

New dúchas.ie website and Photographic Collection launched by Joe McHugh T.D.

Government Chief Whip and Minister of State with responsibility for Gaeilge, Gaeltacht and the Islands, Joe McHugh T.D., launched the redesigned dúchas.ie website and a digitized version of the National Folklore Collection's Photographic Collection at an event in the National Library of Ireland yesterday evening (Tuesday, 26 September).

A new website was designed to cater for additional new resources and functions which have been added to the dúchas.ie website since it was first launched at the end of 2013. The Photographic Collection, which was also launched as part of yesterday's event, is the latest resource to be added to the site. c.10,000 photographs from the Collection have been digitized, catalogued and made available on dúchas.ie.

A large number of the photographs date from the early 20th century. The Collection contains photographs taken by professional photographers and by collectors working with the National Folklore Commission, amongst others. The photographs are classified under 14 different topics including: festivals; holy wells; settlement; the community; folklore collection (of course); and games & pastimes. Visitors to the site can get a sense of the work of the Commission in photographs of well-known storytellers such as [Seán Ó Conaill](#), [Peig Sayers](#) and [Tomás Ó Criomhthain](#). There is also a wonderful collection of photographs taken by [Michael J. Murphy](#) while he was collecting folklore in counties such as Antrim, Armagh and Louth. Although it's fair to say that there is a particular emphasis on country life, towns and cities were not neglected. The majority of urban photographs relate to Dublin and especially to the folklore collection initiative which took place at the start of the 1980s. It contains an interesting record of the people, places and various aspects of life in the capital city.

In addition to this, material from each of the 26 counties that took part in the Schools' Scheme in 1937-39 is also available on the website. [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. Some members of the Meitheal from Ireland, Canada and the United States were in attendance at the event yesterday.

Joe McHugh T.D. said, 'I am delighted to launch the new dúchas.ie website today, along with the most recent collection, the Photographic Collection. The first version of dúchas.ie enabled the online public to engage with this country's heritage through the writings of 1930s school children, as gathered in the Schools' Collection. This new version of the website, and the Photographic Collection, will provide a new perspective on Ireland's rich and varied heritage with thousands of photographs from different times and places made easily available via the browsing facilities. This new collection will add to the value of dúchas.ie as a digital heritage resource. The website is used, and enjoyed, not only in Ireland but all over the world and I'm sure that that interest and support will only increase with the launch of Dúchas 2.0 tonight.'

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, 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.

The Dúchas project is the result of a partnership, beginning in 2012, between the National Folklore Collection in UCD, one of the largest folklore collections in the world, UCD Digital Library and Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge, the Irish-medium teaching and research unit in DCU. The objective of the project is to digitize 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 benefitted from the financial support of the National Folklore Foundation.

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