The private notebook of Bram Stoker has been discovered in an attic on the Isle of Wight, offering clues to the origins of his most famous work, Dracula. The notebook was found by the author’s great-grandson, Noel Dobbs. He sent a facsimile of the book to Stoker’s great-grandnephew Dacre Stoker, an author himself, who has deciphered his ancestor’s ‘terrible handwriting with the help of Dr Elizabeth Miller, author’s great-grandson, Noel Dobbs. He sent death in 1912.

Who knew there was another ‘dead zoo’? It seems that Dublin is not the only place with a natural history museum full of stuffed creatures. NUI Galway has its own museum, which has recently published an updated catalogue. Among its collection is a cuckoo known for its pungent odour, an Azara’s ‘false fox’ and 100 glass representations of marine mammals by the famous father and son team of Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka of Dresden. Significantly, four of the museum’s items actually belonged to Charles Darwin and had been collected by him during his famous voyage on the Beagle. The collection is open to the public free of charge. See galwayscience.ie for details.

Who knew there was another ‘dead zoo’? It seems that Dublin is not the only place with a natural history museum full of stuffed creatures. NUI Galway has its own museum, which has recently published an updated catalogue. Among its collection is a cuckoo known for its pungent odour, an Azara’s ‘false fox’ and 100 glass representations of marine mammals by the famous father and son team of Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka of Dresden. Significantly, four of the museum’s items actually belonged to Charles Darwin and had been collected by him during his famous voyage on the Beagle. The collection is open to the public free of charge. See galwayscience.ie for details.

The contents of www.aimn.ie are based on the nine-volume series Beathaíseáin by Diarmuid Breathnach and Máríe Ní Mhurchú (1986–2007). It is a valuable research tool comprising almost 1,700 biographies dating from 1560 to the present day. Each of the featured lives has made a unique contribution to the Irish language over the past five centuries. The people featured hail from every corner of Ireland (and in some cases from much further afield), and some were active in a wide field of endeavours. While the Irish language forms the common thread, the entire narrative is multi-faceted and will be of great interest to historians, local communities, the families of the people featured, Irish-language academics and the Irish diaspora.

The metadata on the website facilitate searching and browsing on a scale not possible in print. The enhanced features available include alphabetical listing of biographies; cross-referencing; full-text search of keywords and phrases; and a timeline. Selected themes are tagged in the biographies (place-names, works, organisations, references to Conradh na Gaeilge, educational institutions) and the site also includes a featured ‘biography of the week’ and an interview with the authors. The two biographies on the right, abridged and translated versions of the entries on aimn.ie, give a flavour of the entries.

Did you know?

There are 1.3 million words in the original printed work, the Beathaíseáin series.

- 118 of the subjects featured lived to the age of 90.
- aimn.ie contains the biographies of 1,536 men and 157 women.
- An Claidheamh Soluis is the most frequently cited Irish-language publication.
- Blackrock College* is the most frequently mentioned school.
- Trinity College, Dublin,* is the most frequently mentioned university.
- Maynooth* is the most frequently mentioned town.
- Dublin* is the most frequently mentioned county and city.
- Short lives: James Cogan (1874–98); William Haliday (1788–1812).
- An Claidheamh Soluis is the most frequently cited Irish-language publication.
- Blackrock College* is the most frequently mentioned school.
- Trinity College, Dublin,* is the most frequently mentioned university.
- Maynooth* is the most frequently mentioned town.
- Dublin* is the most frequently mentioned county and city.

Did you know?

There are 1.3 million words in the original printed work, the Beathaíseáin series.

- 118 of the subjects featured lived to the age of 90.
- aimn.ie contains the biographies of 1,536 men and 157 women.
- An Claidheamh Soluis is the most frequently cited Irish-language publication.
- Blackrock College* is the most frequently mentioned school.
- Trinity College, Dublin,* is the most frequently mentioned university.
- Maynooth* is the most frequently mentioned town.
- Dublin* is the most frequently mentioned county and city.
- Short lives: James Cogan (1874–98); William Haliday (1788–1812).
- Long lives: Colm de Bhailís (1796–1906); Maynooth* is the most frequently mentioned town.
- Dublin* is the most frequently mentioned county and city.

The private notebook of Bram Stoker has been discovered in an attic on the Isle of Wight, offering clues to the origins of his most famous work, Dracula. The notebook was found by the author’s great-grandson, Noel Dobbs. He sent a facsimile of the book to Stoker’s great-grandnephew Dacre Stoker, an author himself, who has deciphered his ancestor’s ‘terrible handwriting with the help of Dr Elizabeth Miller, author’s great-grandson, Noel Dobbs. He sent death in 1912.

Who knew there was another ‘dead zoo’? It seems that Dublin is not the only place with a natural history museum full of stuffed creatures. NUI Galway has its own museum, which has recently published an updated catalogue. Among its collection is a cuckoo known for its pungent odour, an Azara’s ‘false fox’ and 100 glass representations of marine mammals by the famous father and son team of Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka of Dresden. Significantly, four of the museum’s items actually belonged to Charles Darwin and had been collected by him during his famous voyage on the Beagle. The collection is open to the public free of charge. See galwayscience.ie for details.

The contents of www.aimn.ie are based on the nine-volume series Beathaíseáin by Diarmuid Breathnach and Máríe Ní Mhurchú (1986–2007). It is a valuable research tool comprising almost 1,700 biographies dating from 1560 to the present day. Each of the featured lives has made a unique contribution to the Irish language over the past five centuries. The people featured hail from every corner of Ireland (and in some cases from much further afield), and some were active in a wide field of endeavours. While the Irish language forms the common thread, the entire narrative is multi-faceted and will be of great interest to historians, local communities, the families of the people featured, Irish-language academics and the Irish diaspora.

The metadata on the website facilitate searching and browsing on a scale not possible in print. The enhanced features available include alphabetical listing of biographies; cross-referencing; full-text search of keywords and phrases; and a timeline. Selected themes are tagged in the biographies (place-names, works, organisations, references to Conradh na Gaeilge, educational institutions) and the site also includes a featured ‘biography of the week’ and an interview with the authors. The two biographies on the right, abridged and translated versions of the entries on aimn.ie, give a flavour of the entries.

Did you know?

There are 1.3 million words in the original printed work, the Beathaíseáin series.

- 118 of the subjects featured lived to the age of 90.
- aimn.ie contains the biographies of 1,536 men and 157 women.
- An Claidheamh Soluis is the most frequently cited Irish-language publication.
- Blackrock College* is the most frequently mentioned school.
- Trinity College, Dublin,* is the most frequently mentioned university.
- Maynooth* is the most frequently mentioned town.
- Dublin* is the most frequently mentioned county and city.
- Short lives: James Cogan (1874–98); William Haliday (1788–1812).
- Long lives: Colm de Bhailís (1796–1906); Bred Ó Dhihréáin (1894–2003).
- Ó Súilleabháin is the most common surname (36 subjects) among those featured on aimn.ie.

*These statistics are based on current records. Work on tagging the database is ongoing.

Mairéad Nic Lochlainn details a newly available Irish-language biographies website—www.aimn.ie—at Fiontar, DCU.

The contents of www.aimn.ie are based on the nine-volume series Beathaíseáin by Diarmuid Breathnach and Máríe Ní Mhurchú (1986–2007). It is a valuable research tool comprising almost 1,700 biographies dating from 1560 to the present day. Each of the featured lives has made a unique contribution to the Irish language over the past five centuries. The people featured hail from every corner of Ireland (and in some cases from much further afield), and some were active in a wide field of endeavours. While the Irish language forms the common thread, the entire narrative is multi-faceted and will be of great interest to historians, local communities, the families of the people featured, Irish-language academics and the Irish diaspora.

The metadata on the website facilitate searching and browsing on a scale not possible in print. The enhanced features available include alphabetical listing of biographies; cross-referencing; full-text search of keywords and phrases; and a timeline. Selected themes are tagged in the biographies (place-names, works, organisations, references to Conradh na Gaeilge, educational institutions) and the site also includes a featured ‘biography of the week’ and an interview with the authors. The two biographies on the right, abridged and translated versions of the entries on aimn.ie, give a flavour of the entries.

Did you know?

There are 1.3 million words in the original printed work, the Beathaíseáin series.

- 118 of the subjects featured lived to the age of 90.
- aimn.ie contains the biographies of 1,536 men and 157 women.
- An Claidheamh Soluis is the most frequently cited Irish-language publication.
- Blackrock College* is the most frequently mentioned school.
- Trinity College, Dublin,* is the most frequently mentioned university.
- Maynooth* is the most frequently mentioned town.
- Dublin* is the most frequently mentioned county and city.
- Short lives: James Cogan (1874–98); William Haliday (1788–1812).
- Long lives: Colm de Bhailís (1796–1906); Bred Ó Dhihréáin (1894–2003).
- Ó Súilleabháin is the most common surname (36 subjects) among those featured on aimn.ie.

*These statistics are based on current records. Work on tagging the database is ongoing.

Mairéad Nic Lochlainn details a newly available Irish-language biographies website—www.aimn.ie—at Fiontar, DCU.
Mairéad Ní Ghráda (1896–1971)

Playwright from Knockadangan, Co. Clare. She won a university scholarship and was awarded a BA (in Irish, French and English) and an MA in Irish in UCD. While there she was a member of Cumann na mBan and Conradh na Gaeilge. She was jailed at one point for selling republican flags on Grafton Street. She later worked as a teacher, as timire (Conradh na Gaeilge organiser) and as secretary to Ernest Blythe in the Dáil and during the Civil War. From 1926 onwards she spent nine years working for 2RN (Radio Éireann), compiling programmes for women and children. She was the first female announcer in Ireland and Britain, and perhaps in Europe. She later returned to teaching and her first play, An Uacht, was written for the students to whom she was teaching Irish at the time but ended up being produced by Micheál Mac Liambóir in the Gate Theatre. The following are some of her plays: Giolla an tSolas (1945), Lá buí Bealtaine (1953), Úil glas Oíche Shármhna (1953), Suígín sneachta (1959), Stáilce Ocráis (1960), Mac Uí Rudaí (1961), An Triail (1964) and Breithiúnas (1968). An Triail brought her most fame; it was first performed in An Damer on 22 September 1964 and was later broadcast on television on 21 October 1964. Tomás Mac Anna, the producer, described An Triail as an achievement comparable to Brendan Behan’s The Hostage.

Pádraig Ó Fágáin (1922–2011)

Writer/historian from Farrancallin, Co. Westmeath. He achieved 257 marks in history in the Intermediate Certificate, i.e. full marks plus seven extra for doing the exam through the medium of Irish! He left school without sitting the Leaving Certificate. He wrote plays, short stories, poems and books in Irish, for example Biann an fhírinne searbh (1982) and Fion an ghrá agus drámaí elle (1983). His book Éige na híarmhrí (1985) deals with the works of poets in Westmeath, including their translations. It also deals with the decline of the Irish language in the county, a topic that had not previously received much consideration. His historical works include Divided loyalties: the question of an oath for Irish Catholics in the eighteenth century (1977), The second city: a portrait of Dublin 1700–1760 (1986) and A Georgian celebration: Irish poets of the eighteenth century (1989). He wrote two biographies, Dublin’s turbulent priest: Cornelius Nary 1658–1738 (1991) and An Irish bishop in penal times: the chequered career of Sylvester Lloyd OFM, 1680–1747 (1993). He was awarded an honorary doctorate by the National University of Ireland in 2000. Despite this, he felt that he was never given his due as a historian:

‘... the reality is that, as far as academia in the round is concerned (I know there are exceptions), I do not rate at all, or very little, as a historian. There appears to be a great stigma attached (by the academics, of course) to those historians who came in by the back door, as it were ...’

Another Irish university has been in the news for helping to identify a lost Velázquez masterpiece. Put up for auction as the work of a nineteenth-century British artist, sharp-eyed auctioneers at Bonhams thought it looked too good. They sent it to Velázquez expert Dr Peter Cherry at Trinity College, Dublin. After careful examination, he concluded that the portrait was the work not of Mathew Shepperson but of the great Spanish master. By Shepperson it was valued at around €600, but as an original Velázquez it is worth a tiny bit more ... like €3 million more. So check those paintings hanging up at home. They may be worth more than you think!

A chilling insight into victims of the Great Famine has been revealed by the discovery of 970 skeletons in a forgotten burial site in the old workhouse in Kilkenny during excavations for a shopping centre in 2005. Since then they have been studied by Jonny Geber, an osteoarchaeologist. The study has revealed the range of people buried there, the types of diseases of which they died and their underlying health before the famine struck. The majority (56%) were children. An unexpected revelation was that most of the victims had scurvy and that this contributed to their deaths. Until now scurvy was not considered a major factor compared to typhus or tuberculosis.

Have you people no shame? Bad enough that statues and cables are stolen for the metal in them, but unscrupulous thieves have stolen a relic of the True Cross from Holycross Abbey, Thurlies, Co. Tipperary. Masked men broke into the abbey and stole two crosses, both about 30cm in height and dating from the Middle Ages; one is silver with two dark stones and the other is made of bronze. The relic was donated in 1233 by Queen Isabella of Angoulême, the widow of King John of England. The thieves used an angle grinder, hammer and screwdriver to cut through the steel door of the cabinet where the precious relics were on display. We can only hope that they were stolen for a collector (in which case they might be recovered) rather than for their scrap value.

They’ve clocked up a lot of mileage in 100 years but that is how long one of Ireland’s biggest motor vehicle businesses has been going. Belfast-based Hurst Motors was founded in 1911 and now has thirteen outlets across the island, employing 800 staff. To mark the occasion they have produced an official history, which charts the company from its obscure beginnings to being one of the country’s most successful businesses. The book comes with a six-month warranty and free service for the first year.