

**Template cover sheet which must be included at the front of all projects**

**Title of Project:**

Máire Ní Shíthe

**Category for which you wish to be entered (i.e. Revolution in Ireland, Ireland and World War I, Women's History or a Local/Regional category):**

Local / Regional Category

**Name(s) of class / group of students / individual student submitting the project:**

6<sup>th</sup> class

**School Roll Number:**

12456M

**School Type:**

Primary

**School name and address (this must be provided even for projects submitted by a group of pupils or an individual pupil):**

Timoleague National School, Timoleague, Bandon, Co. Cork, P72Y058

**Class teacher's name (this must be provided both for projects submitted by a group of pupils or an individual pupil):**

Norma Harte

**Teacher's Contact Phone Number:**

0862551187

**Teacher's contact email address:**

timoleaguens2@gmail.com

# Máire Ní Shíthe

## Introduction



Figure 1 - Timoleague NS with Timoleague Abbey in the background

We are extremely fortunate to live in an area of the country so steeped in history. Our history books are full of the wonderful events of Ireland in the years 1912 - 1922. When we began our 1916 Commemoration journey back in 2015, we delved into our local history. Our school is in the shadow of a magnificent Franciscan Abbey and we learned that there was an unmarked grave within the Abbey walls that was of a woman who had a close literary relationship with Pádraig Mac Piarais. Together with the Timoleague Centenary Commemoration Committee and local history group, we set about researching the life of Máire Ní Shíthe and pieced together the life of this wonderful lady. Little did we know that this project would take us a year to complete with a fitting ending for this wonderful lady.

## The Life of Máire Ní Shíthe

Máire Ní Shíthe was born in Ballymacown, Killnagross, Clonakilty, Co. Cork in 1868. Her father was Edward (Ned) Sheehy from Ballintemple and her mother was Ann Deasy from Lehanagh. Máire was a native Irish speaker as her mother was from an area in Barryroe, where Irish was widely spoken at the time. She attended Darrara National School and then the Convent of Mercy, Clonakilty from 1883 - 1887. Her aptitude in the study of languages soon became apparent. She played an active role in the Gaelic Revival and was a regular contributor to *An Claidheamh*



Figure 2- We painted a map outlining the local areas associated with Máire

*Soluis* from 1901 - 1922. She wrote under the pseudonym *Dul Amu (Going Astray)*. Letters and cards written by Pearse to Máire are preserved in the archives of the Convent of Mercy, Clonakilty.

14ú Márta 1907

*Máire, a chara,*

*Bhéinn buidheach dhíot dá guirfeá alt nó scéal gear chugam le haghaidh an Claidhidh anois 's arís.*

Máire married her wonderful linguistic skills with drama. She won first prize with *Suípéar Dhiarmada Mhic Phaidín* at the Oireachtais in 1901. She translated the French Moliere piece, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* into Irish in 1907 and named it *An Geogach Duine Uasal*. Máire also translated from German and this work was frequently published in *An Claidheamh Soluis* and *Irisleabhar na Gaeile*. In 1902 she travelled from Clonakilty to Belfast to play the part of Nora in a play she co-wrote with Eilís Ní Mhurchadha called *Beart Nótaí*. The following review was written in *An Claidheamh Soluis* in October 1902;

*"Dul Amú herself travelled specially from Clonakilty to Belfast to take the part of "Nora, which she acted with*



Figure 3- *An Claidheamh Soluis*

*great spirit and animation. ..The play was a revelation to the native speakers and more serious students who had the good fortune to be present. ...They saw in it the first real attempt to create a National Theatre. Miss Sheehy's play furnishes us with a new standard to work up to."*

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
655	Flynn	Denis	Gaggin	Condon	Mary	Farren	Jeremiah Moloney	Maggie Condon	13	6	1911 P.H.
656	Driscoll	Timothy		Murphy	Kate	Abbeymahon	James Murphy	Kitty Roche	24	6	1911 P.H.
657	Crowley	Daniel		Regan	Kate		Frank Hunt	Julia Regan	20	8	1911 P.H.
658	Donovan	Cornelius		Kingston	Margaret		Jeremiah Donovan	Bridget Hayes	9	11	1911 P.H.
659	Walsh	Andrew		Murphy	Nora		John Walsh	Mary B. Murphy	2	12	1911 P.H.
660	Deasy	James		White	Mary Ellen	Reengarrigeen	William Deasy	Mary Cleary	15	2	1912 P.H.
661	Donovan	Florence		Hunt	Anne	Kilvarig	Wm.Minihane	Julia Regan	20	2	1912 J.M.
662	Donovan	Timothy		Keane	Mary	Ahalisky	Jer Donovan	Kahy Ryan	6	7	1912 J.M.
663	Regan	John	Ailskey	Donovan	Mary Anne		John Calnan	Hannah Donovan	18	7	1912 J.M.
664	Harte	John		Murphy	Anne	Ballinscarthy	John Keohane	Nora Donovan	9	10	1912 T.OHea
665	McCarthy	John	Kinsale	Lee	Bridget	Timoleague	Timothy McCarthy	Hannah Hourihane	9	11	1912 T.OHea
666	Deasy	William	Carrig	Harte	Hanora		James Deasy	Lizzie Harte	11	1	1913 T.OHea
667	Harte	John		Towhig	Kate	Carrig	Pat Sullivan	Margaret Deasy	23	1	1913 T.OHea
668	Ryan	Patrick		Lane	Margaret	Burnane	James Ryan	Julia Lane	30	1	1913 T.OHea
669	Griffin	Thomas		Donovan	Mary Anne	Cregane	William Griffin	Mary Ellen	1	2	1913 T.OHea
670	Lane	John		O'Leary	Hannah	Skeaf	John Buckley	Bridget O'Leary	26	4	1913 T.OHea
671	Fleming	William		Donovan	Mary Anne	Barryshall	John McCarthy	Mary Anne Madden	7	6	1913 T.OHea
672	Minihane	Patrick		Brien	Mary		Denis Minihane	Mary Hallihan	19	5	1913 T.OHea
673	Sexton	Michael		Madden	Eileen		Pat Sullivan	Bridget Neville	9	9	1913 T.OHea
674	Riordan	Cornelius		Ambrose	Margaret		William Lombard	Mary Leary	8	11	1913 T.OHea
675	Forde	James		McCarthy	Annie	Ballinscarthy	Jeremiah Ahern	Eileen McCarthy	13	1	1914 T.OHea
676	Donovan	Patrick		Deasy	Catherine	Cregane	Thomas Donovan	Julia Collins	10	2	1914 T.OHea
677	Sugrue	Cornelius		Crowley	Margaret	Knockbrown	John Moriarty	Catherine Crowley	19	2	1914 T.OHea
678	Reilly	John		Crowley	Hannah	Knockbrown	Michael O'Reilly	Julia Crowley	24	2	1914 T.OHea
679	O'Brien	Dan		Regan	Mary	Timoleague	John Driscoll	Annie O'Donovan	3	11	1914 T.OHea
680	Faaher?	Edmund		Coleman	Margaret	Carrig	Pat Coleman	Mary C. Casey	12	11	1914 T.OHea
681	Burke	Con		McCarthy	Eileen	Kilvarrig	Andrew Burke	Maggie Ahern	28	1	1915 T.OHea
682	Leary	Denis		Sheehy	Minnie	Ardmore	Denis Sullivan	Kate Keohane	17	6	1915 T.OHea
683	Donovan	Bat		Donovan	Hannah	Ailskey	Jeremiah Donovan	Maggie Calnan	24	7	1915 T.OHea
684	Donovan	Jeremiah		Donovan	Mary	Carrig	Lawrence Calnan	Hannah Slattery	11	9	1915 T.OHea
685	Sullivan	Jeremiah		Sexton	Hanora	Ardmore	Lawrence Sullivan	Julia Hennessy	27	2	1916 T.OHea
686	Daly	Jim		Deasy	Elizabeth		Michael Moloney	Katie Mahoney	7	3	1916 T.OHea

Figure 4- Our findings from the Parish Marriage Register

We approached our parish priest, Fr. Patrick Hickey, and he allowed us access to the parish records. We discovered that Máire married Denis Leary in 1915 in Timoleague. It was interesting to see that Máire was referred to as "Minnie" in the register. She married Denis on June 17<sup>th</sup> 1915. They got a Land Commission farm in Ardmore. They remained in Ardmore for some time before selling and buying another farm in Ballinamona, Courtmacsherry where they remained for the remainder of their lives. Máire died on the 13<sup>th</sup> July 1955. She was buried in Timoleague Abbey.



Figure 5- Máire's unmarked grave in Timoleague Abbey

## Re-creating Máire's Life

During our research, we were unable to find photographs of Máire. Her relative Brenda Bean Uí Ríordáin, from whom we received the information, had no photographs. Our class decided to recreate Máire's life in photo. We researched and dressed in clothing of the time. We went on a fieldtrip around our village and recreated scenes of Máire's life. We then published our work in a photobook and have made it available to the school and local community.



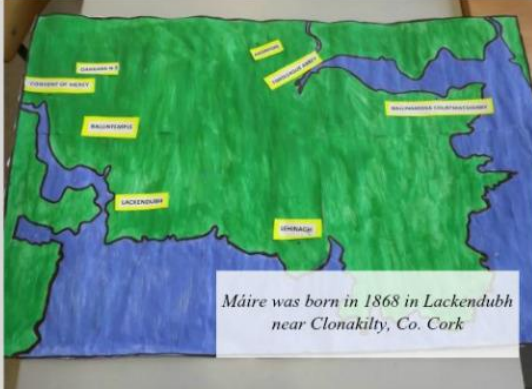
**Máire Ní Shíthe**  
1868- 1955  
*Drámadóir, Aistritheoir, Conraitheoir*



*She played an active role in the Gaelic Revival and was a regular contributor to An Claidheamh Soluis from 1901 to 1922. She wrote under the pseudonym Dul Amú.*



*The letters and cards that Pádraig Pearse wrote to Máire are preserved in the archives of the Convent of Mercy, Clonakilty*

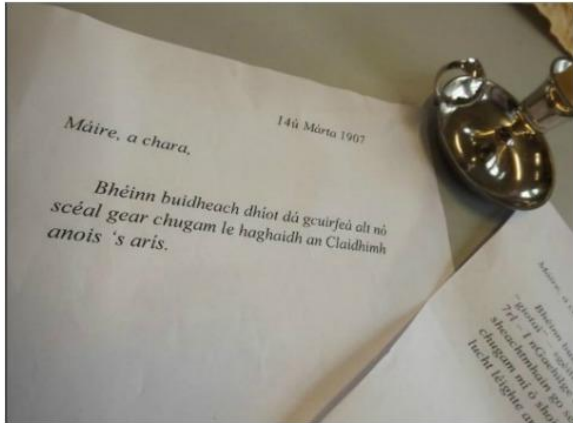


*Máire was born in 1868 in Lackendubh near Clonakilty, Co. Cork*

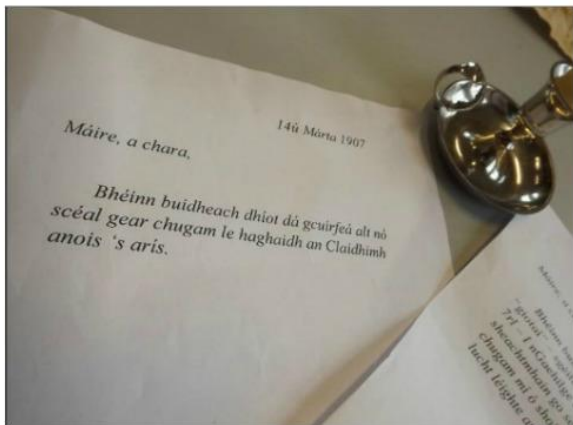


*Her father was Edward (Ned) Sheehy from Ballintemple and her mother, Ann Deasy, from Lehinagh. She attended Darrara National School and then the Convent of Mercy, Clonakilty, where she was a pupil from 1883-1887.*





**Máire was a great dramatist and she won 1st prize with *Suípear Dhiarmada Mhic Phaidín* at *The Oireachtas* in 1901.**



She excelled at languages and was fluent in Irish, French and German. She worked as a translator.

One of her translated works into Irish was "Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme". This play was written by one of the greats of French literature, Molière, in 1670.



This review was written in *An Claidheamh Solais* in October 1902;

***"Dul Amú herself travelled specially from Clonakilty to Belfast to take the part of "Nora", which she acted with great spirit and animation. The play was a revelation to the native speakers and more serious students who had the good fortune to be present. They saw in it the first real attempt to create a National Theatre. Miss Sheehy's play furnishes us with a new standard to work up to".***



**In 1902, she travelled from Clonakilty to Belfast to play the part of *Nora* in a play she co-wrote with Eilís Ní Mhurchadha called *Beart Nótaí*.**





*Máire wrote under the pseudonym Dul Amú. "Dul Amú" wrote as early as 1899 for Fhainne an Lae and continued until 1925.*

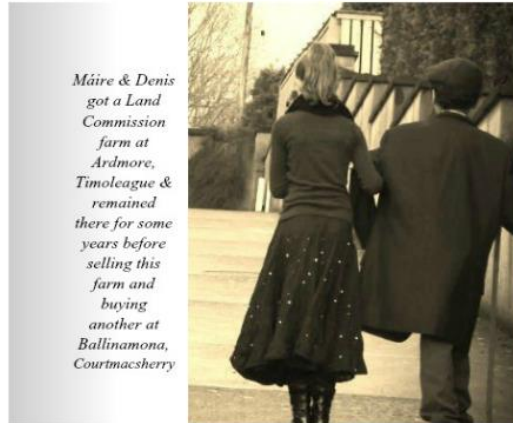
*It is believed that she became editor of The Cork Sun in 1903*



*Máire Sheehy and Denis Leary got married in Timoleague in 1915.*



*Timoleague Marriages Records 1843-1950  
Groom; Denis Leary Bride; Minnie Sheehy  
Married 17th June 2015 by T. O'Hea*



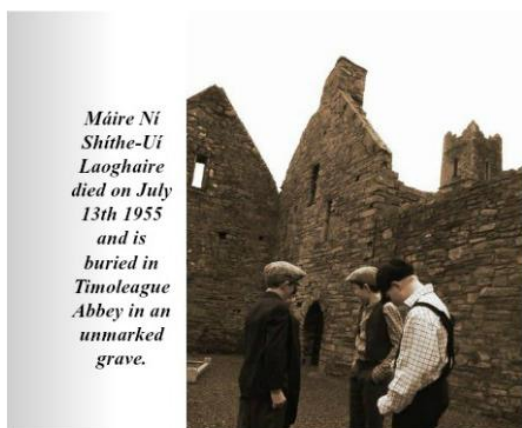
*Máire & Denis got a Land Commission farm at Ardmore, Timoleague & remained there for some years before selling this farm and buying another at Ballinamona, Courtmacsherry*



*Witnesses - Denis Sullivan & Kate Keohane*







*Máire Ní Shíthe-Uí Laoghaire died on July 13th 1955 and is buried in Timoleague Abbey in an unmarked grave.*



*Máire played an active role in the Gaelic Revival. There are letters from Tadhg Ó Donnchadha and Pádraig Mac Suibhne who were known members of Conradh na Gaeilge.*

*Máire gave Irish course in July of 1923, 1924 & 1925*



*Figure 6- Images from our photobook*

The final photographs are particularly moving to us. It was quite lonely standing around her grave that had no visual evidence of her existence. We felt proud that we were honouring this fascinating lady. We publicised our work in our school newsletters and on the school website. The Timoleague Centenary Commemoration Committee approached us and asked us whether they could put



our photobooks on display during their commemorative weekend in April. We were delighted to receive such acknowledgement.

### Our story didn't end there.....

Dúchas Clonakilty had been in contact with Máire Ní Shíthe's relative, Brenda Ní Ríordáin, to come to Clonakilty to give a lecture. It was suggested that Dúchas Clonakilty could erect a plaque on the grave in Timoleague for her anniversary in July 2016. We were delighted to have been contacted by the Clonakilty branches of Conradh na Gaeilge and Cumann Seanchais together with Dúchas when we returned to school in September 2016. We were invited to take part in an event planned in Timoleague Abbey for Máire Ní Shíthe.

On Friday September 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 a large crowd gathered at Timoleague Abbey to honour the memory of dramatist, writer and translator Máire Ní Shíthe.





Máire's cousin Brenda Ní Ríordáin was in attendance. Local piper and Dad of someone in our class led the procession into the graveyard. A synopsis of Máire's career was given and her grave was blessed. We were honoured to be part of the ceremony and joined other students from the other national schools in reading paragraphs in Irish and English inscribed on the plaque resting on her grave. Brenda Uí Ríordáin and Máire's god-daughter, Mrs. Mary O'Donovan, then unfurled the covering on the Celtic headstone and commemorative plaque respectively. We then journeyed to the local hall to hear Brenda give a most informative lecture on Máire.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF  
**MÁIRE NÍ SHÍTHE**  
 FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 2016

The unveiling of a Headstone and Memorial will take place at the grave of Máire Ní Shithe in Timoleague Abbey Cemetery at 7pm.

A lecture on the life & times of Máire Ní Shithe, by a relative, Brenda Ní Riordáin, at Canon Fleming Hall, Timoleague at 8pm.

An evening of music & song etc. afterwards at Charlie Madden's Pub, Timoleague

*Please send a card to Máire at Ashgrove, Clonakilty on 053 9022 4649. We hope it would be greatly to you if you would forward to me some articles, stories, jokes etc in Irish from week to week. The stories you sent me previously were enjoyed very much by the readers of An Chláirínínn!*



## Conclusion



This project developed into so much more that we had ever anticipated! Timoleague National School came together with the local history groups and

organisations to provide recognition for a most remarkable lady who was largely unknown. Our project was on display throughout the commemorative weekend in April. It whet the appetite of the people of Timoleague. When the heritage groups organised the plaque and headstone unveiling, the community came out to honour this lady. She was unheard of in the history classes in Timoleague but due to the Commemorative projects of 2016, she will be taught to the future generations. We would like to mention last year's 6<sup>th</sup> class who were very much involved in this project. They had moved onto secondary school by the time of the unveiling of the headstone.

It became so much more than a project. It brought history to life not only in our classrooms but in our community and local area!

## Bibliography

1. "Cérbh í Dul Amú? Máire Ní Shíthe, 1868-1955, Drámadóir, aistritheoir, conraitheoir - Brenda Ní Ríordáin, *Comahar*, Uimh 8, Conradh na Gaeilge 1893 - 1993. *Móreagrán Comórtha* (Aug., 1993), pp. 38, 40-41, 43-44
2. Timoleague Centenary Commemoration publication
3. Timoleague Historical Society
4. The Southern Star
5. [www.ainm.ie](http://www.ainm.ie)