One of the themes Gorsemoor Primary School has adopted to enliven the Literacy Hour in Year 4 is ‘Pigs’.

This pack suggests some resources to give an Irish flavour to that theme in line with the school’s Ireland project.

Ireland offers some rich resources since pigs have loomed large in the country’s agricultural economy and culture from the earliest times.

The Black Pig’s Dyke, also known as the ‘Worm Ditch’, was constructed as a series of interrupted linear earthworks - banks, ditches and timber palisades, where the southern border of Ulster meets the central plain of Ireland. Dating from the Iron Age, c.500-50 BC, it was intended to impede cattle-raiding from the South into Ulster.

According to tradition, however, its origins are much more colourful. A mythological, giant, black pig crossed Ireland and carved out a trench with its tusks, after a schoolmaster-magician was tricked into transforming himself into a pig.

The resources consist of three parts and two appendices:

1. Irish stories about pigs
2. Pigs in Irish poetry, verse & rhymes
3. Pigs in Ireland: some facts - to be adapted for non-fiction work
   Appendices - Pigs in Irish myths & legends*
   A. The Story of Mac Dathó’s Pig
   B. The Quarrel of the Pig Keepers.

   * These tales need to be re-presented for children.

In Celtic art the boar is a symbol of masculine power. The meat of the boar was served at Otherworld feasts for the deities.
The sow is associated with some Crone/Mother Goddesses, such as Cerridwen, and with Otherworldly feasts.
The pig is the archetypal symbol of plenty, healing, and shapeshifting.
1. Irish stories about pigs

By Fergus Lyons, O’Brien Press; 0-86278-528-6

Muckeen is not a clean pig. In fact, he’s a dirty and untidy little pig who spends his days happily making mud pies, digging for worms in the farmyard and looking forward to dinnertime, when Mrs Farmer brings him a bucket of delicious sloppy stuff. But the summer passes, and one day he overhears the Farmers saying that he should be brought to market. When he eventually realises that a trip to market involves more than an ice cream treat and a new hat, he squeals and squirms and wriggles and shoves until finally he is free. Racing all the way home, he meets a man stealing his bucket of sloppy stuff and knocks him over. His bravery is rewarded and Muckeen is even more contented than before.

LANGUAGE - ENGLISH

• Discuss favourite foods: Muckeen loved ‘sloppy stuff, children love …
• Discuss favourite treats: Muckeen wanted ice cream and a hat …
• Discuss expectations: When reality doesn’t meet expectations.
• Discuss treasured belongings: Muckeen rescued his ‘sloppy stuff.
• Language of movement: Squeal and squirm, wriggle and shove.
• Language of pig: Fat, pink, snout, digs, floppy, curly, meal, mash, boar, sow, piglets, bonhams (banbh), litter, intelligent, clean.
• Creative: Name the ingredients for Muckeen’s favourite meal.
• Listing: ‘This little piggie went to market to buy…’; ‘To market, to market to buy a fat pig/to buy a fat …’

SESE - SCIENCE

• Living things: The pig rooting in the soil for food, rolling in mud, but extremely clean, lives in pigsty or on farm; sow can produce as many as twelve piglets at a time.
• Provides humans with food: Pork chops, roast pork, kidneys, bacon, rashers, sausages.
• Characteristics of pigs: Intelligence, foods they eat, grunting/snuffling noises when looking for food.

SPHE

• Myself: Taking care of my body. Personal hygiene, importance of cleanliness and of being tidy/untidy, taking some responsibility for self-care.
• Feelings and emotions: Exploring different feelings in different situations. Happiness: ‘I feel happy when I’m taking control: ‘I take control when I…’
• Treatment of other people: Treating people with dignity and respect, respecting the belongings of others, tackling those who are doing wrong.

MATHEMATICS

• Counting: Mr Farmer counting his gold.
• Observation: Finding the hidden panda; naming the other farm animals/birds/insects.

REAL BOOKS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Aimed at ‘Beginner Readers, Muckeen the Pig has proved helpful with older children who have reading difficulties.
The Great Pig Escape
by Linda Moller, O’Brien Press, 0-86278-667-3
When the farm cat warns Runtling of his approaching fate, Runtling realises that the trip to market is one which he must avoid at all costs and he rushes off to warn his long-lost siblings of the danger. Together the thirteen pigs make their way across country, learning to adapt to the pleasures and pains of the natural environment as they endeavour to escape the attentions of their pursuers. When they find an abandoned farm, it seems that their troubles are over, until new owners take possession of the land and the pigs fear that their escape has been in vain. But the Faraways have strange, alternative ideas about farming and lifestyle that may work to the benefit of pigs and humans alike.

LANGUAGE - ENGLISH
• Vocabulary extension: Emphatic, absurd, aghast, hummock, tantalising, aloof, folly.
• Language of animals: Children match verbs to appropriate animal/bird: Flapping, ambled, stalked, rooted, cantered, pounced, sniffed.
• Discussion: Are Mist, Bramble, Hawthorn appropriate names for pigs? Children think of more suitable/imaginative names (p.25).
• Discussion: Children analyse people’s reactions to the pig escape (pp.42-43).
• Discussion: Royalties. Discuss the meaning of the term and the practice of donating royalties.
• Creative: ‘Hidden in the tangle of weeds ... were curious things ...’ (p.48). Discuss the items listed and suggest other ‘curious things’.
• Creative: Advertisements. Examine the text of the advert on p.104, discuss its appeal to potential customers and design an alternative.

SESE - SCIENCE
• Plants and animal life: Characteristics of living things. Exploring how plant/animal behaviour is influenced by/adapted to environmental conditions; children discuss foxes (pp. 10, 12, 59-63); farm dogs (p.47); falcons (p.50), rats (p.16) and rabbits (p.49) in an environment ordered by humans.
• Plant and animal life: Characteristics of pigs (pp.11-13), pigs as food, organic rearing (p.21), sense of smell (pp.9, 11, 12), behaviour in a natural environment (pp.33, 59, 85).
• Environmental awareness and care: Recognising how people affect environments. Planting/felling trees, removing hedgerows, constructing buildings/roads, using pesticides: Discuss the pigs’ journey to freedom and the obstacles/difficulties encountered.

SPHE
• Myself: Self-identity/making decisions. Understanding each person’s contribution to various groups, becoming confident in coping with unfamiliar situations, becoming responsible and autonomous. Discuss Runtling, who initially felt helpless and lonely but later discovered the joys of leadership (pp.41, 80), and learned to accept the suggestions of the other pigs (pp.55, 80).
• My friends and other people: Exploring the role of assumption, rumour, fact and opinion. Discuss the various opinions expressed about Mr Taggerty (pp.44, 103) and the local preconceptions about the Faraways (pp.83, 87), and assess the validity of the comments.
• Media education: Exploring and examining accuracy of media, referring to Mrs Taggerty’s approach to the journalist (pp.38, 39).

VISUAL ARTS
• Light and dark: Using white chalk and black paper, draw the opening paragraph scene.
• Papier-mâché pig: See Art and Craft Explorer, Collection 1, by Mary Carroll and Katie Long.

Real Books for Primary Schools, O’Brien Press, 0-86278-609-6, p. 27

Aimed at capable readers of eight years plus.
This is the story of Farmer Neligan’s pig - a pig who dared to be different. It is a scorchingly hot day at the farm and the pig sits by the pond watching ducks and geese keeping cool in the water. It gets hotter and hotter and the pig becomes more and more agitated. Eventually, she leaps into the water herself. Panic ensues as word is passed around the farm and neighbourhood that ‘at Neligan’s farm, the pig’s in the pond!’ Then Farmer Neligan returns, surveys the scene and, with great ceremony, removes all his clothes and jumps into the pond himself! Convention having been broken, all the birds and animals join Farmer Neligan and his daring pig cavorting in the water.

The Pig in the Pond has proved popular - and effective - with all age groups, especially very reluctant readers among older boys.
Daniel O’Connell and the Trickster
This is one of the many stories told about the clever wiles of Ireland’s famous leader in the early nineteenth century.

There was a man living at Carhan, near Caherciveen, in the time of Daniel O’Connell. He was poor and he had a large family. One day he was selling two pigs - a white one and a black one - at Tralee fair. A buyer asked him how much he wanted for the white one, along with the black one. The poor man thought, and no wonder, that the buyer wanted only the white pig; so he named the price. The buyer immediately marked both pigs and took from his pocket only that which had been asked for the white one.

‘What do you mean?’ asked the poor man. ‘You only inquired about the white pig.’

‘That’s a lie!’ said the buyer. ‘Didn’t I ask you how much you wanted for the white one along with the black one?’

The poor man could do nothing but give him the two pigs for the price of one. He returned home and told his story to his wife and to all the neighbours. It wasn’t long till it spread all over the district, and everybody was sorry for the poor man. He told his story to Daniel O’Connell, who had great sympathy for him.

‘We’ll get our own back on that buyer later on,’ said O’Connell. ‘Are you willing to cut off the lobe of your right ear?’

‘I am,’ said he.

O’Connell cut off the lobe of the man’s right ear, put it into an envelope, and took it home. He asked the poor man to accompany him to Tralee next day to play a trick on the buyer.

‘He has a tobacco shop in Tralee,’ said O’Connell, ‘and we’ll call into him. After a while, you must take out your pipe and take a whiff or two from it. I will then pass the remark that you don’t smoke very much, and you must reply that you would smoke seven times as much, if you had the tobacco. I will then say that I’ll give you all the tobacco you want.’

The following day, they both went to Tralee and went into the tobacco shop. The poor man pulled out his pipe, reddened it, drew a few whiffs, and put it back into his pocket.

‘You don’t smoke very much,’ said O’Connell to him.

‘I’d smoke seven times as much, if I had it,’ said the poor man.

‘Well, I’ll give you plenty of tobacco,’ said O’Connell. He ordered the buyer to give the poor man as much tobacco as would reach from his toe to the lobe of his right ear and asked how much it would cost.

‘Eight shillings,’ said the buyer. ‘That’s agreed,’ said O’Connell. The buyer then began to measure the length from the man’s toe to the lobe of his right ear, but when he reached the ear, he found that the lobe was missing. He pretended nothing.

‘We have caught you!’ said O’Connell. ‘That’s not the lobe of his right ear. It is back in Carhan, if you know where that place is. So you must measure from his toe to Carhan!’

The buyer was dumbfounded. He could say nothing. Then O’Connell ordered him to pay the man for the black pig, and he would not insist on the tobacco at all. The buyer paid the money, and even something extra, and went off to his kitchen covered with shame. And no wonder!
2. Pigs in Irish poetry, verse & rhymes

Saving the Bacon

Thunder and lightning rent the air
And all the world was shaken,
The little pig cocked up his tail
And ran to save his bacon.

Mrs Pig

Mrs Pig a-laying in the mud,
Mrs Pig a-laying in the mud,
Never a worry and never a care,
Mrs Pig she likes it there,
Mrs Pig a-laying in the mud.

Five Little Pigs

This little pig has a rub-a-dub,
This little pig has a scrub-a-scrub,
The little pig ran upstairs,
This little piggy cried out: Bears!
Down came the jar with a mighty slam,
And this little pig ate all the jam.

Four Little Pigs

The first little pig broke into the barn,
The second little pig ate all the corn,
The third little pig he hid in the hay,
And the fourth little pig had to pay.

To Market, to Market
To market, to market
To buy a fat pig
Home again, home again
Jiggidy Jig.

To market, to market
To buy a fat hog
Home again, home again
Jiggidy Jig.

**McSwiggin’s Piggins**

Whose little pigs are these?
Whose little pigs are these?
They’re Mickey McSwiggins’,
They’re his little piggins,
And I caught them eating my peas.

Whose little pigs are these?
Whose little pigs are these?
They’re Mickey McSwiggins’,
They’re his little piggins,
And I caught them eating my peas.
The Old Pig

I'm an old pig,
Muc, Muc, Muc.
I'm an old pig,
Muc, Muc, Muc.
Can't sow or dig,
Muc, Muc, Muc.
'Cos I'm an old pig,
Muc, Muc, Muc.

Three Little Pigs

This is the story of three little pigs,
Three little pigs, Three little pigs,
This is the story of three little pigs -
One, Two, and Three little pigs.

The first little pig made his house out of straw,
House out of straw, house out of straw,
The first little pig made his house out of straw.
Straw, straw, his house out of straw.

Big Bad Wolf he said : 'Sure I'll blow that house down,
Blow that house down, blow that house down.'
Big Bad Wolf he said : 'Sure I'll blow that house down.'
Huff, Puff - And he blew the house down.

The second little pig made his house out of wood,
House out of wood, house out of wood,
The second little pig made his house out of wood,
Wood, wood, his house out of wood.
Grandpa’s Farm

Molly went to Grandpa’s farm,
The billy goat chased her round the barn,
Round and round the apple tree,
And this is the song she sang to me:
‘I like coffee, I like tea,
I like you and you like me’.

Substitute ‘pink pig’ for ‘billy goat’

Exiles

George William Russell (A.E.) (1867-1935)

The gods have taken alien shapes upon them
Wild peasants driving swine
In a strange country. Through the swarthy faces
The starry faces shine.

They huddle at night within low clay-built cabins;
And, to themselves unknown,
They carry with them diadem and sceptre
And move from throne to throne.

Muckish Mountain (The Pig’s Back)

Sir Shane Leslie (1885-1971)

LIKE a sleeping swine upon the skyline,
Muckish, thou art shadowed out,
Grubbing up the rubble of the ages
With your broken, granite snout.

Long before the Gael was young in Ireland,
You were ribbed and old and grey,
Muckish, you have long outstayed his staying,
You have seen him swept away.

Muckish, greatest pig in Ulster’s oakwoods,
Littered out of rock and fire,
Deep you thrust your mottled flanks for cooling
Underneath the peaty mire.

Muckish, you will not forget the people
Of the laughing speech and eye,
They who gave you name of Pig-back-mountain
And the Heavens for a sty!
Swineherd

Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin (1942- )

When all this is over, said the swineherd,
I mean to retire, where
Nobody will have heard about my special skills
And conversation is mainly about the weather.

I intend to learn how to make coffee, as least as well
As the Portuguese lay-sister in the kitchen
And polish the brass fenders every day.
I want to lie awake at night
Listening to cream crawling to the top of the jug
And the water lying soft in the cistern.

I want to see an orchard where the trees grow in straight lines
And the yellow fox finds shelter between the navy-blue trunks,
Where it gets dark early in summer
And the apple-blossom is allowed to wither on the bough.

Big Stephen

Brian Dodds (1946- )

drove a jam-factory truck
powered by the pickers
on the Savilbeg plantation.
Sweet-and-sour raspberry bins
circled by wasps in summer
put the juice in his tank.

A Chivers man. A pay-packet
collector in a town of dole-takers,
untouched by sad sagas
of cotton firms that cut and ran
when the free rates ended.
But, just in case, he had a sideline.

Pigs. Fattened by buckets
of spud peelings and meal
simmered to a lumpy pulp
in a Burco boiler; rooting
soil in a small back garden,
sending a stink over the walls,

they sucked and grunted their way
to the hammer. Three strong men
to hold the rope, heavy death-head
swung high, flat face downward,
rape-screech, thump and crunch
as the skull implodes. Roll the shaft,
swing down the spike, sharp snap
as the bone breaks, mincemeat
eruption of brain, and slobbering mouth.
Big Stephen was an expert.
His cobbler’s knife with concaved edge
slit the jugular, and bright blood shot,

heart-muscle pumping uselessly,
voiding hot life on the concrete floor.
With boiling water from a big black pot
he’d scald the pink skin, cut-throat
razor scything off the bristles,
barbering the carcass clean and shiny.

When the men had heaved the pig
like a stiffened lynch-mob victim
up to a rusted wall-ring, with one rip
he’d slice it ribs to arse, spilling
slippery guts to a wooden tub,
and then blow up the bladder for his kids

thick blood drying on his fingers,
he’d pass around a Woodbine packet,
slip shillings to the sweating men,
hose down the yard as they enjoyed a smoke.

The Valley of the Black Pig

W.B. Yeats (1865–1939)

The dews drop slowly and dreams gather: unknown spears
Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,
And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries
Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.
We who still labour by the cromlec on the shore,
The grey cairn on the hill, when day sinks drowned in dew,
Being weary of the world’s empires, bow down to you
Master of the still stars and of the flaming door.
3. Pigs in Ireland: some facts

There are many Irish stories and poems about pigs. This is because pigs have from the earliest times been important to the people of Ireland. True, pigs were not as important as cattle. Cattle were sources of wealth, power and status. However, Irish people knew the value of pigs as food. They ate them either fresh as pork (pink flesh with creamy or white fat) or salted as bacon. The earliest sagas, the ancient Brehon laws, the monastic rules, even the granting of rights of grazing of woodlands for pigs by the Normans to their tenants, show the importance of pig meat in the Irish diet.

Pigs were easy to keep and feed. They used to be kept in the woods during the day, feeding on fallen acorns, grass and hazelnuts. After the potato became popular in Ireland, every home could afford to rear a pig in the good years. The animal could be fed on surplus potatoes, potato skins and sour milk.

The advantages of the pig

The pig has three advantages.

It produces more edible meat relative to feeding costs than any other domesticated animal. It is killed young.

All cuts are reasonably tender, provided they are cooked slowly.

Pork is also a healthy, lean meat, provided the outside layer of fat that encircles the flesh is avoided.

The pig is, therefore, economical, versatile and healthy in the kitchen.

The pig industry in Ireland

Today the pig industry is getting smaller in Northern Ireland. By contrast, it is growing in the Republic of Ireland.

There are some 1.8 million pigs in the Republic of Ireland. This is almost double the number there were fifty years ago. Then, in 1960, there were 0.95 million pigs. The highest number of pigs in Ireland before today was 1.45m - in 1882. This 1882 figure was for the whole island of Ireland, north and south, not just for the Republic of Ireland.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1980</th>
<th>2000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pigs in Irish Republic</td>
<td>950,000</td>
<td>1,030,800</td>
<td>1,731,500</td>
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</tbody>
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The largest number of pigs is found in Cork, Cavan, Tipperary and Waterford. These four counties account for approximately half of the total number of sows - see map of Ireland at the end.

Pig production used to be carried out by a large number of mixed farmers. In 1970 there were 68,000 pig farmers in the Republic of Ireland. Now the pig industry is dominated by 554 specialist producers operating large-scale units. These large units account for 98 per cent of the total production.

Breeds of Irish pigs

The ‘greyhound pig’
The Pictorial Times, 7 February 1846

Large White Ulster
http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/swine/largewhite/

The breed of pig in Early Christian Ireland, some fifteen hundred years ago, was called a ‘greyhound pig’. It was mainly pink and black in colour, long-legged, bony and coarse-haired. It had a vicious temperament and was very agile. It was quite capable of clearing a fence.
Just over one hundred years ago, the greyhound pig fell out of favour. It did not produce enough meat. It was crossed with other breeds imported from England, such as the Berkshire. The result was the Large White Ulster. It was Ireland’s most successful livestock breed. In the early years of the last century, these Large Whites were a major source of pork and bacon for industrial centres in England.

The Large White Ulster was bred for its fat. This was its downfall when tastes changed and people wanted leaner meat. The breed became extinct in the 1960s.

‘The pig in the kitchen’

Pigs and human beings go well together. Pigs flourish in the same temperature conditions as humans. In Ireland small farms often did not have purpose-built outbuildings and led to the practice of keeping pigs in the farm kitchen, especially when sows were farrowing. English visitors to Ireland one-hundred and fifty years ago were shocked by this. In 1843 one newspaper reported:

*The children are sitting before the cabin, enjoying the air and the sun after their meagre meal of potatoes; and the pig is under orders to clear the floor of the peelings which they have scattered about. Pigs, in Ireland, are, in many cases, fed to an enormous size; ... in England [they] would not pay for the outlay in provisions, tending to the animals, themselves, and other incidental expenses. In Ireland ‘they are made to pay’ on account of there being no separate provision made for their keep. As to bed and board, the pig takes ‘pot-luck’ with Paddy, and lies down with the family, of which he is the recognised companion and benefactor.*

The ‘pig in the kitchen’ led many people in Britain to think of the Irish as dirty. What they did not know is that the pig is a very clean animal. It does not soil its living space when allowed the freedom to come and go as it wished. When it wallows in the mud, it was to keep cool, not because it was a ‘dirty animal’. The pig was also very alert intelligent and loyal, often warning the family at the approach of strangers. People are now only realising the qualities of the pig. The Irish have known these qualities for centuries.

*A social occasion*

Nowadays pig farming is an industry. Long ago, though, it was a way of life.

Most farmers killed a pig at certain times of the year, such as the eve of St. Martin’s feast day. There was a custom that pigs should be killed only when there was an ‘r’ in the month, and never in the summer. In some counties, such as Mayo and Galway, it was believed that the deed should be done under a full moon.

Killing the pig was a very important social occasion. It was planned several weeks ahead of time. Many of the neighbours would come to lend a hand. Each neighbour would bring a fistful of salt for the curing. When the work was done everyone would get a share of the fresh pork and the black and white puddings.

In some cases the farmer himself killed the pig. On other farms, a local man skilled in the killing of pigs would arrive on a donkey cart. He brought with him all the tools of the trade - a mallet, a knife, a saw, an apron and a galvanized bath. He was highly thought of and had to be booked ahead.

*Eating the pig*

Every scrap of the pig was used.

The head was salted and boiled with cabbage or turnips or made into brawn.

The feet or trotters, called crubeens in Ireland, were boiled and eaten on their own or with cabbage, or included in the brawn. Big pots of crubeens were cooked up and served in pubs, particularly on Saturday nights and fair days. Canny pub owners realised that these tasty little morsels provoked a great thirst in their customers. Eaten with the fingers - a thoroughly greasy and messy business - crubeens were washed down with copious quantities of beer or porter.
It’s there you’ll see confectioners with sugarsticks and dainties
The lozenges and oranges, the lemonade and raisins.
The gingerbread and spices to accommodate the ladies
And a big crubeen for threepence to be picking while you’re able.

From the ballad ‘The Galway Races’

The stomach was sometimes stuffed and roasted and was known as mock goose.

In the days before footballs could be purchased, the bladder was donated to the children. They pumped it up with air and had endless hours of fun with it.

The pig’s liver was fried and the skirts and kidneys cooked together.

The pig’s blood, various trimmings, and bits of lard were mixed with meat and blood to make puddings.

The heart was stuffed and roasted or sliced and stewed.

The pork steaks and griskins and some loin were eaten fresh.

The remainder was salted down for bacon.

The lard was rendered and some was made into slim cakes.

One cut of port - griskins - may have been introduced into Ireland by the Vikings. This is a pork steak. Perhaps griskins comes from the Viking word ‘griss’ which means young pig. This is one recipe for cooking a pork steak:

Trim the fat from the pork steak.
Cut into 3/4-inch thick slices.
Melt a little butter in a pan.
As it begins to foam, season the pork with salt and freshly ground pepper.
Put it into the foaming butter and cook on a pretty high heat until golden on one side, then turn over and cook to golden the other side.
Serve immediately with bread and butter or as part of the main meal, accompanied by potatoes and vegetables.

Because of the moist climate Ireland did not develop any traditional air-dried hams, salamis or sausages, as happened in Italy and Spain.
Appendix A

The Story of Mac Dathó’s Pig

Scél Mucci Mic Dathó, The Story of Mac Dathó’s Pig, is regarded as one of the best of the Irish sagas and one of the most finished specimens of the art of the ancient Irish storyteller. It belongs to the heroic cycle of Ulster, one incident in the long rivalry between Ulster and Connacht and depicting some of the events which lead to the Táin Bó Cúalnge, the Cattle Raid of Cooley. Its subject, the champion’s portion, occurs in many sagas, not least in Fled Bricenn, the Feast of Bricriu. Many, in fact, consider The Story of Mac Dathó’s Pig to be a parody of earlier heroic tales.

Summary

Mesroda Mac Datho of Leinster owned a great hound and a huge boar. Both King Conchobor of Ulster and Queen Medb of Connacht made generous offers for the hound. In order to avoid denying it to either and making a powerful enemy, at his wife’s suggestion he threw a party and invited both sides, hoping the situation would resolve itself.

The boar was slaughtered and cooked, and with Bricriu’s encouragement the heroes of Ulster and Connacht fell to arguing over who was to get the hero’s portion. Cet mac Matach of Connacht verbally humiliated in turn the various heroes from different parts of Ireland.

Then Conall Cernach, Conall of the Victories, arrived late, smashed Cet in the face with the recently severed head of his brother Anluan and started a riot. The Connachtmen ran off home, and Ailill’s charioteer decapitated the pursuing hound as he went. So Mac Datho lost his hound and boar, but kept his lands and life.

Section 1

There was a famous king of Leinster. Mac Dathó was his name. He had a hound; the hound defended the whole of Leinster. The hound’s name was Ailbe, and Ireland was full of its fame. Messengers came from Ailill and Medb asking for the hound. Moreover at the same time there came also messengers from Conchobar Mac Nessa to ask for the same hound. They were all made welcome and brought to him in the hall.

That is one of the six halls that were in Ireland at that time, the others being the hall of Da Derga in the territory of Cualu, and the hall of Forgall Manach, and the hall of Mac Dareo in Brefne, and the hall of Da Choca in the west of Meath, and the hall of Blai the landowner in Ulster. There were seven doors in that hall, and seven passages through it, and seven hearths in it, and seven cauldrons, and an ox and a salted pig in each cauldron.

Every man who came along the passage used to thrust the flesh-fork into a cauldron, and whatever he brought out at the first catch was his portion. If he did not obtain anything at the first attempt he did not have another.

Section 2

Now the messengers were brought to him in his place that he might learn their requests before the feast. They delivered their message: ‘We have come from Ailill and from Medb to beg the hound,’ said the messengers of Connaught; ‘and there shall be given three score hundred milch cows at once, and a chariot and two horses, the best in Connaught, and their equivalent gifts at the end of a year in addition to this.’

‘We also have come from Conchobar to ask for it,’ said the messengers from Ulster; ‘and Conchobar’s value as a friend is no less and to give you treasure and cattle; and the same amount shall be given you at the end of a year, and close friendship will be the result.’

Section 3

Thereupon our Mac Dathó lapsed into total silence and in this way he was a whole day(?) without drink, without food, without sleep, tossing from side to side. Then his wife said to him: ‘You are making a long fast. There is food beside you but you don’t eat it. What ails you?’

He gave the woman no answer, so the woman said:

‘Sleeplessness fell upon Mac Dathó at his home. There was something upon which he was brooding without speaking to anyone.

‘He turns away from me and turns to the wall, the warrior of the Fían (?) of fierce valour; it causes concern to his prudent wife that her husband is sleepless.’

The Man: ‘Crimthann Nia Nair said: “Do not tell your secret to women. The secret of a woman is not well kept. A treasure is not entrusted to a slave.”

The Woman: ‘Even to a woman you should speak if nothing should be lost thereby. A thing which your own mind cannot penetrate the mind of another will penetrate”.’

The Man: ‘The hound of Mesroeda Mac Dathó, evil was the day when they sent for it. Many tall and fair-haired men will fall on account of it. The strife about it will be more than we can reckon.

‘Unless it is given to Conchobar it will certainly be a churl’s act. His hosts will not leave behind them anything more of cattle than of land.

‘If it be refused to Ailill(?), he will hew down a heap of corpses(?) across the country. Mac Matach will carry us off, he will crush us into bare ashes.’

The Woman: ‘I have advice for you about it. I am not bad at directing an affair. Give it to them both. It is all the same whoever perishes for it.’

The Man: ‘The counsel you offer is helpful to me. Ailbe.... It is not known by whom it was brought.’

Section 4

After that he arose and made a flourish. ‘Let us then,’ said he, ‘and the guests who have come to us be well entertained.’
They remain with him three days and three nights, and the messengers of Connaught were summoned to him in private: ‘Now I have been in great perplexity and doubt,’ said he, ‘until it became clear to me that I should give the hound to Ailill and Medb; and let them come for the hound formally, and they shall have drink and food, and shall take the hound and welcome.’

The messengers of Connaught were pleased with the intimation.

He then went to the messengers from Ulster: ‘I have ceased to have any hesitation,’ said he, ‘in giving the hound to Conchobar, and let him and the host of Ulster nobles come for it proudly. They shall receive presents and they will be welcome.’

The messengers from Ulster were pleased.

Section 5

Now the people from East and West made their tryst for the same day. Moreover they did not neglect it. On the same day the two provinces of Ireland made their journey until they reached the door of Mac Dathó’s hall. He went out himself and welcomed them: ‘O heroes, we did not expect you. However you are welcome. Come into the enclosure.’

Then they all went into the hall, and half the house was occupied by the Connaughtmen, and the other half by the Ulstermen. Now the house was not a small one. There were seven doors in it, and fifty places between each pair of doors. They were not however the faces of friends at a feast which were in that house. One party was at feud with the other. There had been warfare between them for three hundred years before the birth of Christ. Now Mac Dathó’s pig was slaughtered for them. For seven years sixty milch cows supplied its food. On poison however it had been nourished and the massacre of the men of Erin took place through it.

Section 6

Now the pig was brought to them, and forty oxen as a relish, and other food as well. Mac Dathó himself was acting as steward. ‘Welcome to you,’ said he; ‘the equal to this cannot be found. Bullocks and pigs are not lacking in Leinster. Whatever is lacking now will be slaughtered for you tomorrow.’

‘The pig is good,’ said Conchobar.

‘It is indeed good,’ said Ailill. ‘How shall the pig be divided, Conchobar?’

‘How,’ said Bricriu mac Carbaid...from above, ‘in the place wherein are the brave heroes of the men of Ireland, except by dividing according to brave deeds and trophies? And each of you has hit another over the nose before now.’

‘Let it be done,’ said Ailill.

‘Very proper,’ said Conchobar. ‘We have heroes present who have raided the borderland.’

Section 7

‘You will have need of your young men tonight, O Conchobar,’ said Senlaech Arad from Conalad Luachra in the West. ‘You have often left a fat bullock of your number lying dead on his back on the Luachra Dedad roads.’

‘It was a fatter bullock that you left behind with us, namely your own brother, Cruachniu mac Rúadluim from Cruachan Conalad.’

‘He was no better,’ said Lugaid mac Cúrói, ‘than the great Loth the son of Fergus mac LÚti, who was left dead by EchbÚl mac Dedad in Tara Luachra.’

‘What do you think of this,’ said Celtchair mac Uthechair, ‘my having killed Conganchness mac Dedad and cut off his head??’

Section 8

However it so fell out among them in the end that a single champion, Cet mac Matach, got supremacy over the men of Ireland. Moreover he flaunted his valour on high above the valour of the host, and took a knife in his hand and sat down beside the pig. ‘Let someone be found now among the men of Ireland,’ said he, ‘to endure battle with me, or leave the pig to me to divide!’

Section 9

Silence fell upon the men of Ulster. ‘You see that, Loegaire!’ said Conchobar.

‘It is intolerable,’ said Loegaire, ‘that Cet to divide up the pig before our faces.’

‘Whom have we here?’ asked Cet.

‘He is a better hero than you are,’ said everyone; ‘he is Oengus mac Láma Gábuid of Ulster.’

‘Why is your father called Lam Gábuid?’ asked Cet. ‘Well why?’ ‘I know,’ said Cet. ‘I once went eastward. The alarm was raised around me. Everyone came on and Lam came too. He threw a cast of his great spear at me. I sent the same spear back to him, and it struck off his hand, so that it lay on the ground. What could bring his son to give me combat?’

Oengus sat down.

Section 10

‘It is intolerable,’ said a tall fair hero who had risen from his place, ‘that Cet should divide the pig before our faces.’

‘Whom have we here?’ asked Cet.

‘He is a better hero than you are,’ said everyone; ‘he is Oengus mac Láma Gábuid of Ulster.’

‘Why is your father called Lam Gábuid?’ asked Cet. ‘Well why?’ ‘I know,’ said Cet. ‘I once went eastward. The alarm was raised around me. Everyone came on and Lam came too. He threw a cast of his great spear at me. I sent the same spear back to him, and it struck off his hand, so that it lay on the ground. What could bring his son to give me combat?’

Oengus sat down.

Section 11

‘Keep up the contest further,’ said Cet, ‘or else let me divide the pig.’

‘It is intolerable that you should take precedence in dividing the pig,’ said a tall fair hero of Ulster.

‘Whom have we here?’ asked Cet.

‘That is Eogan mac Durthacht,’ said everyone. [He is king of Fernmag.]

‘I have seen him before,’ said Cet.

‘Where have you seen me?’ asked Eogan.

Pigs in the Literacy Hour, 15
‘At the door of your house, when I deprived you of a drove of cattle. The alarm was raised around me in the country-side. You came at that cry. You cast a spear at me so that it stuck out of my shield. I cast the spear back at you so that it pierced your head and put out your eye. It is patent to the men of Ireland that you are one-eyed. It was I who struck out the other eye from your head.’

Thereupon the other sat down.

Section 12

‘Prepare now, men of Ulster, for further contest,’ said Cet.

‘You will not divide it yet,’ said Munremor mac Gergind. ‘Is not that Munremor?’ asked Cet. ‘I am the man who last cleaned my spears in Munremor,’ said Cet. ‘It is not yet a whole day (?) since I took three heads of heroes from you out of your land, and among them the head of your eldest son.’

Thereupon the other sat down.

‘Further contest!’ said Cet.

‘That you shall have,’ said Mend mac Sálcholcán.

‘Who is this?’ asked Cet.

‘Mend,’ said everyone.

‘What next!’ said Cet, ‘sons of rustics with nick-names to contest with me! - for it was from me your father got that name. It was I who struck off his heel with my sword, so that he took away only one foot when he left me. What could encourage the son of the one-footed man to fight with me?’

Thereupon the other sat down.

Section 13

‘Further contest!’ said Cet.

‘That you shall have,’ said a grey, tall, very terrible hero of Ulster.

‘Who is this?’ asked Cet.

‘That is Celtchair mac Uthechair,’ said everyone.

‘Stop a bit, Celtchair!’ said Cet, ‘unless we are to come to blows at once. I came, Celtchair, to the door of your house. The alarm was raised around me. Everyone came up. You came too. You went into the doorway in front of me. You cast a spear at me. I cast another spear at you so that it pierced your thigh and the upper part of the fork of your legs. You have had a ... disease ever since. Since then neither son nor daughter has been begotten by you. What could encourage you to fight with me?’

Thereupon the other sat down.

Section 14

‘Further contest!’ said Cet.

‘That you shall have,’ said Cúscraid Mend Macha, the son of Conchobar.

‘Who is this?’ asked Cet.

‘Cúscraid,’ said the others. ‘He has the makings of a king to judge from his appearance.’

‘No thanks to you,’ said the boy.

‘Well,’ said Cet, ‘it was to us you came in the first place, boy, for your first trial of arms. There was an encounter between us in that borderland. You left a third of your people behind; and it is thus you went, with a spear through your throat, so that you have not an articulate word in your head; for the spear has injured the tendons of your throat, and that is why you have been nick-named Cúscraid the Stammerer ever since.’

And in this manner he flouted the whole province.

Section 15

Now while he was making flourishes about the pig with a knife in his hand they saw Conall Cernach entering. He bounded into the centre of the house. The men of Ulster gave a great welcome to Conall. Then Conchobar whipped the hood from his head and made a flourish. ‘I am glad that my portion is in readiness,’ said Conall. ‘Who is he who is making the division for you?’

‘It has been granted to the man who is dividing it,’ said Conchobar, ‘namely Cet mac Matach.

‘Is it right, Cet,’ asked Conall, ‘that you should divide the pig?’

Then Cet answered:

‘Welcome, Conall! Heart of stone,
Fierce glowing mass of fire, brightness of ice,
Red strength of wrath! Under the breast of the hero
Who deals wounds, and is victorious in battle
I see the son of Findchoem before me.’

Whereupon Conall replied:

‘Welcome, Cet,
Cet mac Matach! great (?) hero,
Heart of ice.... Strong chariot-hero of battle, battling sea,
Beautiful fierce bull, Cet mac Magach!
‘It will be clear in our encounter,’ said Conall,
‘and it will be clear in our separation.
There will be a fine saga in Fer m-brot (?)
There will be ill tidings in Fer manath (?)
The heroes will see a lion (?) fierce in battle,
There will be a rough onset
in this house to-night.’
Section 16

‘Get up from the pig now,’ said Conall.
‘But what should bring you to it?’ asked Cet.
‘It is quite proper,’ said Conall, ‘that you should challenge me! I accept your challenge to single combat, Cet,’ said Conall.
‘I swear what my tribe swears, that since I took a spear in my hand I have not often slept without the head of a Connachtman under my head, and without having wounded a man every single day and every single night.’
‘It is true,’ said Cet. ‘You are a better hero than I am. If Anlúan were in the house he would offer you yet another contest. It is a pity for us that he is not in the house.’
‘He is though,’ said Conall, taking the head of Anlúan from his belt, and throwing it at Cet’s breast with such force that a gush of blood burst over his lips.
Cet then left the pig, and Conall sat down beside it.

Section 17

‘Let them come to the contest now!’ said Conall.
There was not found among the men of Connaught a hero to keep it up. They made however a wall of shields in a circle around him, for the bad practice had begun among those bad men there of evil casting. Conall then went to divide the pig, and takes the tail-end in his mouth and so attained to a division of the pig. He devoured the hind-quarters - a load for nine men - until he had left nothing of it.

Section 18

Moreover he did not give to the men of Connaught anything except the two fore-quarters of the pig. Now the men of Connaught thought their portion was small. They sprang up, and the men of Ulster sprang up, and then they came to close quarters. Then it came to blows over the ears there until the heap on the floor of the house was as high as the wall of the house, and there were streams of blood running through the doors. Then the hosts broke through the doors so that a great uproar arose, until the blood on the ground of the liss would have turned a millshaft, everyone striking his fellow. Then Fergus seized by the roots a great oak which was growing in the midst of the liss and wielded it against them. Thereupon they break forth out of the liss. A combat takes place at the entrance of the liss.

Section 19

Then Mac Dathó went forth leading the hound, and the hound was let loose among them to find out which of them its instinct would choose. The hound chose the men of Ulster and he set it to slaughtering the men of Connaught - for the men of Connaught had been routed. They say it is in the plains of Ailbe that the hound seized the pole of the chariot in which Ailill and Medb were. There Ferloga, the charioteer of Ailill and Medb, ran it down, striking its body aside, while its head remained on the pole of the chariot. They say moreover that Mag Ailbe is so named from this incident, for Ailbe was the hound’s name.

Section 20

Their flight turned southwards, over Bellaghmoon, past Reerin, over Áth Midbine in Mastiu, past Drum Criach which to-day is called Kildare, past Rathangan into Feighcullen to the Ford of Mac Lugna, past the hill of the two plains over Cairpre’s Bridge. At the Ford of the Dog’s Head in Farbill the dog’s head fell from the chariot. Coming westwards over the heath of Meath, Ferloga, Ailill’s charioteer, lay down in the heather and sprang into the chariot behind the back of Conchobar, and in this way seized his head from behind.
‘Buy your freedom, Conchobar,’ said he.
‘Make your own terms,’ said Conchobar.
‘It will not be much,’ replied Ferloga, ‘namely, you to take me with you to Emain Macha, and the women of Ulster and their young daughters to sing a panegyric to me every evening saying: “Ferloga is my darling”.’
There was no help for it, for they did not dare do otherwise for fear of Conchobar; and that day a year hence Ferloga was sent across Athlone westwards, and a pair of Conchobar’s horses with him, with golden bridle.
Appendix B

The Quarrel of the Two Pig-keepers

From The Táin

Summary

In Tír na n-Óg there was bad blood between Ochall Ochne the King of the Sid at Cruachan in Connacht, and Bodb the King of the Sid on Femen Plain in Munster. Their shape-shifting pig-keepers were Rucht (grunt) and Friuch (bristle), and they were friends, sharing each others’ oak and beech mast. When some mischief-maker caused an argument between them, things escalated. They got the sack and feuded for two years as birds of prey, two as water-creatures, then as stags, warriors, phantoms, dragons and finally maggots. As maggots, they were swallowed by an Ulster cow belonging to Daire mac Fiachna and a Connacht cow belonging to Ailill. Thus were born the two super-bulls Dub of Cualgne (Ulster) and Finnbennach of Ail Plain (Connacht).

What caused the two pig-keepers to quarrel?
It is soon told.

There was bad blood between Ochall Ochne, the king of the Sid in Connacht, and Bodb, king of the Munster Sid. They had two pig-keepers, called Friuch, after a boar’s bristle and Rucht, after its grunt. Friuch was Bodb’s pig-keeper, Rucht was Ochall’s and they were good friends. They were both practised in the pagan arts, and could form themselves into any shape, like Mongan mac Fiachna.

The two pig-keepers were on such good terms that the one from the north would bring his pigs down with him when there was a mast of oak and beech nuts in Munster. If the mast fell in the north the pig-keeper from the south would travel northward.

There were some who tried to make trouble between them. People in Connacht said their pig-keeper had the greater power, while others in Munster said it was theirs who had greater power. A great mast fell in Munster one year, and the pig-keeper from the north came southward with his pigs. His friend made him welcome.

‘Is it you?’ he said. ‘They are trying to cause trouble between us. Men here say your power is greater than mine.’

‘It is no less, anyway,’ Ochall’s pig-keeper said.

‘That’s something we can test,’ Bodb’s pig-keeper said. ‘I’ll cast a spell over your pigs, Even though they eat this mast they won’t grow fat, while mine will.’

And that is what happened. Ochall’s pig-keeper had to bring his pigs away with him so lean and wretched that they hardly reached home. Everybody laughed at him as he entered his country.

‘It was a bad day you set out,’ they said. ‘Your friend has greater power than you.’

‘It proves nothing,’ he said. ‘We’ll have mast here in our own turn and I’ll play the same trick on him.’

This also happened. Bodb’s pig keeper came northward the same time next year into the country of Connacht, bringing his lean pigs with him, and Ochall’s pig keeper did the same to them, and they withered. Everybody said then that they had equal power. Bodb’s pig-keeper came back from the north with his lean pigs, and Bodb dismissed him from pig-keeping. His friend in the north was also dismissed.

After this they spent two full years in the shape of birds of prey, the first year at the fort of Cruchan, in north Connacht, and the second at the sid on Femen Plain. One day the men of Munster had collected together at this place.

‘Those birds are making a terrible babble over there.’ They said.

‘They have been quarreling and behaving like this for a full year now.’

As they were talking they saw Fuidell mac Fiadmire, Ochall’s steward, coming toward them up the hill and they made him welcome.

‘Those birds are making a great babble over there.’ He said. ‘You would swear they were the same two birds we had back north last year. They kept this up for a whole year.’

Then they saw the two birds of prey turn suddenly into human shape and become the two pig-keepers. They made them welcome.

‘You can spare your welcome.’ Bodb’s pig-keeper said. ‘We bring you only war-wailing and a fullness of friends’ corpses’.

‘What have you been doing?’ Bodb said.

‘Nothing good,’ he said. ‘From the day we left until today we spent two full years together in the shape of birds. You saw what we did over there. A whole year went like that at Cruchan and a year at the sid on Femen Plain so that all men, north and south, have seen our power. Now we are going to take the shape of water creatures and live two years under the sea.

They left and each went his own way. One entered the Shannon river, the other the river Suir, and they spent two full years under water. One year they were seen devouring each other in the Suir, the next in the Shannon.

Next they turned into two stags, and each gathered up the other’s heard of young deer and made a shambles of his dwelling place.

Then they became two warriors gashing each other.

Then two phantoms, terrifying each other.

Then two dragons, pouring down snow on each other’s land.

They dropped down then out of the air, and became two maggots. One of them got into the spring of the river Cronn in Cualnge, where a cow belonging to Daire mac Fiachna drank it up. The other got into the well-spring Garad in Connacht, where...
a cow belonging to Medb and Ailill drank it. From them, in this way, sprang the two bulls, Finnbennach, the white horned of Ai Plain, and Dub, the dark bull of Cuailnge.

Ruucht and Friuch were their names when they were pig-keepers; Ingen and Eitte, Talon and Wing, when they were two birds of prey; Bleed and Blood, Whale and Seabeast, when they were two undersea creatures; Rinn and Faebur, Point and Edge, when they were two warriors; Scáth and Sciath, Shadow and Shield, when they were two phantoms; and Cruinniuc and Tuinniuc when they were two maggots. Finnbennach Ai, the White, and Donn Cuailnge, the Brown, were their names when they were two bulls.

The Brown Bull was huge, dark, haughty, ferocious and intelligent. Thirty grown boys could fit on his back, and he led his herd with reckless bravery. White Bull had a white head and white feet, and his body was blood-red.

This was the Brown Bull of Cuailnge -
dark brown dire haughty with young health
horrific overwhelming ferocious
full of craft
furious fiery flanks narrow
brave brutal thick breasted
curly browsed head cocked high
growling and eyes glaring
tough maned neck thick and strong
snorting mighty in muzzle and eye
with a true bull’s brow
and a wave’s charge
and a royal wrath
and the rush of a bear
and a beast’s rage
and a bandit’s stab
and a lion’s fury.
Thirty grown boys could take
their place from rump to nape
- a hero to his herd at morning
foolhardy at the herd’s head
to his cows the beloved
to husbandmen a prop
the father of great beasts
overlooks the ox of the earth.

A white head and white feet
had the Bull Finnbennach
and a red body the colour of blood
as if bathed in blood
or dyed in the red bog
or pounded in purple
with his blank paps
under breast and back
and his heavy mane and great hoofs
the beloved of the cows of Ai
with ponderous tail
and a stallion’s breast
and a cow’s eye apple
and a salmon’s snout
and hinder haunch
he romps in rut
born to bear victory
bellowing in greatness
idol of the ox herd
the prime demon Finnbennach