

The Hiring Fair

Since Famine times hiring fairs were a feature of the Northern Counties of Ireland. Wealthy farmers and landowners from The Lagan Valley would come and hire poor children as manual labourers and servants. This twice-yearly practice continued for almost a century. The novel *Rotha mor an tSaol* by Mici Mac Gabhann from Cloughaneely, Co. Donegal includes a beautiful but sad account of Mici walking through the night to the hiring fair in Letterkenny which was part of the artist's inspiration for this piece. In conversation during the selection of this piece, it was suggested that although these were hard sad times for the children, there was also some fun too – hence the small little frog in the boys hand.