

MONAGHAN COUNTY MUSEUM

IN ASSOCIATION WITH 'LAMN' – LOCAL AUTHORITY MUSEUMS NETWORK

“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”



Múseam Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Museum

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“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”

AN EXHIBITION CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND



Comhairle Contae Mhuineacháin
Monaghan County Council



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The Department of
Arts, Sports & Tourism

AN EXHIBITION CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND

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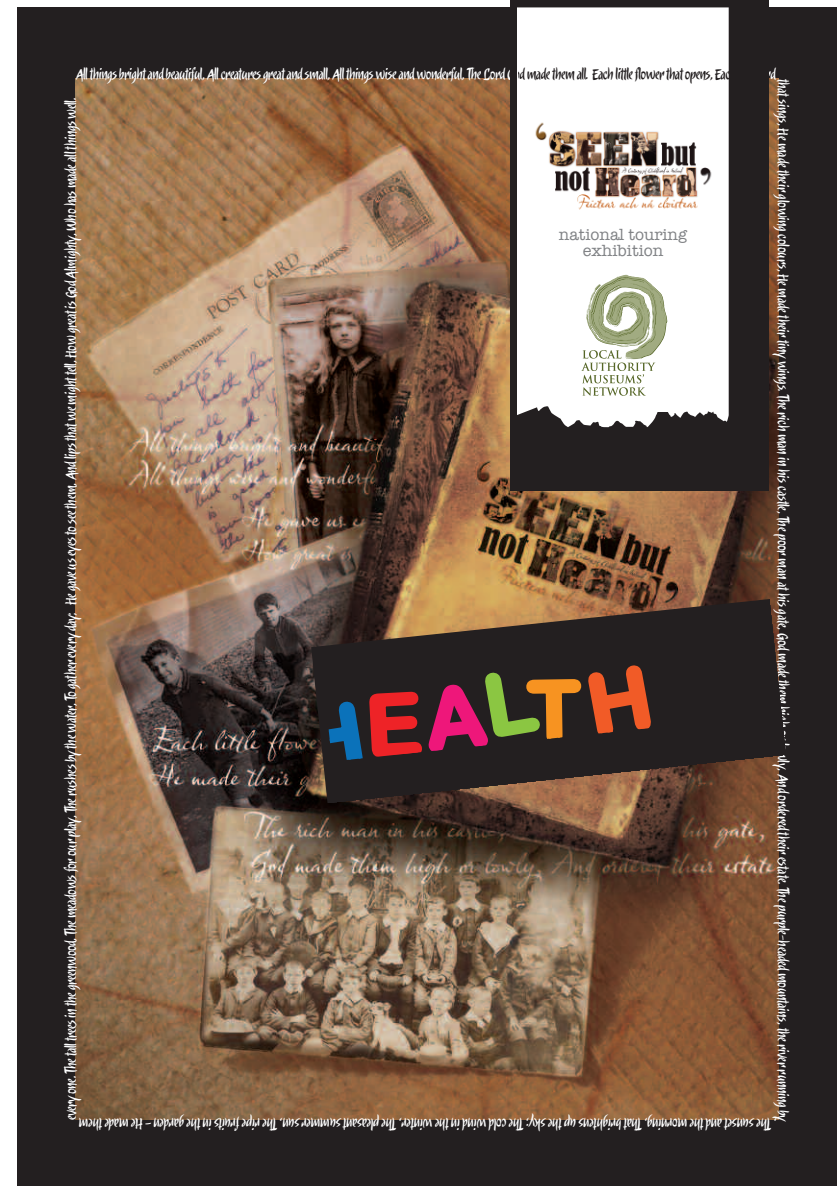
THIS 'SEEN BUT NOT HEARD' EXHIBITION HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO YOU BY LAMN (LOCAL AUTHORITY MUSEUM NETWORK) AND IS AN ENCHANTING COLLECTION OF IMAGES AND MEMORIES DOCUMENTING MANY ASPECTS OF GROWING UP ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND OVER THE LAST CENTURY.

Is é gréasán Músaem na nÚdarás Áitiúil (LAMN) a d'eagraigh an taispeántas seo 'A bheith le feiceáil ach gan a bheith le clois' agus is bailiúchán is ea é d'íomhánna agus de chuimhní cinn a thugann cur síos ar ghnéithe éagsúla de shaol an pháiste ar oileán na hÉireann le céad bliain anuas.

SPECIAL THANKS

WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE HARD WORK, CONTRIBUTIONS AND EXPERTISE OF THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS WITHOUT WHOM THIS EXHIBITION WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE.

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- Donal McEnroe
- National Library of Ireland
- St. Patrick's National School, Galway
- Heritage Council of Ireland
- Kate Buckley
- pH7 Design



'SEEN but not HEARD'

A Century of Childhood in Ireland

Fictear ach ná cloistear

These recollections capture a period in our history of innocence and carelessness. The exhibition recalls a brief moment in all our childhoods. A fleeting memory of a school day long forgotten, a sporting epic fostered in the newly mown grass, the reverential hush of a Sunday Mass ritual. Thoughts and memories are invoked here, providing a unique opportunity to glimpse the childhood that your parents, grandparents and great-grandparents enjoyed. These vivid experiences now passed on to the next generation through story, verse and poem.

Time too is afforded for the thoughts and recollections of a younger generation. Those who have witnessed the onset of technology, the passage of the imposition of order from the State and the religious. It spans the history of a time free from electronics and gadgets, when imagination stemmed from necessity, to a period where technology reigns supreme.

A visual look at the story of childhood in Ireland

over the last one **hundred years** and how it has

changed in terms of Schooling, play, health, money

and punishment in today's modern society.



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”

The last 100 years have seen significant changes in the roles and responsibilities of Ireland's children. The childhood of the past was for many filled with innocent times, when respect for your elders and an expectation to help with daily tasks exercised discipline and values. As we recall memories of playing outside until bed-time, perennial sunny summers, the independence afforded by a bicycle, the wealth of a coin in your pocket, we reflect now on perceivably tougher times for children of the 21st century.

Is iomaí athrú atá tagtha ar shaol an pháiste in Éirinn le céad bliain anuas, ó thaobh róil agus freagrachtaí de. San am atá thart bhí saol an pháiste saor ó bhrú agus ó chur isteach ón saol mór i gcás mórchuid de mhuintir na hÉireann. Inniu bíonn ar pháistí fás suas níos tapúla ná riamh agus ciallaíonn sin nach mbíonn teacht acu ar chuid de na pléisiúir neamhurchóideacha a bhí ag páistí fadó in Éirinn.

With increased pressures academically and socially, children today are being forced perhaps to mature faster than those generations before them. A younger society moving at a quicker pace confronted with the internet, mobile phones and a latch-key lifestyle has seen our youth lose some of the innocence that was once a part of being a child of Ireland. Although we may not share the same childhood experiences as our forefathers, we do have one common link; we were, are and will continue to be children.



“We'd have to do sewing and mending and things like that. My mother would have made the sheets. You'd get the flour bags and then wash them well, then boil them and everything and then sew them all together and then make sheets. They were lovely too they were”

“We didn't know what it was to travel. If you got to leave town once a year, once a month, it was a big day for us. Today children get to travel all over the world and it doesn't mean anything. It's no big deal to travel to Australia or America. We wouldn't have coped with that”

THE GOOD OLD DAYS!



For most people, reminiscing about their childhood days recalls happy carefree times where family, friends and play seemed to be primary recollections. Sayings such as 'youth is wasted on the young' suggest that we hold these times fondly in our hearts. Thankfully most of us grew up in a safe, secure society where authority was enforced by the occasional slap of an adult's hand or ruler.

For some, however, childhood was a time when strict punishment either at home, school or an institution contributed to the recollection of lasting memories of fear, anxiety and neglect. It may well be that a not so happy childhood forced some to grow up too quickly, to abandon their childhood innocence and carry with them into adulthood anger, bitterness and distrust. Thankfully though, for most of us, our childhoods are richly blessed with memories of pocket money spent on penny sweets, of playing simple games and endless holidays spent outdoors.



“In the wintertime you would unscrew that and fill it up with hot water, you could put that in your bed and your feet were lovely and warm but you couldn't put your feet near it because it would roast you”



“Your shoes used to be so tight for you. A load of children used to come to school with no shoes, couldn't afford shoes. It was nothing for children to come into school with no shoes or coat. Everybody accepted it”

“Holidays did not mean two weeks away in the sun. It usually meant day trips away to local seaside resorts, which in themselves were a reflection of simpler times”



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”

“Slaps, very hard ones. But on the hands that was about all we got. I’d say there was worse punishment than that, slaps on the hand or put out in the hall, frozen”

“I remember poor Mam; as soon as January came in she’d start saving for Christmas and there were a couple of toy shops in the town, and you had a little card and you’d go and pay half a crown or whatever because you had six children. I remember a blackboard and chalk and that would be a dream, or you would get a doll. I mean we were easily pleased”

“I hated school, I’ll tell you the truth. Every morning was like going to prison and the masters them times if you were late you got a leather strap on the hands or across the knuckles. I often came home with blisters on my hands but you couldn’t complain to your mother, she’d say, only you deserved it you wouldn’t have got it”

Búiochas le Dia, ní droch-chuimhní cinn mar sin atá ag formhór daoine, ach cuimhní ar phingíní a chaitheamh ar mhilseáin, cluichí simplí a imirt le cairde ar an tsráid agus laethanta saoire fada amuigh faoi spéir.

“It was a long time ago but when I was being taught by the Mercy nuns, I remember this old nun who used to carry a bamboo cane. She taught infants class and we soon learned she was a gentle old lady because she never hit or slapped anyone, she just used the cane to scratch her back”



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”

“When I left school I was thirteen years and three months. I worked for Tommy Slevin, a builder who lived in Ballybofey. The wages weren't big then either and the shovel was a lot bigger than me”

“I can remember as a child that we used to do embroidery for Gallagher that used to come to Killeter. They gave out embroidery every two weeks and you brought it back finished every two weeks. We got about 5 shillings (25p) for it”

“Another thing I didn't like about school were the upper class, the people with money. We thought they had money anyway even though they only had shops. But they had more money than we had. These people with shops were always held up as examples. They always got away with anything and everything. They were teacher's pets and they got away with a lot because they were upper class and we were poorer”

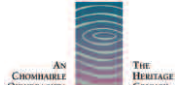
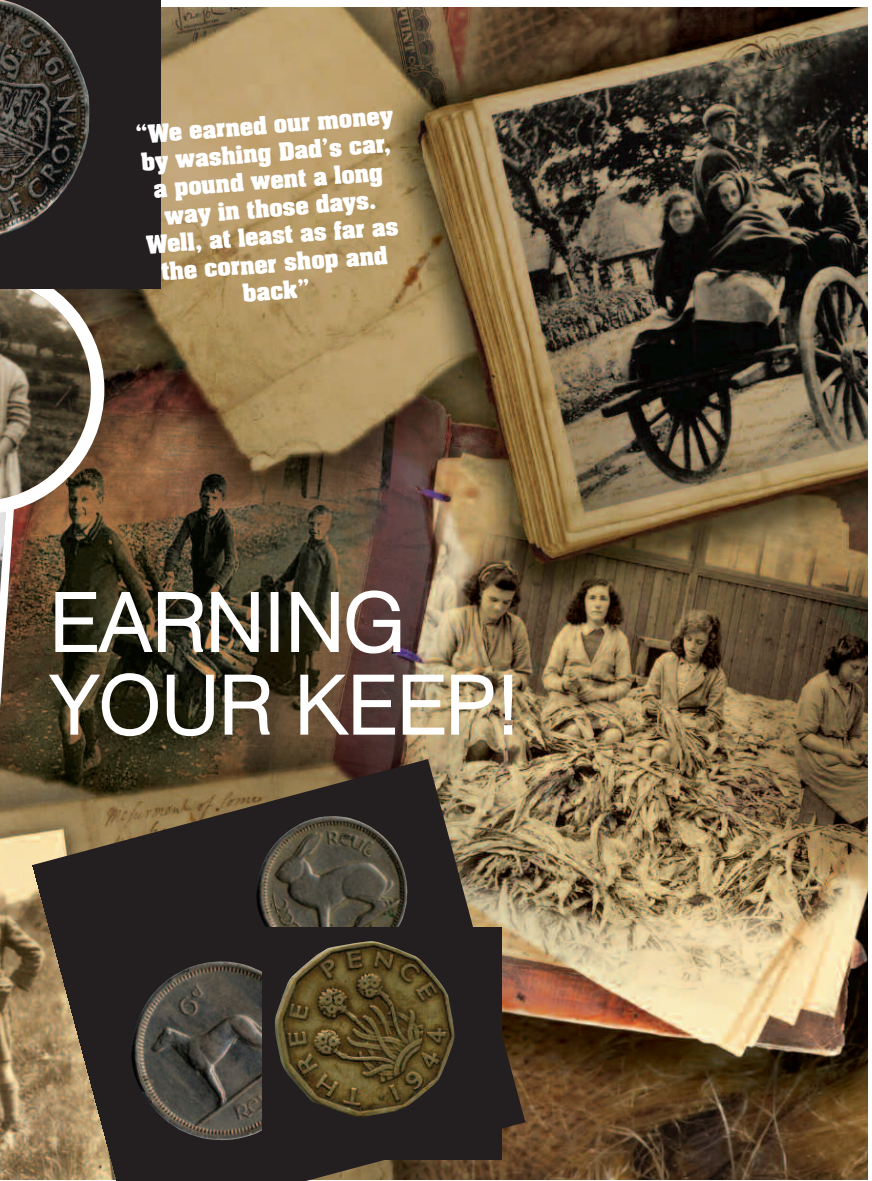
“I remember one day deciding to earn some money helping a local farmer pick spuds (potatoes). I had never done it before and even though the people I was picking with were really nice, it was really hard work and I was so stiff all over. When I got home that night I told my mother that I did not want to go back the next day, she laughed as she knew it was hard work but she was still very proud of me”

“I remember my first job (I was only 14 at the time) - hanging trousers in the Farah factory in Shantalla, and being paid £2.50 an hour. My mother advised me to buy something special with my first ever pay packet - something that I would have and enjoy for many years to come - I bought a snooker cue and case in Furey's in Eglinton Street. It was my pride and joy”

“When I was 13, Bridget Carlin wanted me to come and work for her in her house so I left school and went there. I worked in the farmhouse. She didn't pay me she paid Granny”



“We earned our money by washing Dad's car, a pound went a long way in those days. Well, at least as far as the corner shop and back”



"I was hired from home at the age of eleven to a local farmer. I spent nearly six months with him. There wasn't much going to school then. There was no such thing as working hours. You got up early in the morning and worked until it was not possible to work any more"

"In the summer we used to walk to Duleek to pick fruit at 7am and walk home in the evening which would be late. We would earn 2 shillings a day. Down on your knees in the muck and dirt, thinning turnips, picking fruit. If he caught you taking a few strawberries you'd be sacked. He wouldn't even make you a cup of tea. We used to go up were the hens were and pinch the eggs and go up to him and say, 'my mother said would you boil that egg', and they would be his eggs"

SEEN BUT NOT HEARD"

EARNING YOUR KEEP!

Unlike today where children have an opportunity to go to school, then college and even travel for a year or two, it was expected in the early part of the 20th century that children "should earn their keep". Working around the house, doing jobs for neighbours was seen as contributing your bit to your family, your food and your home. To be brought up on a farm meant more daily duties than most, with jobs such as drawing water, feeding animals, planting and picking crops, saving hay, very much a part of your growing up.

Children from middle class or wealthy families fared better. While some worked, they did so after their primary schooling was complete. Some young boys got work running deliveries for local shops or in factories. Others had apprenticeships with a builder or carpenter, both highly respected positions. Of course many boys and girls worked on farms on a seasonal basis. For many girls a working life with a local shop or factory, weaving, spinning, knitting or 'in service' beckoned until such time as they married.

Bhíodh saol an pháiste leagtha amach dó, a bheag nó a mhór, ag obair ar fheirm nó i ngnó a mhuintire i gcás na mbuachaillí agus i mbun oibre go dtí gur phós siad i gcás na gcaillíní.



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”

SCHOOL DAYS ARE THE BEST DAYS!

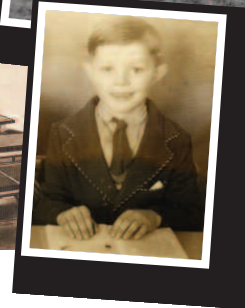
“I loved school because it was a way to get out of the house because I was an only girl among seven brothers. They were all younger than me. So I had to do everything but I was glad to get to school to get away from it all. Get a bit of peace to my head”

The Twentieth century saw great changes in education. The Department of Education was set up in 1924 and introduced a revised syllabus. Children were taught religion, Irish, English, arithmetic, history, geography, music and for girls, needlework. Extra subjects included nature study, drawing, physical training, cookery or laundry or domestic economy for girls and manual instruction for boys.

Many schools however were understaffed, with classes which were too large, or else uneconomically small, buildings that were old fashioned, and heating, lighting and sanitation, which were often totally inadequate. In 1963 there were still 736 schools with one teacher and 2,458 two teacher schools and despite increases in expenditure on school buildings many children were still taught in schools that dated from the 19th century.

In 1922 the Constitution established Irish as the national language. By 1928 most subjects in primary school were taught through Irish.

“I grew up beside our local national school which I didn't like as myself and my sisters had to come home at lunchtime to do chores. We had to draw water from the well or feed animals. I envied the kids who lived further out the country as they had a longer walk home which meant that they did not have to start work so soon after school”



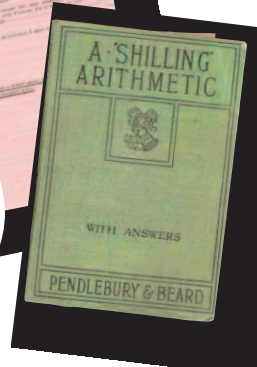
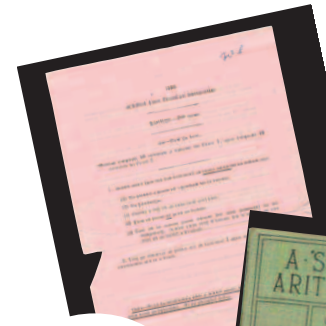
“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”



“About a fifth of boys came to school barefooted even in the hardest of winters boys with pale little faces dressed in tattered rags”

D’fhoghaím páistí creideamh, Gaeilge, Béarla, uimhriocht, stair, tireolas, ceol agus i gcás na gcailíní, fuáil.

“I liked school but you weren’t allowed to go every day as we were kept at home to work on the farm. I missed out on a lot of learning”



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”



“I remember that the door bell would ring at 10 o'clock in the morning and I would be out playing with my friends all day, only coming home because it was dark”

These were the everyday activities that we remembered fondly but for most there were also more structured events. Sporting organisations such as the FAI (Football Association of Ireland), the IRFU (Irish Rugby and Football Union) and the GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) have all contributed in the twentieth century in providing a strong local presence for sport in almost every part of the island of Ireland. Local clubs have always existed to support swimming, athletics, gymnastics and basketball. Similarly so, the Scouts and Guides Associations have been an outlet for our youth. For both girls and boys, Irish dancing, music, singing and participation at the various Feiseanna around the country provided an opportunity to showcase local and regional talents.



“The cinema was the main pastime. There were usually two films nightly and the 1st film usually a western was called the “wee” picture. 10d was the usual admission price. The wooden seats called the “crokers” were 4d which was the price we mostly paid”



“Tiny Tears, how I loved thee when I was seven, you could keep your Cindys and Teddy Bears, Tiny Tears was the toy for me”

“Well there was no electricity as such, we had some electricity but it wasn't powerful enough, it was only generated locally. That restricted your lights and games in your house. So storytelling and playing cards and reading was possible but sometimes difficult”

“When we were very young, my sister and I would have to share a bath and there was always disagreement over whose turn it was to sit at the tap end of the bath”

“YOUR HEALTH IS YOUR WEALTH”

Ba ghnó don teaghlach agus don pobal áitiúil cúrsaí sláinte agus leasa idir pháistí agus dhaoine fásta in Éirinn sa bhliain 1900. In imeacht céad bliain rinneadh gnó poiblí agus náisiúnta de shláinte páistí, cúram a thit ar an teaghlach agus ar an pobal áitiúil amháin go dtí sin.

The health and welfare of Irish children and adults was largely a family and community matter in 1900. Medicine was quite primitive and doctors did not exert a major influence on national health issues. Infectious diseases were common and deadly, with tuberculosis especially dangerous and rampant among young people.

“Well there was an old cure, you say if you had a sore throat and if you were wearing a woollen sock, you should take it off and put it around your neck at night-time. Just suppose to cure it, a sore throat”

By 1913, however, reformers were trying to expand government involvement in health services and focus on maternal and child health, including, for the first time, medical inspection and treatment for all school children. Reformers recognized the link between children’s health and poverty, and targeted everything from milk supply to playgrounds to ensure children’s wellbeing.

Today, children’s health and wellbeing is understood to be broader than whether or not they are sick. It encompasses their living situation, their diet, their social opportunities and their family’s lifestyle. Over 100 years, children’s health has transformed from a private and local matter to a public, national concern.

Health services in Ireland improved greatly in the 1940s-50s. A national effort brought tuberculosis and other infectious diseases under control, improved mother and baby services, and reduced maternal and infant mortality significantly. By the end of the 1950s, Ireland had a modern health service.



"In my time T.B. was terrible. It was something like cancer at the moment. It was a killer. T.B. was a dreadful complaint. I remember one family and three boys in the family died of the illness four months of each other. It was dreadful. T.B. came into a family, well it was a black night to everybody"

"While there was not always a doctor on call sometimes the presence of a knowledgeable lay midwife was more beneficial"



"Medicine: well we used to have castor oil, you wouldn't remember that, castor oil. Then if we got sick and had a sore throat, my mother would fill a stocking with salt and heat it, and put it around our necks for to cure our sore throat. There were no aspirins and no disprins, nothing like that. That time no proprietary medicines, but they were all natural medicines"

"While in Primary School our class had to line up in the gym hall to receive the B.C.G., invariably someone would faint and cause panic throughout the line"



"I was 8 at the time and everyone in those days had to get their tonsils out and someone would come to the school and make arrangements with each one of us on what day we were to attend the hospital. Auntie Kay left me to the door and went onto her work, nobody went into the hospital with you and no one was allowed in to visit you. Because there weren't many beds in the hospital kids always had to double up in the one bed"

"Whichever of my friends happened to be in my house at 7 o'clock on Saturday evenings would get a bath whether they liked it or not"



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”



“SEEN BUT NOT HEARD”



FERN HILL

by Dylan Thomas

Now as I was young and easy under the apple boughs,
About the litting house and happy as the grass was green,
The night above the dingle starry,
Time let me hail and climb
Golden in the hedges of his eyes,
And honoured among wagons I was prince of the apple towns
And once below a time I lordly had the trees and leaves,
Trail with daisies and barley
Down the rivers of the windfall light.

And as I was green and carefree, famous among the barns
About the happy yard and singing as the farm was home,
In the sun that is young once only,
Time let me play and be
Golden in the mercy of his means,
And green and golden I was huntsman and herdsman, the calves
Sang to my horn, the foxes on the hills barked clear and cold,
And the sabbath rang slowly
In the pebbles of the holy streams.

All the sun long it was running, it was lovely, the hay,
Fields high as the house, the tunes from the chimneys, it was air
And playing, lovely and watery
And fire green as grass.
And nightly under the simple stars
As I rode to sleep the owls were bearing the farm away,
All the moon long I heard, blessed among stables, the nightjars
Flying with the ricks, and the horses
Flashing into the dark.

And then to awake, and the farm, like a wanderer white
With the dew, come back, the cock on his shoulder: it was all
Shining, it was Adam and maiden,
The sky gathered again
And the sun grew round that very day,
So it must have been after the birth of the simple light
In the first, spinning place, the spellbound horses walking warm
Out of the whinnying green stable
On to the fields of praise.

And honoured among foxes and pheasants by the gay house
Under the new made clouds and happy as the heart was long,
In the sun born over and over,
I ran my heedless ways,
My wishes raced through the house high hay,
And nothing I cared, at my sky blue trades, that time allowed
In all his tuneful turning so few and such morning songs
Before the children green and golden
Follow him out of grace.

Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me
Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,
In the moon that is always rising,
Nor that riding to sleep
I should hear him fly with the high fields
And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.
Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,
Time held me green and dying
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.



**LOCAL
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**LAMN – LOCAL AUTHORITY
MUSEUMS' NETWORK**

The Local Authority Museums Network is made up of the 13 museums around the Republic of Ireland, which are funded by local authorities. Each museum is represented on this network by its Curator. These 13 people meet throughout the year to discuss how best to promote and protect the cultural heritage and historical richness of their regions. It was through the collaboration of this network together with funding received from the Heritage Council and the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that this exhibition was made

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