

## Homemade Toys

### Daisy Chains and Necklaces

Within the Schools Manuscript Collection many of the girls from differing counties recounted how they made necklaces from Daisy's in particular. Some used needles and threads to make the necklaces whilst others pierced a hole in the stem. A small sample of the girl's descriptions is provided below from the collection

Some small girls occupy their leisure time by making necklaces out of the heads of daisies. They procure a needle and a long piece of thread. At one end of the thread a knot is put in order to stop the heads from falling off. Forty or fifty heads of daisies are sufficient to make a necklace.



Necklaces are also made out of red berries which are to be found on wild rosebushes. They are treated in a similar way to the heads of daisies, but a stronger needle and thread are required. Sometimes the little girls knot the ends together and put the necklace round their necks.

NFC, Vol 088, Page 267. Westport, Mayo

When they are making a necklace they gather a crowd of flowerers. They get on a daisy with a long stem. They put a hole in the stem and draw the stem of another daisy through it. They carry on with this until they have a long chain made. They put it around their necks and they wear it for a necklace.

NFC Vol 233 pg 71 Roscommon

Long ago children used to make their own toys. A very popular pastime amongst the girls is the making of chains from Daisies. The stem is cut off and then a pointer is run through the flower. Then the flower is put on a piece of thread or twine. Amongst the boys a very pleasant pastime was the making of wheelbarrows. A box was got and two pieces of sticks formed the legs

NFC Vol 907 pg 370 Carlow

## Home-made Dolls

A wide variety of homemade dolls are described within the School Manuscript Collection, including paper dolls, wooden dolls, rag dolls stuffed with straw or cloth rags and dolls made from potatoes. A flavor of the differing homemade dolls from the School Manuscript Collection is provided below.



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### Rag Doll

We all love to spend the long winter nights at some amusement. I make a rag doll and this is how it is made. I get a piece of white cloth and stuff it with rags and then sew it up. Then I stuff another piece with rags and sew it up, and it will do for the head. Then I get two long pieces of cloth and stuff them and sew them to keep in the stuffing. Then stitch them to the body and they do for the legs. Do the same to make the arms. Then you paint two eyes, a nose and a mouth on the face and you have a lovely rag doll.

NFC Vol 752 pg. **Longford**

### Rag dolls (straw)

People in our district still make toys for the children, and sometimes the children make the toys themselves. They make dolls when they have none. The way we make our dolls is by getting hay and piece of cloth and by sewing the cloth round the hay. Then we get a piece of stick and pare it until it is round and then we mark two eyes in it with a pencil and get two pieces of sticks for the hands and two more for the legs.

NFC, Vol 149, Page 399-400 **Mayo**

### Potato dolls

Girls made dolls from potatoes. A potato, not to small, was procured. A little head was necessary on top of the potato. In the head a pair of eyes, a mouth and a nose was inserted, and a may be painted in bright colours to make the doll look nice. Pieces of sticks are stuck into the potato for arms and legs. A set of cloths may then be made for the doll.

NFC 966 pg 252-3 **Cavan**

## Paper dolls

When they are making a paper doll they get a large sheet of brown paper. They get a scissors,. They cut off a piece of the paper. Then they cut out the legs and arms. When they have this done they get a pencil, and they fill in the eyes, nose and mouth with it. Then they have the doll made. They play with these toys when they have nothing else to do.

NFC Vol 233 pg 71-2 **Roscommon**

## Carts and Motor car

We also make chairs and barrows. The way we make a chair is by getting a flat board for the seat and sally rods for the rails. We bore holes to put the rails into and then get four good strong sticks for the legs. The way we make a barrow is much the same by getting four flat boards and nailing them in the shape of a box.

Then we get a piece of an oak for the wheel and a nail and put the wheel in on the oak and two sticks for the shafts and legs.

NFC, Vol 149, Page 399-400 **Mayo**



*This image is reproduced courtesy of the National Library of Ireland [CLON1784].*

## Kite

Kites are not a modern invention and homemade kites were another common homemade toy using sticks and strong brown paper or canvas. A selection of both techniques is provided below from the collection



The way we make a kite is to get a rod and join the two ends of it together. Then we get another stick and put it in the middle. We put a piece of paper round the rods and tie them with a string and let it go up in the air.

NFC, Vol 149, Page 399-400 **Mayo**

The Kite is formed by two pieces of stick one about 16 ins long and the other about 12 ins long. Cross them about 4ins from the top. Then get some strong brown paper and gum its edges well. Add some more to keep it from

tearing. Then add the tail, have it about 5 feet long with pieces of paper about 6 ins apart. It will only go up on a windy day.

NFC Vol 863. Pg. 256 **Kilkenny**

Kites are still made in the district. The way a kite is made in my district is first you get two sticks one longer than the other then you fasten them together in the form of a cross +. Glue light brown paper to the cross, then fasten a loop of strong thread to the top of the stick you can put a tail to your kite with a piece of long cord with little spools made of paper tied to the cord.

NFC Vol pg 783 pg 98 **Dublin**

The kite is made from sticks, canvas, paper, glue and thread. The sticks are put in the shape of a cross and the canvas is tied and glued to the sticks. There is paper tied to the end as a tail. There is a string tied to the kite where the sticks cross.

NFC Vol 233 pg 74 **Roscommon**

## Whistles

Whistles were made from chestnuts. A chestnut was procured and cleaned out and a pebble put in it to make the sound loud.

NFC 966 pg 252 **Cavan**

## Wooden Boats

One big piece of wood shaped like a boat's floor 2 other pieces put up to the sides, and a big nail in the middle, an old piece of cloth for a sail tied on to the nail, and the boat is made.

NFC Vol 788 pg 96 **Dublin**

## Tops

The most common homemade toy described by the boys and some of the girls were tops and spinning tops. They were more popular than all the other homemade toys collectively Children from nearly every county in the Republic of Ireland gave their own person descriptions. Many of the children drew their tops and spinning tops and some of their drawings as well as the transcriptions of their written descriptions are included below.

### Tops from Spools

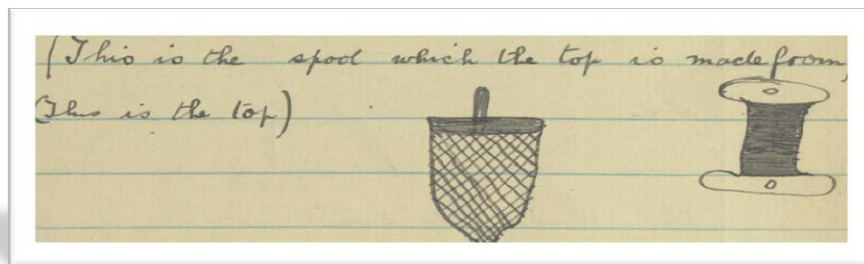
The way we make a top is to get a spool and cut the ends of it. We cut it on a slant and make hollows all-round the spool and on these hollows we put the thread and wind it all round the spool. When this thread is all wound around we let the spool go and it will keep spinning for a long time. NFC, Vol 149, Page 399-400 **Mayo**

They get an old spool and they get cut in halves. They pare it on one side until they have a point on it, then they get a piece of a stick and they cut it into the hole. They point the stick and they then can spin the top on a plate or on the ground. NFC Vol 233 pg 72-3 **Roscommon**

### Spinning tops

Homemade toys were common in this district long ago, and some of them are made yet. Boys used to make bird-cradles and toys, for spinning called tops. Tops were made from reels. A reel was procured, and both sides were pared with a knife. One side was pared thinner than the other, so that it would spin. A long stick was then got and put through a hole in the reel. The top was then ready for use. Bows and arrow were made, also and played with by girls and boys. They are not made plentifully now. Guns and catapults were also made. NFC 966 pg 251 **Cavan**

Tops are made by getting a spool and shaping it like a bough top with a knife or chisel. An old pen handle is then stuck into it and pointed. I made one and it is nearly as good as a bought one. NFC Vol 725 pg 66 **Westmeath**



*NFC Vol 912 pg 199 (Wicklow)*

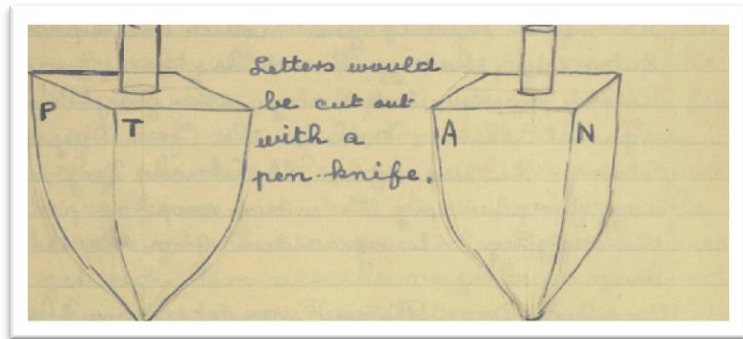
Tops are made by children in the district. They get a spool and cut one side of the spool in the form of a point. Then they put a nail down in the hole of the spool and spin the top.

NFC Vol pg 783 pg 98 **Dublin**



### Teetum Toetum Tops

Teetum Toetum was a kind of top that boys used to make long ago. The top was square on the top. Each side sloped from the side of the square to the point. Stuck in the middle of the top, was short handle with which it was spun. On one side of the top was the letter 'P', on the second side the letter 'T', on the third the letter 'A' and on the fourth the letter 'N'. You'd give it a spin and when it fell you'd yell look at the side that came up, if 'A' came up you'd take all the stakes, if 'P' came up, you'd put down a stake. If 'T' came up you'd take your own stake and if 'N' came up you'd do nothing. The boys used to make the tops themselves. The stakes would be buttons or pennies. You'd see as wicked a row over the buttons as if they had pennies.



NFC Vol 684 pg 225 Meath

You'd see these tops in every house you'd go into.

NFC Vol 684 pg 225 Meath

### Cords for Spinning Tops

When my father was going to school there were not many toys to be had. Top spinning was a great game then, and they boys would make tops out of a spool or a lump of wood. They would spin these tops with cords. Flails were used for threshing and were made at home. The part that struck the corn was called the boleceen.

NFC Vol 684 pg 352-3 Meath

### Wooden horse

They made wooden horses as play toys. They got a block of wood and put a round shape on it for a body. They then got a piece of a board and shaped it like a head and nailed it on to the body. They put ears of timber on him. Then the horse was made. Many people look back at the happy days they spent making those toys.

NFC Vol 233 pg 77-8 Roscommon

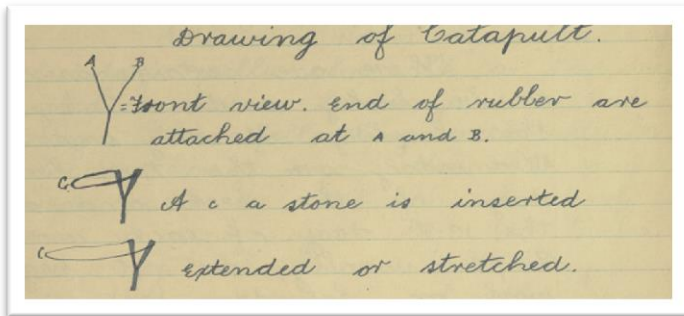
### Bows and Arrows.

A small piece of stick was found then cord, the cord was fastened on to the stick, this made the arrow itself, then another stick was found slipped on between the stick and cord, then the arrow was completed.

NFC Vol 788 pg 95 Dublin

## A Catapult

Catapults were also popular as a homemade toy. Children drew their catapult designs as well as describing how to make them and a sample are included below,



NFC Vol 966 pg 254 (Cavan)

To make a catapult, a piece of wood, cut in the shape of the letter Y was procured. A piece of motor-tyre or any other sort of rubber was got and one end of it was tied around one leg of the Y, and the other end of it, around the other leg of the Y. A stone was put in the rubber, and then the rubber was pulled with the hand and the stone went off in a straight line.

NFC 966 pg 251-2 Cavan

## Catapult – wood, rubber and leather

First you procure a strong fork from a tree and attach two pieces of rubber to it. This rubber is cut from an old bicycle tube. Then you get a piece of leather and attach it to the two pieces of rubber by cutting two holes in the leather one on each side and putting the rubber through the holes. When you get them through the holes you bend them down and tie them with two pieces of strong string. Then you tie the other two ends of the rubber to the two sides of the fork and your catapult is made. The catapult is used for shooting. The shooting is done by playing a stone in the piece of leather. Hold the fork firmly in your hand and pull the piece of rubber as far as you can, holding the piece of leather in your other hand while doing so. Take an aim at the thing you want to hit and let the leather go. Then the stone will shoot out like the shot of a gun.

NFC, Vol 171 Pg302-3 Sligo

## The Pop Gun

The pop gun was made by the boys also. They used to get a medium sized piece of Alder stick and scooped out the inside. Then they put a cork in one end and a long stick in the other, then they hit they hit the cork out with the stick. I often made one of them myself

NFC Vol 863. Pg. 255 Kilkenny



## Tractor

Nearly every child in the District knows how to make a tractor they get a spool and they cut a little teeth on both sides. Then they get a piece of rubber and put it through the hole in the spool. Then they get a stick and put it through the rubber and turn the stick round until you feel it tight. Then put it on the table and turns it slowly. NFC Vol pg 783 pg 98 **Dublin**

## Models from vegetables

The humble turnip was a precursor to the pumpkin and the following descriptions appear to be linked to children's play at Halloween

### Turnip Heads

Some children make a hobby by of toy making. I have often seen boys getting a large round turnip and drawing out a man's head and face on it. Then with a penknife and a large spoon the inside of the turnip is cut and scooped away until only the skin remains. Then with paint and a piece of black burned stick the mouth, eyes and nose are outlines. NFC Vol 907 pg 371 **Carlow**

### A Skeleton

Get a turnip. Scoop it out very finely with a spoon. Make two holes for the eyes. Scoop a nose and a mouth. Put a lighted candle in behind. Get a a stick and put it in the turnip. Put an old coat on the stick and an old hat on the top of the turnip. The whole lot looks like a skeleton in the dark. NFC Vol 798 pg 294-5 **Dublin**

## Fishing rod

This is the way to make a fishing rod. To get a fairly thick stick about four foot in length. It must be straight. Then look for a thinner piece than the other. That will stand for the middle. Splice the middle to the boot. Then get a piece, of thinner than the middle and splice it to the middle. Make a wax end fairly long. Then get six rings and wax end the rings on the rod. Put a reel on the boot and put line on the reel. Then the rod is made NFC Vol 863. Pg. 254-5 **Kilkenny**

## Girls Homemade Toys

The girls had certain games different from the boys and they considered it a great pastime to play them. The young girl had dolls and got nice coloured cloth, and made little dresses and other dolls' cloths with it. Some of them were very fond of putting ornaments, such as scallops on paper and they out this paper on the mantelpiece or on some shelf. Sometimes they made flowers from paper and these were very ornamental. The children made rag dolls. They got old pieces of cloth and sewed them, and then they put wool into it, to make it stay. They made nice dresses for their dolls and each child wished to see her doll the nicest. NFC Vol 275 pg 377-8 **Cork**