routinely made and descriptions of how they were prepared are commonly found.

Viola May Gregg, Ednacarnon School, Kilmacrennan, wrote the following account on candle-making:

*“Candles were made by melting cows’ tallow in a large pot. When the tallow was in a liquid state several plies of hemp thread were dipped into it and then the tallow was left for about an hour until it was fairly hard. It was then rolled into the shape of a candle having the hemp thread for a wick.”*

Nóra Ní Chnámhsaigh, Baile Uí Chiaragáin School, Kiltcevogue, collected an account from her father on how creels were made in her district:

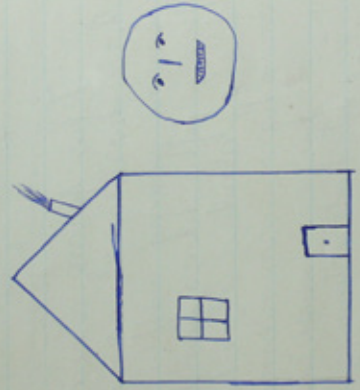
*“Nuair a bhíonn fear ag déanamh cliabh, gearann sé fod mór as an tálamh. Sáthainn sé na sláit síos sa bhfód go daingean. Annsin chuireann sé na sláta isteach agus amach idir na sláit eile. Nuair a bhíonn giota de déanta fágann sé poill i lár an chliabh chun é do thógail. Tig leis an fhear móin do iomchar ann agus rudaí eile fosda. Déanainn sé an cliabh le saileóga bána agus chor am le saileóga dubha. Chuireann sé airísí ann déanta de cóchan. Tá an chuid is mó do na fir i mo cheanntar ábalta cliabh do dheánamh.”*

Descriptions of homemade toys are found throughout the county. The following entry was collected by Joe Ayton, Swanzy Memorial School, Moville:

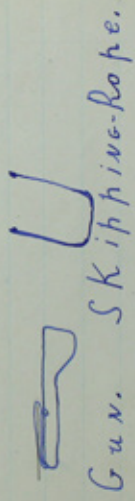
“Boys and girls amuse themselves in making toys. Girls string chains of daisies and make dolls and skipping. Boys make tops out of thread spools, snare rabbits and hares, trapping birds and making a face out of a turnip and making boats. Older people make guns, and build Easter houses.”

Joe later added that Easter houses were made specifically at Easter “in the face of a bray near the hen house [although] some are made near the house”.

137



EAST-ER-HOUSE, TURVIP-FACE.



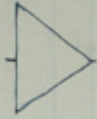
GUN. SKIPPING-ROPE.

Joe Ayton,  
Balleighan,  
Greencastle,  
Co Donegal.

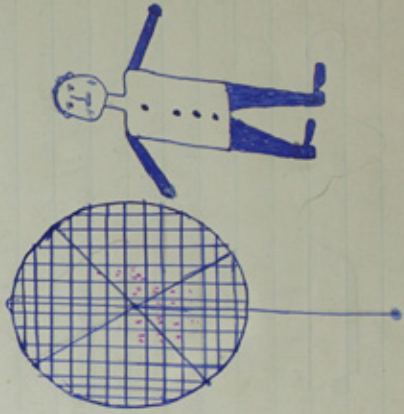
136



DAISY-CHAIN.



TOP.



BIRD-SNARE. DOLL.

## CUSTOMS & BELIEFS

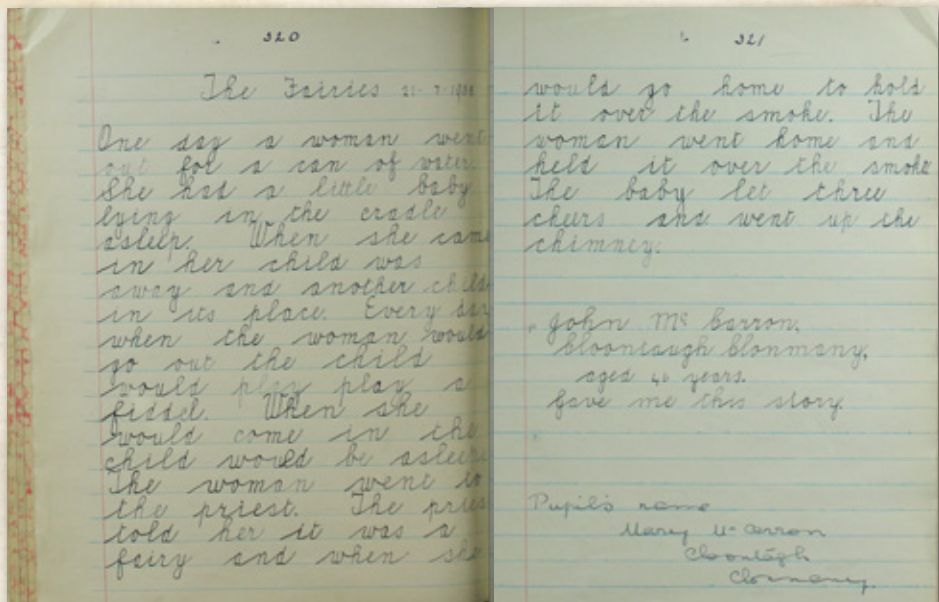
---

Customs, beliefs and otherworldly characters are found cited throughout the collection. Eibhlín Nic Mhathghamhna, Loch Muc School, Inishkeel, explained why women threw salt over a baby's cradle before they left the house:

*“Deirtear nuair a bhí cogadh ins na Flaitheas na h-aingle a cuireadh amach as gurab iad sin na daoine beaga. I bhfad ó shoin ba ghnáthach leobhtha capall a dheanamh amach as an 'buachallán buidhe'. Ba ghnáthach leobhtha daoine a thabhairt leobhtha agus sin an fáth ar ghnáthach leis na mná salann a chur trasna ar an chliabhán sul a dtéigheadh siad amach.”*

Numerous stories telling of a child being replaced by a fairy-child or changeling are found in the Schools' Manuscript Collection. It is interesting to note that this theme is more commonly found in material collected in the north of the county than anywhere else. The following account was written by Moira O'Donnell, Convent of Mercy School, Moville:

*“Many years ago, there lived in Moville a woman who had a lovely little baby boy. On Hallow Eve night she left the baby in bed and then continued her work as she had a great deal to do that night as it was Hallow Eve night. After midnight, she went to her bed and found in it an ugly child and her own child was gone. Her friends told her that the fairies had taken it as fairies are always busy on Hallow Eve night. The woman kept the baby but it was very hard to nurse as it was noisy and troublesome. One day it was so troublesome that the woman lifted a stick and hit it a blow. Suddenly the ugly baby seemed to disappear and the woman beheld to her joy her own child again.”*



Entry of Mary McCarron, Gaddyduff School, Clonmany.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

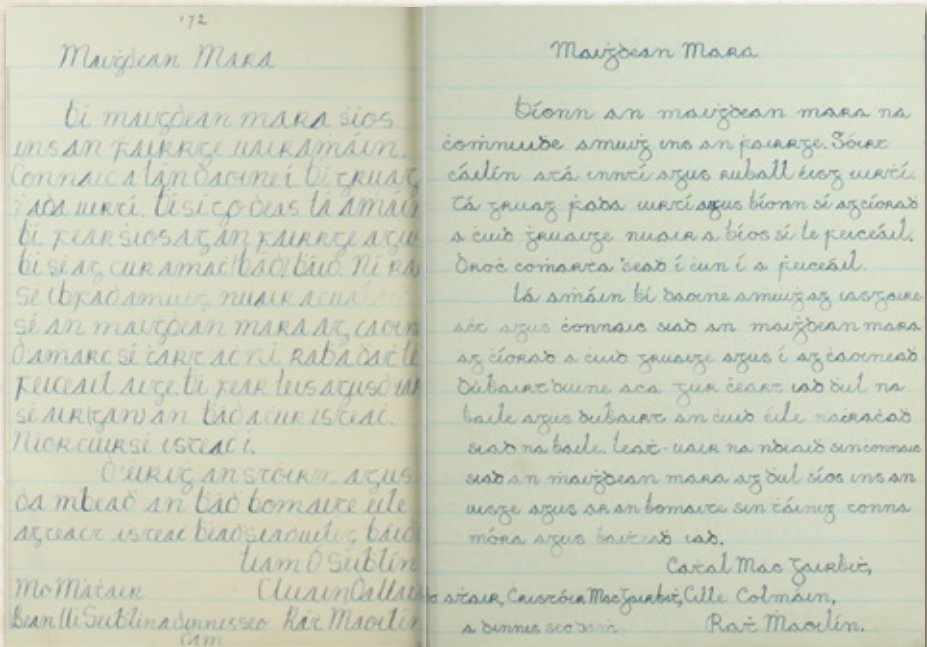
Susie Mac Cole, Glentogher School, Donagh, wrote:

***"There was a woman one time whose baby had been stolen by the fairies while she was outside. She had left the baby alone. When she came back there was a fairy baby in the cradle and it never stopped crying. The neighbours told her that it was a fairy baby and that it should be thrown in the river. One day she went to the river with it. She threw it in a hole and it got out and went away and disappeared. She never got back her own baby."***

References to the mermaid are typically found in entries gathered along coastal areas. A tale recounting how a mermaid was coerced into marrying an earthly man and having a family with him before seizing an unexpected opportunity to return to her home deep in the ocean is found in one of the most beautiful collections in the county, that of Leac Chonaill School, Inishkeel. This was collected by Máirín Nic Grianra and later rewritten by her father, Séamus Mac Grianra, who taught in the school at the time.

The mermaid was traditionally associated with an imminent drowning. The belief that the appearance of a mermaid foretold misfortune is verified in a story collected by Cathal Mac Gairbhith, St Garvan's School, Rathmullan, Killygarvan:

***"Bíonn an mhaighdean mhara na chomhnuidhe amuigh ins an fhairge. Sóirt cáilín atá inntí agus ruball éisg uirthí. Tá gruag fhada uirthí agus bíonn sí ag cíoradh a chuid ghruaige nuair a bhíos sí le feiceáil. Droch comhartha 'seadh í chun í a fheiceáil. Lá amháin bhí daoine amuigh ag iasgaireacht agus chonnaic siad an mhaighdean mhara ag chíoradh a chuid ghruaige agus í ag chaoineadh. Dubhairt duine aca gur cheart iad dhul na bhaile agus dubhairt an chuid eile nach rachadh siad na bhaile. Leath-uair na ndiaidh sin chonnaic siad an mhaighdean mhara ag dhul síos ins an uisge agus ar an bhomaite sin tháinig tonna móra agus bailtheadh iad."***



Entries of Liam Ó Seibhlín and Cathal Mac Gairbhith, St. Garvan's School, Rathmullan.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin



Death omens are frequently cited. Nellie Corcoran, St. Johnston School, wrote the following entry entitled 'The Banshee.' She collected her information from Mrs McCready, Carrigans:

***"There is a woman living near us called Maggie McCready, who saw a banshee. This is how she told me the story: We were leevin in St. Johnston at the time this happened. Wan night just as darkness was falling my fether said he'd go oot and put in the cow. Before lang he came in again and told my mother and us that he wanted us oot tae see a thing. Oot we went and what did we spy bit a wee woman sitting on our roof. She was wearing a wee red cloak and tammy-shanter. We stood looking up at her. She kept on saying, 'Och-och in a nee o.' After a while she told us tae go intae the hoose and not tae be afraid. We went oot again tae see her bit she was awa. We heard her crooning down at the fit of our garden. My fether told us not to be going down near her again because she was a ban-shee and might blow bad luck on us for following her:"***

Maighread Ní Dhochartaigh, Na hAcraí School, Teampall Cróine, collected a story entitled 'Trí Bladhairí Solais' where a man fishing out at sea saw three flashes of light and knew immediately that misfortune had befallen his three children. When the fisherman reached land and went home he found his house knocked to the ground and his children dead.

Customs pertaining to various festivals or days of the year such as Lá Bealtaine (May 1<sup>st</sup>), Lá Fhéile Bríde (February 1<sup>st</sup>), Oíche Fhéile Eoin (June 23<sup>rd</sup>), Oíche Shamhna (October 31<sup>st</sup>) appear throughout the Collection. Five children attending Meenbane School, Stranorlar, collected accounts of women taking the guise of hares and 'blinking the milk' on May Day. Ruairí Mac Suibhne, Tor School, Tullaghobegly, wrote an article outlining May Day customs, including:

***“Gan teine a chur síos ar maidín go mbeadh teine thíos ag gach duine eile ar an bhaile. Bean a bhíos ábalta giarrfhiadh peisirógrach a dhéanamh dí fhéin ghlacfadh duine bonn trí bpinginn a bheith aige le í a sgoileadh. Bláth éigin a chur faoi do cheann agus an fear a ndéanann tú brionglóid air sin an fear a phósfaidh tú. Nuair a bhíodhas airgead agat smug a chaitheadh air agus beidh adh maith air.”***

A student attending Leitir Mhic an Bhaire School wrote an entry entitled, ‘Rudaí atá crásta agus rudaí nach bhfuil sona i Leitir ‘ic a’ Bháird’. There follows a list of thirty-nine deeds considered to draw bad luck including:

***“Ní ceart theacht isteach ar doras agus cliabh ort. Ní ceart dul an aithghorra le torramh. Ní ceart bó a bhuailleadh le bufalán buidhe. Níl sé sona a bheith amuigh go mall oídhche na marbh. Ní comhair uisge a thabhairt isteach i ndiaidh luigh na gréine. Tá sé créasta cat a ligint isteach sa leabaidh a bhfuil duine marbh na luighe ann.”***

Since the majority of students came from a rural background where farming was the primary source of income, the connection to the weather was all-important. Pádraig Mac Seaghain, An Chógais School, Cill Charthaigh, collected twenty-five signs forecasting rain. These include “lachain ag screadaigh, easógaí amuigh lá maith, fáinne ar an ghealach, cearca dhá bpiocadh féin, grian ró-bháidhteach ag dul síos”. Tellingly, there is no mention in his account of signs forecasting good weather.





## MONUMENTS & RUINS

Holy wells, stone forts, standing stones and derelict ruins of castles and churches were often a focal point for local communities. Many stories and legends were based around these monuments and, as such, they are a common theme in the Schools' Manuscript Collection.

Holy wells held a significant place in communities, were typically associated with local saints and, more often than not, healing. Many parishes had a holy well where on a specific date every year a "turas" (pilgrimage) was held. Brian Kelly, Gaddyduff School, Clonmany, wrote an account of a "turas" and a miraculous return to health of a five-year-old boy that occurred in his area. He collected his account from his mother, whom he adds, is "about 50 years old":

***"Holy Wells: One in Binion. One in Poland (Pollan), Slievsnacht and Magheramore. There was once a child five years before he could walk and his mother took him to Poland turas and on his way home they went into a house. They left a cake on the table, the child went down to the table and took the cake and ever since he was the champion runner of Inishowen and he win the silver cup. You make the turas on the 15th August and you say 7 our fathers, seven hailmaries, 7 glories. You have to turn four stones. The track of fingers is in the stones. You must leave a meddle or a piece of cloth. When you have the turas finished you must go to the sea and you must stand till three waves washes over your feet and throw the water over your shoulders."***

Tobar an Dúin (Doon Well), one of the more renowned holy wells in Donegal, is frequently mentioned in schools around Kilmacrennan. Máire Ní Dhochartaigh, Cionn na Leargaí School, Mevagh, collected the following account from her mother:

***"Tobar an Dúin: I measc sléibhte dubh Thír Chonaill suidhte i gceart-lár móinte tá tobar de thobair bheannuighthe na h-Éireann ar a dtugtar Tobar an Dúin. Tá an tobar seo fá thuairim ceathramha míle ar an taobh theas dén bhealach mhór atá ag dul ó Cill-mhic-nEanain go Gartan. Dhá mhíle ó'n áit nar rugadh Naomh Colmcille. Ní fhuil [rud] ar bith fá leith i gcuma nó i ndeánamh an tobair seo, acht amháin mar áit mhór***



*cuid de na tobair beannuighthe eile atá at fud na tíre. Tá an tobar é féin beag cruinn, carnan beag cloch thart fá agus leac mór orthu seo, mar cúmhach don uisge. Ba doiligh deánamh amach carbh as a bhfuil an t-uisge ag teacht acht bíonn sé annsin Samhradh agus Geimhreadh agus ní fhaca aon duine beo aon laghdaghadh air gidh go dtógtar na céadta galún as gach Domhnach i rith an tSamhraidh."*

Mary Gallagher, Keeloges School, Conwal, wrote an account of how Doon Well came to exist in Donegal in the first place:

*"Doon Well is the most famous well in Donegal. Many cures have being wrought there. It was founded by a priest whose name was Lictor O'Friel. He was stationed in the town-land of Fawns in Termon. There were people coming to him from all parts to get cured of ailments. He came to a conclusion that it was a great trouble to the people of the house that he was stationed in. He meant to make a well someplace and leave all his miracles in it. He went to Rome. He asked a request for the staff to rise where ever the well was to be and it rose in Doon moss. The proper name for this well is the Well of the World."*

In a similar manner, Dan Carey, Drumaweir School, Moville Lower, undertook to explain how a standing stone happened to land in the townland of Ballybrack:

*"There is an old stone standing in the townland of Ballybrack. It was thrown by a giant across the water. This mighty giant was going to throw it to a hill at first. Then it slipped out of his hand and fell at Ballybrack. It is said that he threw it across the water about a hundred years ago. It is plain to be seen the tracks of his hands on the stone to this day. This is how it got its name. It is called the Standing Stone. It is said that it is as far down again in the ground."*



557

### Sjalán

Tá sjalan tios ar cúl an roig sazarne a  
mbeile clunn Uí Mhallgus agus déirtear  
go lebuig an supreann ann fadó o'soin  
nuair a biod na sazarne a leabad an  
suprinn amuig ar na inuc. Tá sé deánta  
de cloca móra tá carraig mór na seasam  
agus stéira suas go dtí i. Bí fear<sup>inn</sup> fadó  
o'soin agus bí sé ag pollad cló. Poll sé  
ceann de na cloca a bí sa stáige si n  
túig sé leis i agus tá an poll inntí o'soin  
sazarne de clunn Uí Mhallgus a bí ag  
leabad an suprinn ann. Tá trí crann ag  
fás ag na caob agus binn ar an caob  
tuas de agus sean bála cló iare fá daim  
dó

Fuar mé seo o m' aiar null sía <sup>Diarm</sup>  
Mínamalrae  
na gleanntaí  
Is mise Séamus sía <sup>Diarma</sup> (ii)  
Mínamalrae  
na gleanntaí

Entry of Séamus Acha Diarma, An Ghrafaidh School, Inishkeel.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

While saints were typically associated with holy wells and churches, fairies and otherworldly characters were associated with stone circles and forts. Anthony Gillespie, Aghador School, Mevagh wrote that the fairies built an old fort in his area and that fiddle music was often heard emerging from it:

***“There is an old fort in a field of Mandy McGettigan. This field is called Dunnin. The fort is round and there is a fence round it. People say that it was the fairies who made it. The sound of the fiddle was often heard from it early in the morning. There was a light often seen at it and on one moonlight night two men were seen fighting near it.”***

Rose McLaughlin, Drumaweir School, Moville Lower, collected an amusing story based on a fairy fort and entrepreneurship in Shrove:

***“Some years ago Michael Cavanagh of Shrove was ploughing a field not far from his home. In the middle of this field there was a large quarry. He saw a hole under the rock. He went home then and got another man to come with him. The[y] took a light with them and went down under the rock. They saw that there were steps going on down and it was ten feet deep. And down under the steps they found a beautiful wooden house with four wooden chairs and four wooden plates. Many people came from all parts of Donegal to see this wooden house. Some people came from Lifford and a lot of people came from Dublin and also from Glenagivney. Every person who got in had to pay one shilling.”***

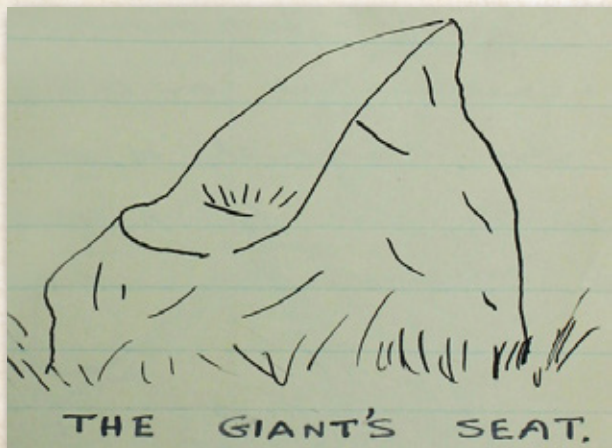


Illustration of 'The Giant's Seat' by Donnachadh E. Mac Congáile from Tievebrack School, Donaghmore.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin



## FOLK MEDICINE

Folk medicine constitutes a significant part of the material collected in Donegal. This may be indicative of how common illnesses such as whooping cough, measles and mumps were at the time. It also indicates how self-sufficient people were in dealing with illness in the home. For many people, folk medicine was the only medicine available. That it is so frequently recorded in the Schools' Manuscript Collection illustrates how regularly it was used and how highly it was valued in society at the time.

There are three categories of cures. Firstly, and most commonly listed, are herbal cures where an herb or a plant is listed along with the ailment which it will heal or ease. Occasionally this is accompanied by instructions as to how to go about preparing a tincture and how it should be taken. Secondly, the name of a person who has "the cure" for a particular ailment is cited. This may be down to the fact that the cure runs in a family - a man is a seventh son of a seventh son, or, a person's parents were both of the same family name. Thirdly, certain rituals must be undertaken such as visiting a holy well or completing a pilgrimage.

Peter Quinn, Drumnaheark School, Inver, wrote a very concise list of cures:

***"If you get donkey's milk it is a cure for whooping cough. Linseed oil is a cure for burns. Caustic is the only cure for warts. If you get a man and a woman married of the same name and get butter from them it is a cure for the rose. There is a little animal called a lizard. If you would get him to lick you where you have the cancer it would go away. If you go to the river with a donkey's bridle on you and take three mouthfuls of water it is a cure for the mumps."***

His classmate, Teresa Cunnaghan, added a cure for measles. She advises the patient to "keep warm and drink liquor". Another classmate, Mary Kennedy, prescribed nettle tea for measles. For mumps, she wrote, the patient should don the donkey's bridle and then "he would be led to a place where three streams met. He would have to take three drops of water out of where the three streams met". For warts: "If a person counted the warts three Fridays after other, then he would get rid of them". She also gave the cure for the rose: "Long ago a swelling in the head used to be called rose. If the seventh daughter rubbed her hand on the rose it would go away".

Frances Gallagher, Creeslough School, Clondahorky, collected an unusual cure for the itch:

***"If you fill a bag with cow manure and get into it you will be cured of the itch".***

Frances, a girl with a dark sense of humour, wrote a great list of cures including one for toothache:

***"If you are down at a graveyard when people are digging a grave and you pull one of the teeth out of one of the skulls and keep it you will never have toothache".***

Brigid Ní Dhubhagáin, Oileán Thoraí School, wrote a six-page entry on cures using herbs and plants growing on the island:

***"Fásann gromlasg ar thaobh na gclaidhteach agus baintear úsáid as fá choinne páistí a mbíonn tartfuairt ortha. Bruithear é ar uisce agus bruithear é inéadach agus thig sugh as agus tugtar dó na páistí an sugh fríd an bainne agus ghnídheann an sugh sin maith dobhtha. Fásann luibh ins an talamh darbh ainm dó cúlfaíth agus dá mbeirfeadh air dhoighfadh sé tú agus fásann cuid mhór de i roiliceacha. Nuair a bhíos an bruicneacha ar dhaoinibh baintear úsáid as cúlfaíth le í a bhruith ar uisce agus an sugh a thabhairt dóibh le h-ól, agus cuirtear siúcra air."***



## Lubcanna.

fáranann zromlagz ap raob na zelaidéac auzur  
bainceap úpáid ap fá éoinne páipé a mbíonn  
carpuarpe oíca bpuiceap é ap upce auzur  
bpuiceap é inéadac auzur éiz tuiz ap auzur  
cuizeap dō na páipé an tuiz fpíid an bainne  
auzur žnideann an tuiz pin maic dōbia.

fáranann lub iny an calaim darpó ainm  
dō cūlfáic auzur dā mbeuppead ap dōizpad  
pē zū auzur fáranann cuid mōp de i  
pohlíceacia. Nusap a bíor an bpuiceacia ap  
daoinb, bainceap úpáid ap cūlfáic le i  
a bpuicé ap upce, auzur an tuiz a tabapí  
dōb le h-ōl, auzur cuipceap tuippa ap.

bainceap úpáid ap žairpéoz fá éoinne  
ainmíde náe mbíonn foltáin. Szoidcean  
píad puball an ainmíde auzur cuipceann  
píad cūpla žairpéoz ipéac ann puball  
na bí, auzur cuipceann píad éadac íapí  
ap auzur cuipceapí cōpda ap an éadac  
žo žepapuíceann an puball apap.

Tā lub auzur fáp  
auzur pē an calaim sēa ap copōza auzur  
cā léizeap ann iny an c-pampad nusap  
a bíor an copōz auzur dūl apíap, bíonn  
dūilleoz beaz žlap ipóiz ann auzur bíonn  
pē flucé auzur raob amuiz de bíonn

Eibhlín Nic Mhathghamhna, Loch Muc School, Inishkeel, cited a number of cures entitled, 'Pisreógaí'. Under 'Snáithe Leónta' (sprains) she wrote:

***"Ghnítear an leigheas seo dó dhaoinibh agus beithidhigh. An duine a ghnídheas an leigheas gheibh sé lín agus cuireann sé naoi snaoidhm ar an snaithe ag rádh urnaighe os a cheann. Cuirtear an snaithe annsin thart ar an áit a bhfuil an leónadh."***

The notion of certain people "having the cure" is also referred to. Anna Brown, Ramelton School, wrote that rickets could be cured by a blacksmith "whose people for three generations have handled the sledge. The parents hold the child on the anvil and the blacksmith makes three strokes at the infant while saying certain prayers". A student from Leitir Mhic an Bhaird, who didn't write his/her name, lists the names of people in the area who had the cure for specific ailments:

***"Tá leigheasannaí ag mórán daoine ins an cheantar seo. Conchubhair Uí Gaoithín, Baile an Churraigh, Dubh Churraigh. Tá leigheas aigesean dá mbéadh do chos leonta nó do lámh. Thiocfadh leat an leigheas a fhághail aige...Tá leigheas don ruadh ag Caitlín Baintreachbhach Uí Gaoithín...Tá leigheas ag Sean Ua Meallaigh, Tuam, Leitir Mhic a' Bhaird don bhéal neimhneach."***

Cahal McCormick, Drumaweir School, Moville Lower, refers to a lady in Claghan in the townland of Carrowhugh in the mid-nineteenth century who was known for her ability to cure "many ills which existed at that time". This lady, Martha Douglas, had "what was known as the 'Sweat House' constructed much to the design of a lime kiln. Here the patient was placed rolled up in blankets on a large flat stone with a fire underneath. This operation continued from twelve to twenty-four hours. Then the patient was removed and placed in a bed where she administered medicine made from herbs. After three or four days' treatment the patient was completely cured".



## PLACENAMES

At least half of the participating schools included placenames in their collections. While most material relating to placenames comes in list form, Seán Mac Cuinneagáin, Dunkineely School, Killaghtee, cited placenames along with the name of the person who owned the land. Numerous entries exist explaining how a particular place came to get its name. The vast majority of placenames are in, or are derived from, Irish. Seán Mac Fhionntaigh and Anna Ní Bhaoghail, An Coimín School, Kiltееvege, elaborated on the names of a number of townlands in their area:

***“Alt an tSneachta: Nuair a thigeadh an an-tsneachta i bhfad ó shoin deirtear go mbéadh cuid de ar an chnoc seo nuair nach mbéadh dadaidh de le feicealt áit ar bith eile agus tugadh Alt an tSneachta air.***

***Baile na mBan: In am an chogadh dearg d'imthigh na fir uilig as an bhaile seo un chogaidh agus ní rabh fágtha acht mná uilig. Marbhadh na fir agus annsin bhíodh na mná ag díospóireacht le chéile agus sin an fáth a tugadh Baile na mBan ar an áit.”***

Pádraig Ó Domhnaill, attending An Chruit School, Teampall Cróine, wrote an entry on Oileán na gConrach:

***“Tá oileán ar thráigh na Cruite ar a dtugtar Oileán na gConrach. Tá an tráigh seo idir an Chruit agus Beal na Cruite i bparóiste Teampall Cróin Íoctarach. Tá cuid mhór oileán eile ar an tráigh seo acht tá an ceann seo ar a bhfuil muid ag tracht sgaithte ón chuid eile. Tá sé ar an bhealach díreach idir an Chruit agus Ceann Caslach.***

***In aimsir an droch-shaoghal (1847-48) bhí cuid mhór daoine ag fagháil bháis leis an ocras agus leis an aicid. Bhíodh torramh nó beirt gach lá. Ní rabh roilic ar bith thart fán cheanntair seo san am acht Roilic na Cruite. Nuair a bhíodh an torramh ag teacht treasna na trágha leigidhe síos na comhnair ar an oileán seo agus glacadh na daoine sgithiste. Leanadar do'n nós seo agus an deireadh a bhí air gur báisteadh ‘Oileán na gConrach’ ar an oileán beag seo agus sin an ainm atá air go dtí an lá bhfuil indiu ann.”***



7/36

27

(Ar lean.)

Mín na gCráin : Nuair a bí an éit isre i Sráid na mbraoig éadó na Fáil éis agus iroib siad cá eile ms an áit seo. Marbaid euid mhór daoine agus curread saó ms an áit in áit troibead an éit. Ms an am fá laisre nuair a bíonn na daoine ag creabá an calamí bíonn euid ag coisile aísos euid de na cráina. Sin an fáil a rugad Míin na gCráin ar an áit.

Cnó na fola : In am an Éigéid Deaz bíod na daoine ag deanamí porcín ms an áit seo agus lá amáin eamre na fáil ortá agus iroib euid. Dorrad euid mhór fola an lá sin agus ó sin amáil rugad Cnó na fola ar.

An Cuimín : Calamí iséal seá ann. Euid ar rannad an calamí bí eí uliz faoi ingilce agus nuair a bí eí ranna curread euid de faoi éuraidéac. Ms an fáil seo porca cá sean deoir seá deancia is carraiceacia agus bí ignáic leis na Sagarre Supreann a léigamí ar ms an rann am.

Jore an Casa : Calamí iséal curreadéac seá ms an áit agus porca cá eas ar an stam. Curleac Jore an Casa ar de léig seo.

Me an Snaicé : Nuair a rugad an an-creadéa i fáil ó dom deairear zombéad euid de ar an éit seo nuair naí mbéad daibid de la fereale áit ar léi eile agus rugad Me an Snaicé ar.



His classmate Nuala Nic A' Bhaird decribed how a beach on the island came to be called 'Tráigh Silesia':

***"Tráigh Silesia is situated in lower Kedue, in the lower Rosses. One winter's morning the sun shone brightly and clearly. In the evening dark clouds began to come over the sky. The old people knew that a storm was going to come. It was in the year 1856. The next morning was very bright and clear. The people had a big sight to see. A large ship was up on the strand. She had a cargo of timber. It was at that time that they were making the Kincasslagh Chapel. They had no timber to roof the chapel. The people that got the timber sold it and they roofed the chapel with it. Silesia was the name of the ship and that is how Tráigh Silesia got its name."***

Máighreád Haimlet, An Gleann School, Mevagh, collected a version of a well-known tale from her grandmother relating how Ros Goill came to be called Ros Goill:

***"Uair amháin thuit Fionn agus Goll amach agus b'eigin do Gholl teicheadh ar eagla roimhe Fionn. Lean Fionn é. Nuair a tháinig Goll fhad leis an fhairrge chonnaic sé carraig amuigh ar oileán san fhairrge. Chuaidh sé amach agus chuaidh sé i bhfolach i gcúl na carraige. Nuair a thainig Fionn fhad leis an fhairrge cha dtiocfadh leis Goll a fheiceál i n-áit ar bith. Bhí órdog ghreannmhar ag Fionn agus nuair a chuireadh sé an órdog i na bhéal tchíodh sé achan rud thart fá dtaobh de. Chuir sé an órdog in a bhéal agus chonnaic sé Goll amuigh ar an oileán. Chuaidh sé amach agus mharbh sé Goll. Thug na daoine Carraig Goll ar an charraig sin agus thug siad Ros-Goll ar an pharóiste seo."***



## SONGS, POEMS & PRAYERS

The interests of teachers are often reflected in collections from their own schools. Songs and poems frequently appear in clusters. The collection from Gort an Chioice School includes both the words of songs such as 'An Cailín Donn', 'Bhí mé i dTeach Aréir', 'Tá mo Chleamhnas dá Dheánamh' along with musical notes written above the words of the songs.

The image shows two pages of a handwritten manuscript. The left page is numbered '26' and titled '(14) An Cailín Donn.' It features musical notation consisting of letters S, P, F, L, D, R, M above the text. The text is in Irish Gaelic. The right page is numbered '27' and titled 'd' d'innis nam.' It also features musical notation above the text. The text is in Irish Gaelic. The handwriting is in dark ink on aged paper.

Extract from the Gort an Chioice School collection.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Songs written locally such as 'Camas Binne', 'Cailíní Deasa Shraith Laoill', 'Gleann Domhain', 'Amhrán Tamhnach Mhullaigh' are occasionally accompanied by a note recounting their origins. Ethna Cassidy, Meencargagh School, Stranorlar, collected 'Pat O'Donnell' a song composed about "the Donegal man who shot James Carey, the informer on the invincibles in the year 1882". An entry in Dromore School, Donaghmore, gives us 'Killeter Fair', a song composed by Francis Kelly who "died at Liscooley about ten years ago". We are told that Kelly was "a blind fiddler who travelled from place to place, playing for coppers and singing songs of his own



composition. His ballads were in great demand at fairs, markets and gatherings". May Moorehead, Glenmaquin School, Raphoe, collected a number of songs including 'The Pads of Glenmaquin' written about "a dispute over a right-of-way". Stella Byrne, Rashedoge School, Conwal, wrote about her great-aunt, Brigid McGinley, "the poetess of Glenswilly", who composed 'The Hills of Donegal'. Stella notes:

***"In it [The Hills of Donegal] the poetess makes us see the sombre cloud capped summits which appear cold and dead to the eye, alive with goblin and fairy and with memories which hang like a halo over the ancient and heroic land of the O'Donnell and so she makes them dearer to the natives of Donegal than all other places on earth."***

Poems written about local places or local people appear in a similar way. A note in Dromore School, Donaghmore, tells us about a local poet. "James McLaughlin of Tievebrack is a poet. He published a small book of long poems about forty years ago. The title was 'The Romance of Con Tinney and other Poems.' The poems tell of the happenings in the Finn Valley 150 and 200 years ago. James McLoughlin is still a fresh man." James also composed 'The Rector's Ride', "a faithful history of the famous race between Rev. W. Spence, former rector of Donaghmore, and Mr. Thomas Russell, Clady, from an account of an eye-witness". No student is credited with this or with the entry for 'Clonmany Asthore' composed by Bella Doherty and included in the collection from Gaddyduff School, Clonmany. Caitlín Ní Mhiothagáin, a teacher in Gaddyduff School, added at the end of the entry: "She (Bella Doherty) is only a young girl. Left school only a few years ago". Newly-composed poems collected in English far exceed the number of those collected in Irish.

165

# Leg an Fiaí.

Kéim - Káó,

1. Fionnsias O'h-Láirín;
2. Míon-a-dúibáin, Baile-na-finne, Co. Dúin-na-níall;
3. 88 Bhádánra; 4. táillúir;
5. I nGleann-na-mBuaicall, Baile-na-finne, Co. Dúin-na-níall  
 (Láir sé a saogal san áir céadna.
6. Fáidgán O'h-Láirín as an Baile céadna.
7. Tuairm ar céire sgor.
8. Tuairm ar céire sgor Bhádánraic.
9. I nGleann-na-mBuaicall.
10. An 3<sup>o</sup> lá de Iúil, 1934.

## An Raol.

Orsin ag innse an scéal do Naomh Pádraig:

Innseóid mé scéal ionganraic agus cairde mór,  
 Ar an fíad fearraic na dréan slóg,  
 A ianuc ann ar ndáil le ar gceannas uilig  
 do dub fógail.

Is créic na n-Indiaca a ghuais sé,  
 Mac Árd Rí na steaman-lann cruaid,  
 Hó go bfaicid an fíamh é cair ann ar ndáil  
 Ar síeád é, mac aní.

Ar a créaire nī rab spíd,



Stumpy's Brae.  
Heard ye not tell of Stumpy's  
brae.  
Sit down sit down young  
friend,  
It would make your flesh  
to creep today,  
And your hair to stand  
2. on end.  
Young man it is hard to  
strive with sin.  
But the hardest strife of  
all  
Is where the greed o' gain  
creeps in,  
And drives God's grace  
3. away.  
It's quick to do but it's long  
to rue.  
When the punishment  
comes at last.

Prayers and charms are more commonly found written in Irish: 'Urnaigh le Rádh ar Dul isteach go Teach Pobail', 'Ó mo Dhia agus mo Chuid de'n tSaoghal', 'Colm Cille Naomhtha', 'Paidir i gCóir an Scabail', 'Orthaidhe an Chruithnighe', 'Orthaidhe an Dúileogáin', 'Orthaidhe an Doghadh' are found in collections scattered throughout the county. Longer prayers such as 'Carraig an Mhonamair', a prayer said by people travelling the roads, was collected by Áine Ní Fhuathaigh, a teacher in Loch Muc School, Inishkeel, from 'Bean Bheárnaí Longáin in Sraith an Arbhair'; 'Seanmóir na n-Aithreach Naomhtha' was collected by Áine Ní Dhochartaigh, An Cheathrú Cheanainn School, Raymunterdoney; 'Beatha Chríost', a prayer with no less than one hundred and seventeen verses, was collected by Conn Mac Diarmada, An tÉadan Anfach School, Inishkeel.

'Seanfhocla' (proverbs) and 'tomhaiseanna' (riddles) are commonly found in collections from schools in Gaeltacht regions. An impressive 352 proverbs were collected by the children in An Dúchoraidh School, Inishkeel; 217 were collected by children in Árainn Mhór School and Seán MacAodha, Mucros School, Cill Charthaigh collected 103 proverbs. Pádraig Mac Seaghain, a teacher in An Chógais School, Cill Charthaigh, added at the end of Síghle Ní Chuinnigeáin's collection of 122 proverbs, "Fuair sí cuid mhór aca ó n-a hathair, Seán Mac Cuinnigeáin".





## HISTORICAL EVENTS

Most of the entries in this category refer to local events although there are, nonetheless, numerous references to national events on a local level. Entries based on the Land War are found in a number of schools in the parish of Teampall Cróine. Nábla Nic Amhlaidhe, the teacher in Robertson National School, Lettermacaward collected a fascinating account of the Molly Maguires in her area from Matthew Morrow. An account of 'The Landing of Napper Tandy at Rutland Island' was written by Nábla Ní Ghallachobhair, An Clochán Liath School, and Seumas Ruadh Ó Dómhnaill, a teacher in Míin Beannaid School, wrote an article entitled '1798' in which he also described Napper Tandy landing in Rutland Island. Séamus Mac Giolla Easbuic, the teacher in Gort an Choirce School, was clearly interested in local history and wrote an account of events in Cloich Chionnaola during the Land War:

***"Nuair a bhí cogadh na talmhan ar siubhal idir tighearnaí agus tionantaí ní rabh muinntir Chloich Cheann Fhaolaidh ar deireadh ins an troid, agus dálda mar rinneadh le go leór eile ar fud na tíre, cuireadh amach as a seilbh furmhór na ndaoine ins an pharóiste seo ins an bhliadhain 1889 agus caitheadh ar thaoibh an bhealaigh mhóir iad, gan scáth, gan dídean ach an spéir ghorm o's a gceann. Chosain móran aca a dtighthe agus a dteaghlaiigh go calma ach b'éigin díobhtha géilleadh ins an deireadh. I gcorr áit dhaingnigh fir chródha, chalma na tighthe agus throid said go dian dícheallach i n-aghaidh lucht an airm, agus is beag aca nár chaith tamall i bpríosún de thairbhe."***

Accounts relating to landlords are recurrent, particularly in east Donegal. Sir William Styles, Lord Templemore, Captain Cochrane, the Earl of Shaftsbury, Mr. Nuton, Mr. Baird, Mr. Gilland, Captain Cochrane, Colonel Mc Clintock are all accounted for. Lord Leitrim, the notorious landlord in north Donegal, is mentioned more often than the others. The following example is the beginning of an entry collected by Elizabeth Doherty, St. Mary's School, Buncrana which she collected from her grandmother, Margaret Roe Doherty:



*"When I was a girl about sixty years ago I mind how the people were afraid to fix their houses or even whitewash them. The landlord's men would come round and look at the houses, and if he thought from their appearance that the people could live fairly well the rents were raised. I remember when I was one day up in a house in Middle Illies. I was spending a few days there with Mr. Patrick Grant. He was out ploughing a little corner of a field that he had reclaimed. He had gathered the loose stones and had dug up the stones that were embedded down deep in the soil. He had a tough job rooting out the whins and clearing it for ploughing. While he was following the horses down the field the landlord's agent, a Mr. Miller, who was living in Linsfort, galloped up the road and made the horse jump over the ditch into the little patch of corn that had been sowed a few days before and which was near to the piece which was getting ploughed. He galloped the horse through the corn and then told him that he seemed to be able to live comfortably and on that account his rent would be raised. A few days later he received a letter informing him that his new rent would be three pounds more."*

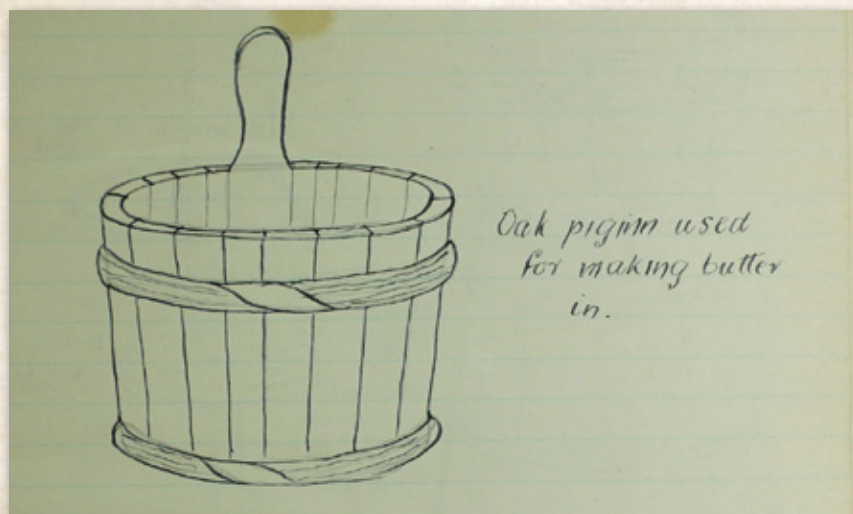


Illustration by Seaghan Mac Cuinneagáin, Dunkineely School, Killaghtee  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin



345

Murder of Lord Leitrim 1877

William, Earl of Leitrim was said to be a very bad landlord and local stories are told around firesides at night about his bad acts. One of the stories is that he used to go around with his bailiffs through his tenants, and anywhere he saw any improvement made, he raised the rents, and if the tenants refused to pay the new rent, he and his family were thrown on the roadside.

Another story gets that he had a great hobby for planting trees and grazing bullocks, and he erected a great number of his tenants in order to make room for his cattle.

In order to keep the people in ignorance he demolished all the schools as soon as they were built, and bought small neighbouring estates for the sole purpose of closing the schools.

These are only a few of the cruel deeds attributed to him by the old story-tellers, at last the people could not stand his cruelty any longer and he was waylaid and killed one lovely morning in early spring near Milford at a place called Bratlagh Wood.

On this particular morning he left his seat at Manorroughan to go to Dublin, it is said to take an action against the British Government to receive possession of the Phoenix Park which he claimed, and before he left home he gave orders that the widows should pocket with out delay.

But he got no farther than Bratlagh about three miles from his mansion. His secretary and coach driver perished with him on that eventful morning the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1877.

His remains were brought to Dublin and entered in a vault in St. Melician's cemetery in Church St.

He was so much hated in Dublin that on the day of his funeral a great crowd gathered to prevent his remains from being brought into the city, and with great difficulty the police repulsed the crowds from throwing the coffin into the Liffey.

Head Story from P. Lees.  
Occupation: Public Commissioner.  
Residence: Milford.  
Sarah Jane Thompson 12<sup>th</sup> April 1938.

Entry of Sarah Jane Thompson, Tamney School, Clondavaddog.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Meta McConnell, Milford School, collected an account entitled 'The Murder of the Earl of Leitrim' from 'Mr. Robt. Hazlett'. A song about the shooting of Lord Leitrim "said to be composed by a Michael McAteer of Carland" is included among entries from Fánaid School, Clondavaddog. No one is accredited with having collected the song.

405

## Famine Times

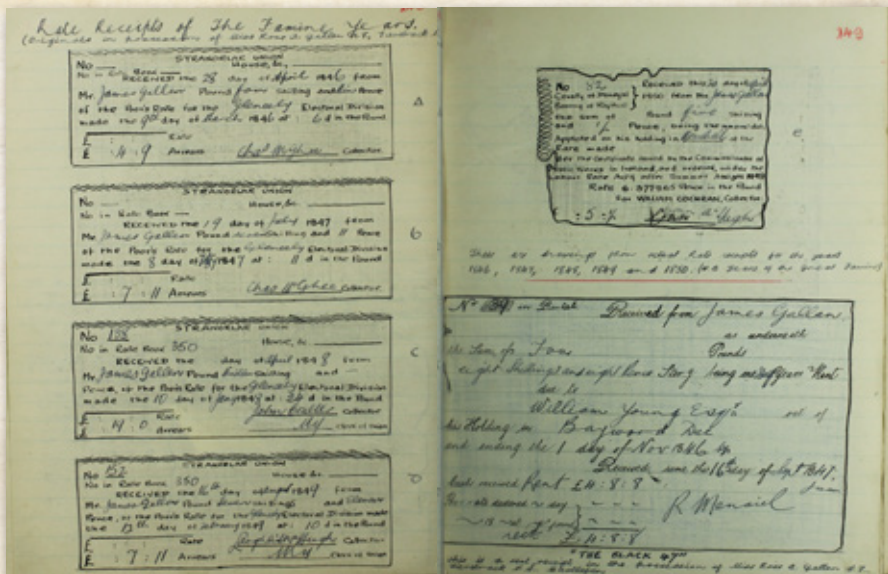
In the year 1846-47 the great famine began. It affected this district very much. The potato crop failed badly. My great grandfather and two other men went out to dig early in morning without any breakfast but grass to eat. The men dug all day long and when came into the house and put the potatoes altogether. They had not what made a dinner for them. There were no potatoes to put in pits because they all decayed in the ground. The food the people had that time in this district was indain porridge. That was the first time the indain meal came into force. Many people died of hunger because they had no indain meal. You would see woman and children lying dead on the roadside starved with hunger. They also had oat, bread and some milk but the poorest of them had nothing but grass to eat and other green things.

Margaret Grant  
 Gortnaskea  
 Burnfoot  
 Co. Donegal

Mr. Denis Grant (68 yrs),  
 Gortnaskea  
 Burnfoot  
 Co. Donegal

Entry of Margaret Grant, Birdstown School, Clonleigh.  
 © National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Joseph O'Rielly, Más an Easa School, Clondahorky, collected material from his father, Bernard, about the Penal Times in his district. Donnchadh Mac Congáile, the teacher in Tievebrack School, Donaghmore, drew replicas of tithe and rent receipts issued from 1832 and 1850 which were in the possession of Miss Rose A. Gallen.



Replicas of tithe and rent receipts drawn by Donnchadh Mac Congáile, Tievebrack School, Donaghmore.  
 © National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Maureen McColgan, Birdstown School, Clonleigh, collected information from her mother, Mrs. Mary McColgan on 'The Great Flu 1918':

***"One blessing from God we never do be troubled with diseases except the year of the Flue. Nearly all around here got a little trouble at that time. Some homes of course were worse than others. In Granny's home here all the family were lying sick at the time except my mamy and Auntie Kathleen and they never took it at all. Auntie Roseann died and the other five got better. Dr. O' Reilly said it was the greatest miracle only one died they were so bad. There was another house down the road in Lower Sappagh and two sisters died only a week between the two but Mamy says the neighbours were all very good and came in and sat night about with them. Only for that they would have been much worse."***

Accounts of drownings and shipwrecks are found in schools all along the coast. Eddie Sweeney and Mary Duffy, both students at Inch Island School, wrote accounts of the sinkings of the 'Saldahna' and the 'Rob Roy'. Eithne Ní Cheallaigh, An Gleann, Kilmacrennan, described the 'Wasp' being driven onto rocks on Oileán Thoraí.

107

## Ship Wrecks

The Saltdanna was lost in Lough Swilly at Stalker Bay 1809. They were all drowned but one man and when he came ashore he died. One tug went to the rescue but she broke away. The captain told the crew to jump into the sea for there was nothing else for them. There were a thousand pounds of silver and a plate of gold on board the ship. The captain had gold rings on his fingers. A man went out into the sea and cut the captain's fingers and took the gold rings. This ship was lost on the eighteenth of December 1809 by a great storm.

Pupil = Eddie Sweeney.

Hill Bay, Inch Island

Told by = John Duffy. (76)

Hill Bay Inch Island.

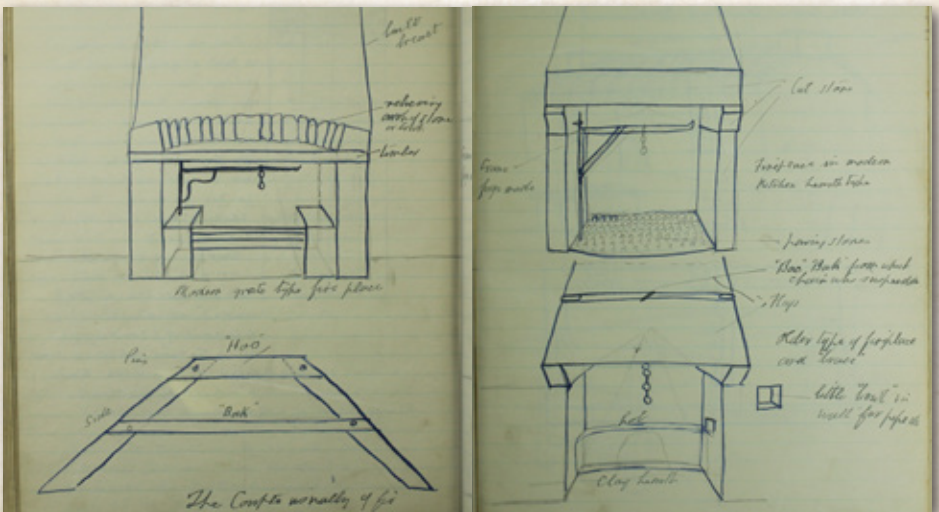


## HOUSE & HOME

*"Before a man can thatch his house he must draw the straw to have it all the same length and then he puts it in equal bunches. He thatches a spar at a time and when he has that done he puts the scobes in at the head and foot to keep the straw down. The spurtle makes the holes for the bunches of straw called the staple and then he pushes the staple in with the spurtle. There are two little iron prongs and a wooden handle on the spurtle it is nearly like a fork."*

The above article was written by Joan Peoples, Carrowreagh School, Burt. It is one of many entries from this school within this category which includes detailed illustrations of implements used in butter-making and tools used in thatching.

Seán Mac Cuinneagáin, a teacher in Dunkineely School, Killaghtee, also used illustrations to depict images of houses long ago. Beginning with an illustration of a thatched cottage, he went on to draw illustrations of a chimney hag, the outline of the inner house, various pieces of furniture including a dresser, table, fireplace, farm implements and dishes.



Illustrations drawn by Seaghan Mac Cuinneagáin, Dunkineely School, Killaghtee.  
 © National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Hubert Doherty, Tiernasligo School, Clonmany, described flailing and thrashing. His classmates, James Conaghan, Hugh Doherty and Philip Conaghan outlined the work involved in battling the straw, winnowing corn and carding.

### "Battling" the Straw.

When the thrasher has a big heap of straw, <sup>about</sup> around him, he puts it out of his way by 'battling' it. This is how he does it.

He gathers a big armful of straw between his breast and his knees. Then he puts one arm around one of the ends and gathers it together and makes a sort of rope from it. He then does the same with the other end and ties both together. Bunches like these are called 'battles'. Then he piles them in one corner of the barn. These 'battles' can be carried from the barn to the byre and stable without losing any of the straw.

3-2-'38

James Conaghan  
Letter  
Rang VIII



Rosena Gallagher and Anna May McConnell, Temple Douglas School, Conwal, described how 'poundies' and 'beastings' were made. Francis McBride, St. Davaddog's School, Tamney, Clondavaddog, outlined how black pudding was made in his district with the blood of a cow or a pig:

## Meals of former days

### Black Puddings.

To make black puddings you need to get the blood of a cow or pig. Long ago people used to make black puddings often. The neighbours used to kill a cow between them and made the puddings that way also. When the blood was warm, oatmeal, pepper, salt, and some of the animals lard or fat <sup>was</sup> mixed up with the blood. Then the guts were washed clean and cut into pieces each half a foot long. The mixture was poured in after one end of each piece was tied. They were then tied <sup>in</sup> bunches and put into a pot of boiling water and boiled until they were hard. Hardly anyone makes these puddings now.

Francis Mc Bride.  
Standard Seven.



## HIDDEN TREASURE

Tales of hidden treasure are usually short anecdotes. They typically cite the exact location where the treasure is located along with instructions as to how to get it. Proinneas Mac Giolla Easpuig, Sliabh Liag School, Gleann Cholm Cille, collected the following story entitled 'Ór atá i bhFolach' from Caitlín Ní Ghádhra, Mín na bhFachrán. This account is unusual in that the treasure, a golden shoe, is actually found. However, in time-honoured fashion, the treasure-seeker's new-found wealth brings him no luck and the sleep-deprived Gleann Cholm Cille man decides he would prefer a good night's sleep to worldly riches and returns the shoe to the lake where he found it:

***"Tá Loch a' Chrupain 'na loch beag ag taobh Loch Duibhne ag bun na Cruaiche tuairim dhá mhíle ó theach s'againne. Ans an loch seo tá bróg óir i bhfolach. Chualaidh fear as an Bhrághad istigh go rabh sí ann agus thainig sé amach lá amháin agus leig sé an loch. Nuair a bhí an loch tirim fuair sé an bhróg.***

***Bhí lúthghair mhór air ag dul abhaile leis an bhróg acht ní thioctadh leis codladh an oidhche sin. Oidhche in a dhiaidh na h-oidhche eile ní rabh codladh lé fághal aige agus sa deireadh rinne sé amach gur an bhróg ba chionntach leis seo.***

***D'éirigh sé maidin amháin. Thug leis an bhróg agus níor stad gur chaith sé í isteach sa loch ar ais. Ó'n lá sin go dtí'n lá indiú níor iarr aon duine an bhróg fhágail. Tá sí na luighe ar thóin Loch a' Chnupain."***

Leprechauns, often seen but rarely captured, were traditionally associated with hidden treasure. In one entry, Pádraig Ó Buadhaigh, Doire Chasáin School, Mevagh, initially described what a leprechaun looked like and then continued on to give an account of a local fisherman catching one under his curragh. Needless to say, the leprechaun made his escape, the location of his gold remaining a secret:

***"Deir na seandaoine gur fear beag fá thuairim cúig nó sé orlaigh in áirde atá ins an leipreachán. Bíonn sé gléasta in éadach dhearg agus bíonn bearrad beag thrí choirneail air. Bíonn sé le feiceál na shuidhe faoi thor iongantach luath ar madin agus bíonn sé i gcomhnuidhe ag obair le seanbhróg. Deir na seandaoine go bhfuil sparán ór ag an leipreachán, acht go bhfuil sé i bhfolach aige ar eagla go mbeirfeadh duine ar bith air agus go mbainfeadh said an t-ór uaidh.***



**Maidín amháin iongantach luath bhí fear as an bhaile úr ag ghabhail amach a iasgaireacht. Nuair a thainig sé fhad le na churrach chualaidh sé torman agus [nuair] a d'amharc sé faoi'n churrach chonnaic sé fear iongantach beag agus é ag coiriú seanbhróg. Fuair an fear greim ar an leipreachán agus d'iarr sé air innse dó an áit a rabh a chuid óir i bhfolach aige. 'An bhfeiceann tú an chloch atá thuas ar thaobh an chnuic sin?' arsa'n leipreachán. D'amharc an fear thart acht nuair a d'amharc sé faoi'n churrach ar ais bhí an leipreachán ar shiubhal!"**

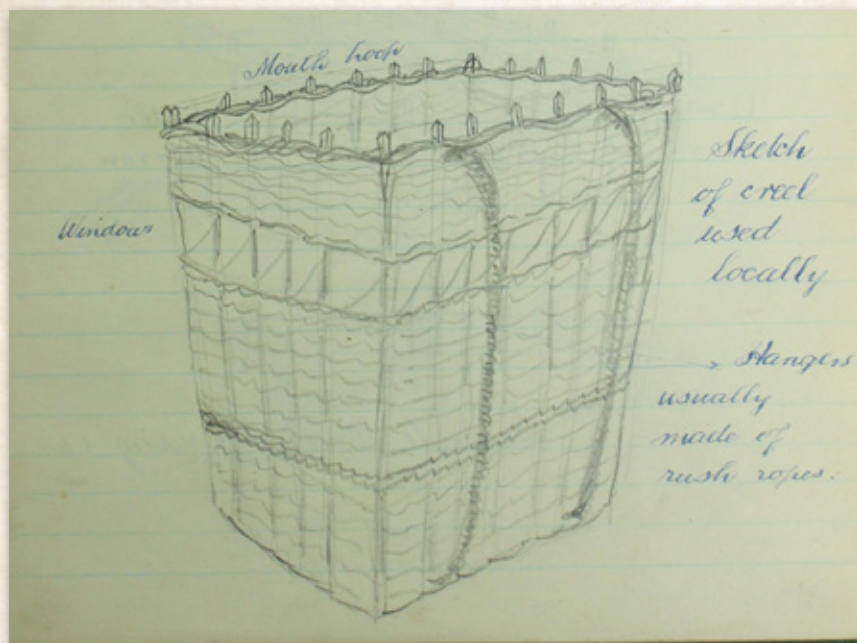
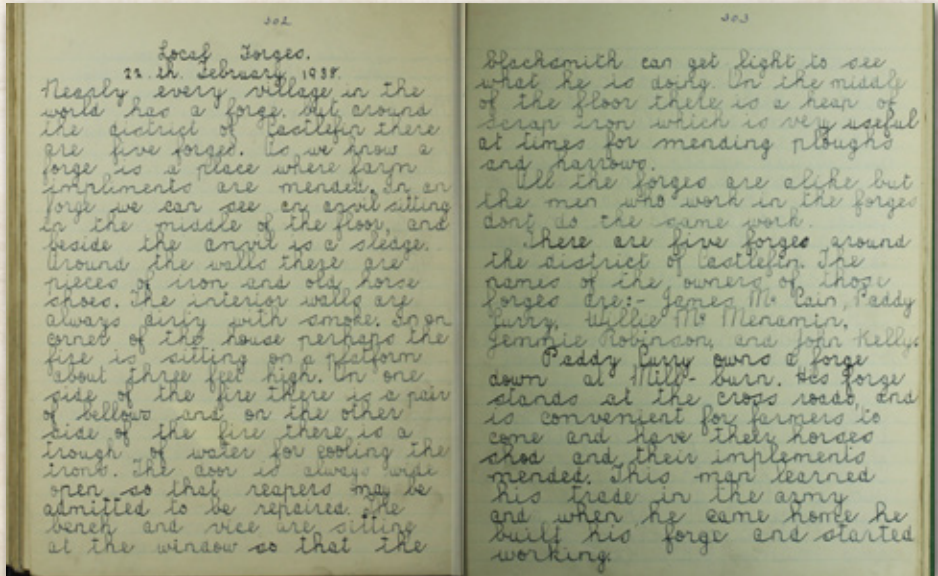


Illustration by Seaghan Mac Cuinneagáin, Dunkineely School, Killaghtee

© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

## ACCOUNTS OF DAYS GONE BY



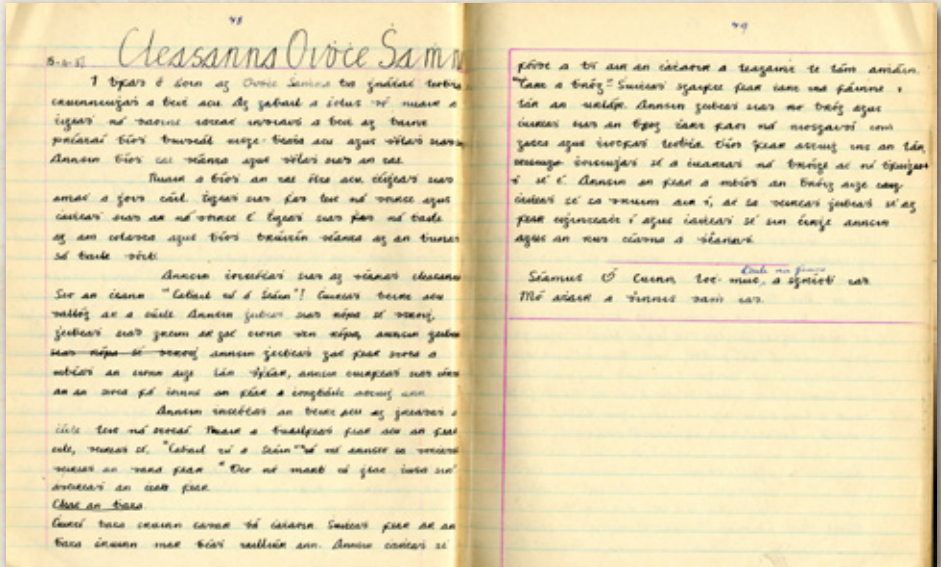
Entry of Michael McMullin, Castlefinn School, Donaghmore.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Accounts of travelling men, buying and selling, fair days, trades, care of farm animals, care of the feet, local roads and clothes of long ago are found throughout the collection and merit mention. Kathleen Carbin, Four Masters' School, Donegal, collected information about a hedge school situated near Donegal Town and on the teacher who taught there, Denis Gallagher. Patrick Goan, Creevy School, Kilbarron, also gave an account of a hedge school which stood in 'Tommy Cleary's field' in his area. Séamus Ó Cuinn, Loch Muc School, Inishkeel, collected the following entry from his father, Séamus, about his father's time at school:

***"Bhí sgoil eile i gCroc Leitreach an áit ar a dtugtar Árd na Beatháige air. Sé Millie Ó Tiomáinidhe a bhí ann, cipíní adhmaid a bhí acu le sgríobh leis, agus leac a bhí acu fá choinne sgríobh uirthi, chuirfeadh na sgoiláirí ceann an chipín ins an teinidh agus fhad is mhairfeadh rud dubh ar bith ar bhárr an chipín bhéadh siad ag sgríobh leis. Sé an chineál suidheacháin a bhíodh acu ná clocha agus fóide pórtáí ina mhullach sin."***



Séamus also collected an account from his father about tricks that children played at Halloween entitled 'Cleasanna Oidhche Shamhna'.



Entry of Séamus Ó Cuinn, Loch Muc School, Inishkeel.  
© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

Gráinne Ní Shearcaigh, An Cheathrú Cheanainn School, Raymunterdoney, collected a list of games played by children at the turn of the last century along with instructions on how the games were to be played. She collected the information from her mother, Maighread. Patrick Moore, Narin, Portnoo, gave a student whose name is not cited from Clochar School, Inishkeel, a descriptive account of wake games played in his area such as 'Hide the Gully,' 'Putting the Eye in the Pig,' 'The Parish Priest' and 'Sell the Knife':

***“This is how they play hide the gully a man gets a piece of turf and goes round the people with it and he says “hide the gully hide the gully in a wee wee well”. Then he asks some person who has got the gully. If the person guesses right there will be nothing done on him but if he guesses wrong he will get penance to do and if he does not do the penance he will be blackened with polish.”***

A descriptive account of a marriage being arranged is included in the collection from Míin Beannaid School, Teampall Cróine, under the title ‘Pósaidhthe’. The account written in an adult’s handwriting, presumably that of the teacher, Seumas Ruadh Ó Dómhnaill, describes the practicalities in finding a wife living within a certain geographical zone. If the team of men who set out seeking the match failed in their quest to get a woman in the first house they visited, they continued on to the next house and the house after that again until they found a willing bride. A wife was a basic necessity for doing the housework when the old pair was getting on in years:

***“Ins an tsean-am a phóstaí na lanamhaineacha ins an Inid, de ghnáth. Nuair a bhuaillfeadh taom pósta é nó fiacha le bean sa teach le timtíreacht an toighe a dhéanamh agus an tsean-lánamhain ag éirghe aosta thoisigheadh sé a smaointiú ar dhul amach a chuartú mná dó féin. Agus leoga is iomdha scéal greannmhar a thiocfaidhe a inse fá dhaoine áirithe. Ach ins an deireadh thigeadh an oidhche a bhí leagtha amach. Bhíodh baicle leis an fhear óg: a athair le dhul un cainnte fá’n spré le athair na bríghideoige agus cupla duine stuamdha céillidhe eile le ceisteanna achrannacha a thanlochadh eatorra a shocrughadh. Muna bhfuigheadh siad cailín ins an chéad teach a shocrachas said air rachadh said go teach éiginteacht eile agus leanas siad leo go n-eireochadh leo fá dheireadh. Nuair a bheadh ceisteanna fán chruth nó spré socruighthe eatorra thúisigheadh an t-ól nó bhíodh buidéal maith teith le achan duine agus annsin d’imigheadh lucht na dála sul a mbeireadh bánughadh an lae orra.”***

It wasn’t all matchmaking, however, as the following entry on marriage written by Tadhg Ó Laoghaire, a teacher in Keeloges School, Gartan, indicates:



*"In the last generation half or more of the marriages of the district were 'run away matches'. The young man and his 'intended' went to a local dance. They danced together most of the night. Then during the course of their final dance, both slipped quietly out of the door. They were married next day and quietly after a suitable interval returned to their homes."*

88

Games I play.

There are some games played in Letterkenny, that are not played in any other place. There are pitching marbles, eggs in the bush and Tig. Eggs in the bush is played with marbles, and a person holds out his hand with a number of marbles in it and asks the other person how many are in his hand, and if the other person said a number above or below the number, he has to give the other person that number of marbles, but if the person guesses right he gets all the marbles in the other person's hand. The words that are used by the players are, How many eggs in the bush. In playing tig one person is said to have the tig, and he runs after the rest and whoever he tips that person has then the tig.

Denis Curran

3, Government Tce,  
Letterkenny.

Entry of Denis Curran, St. Eunan's School, Letterkenny.

© National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin

# CONCLUSION

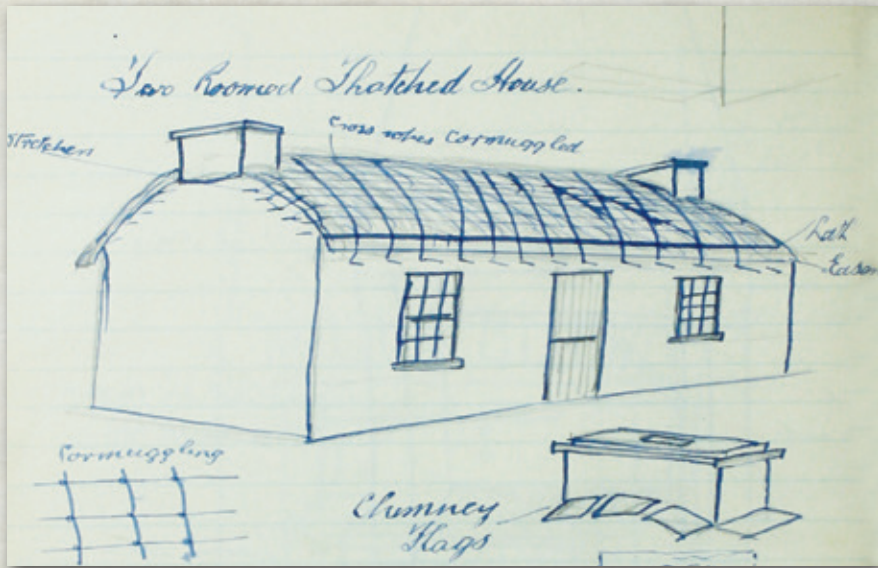
---

The Schools' Collection is a national treasure, truly unique in its substance and in its execution. On a national level, it is fascinating to note that while this extraordinarily successful project was coordinated at the highest administrative level, the groundwork was completed by children. Their contribution to our national oral heritage cannot be overstated. The Schools' Manuscript Collection in its entirety is the ultimate tribute to them and to the teachers of the time who worked in circumstances far beyond the call of duty and whose commitment and enthusiasm was paramount to the success of the scheme. Their collective accomplishment is an accolade to their understanding and appreciation of their national heritage. It is a tribute to the education the teachers provided, a tribute to the standard of education they provided. To have captured the essence of a nation's folklore at a time when Ireland, a nation in poverty, still retained and maintained its distinct oral traditions was an act of heroism and foresight.

Every individual notebook within the Schools' Manuscript Collection bestows an oral heritage upon every individual parish in twenty-six counties of Ireland and upon the people living within their boundaries. Yet, while it is a national treasure trove, the Schools' Manuscript Collection's intrinsic value is to the communities to which the material belongs. That this work was done by children in their own localities with nothing other than pen and paper enhances its merit and secures the Schools' Manuscript Collection in the affections of everyone interested in the heritage and oral traditions of Ireland.

## **Eithne Ní Ghallchobhair**





### FURTHER INFORMATION:

The 1930s Schools' Folklore Collection can be investigated on-line at [www.duchas.ie](http://www.duchas.ie) a collaboration between the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin & Fiontar agus Scoil na Gaeilge, Dublin City University. Additional copies of this free booklet are available from:

County Donegal Heritage Office,  
Donegal County Council,  
Station Island,  
Lifford,  
County Donegal.  
Telephone: (074) 917 2576  
E-mail: [heritage@donegalcoco.ie](mailto:heritage@donegalcoco.ie)

This booklet can be downloaded free-of-charge from the County Donegal Heritage Office website at: [www.donegalcoco.ie/heritage](http://www.donegalcoco.ie/heritage)



Comhairle Contae  
Dhún na nGall  
Donegal County Council

An Chomhairle Oidhreachta  
The Heritage Council



An Action of the County Donegal Heritage Plan