

The Banks of the Moy His Heaven



NEW BALLINA POEMS

Foilseachán de chuid Chlár Dheich mBliana
na gCuimhneachán, Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo

A Mayo County Council
Decade of Centenaries Publication

Edited by Martin Dyar

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A Mayo County Council Decade of Centenaries Programme publication, produced for Mayo County Council Arts Service in partnership with the Jackie Clarke Collection.

Eagarthóir / Editor: Martin Dyar

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An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
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Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



Bailiúchán
Sheáin
Uí Chléirigh

The Jackie
Clarke
Collection



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Editor's Introduction

The poems in this publication came about through a series of classes that I had the privilege of teaching during my time as the 2023 Decade of Centenaries writer in residence at the Jackie Clarke Collection in Ballina.

The seed of the idea for a series of poems that would take the town as their primary starting point was sown by the late Eugene Loftus, an influential artistic presence in Ballina for many years and a co-founder of the town's One Act Drama Festival.

I did not know Eugene, but early in my Decade of Centenaries residency I heard about him from the Community Development Liaison and Volunteer Manager at the Jackie Clarke Collection, Anne Marie Forbes, in one of many creative, candid and door-opening conversations.

Late one night, some years previously, Eugene had floated the idea of a Ballina epic, a poem that would have the quality of being endless. That grand idea remained in the minds of some of his friends and by

collaborators. In Anne Marie's retelling it resonated and struck me as a kind of gauntlet cast at the feet of the writer in residence.

Ultimately, to run with the Eugene legend was to encounter numerous people of natural writing talent for whom Ballina was a very natural subject. It also provided a pathway to a deeper acquaintance with the archival treasures in the Jackie Clarke Collection.

If the poems gathered here do not go on forever, as in Eugene's excellent daydream, they do represent certain unending things. The abundance of the Jackie Clarke Collection, I believe, is palpable here, together with its function as a home of history and memory, and its role as a vital cultural space. The glimmering story of the River Moy and its place in the daily and artistic lives of Ballina people is also subtly recorded. Additionally, there is a sense of the timeless quest of poetry, the effort to capture what is imaginatively possible when the mind has been made quiet and reflective and articulate the act of writing.

I wish to express sincere thanks to Katriona Gillespie and Ann Marie McGing in Mayo Arts Service, for

their generosity, their expertise and their diligence; Austin Vaughan, County Librarian, for his passionate commitment to the Jackie Clarke Collection and his energetic coordination of the Decade of Centenaries programme across Mayo; Joanne Grehan, Director of Services in Mayo County Council, whose sense of the value of poetry and creative writing made her many gestures of support truly impactful; the staff and officials in the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media whose Decade of Centenaries work made this residency possible; Anne Marie Forbes, for her unflagging support and inspiration, and her brilliant work as an opener of Jackie Clarke's achievement to all communities; Yvonne Corcoran Loftus, who backed this project immediately in her new managerial role; and all the staff at the Jackie Clarke Collection, including Celene Brennan, Sharon McGinty, Nathan Gorman, Susan Keane, Alf Cowan, Eilish Higgins, Stacey Joslin, Ann McCafferty, and Tommy Durkan, whose professionalism made the experience of being a guest poet in Ballina all the more fruitful and memorable. Thanks are due also to Lisa Hallinan, whose work on the Ballina 2023 celebrations put many new things on my horizon,

and whose insight and kindness were indispensable; Alan Conmy, in St Muredach's College, who brought a group of extraordinary students across the river; Marie Loftus (Eugene's wife), for her blessing, and for her own writing; and Richard Meade, for his first rate design work, and his sensitive and patient approach to the poems and the manuscript.

Finally, thanks to all the poets in *The Banks of the Moy His Heaven*, for the gift of our dialogue and the individual strength of their work. Some are starting out, and some have revived long term dreams. May this little book be a point of no return, and a lasting encouragement.

Martin Dyar

Réambrá leis an Eagarthóir

Tháinig na dánta san fhoilseachán seo ar an saol trí shraith ranganna a raibh de phribhléid agam iad a mhúineadh i rith an ama a chaith mé mar scríbhneoir cónaithe Dheich mBlíana na gCuimhneachán 2023 ag Bailiúchán Jackie Clarke i mBéal an Átha.

Chuir Eugene Loftus, nach maireann, an síol don smaoineamh sraith dánta a scríobh ina dtosófaí i mBéal an Átha ar dtús. Ba phearsa ealaíonta é Eugene a chuaigh i gcion go mór ar mhuintir Bhéal an Átha ar feadh go leor blianta agus ba chomhbhunaitheoir é ar Fhéile Dhrámaíochta Aonghnímh an bhaile.

Ní raibh aithne agam ar Eugene, ach d'inis an Bainisteoir Idirchaidrimh Forbartha Pobail agus Oibríthe Deonacha ag Bailiúchán Jackie Clarke, Anne Marie Forbes, dom faoi go luath i mo chónaitheacht Dheich mBlíana na gCuimhneachán, le linn dúinn a bheith i mbun comhrá cruthaitheach, nádúrtha agus a raibh deiseanna le tapú dá bharr, mar ba ghnách dúinn.

Rinne Eugene machnamh go déanach oíche amháin roinnt blianta roimhe sin ar eipic Bhéal an Átha a scríobh

– dán nach mbeadh deireadh leis. Lean an smaoineamh mór sin in intinn cuid dá chairde agus dá chomhoibrithe. Chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm orm agus rith sé liom san athinsint a rinne Anne Marie air gur chuir sé dúshlán faoin scríbhneoir cónaithe.

I ndeireadh na dála, chasfadh go leor daoine orm a bhfuil tallann nádúrtha scríbhneoireachta acu a raibh Béal an Átha ina ábhar an-nádúrtha acu de bharr an laoi Eugene. Sholáthair sé bealach freisin chun cur amach níos fearr a bheith agam ar na taiscí cartlainne i mBailiúchán Jackie Clarke.

Mura leanfaidh na dánta a bailíodh anseo ar aghaidh go brách, mar a leanann i mbrionglóid iontach Eugene, rudaí áirithe nach bhfuil deireadh leo atá iontu, mar sin féin. Is féidir flúirse Bhailiúchán Jackie Clarke a mhothú anseo, creidim féin, sa mhullach ar a fheidhm mar bhunáit na staire agus na cuimhne, agus a ról mar spás ríthábhachtach cultúrtha. Déantar scéal drithleach faoi Abhainn na Muaidhe agus a háit i saol laethúil agus ealaíonta mhuintir Bhéal an Átha a chur i gcuntas go cáiréiseach chomh maith. Ina theannta sin, tá braistint ann d'aistear síoraí na filíochta, den iarracht an méid is féidir a shamhlú a léiriú nuair a chuireann gníomh na

scríbhneoireachta tost ar an intinn agus nuair a spreagann sí an intinn chun machnaimh agus rudaí a léiriú.

Is mian liom buíochas ó chroí a chur in iúl do Katriona Gillespie agus Ann Marie McGing i Seirbhís Ealaíon Mhaigh Eo as a bhflaithiúlacht, a saineolas agus a ndícheall; Austin Vaughan, Leabharlannaí Contae, as a thiomantas paiseanta do Bhailiúchán Jackie Clarke agus as an gcomhordú fuinniúil a rinne sé ar chlár Dheich mBliana na gCuimhneachán ar fud Mhaigh Eo; Joanne Grehan, Stiúrthóir Seirbhísí i gComhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo, ar imir an tacaíocht a thug sí tionchar mór de bharr na tuisceana atá aici ar fhiúntas na filíochta agus na scríbhneoireachta cruthaithí; an fhoireann agus na hoifigigh sa Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán, nach bhféadfainn tabhairt faoin gcónaitheacht seo murach an obair a rinne siad maidir le Deich mBliana na gCuimhneachán; Anne Marie Forbes, as an tacaíocht agus an spreagadh gan staonadh a thug sí, agus as a sárobair chun gach pobal a chur ar an eolas ar ghaisce Jackie Clarke; Yvonne Corcoran Loftus, a thug tacaíocht don tionscadal seo díreach i ndiaidh di glacadh lena ról nua bainistíochta; agus an fhoireann go léir ag Bailiúchán Jackie Clarke, Celene Brennan, Sharon McGinty, Nathan Gorman, Siobhán Keane, Alfie Cowan,

Eilish Ó hUiginn, Stacey Joslin, Ann McCafferty, agus Tommy Durkan ina measc, a raibh an t-eispéireas a bhí agam de bheith i máoifhile i mBéal an Átha ní ba thairbhí agus ní ba dheise dá mbarr.

Tá buíochas ag dul freisin le Lisa Hallinan, ar chuir a hobair ar cheiliúradh Bhéal an Átha 2023 go leor rudaí nua i mo threo, agus a raibh a léargas agus a cineáltas an-riachtanach; Alan Conmy, i gColáiste Naomh Muireadhach, a thug grúpa de scoláirí iontacha trasna na habhann; Marie Loftus (bean chéile Eugene), as a tacaíocht, agus as a scríbhneoireacht féin; agus Richard Meade, as an obair dhearaidh den chéad scoth a rinne sé, agus as a chur chuige íogair agus foighneach i leith na ndánta agus na lámhscríbhinne.

Gabhaim buíochas, ar deireadh, leis na filí go léir in *The Banks of the Moy His Heaven*, as an deis a tugadh dúinn rudaí a phlé agus as neart aonair a n-oibre. Tá roinnt díobh díreach ag tosú, agus tá brionglóidí fadtéarmacha fíoraithe ag roinnt eile. Tá súil agam go mbeidh an leabhar beag seo ina chor cinniúnach agus go leanfaidh sé le spreagadh a thabhairt.

Máirtín Ó Duibhir

Fisher Boy

Dawn is breaking
On dappled water
Morning silence broken
Only by birdsong
A young fisher boy
Deftly casts his line
Full of hope
The banks of the Moy
His heaven.

Marie Loftus

Belleek Woods

I feel the loneliness deep inside and the tears
 running down my face
As if in a dream I drift towards my favourite place
Belleek Woods in Ballina - my sanctuary, my safe
space
Isolated, detached and separate from all I know
I trudge in the rain and the leftover slush from
 the snow
And then I brush the tears from my eyes
As I've been given such a wonderful surprise
Belleek Woods has hosted a party to welcome me
All sorts of leaves flutter from each Autumn tree
The Beech family came from Beech Avenue
The Oak family from Cyril's Way were there too
And the Maples from Moy Trail – what a crew!
They arrive in the most exquisite coats I have
 ever seen
Burnt orange, brown, golden and some shades of
 green
We danced together in the rain that day
I will never forget but for now I must away

Catherine Gilmartin

I Remember the Poem Lovers

I remember ...
the late-night Tone Street traffic seeped in the
 open window,
cold fluorescents hosted attention-seeking flies.
We shuffled in, we found a seat, and waited, for
 our turns to speak.
A lady whose first time it was
delivered Dickinson with professional vigour.
A gent with a beard spoke to my musical heart,
A vision in green with a silver tongue and high
 heels.
An American accent and the thirsty bog-goer.
“Who knew there were so many stones in a
 poem” he said.
Some puppy-dog love from tattooed sleeves
 and lots of words too big for me.
Lilac boots danced ballet and made us feel a
 storm in haste,
the eloquence of The Mother translated to
 help us, Walkers,
the race from a visitor's perspective slowed for
 us to see.

The mighty Moy and beautiful Belleek give
inspiration to so many,
but another Quay would hold the lure of
oriental love.
Family bonds in Moments,
white frilly socks and a lace-trimmed top and a
tribute to Sinead.
An old Fart, a black hat, he rolled the words so
marvellously,
a lady and her coffee, the unfinished and the
free.
I'd almost swear each sound soaked into every
pore and cell;
they floated deep beneath my skin and made
my world stand still.
I'd found a rock, an old new home on fragile
fold-up chairs,
a hidden gem that stirred my brain
to raise a pen to tell of
the generous faces, the nods of encouragement
the closed eyes, the appreciative applause.
There I was,
among the brave sharers and nervous hand-shakers,
the loud delivery and meek whispers.

There we were ...
the poem lovers.

Sheila M. Garvin



100 St. Patrick's
100 St. Patrick's

St. Patrick's
Library
Room 100
Bank of Ireland

Our Moy

The continuous flow
provokes memories.
It divides and unites.
Our constant ...

Patricia Greaney

Three Memories

I

Shambles Street

Blood oozing out
Cattle calling out
Smell of fear
So very near

Butchers hurrying
Backs bent with sides of beef
Up Helly's Lane
Laying it down
To make a crown

II

Fun

Honours class 5th Yr n L.C.
Backseat nearest de door
Had to sit on left side

Me being a Ciotog
Áine to me right
Diagonal view to teachers
Couldn't see me!
Wan in front sat upright
Father in de army
R.C. class a hoot
Mother B. having read Sunday press
"Any Irish girl dat went to
Pagan Land Across de Sea
Lost forever"
Me whispering to Aine
Can't wait to go
Hands covering her face
Suppressing de giggles
First thing I do post L.C.
Off to de Pagan Land!
Still searching!!!

III

A Wedding

Hiding in de cowshed
Oh! What a dread
Dey won't put me in tails
I won't be nailed!

Molly dropping de tears
Oh! What will he wear
Wedding dress ruined
Photos all doomed!!!

He's come out
We all shout
Fetch his Sunday clothes
Those is what he chose

Helen Quinn Dawad

The Jackie Clarke Collection

Amharclann
Theatre



Seomra Cótaí
Cloakroom



Leithreas Inrochtana
Accessible toilet



Michael Davitt Speaks from the Balcony of The Moy Hotel

Packed to overflowing the bus pulls to a stop
Rough hands push and shove, eager to get out
With bag and glove in hand I step gingerly
outside

Knox Street is teeming as crowds jostle and
weave

Midst this swarming mass I must wade and
must heave

“Land League and tenants and rights for all
here”

Is the voice I hear as it wafts through the air
I gravitate as one spellbound towards that
source in the throng

Excitement is building as Davitt thunders on
“Fair Rent”, he declares and “Fixity of Tenure”
With “Freedom of Sale” as our new hope and
promise

As if of one voice jubilation erupts
And deep-rooted memories of grim days ...
fade

Bertha Cooke

Pearse Street

Pearse Street

Same name

But a different street

The families

The family businesses

Gone

Get your hair done in Mrs Cowley's

Get your clothes in O'Connell's, Greham's,
Carney's

Or the Fashion Shop

Go for a pint in Barrett's, Rouse's, Hunt's

The Moy or the Imperial

Get your teeth done in Donnelly's

Get your watch repaired in Harte and
McCormick

Get your prescription filled in Quinn's or
McCarthy's

Your shoes in Joe Moran's

Your daily paper off the Miss Greys

Your furniture in Moran's

Your groceries in Greaney's

Delivered to your door on the messenger boy's
bike

A homely atmosphere existed

In that lovely street

It's sad to think it's gone

But - funnily enough

The bond between the families

That once inhabited

Pearse Street - or Knox Street as it was once
known

Will remain

In their hearts

Forever

We are still neighbours

Noel Greaney

Planes, Trains and Automobiles

Planes, trains and automobiles
from a concrete city
to the green green grass of home
two weeks every year,
smiling grandparents, green fields
and freedom - Oh the freedom -
the warm summer sun, the smell
of the grass, the rolling down
the newly formed haycocks,
the tea in the bottle, chasing Mam
with the frog, wishing it would
last forever. The car packed
for home; the tears; the heartache;
we belonged here; not there;
until next time, which always
seemed a world
of summers away.

Anne Marie Forbes

In the Pink

She steps into the salon, looking like Dolly
Parton.

Pink heals, pink dress, pink lipstick. A belt
with three pink roses.

Blonde tangled curls escaping from a thick,
rose-pink headband.

‘Well, there you are now Margaret,’ the owner
calls in greeting.

‘How are you doing today? Come sit here at
the basin.’

With an encouraging smile she waves to
beckon her in.

Fidgeting with the roses, Margaret stalks down
the runway,

between the drying stations, eyes scanning
from left to right.

Her brief inverted image passes across our
mirrors.

The owner, at the basin, reverently takes the

hairband
and gently tilts her head back, 'Is that
temperature ok?'
A sound, not quite a whimper, grows with the
surge of water.

'No, Mags! Stay back a while yet. I need to dry
you off love.'
A light touch on the arm, at the first blast from
the dryer.
Margaret scrunches-up her eyes, and yelps at
every brush stroke.

The woman doing my hair leans close and
whispers to me:
'The nicest woman ever. She'd have us all in
stitches.
It's all the medication. This is the worst we've
seen her.'

The owner pats her shoulder. 'Your nearly
finish loveen.
We'll use this fab new hairspray. It smells like
summer roses.'

The scent seeps through the salon, and
Margaret starts to hum.

'Robert will pick you up soon,' the owner
reassures her.

The other stylists visit. 'Would you like a
magazine?'
or perhaps a cup of tea. Milk and two sugars, is
it?

Margret, smiling dreamily, politely nods and
answers
and, when her tea arrives, magics from her pink
handbag
a pack of fun size Mars Bars, and carefully
unwraps one.

She sips and munches through it, occasionally
stopping
to address the odd aside to the woman that she
knows,
dressed so stylishly in pink, just there, inside
the mirror.

Audrey Robinson



The Seacats of Enniscrone

These are the Seacats:
they have the reddest of mouths;
red and soft as the glands of closed anemones
in those cleft and secret rock pools
where sometimes when the wind is right,
out of sight of Enniscrone's Seaweed Castle,
puffins fly beneath the water for fun,
nipping children's toes as they pass.
But not out of malice.
These are the Seacats of Enniscrone.

The Seacats of Enniscrone smile through tiny
needle teeth,
and prance like seals in full daylight
between the wet secrets of the sand
and the barnackled mystery of the sea.
They are not hidden!
On gale days you will find them
along the beach edge
running with the wind-blown sand
amongst the flurried sandpipers.

They would seem unattached,
but there are shell collars there around their
necks,
marking their allegiance to the great swelling
suck of the tide!
For they are Mooncats too.
They have fed on fish and sailors' bones
and grin like wise men
watching fools fart into the wind
on the long beach at Enniscrone.
Sometimes they sing:
Such a harsh sound!
Like the creaking of a cock-pheasant
in the new bracken
at mating time.
When he prepares himself,
holding it in,
after a year's continence,
it sounds like he swallowed a wine glass.

When the sky is blue enough to crystallise into
music,
the Seacats curl up like snakes and swallow
their own tails.

Now, that is perfection.
The Seacats of Enniscrone!
Ah! The Seacats of Enniscrone!
I, at least I have seen them!!

Mike Absalom

Ballina

Ballina, the town where I was born,
the place where I grew up.

My town offers warmth,
friendship and opportunities,

a sense of home and support
to all who choose to embrace it.

The pride that I feel is a true pride.
Come dance with me in Ballina.

Siobhán Leonard

Tight Lines All

'Tight lines all' is the fisherman's motto.
Landing bars of silver is akin to winning the
lotto.
The younger anglers learn from Peter, John
and Francis
about bait and the necessary cold long patient
wait.

to land an eleven pound bar of silver is their
heart's desire,
with these Ballina Anglers committee lads
encouraging them
their permits are never allowed to expire.
The visiting anglers don their designer Simms,
with waders up to their oxters, hanging out in
the Weirs,
here they park all their fears, forget about their
professions,
their suits and ties.
Their banter is all aglow about rods, and fishy
tales with bubble and fly.

Seals, cormorants, herons and otters share the
river
frolicking, fishing, stealing and eating
as the anglers await patiently their fate with
their mates.

Bridie McAndrew

CONFECTIONER & HARDWARE
GENTS HAIRDRESSING SALON
KING ST.
BALLINA.

J. CLARKE
SCRAP BOOK

[Faint purple stamp, illegible]

REM: Billy MAHER. (willow)
MAIN ST.
THURLES.
Co. Wick.

Ratification

Watching on in despair
I take count of votes
to change our very nation

Members agree and disagree
the tense scene is unfolding

The count is in,
the chamber goes
silent, the Speaker conferring.

He announces:
“The treaty is ratified”
Some erupt, others cheer

The outcome is clear.

Jamie Brown

Choices

Ireland early 1900's a story to be told,
De Valera's choices, both cruel and cold.
Many call it cowardice, perhaps one of his
many schemes

In an effort to protect himself from the Irish
people's extremes.

In the midst of struggle all that could be heard
was the republican song,
he stated “The majority have no right to do
wrong”

His controversial decisions debated
forevermore, De Valera's legacy
tarnished on the floor.

Kian Boland

Pages

Splattered with names and votes
Could be seen as so worthless
Yet
It has had the biggest change
In shaping Ireland as I know it today.

Keelan Langdon

Jackie Clarke

the smart young boy loved
to collect things,
since the age of young
to what he's become is a brilliant young man,
to his knowledge he didn't know
that he would play a pretty big role,
his collection that he collected
helps us understand about our country's
history's past,
so to this boy that liked to collect we owe a big
thanks!

Ka Paw Say

The Book

Seeing the events unfold
Right in front of me
Was a sight to behold

Full of names and votes
Pride and honour

I was going to
Make a difference

So small in size
Yet
So big in purpose

Liam Moyles

Remember

In Ballina's embrace, like a river's flow
Jackie Clarke,
A collector's heart aglow.
Artefacts stored like treasures of old,
His love for history, a story untold.

Séamus Clarke

Buried

Born a disadvantaged Man
Running from house to house
In fear and struggle
I ran silent as a mouse

Time is ticking fast
They are after me now
In this race I am finishing last
No need for a row

Captured by the British
Time is moving slow
Buried is my body
On the Foxford Road.

James Brogan

Tolan

The blood furrows a slow stream
Through this cold bog
Or
Is it just me
Who's growing colder

And from where the elixir of my life
Trickles to the ground
Rises a skull
Hibernia

Although in my youth
The eldest years of my life
And she nears the grave
We shall die together
I'll be labelled brave

Iarla Dunford

Jackie Clarke

If ever there was an event at school,
A rugby match or outing,
I would always sneak away
As it was intrigue that I was scouting.

At the meeting of two quiet streets,
I'd wade through outlawed prints.
Makeshift stalls would line the path
Of wooden planks and unsure splints.

Books and stories of our past,
Of hardship and oppression.
A man there would always welcome me,
As we discussed our shared obsession.

Invaded abruptly and marred by Albion,
For honest freedom our men did fight.
Tales of pride, of bravery and of passion,
I felt obliged to shed some light.

A collection a lifetime in the making,
Sourced by me for you to treasure.
So we might never forget our past,
So significant, yet simple, a timeless endeavour.

David Newcombe

The Tally

I

I fondly remember
the plethora of hands
grasping me
etching their names
onto my pale body.
the idiosyncracies
of their writings
are like
carvings, eloquent
and delicate
each possessing
something new.

II

Suddenly I
am overcome with
the surrounding
tension.
all these shallow faces,

drowning in their own
thought, unaware of
the utter melancholy
written on their
expressions.

III

These etchings feel different,
a new
sensation, like
gentle strokes
from a paintbrush
all descending along
my eggshell skin

IV

The room is alive,
electric with hostility.
some speak, but
I do not listen.
perhaps I have assisted
in the evocation of

despondency, fear and
loathing.

V

Perhaps I have brought
on change, yet I
do not know; is it for
better or for
worse.

Colum Clarke

Hush

Come through to memory.
Outside the window it is there, you can see it,
You can see it from this bank, a stream of
Dignity.
Window frames the prize – dignity denied,
Reclaimed now innate.
Inside, beneath glass – a different window –
Trinkets from the morass of dirty war.

They surely know, inside this hush, their story
is laid down.

Alan Conmy

Le tacaíocht ón Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon,
Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán faoin tionscnamh
Deich mBliana na gCuimhneachán 2012 – 2023.

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Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
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An Roinn Turasóireachta, Cultúir,
Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán
Department of Tourism, Culture,
Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media



Bailiúchán
Sheáin
Uí Chléirigh

The Jackie
Clarke
Collection

