

Moycullen Local History Quiz Number Eight – Answers

We hope you enjoyed this quiz.

1. In pre-vaccine days whooping cough was a greatly feared disease. According to local folklore, the owner of a particular animal could give a cure – (a) What was the animal? (b) What was particular about this animal?

The owner of a white horse was said to have a cure for whooping cough.

A person would have to ask for a cure by saying “Man of the white horse, give me a cure for the whooping cough.”

The owner of the horse could specify any type of cure. For example, he could instruct that the sufferer eat white loaf boiled in fresh milk and eat it with a spoon. It would be easy to organise this cure. However, the horse owner could also give an obscure cure, one that was difficult to organise such as ‘Drink hen’s milk mixed with a cat’s feather.’ He obviously would not be thanked for this cure.

2. If you had a thorn in your finger that couldn’t be removed with a needle, what part of a fox would be used to draw out the thorn?

It was believed that a thorn could be removed from one’s finger with a fox’s tongue. The tongue was cut out of the fox’s mouth and dried. It was then placed on the finger and was secured by bandages. It was believed that the tongue would draw out the thorn.

3. When was Puss Sunday and why was it so called?

Puss Sunday was the Sunday before Ash Wednesday. Marriages did not take place in Lent so Shrove Tuesday was a popular day for a wedding. Women who hadn’t their marriages arranged were easily recognised at Mass on Puss Sunday as they were believed to ‘wear’ a puss.

4. A tradition associated with local weddings was that the guests would take part in racing their horses from the church to the house where the reception was held. What was this race called?

The race from the church to the house where the wedding reception was held was called the ‘Draggin’ Home’.

5. What was the *fóidín mearbhaill*?

The *fóidín mearbhaill* was a most disconcerting experience whereby a person became disorientated and couldn’t find their way home. ‘Fóidín’ translates as ‘small patch of land’ and it was believed that the fairies had ownership of various patches of land. If you happened to step on this patch, you would be under the control of the fairies who caused bewilderment and confusion. It was also believed that people would get the *fóidín mearbhaill* at the same time of the day as they would die.

6. What was the cure for the *fóidín mearbhaill*?

The cure for the *fóidín mearbhaill* was simple: take off your cap or coat, turn it inside out and put it back on! You would be back to reality and be able to make your way home.

7. The names of the townlands in Moycullen are all derived from the Irish language and were Anglicised – Coill Bruachlán became Kylebroughlan. What are the two exceptions to this?

The two townlands in Moycullen that were not originally named in Irish are Allens Park and Mount View.

8. Where is Bealach Uilinn?

Bealach Uilinn is the narrow strip of land between Lough Corrib and Ballyquirke Lake.

9. A local custom was that a branch of a tree was put over doors of houses and outhouses and on top of dung heaps on May Eve for protection from the fairies. What tree was used?

A branch of the rowan tree (also called the mountain ash) was placed over door and outhouses on May Eve as a protection from fairies. The name given to the branch was the 'crainnín Bealtaine' (little tree of May).

10. It was believed that the leg of particular creature, if chewed, could cure toothache. What was the creature?

It was believed that chewing the leg of frog brought relief from toothache, perhaps by transferring the pain from the person to the frog. Frogs were used in folk medicine in many countries.

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