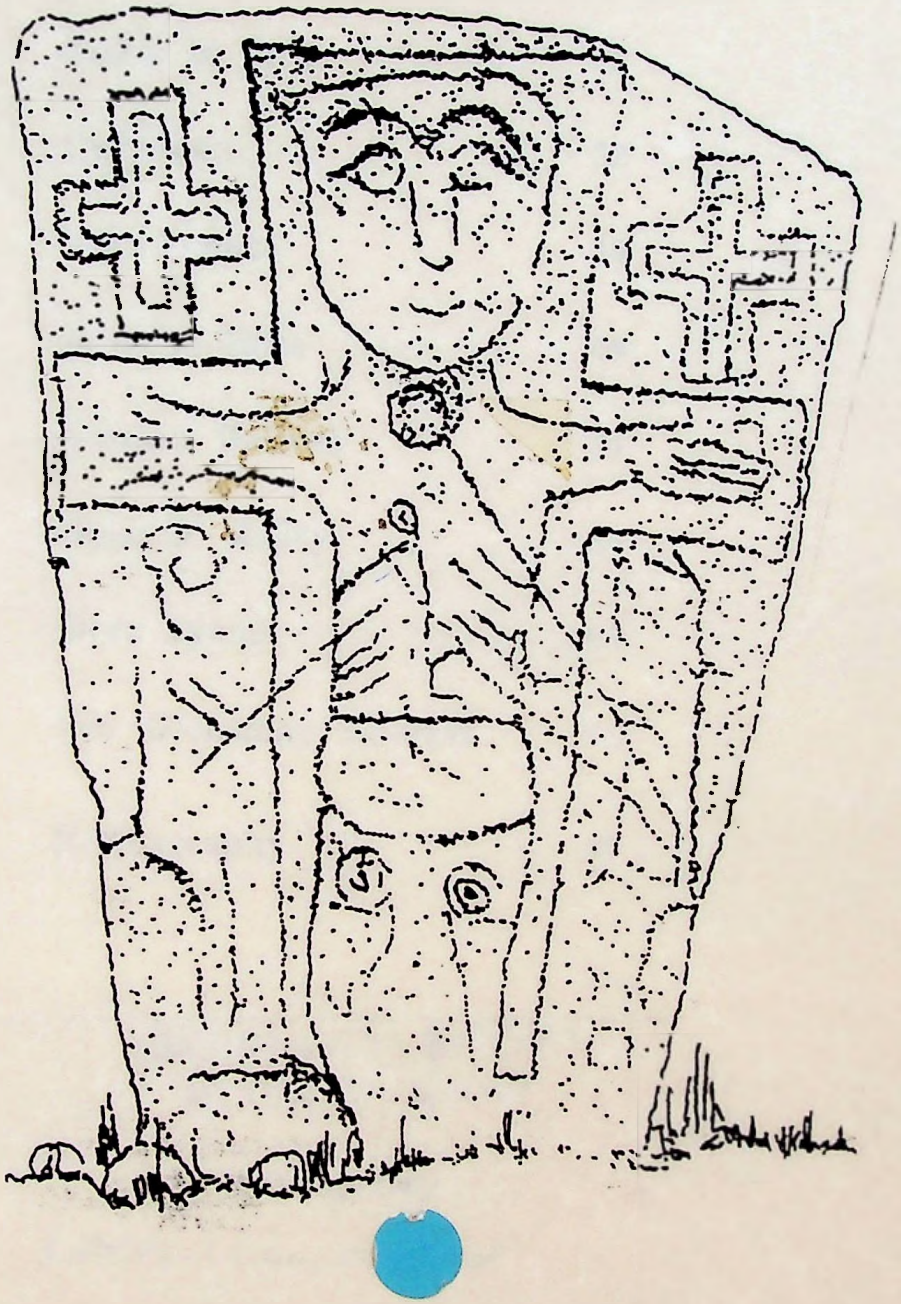
Report of the Erris Survey

August 1990 - May 1994



Part III

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SAINTS IN ERRIS

SAINTS AND THEIR NAMES

There are literally hundreds of Irish saints. Some achieved their status by being especially learned, some - remarkably few - by martyrdom, some by their noteworthy service to God and the Church, some, it would seem, simply from being in the right place at the right time. Interestingly however, only three have been actually canonised: Malachy, in 1190, by Clement III, Laurence O'Toole, c. 1220, by Honorius III, and Oliver Plunkett, in 1975, by Paul VI.

There are many with the same name, which causes a great deal of confusion. It is understandable that some names of certain saints should be used again and again, as a mark of respect and possibly, in an attempt to have a share in the sanctity of its original owner. Records, which are even nearly contemporary with the events, are sparse, and often a single, not certainly identifying, name is used. Some on the other hand, have a multiplicity of names.

It has been demonstrated, for example, that Colman of Dromore was also known as Colum, Mocholmoc, Mochoone, Dochonna, Mochumma - some of which are easily explained legitimate linguistic variations. They do, however, give rise to a further extension of the list of names ascribed to this single saint: we next have a series containing Cummae, Cuimme, Commae, Coimme, Caimme, as well as Cummoc, Cammoc, Comman, Camman, Cuimmin, Cuimmine, Caimmin, Caimmine. When to these lists are added Conna or Connae they overlap confusingly with both Colum, as Colm Cille, which is the same as Columba, and Cainnech (Canice of Kilkenny), with the addition of Latin and English forms of names of Irish saints, such as Latin Columba for Colm or Colum, which also means dove. Or the English Kevin for one of the Irish spellings of the saint of Glendalough-Caoimhin gives a very wide choice of forms or spellings, as well as contributing to a general and widespread confusion. When some saints have no known feast day, others appear to have more than one. And some saints are more positively identified by the use of their patronymic, being the name of a father, grandfather or other male ancestor, or a gloss on the area where they were born or with which they were associated, others are not.

Three saints are dealt with in this section : St. Deirbhle, St. Brendan and St. Columcille. The information gives us a clear description of, and insight into the work of the saints. Following on from that details are given on the surviving evidence of the monasteries and churches they founded.

ST. DEIRBHILE

Deirbhle was of noble family and her father was Cormac, a descendent of King Daithi. She was a contemporary of St. Columba's founding her convent in the sixth century. The site of her convent is marked by Saint Deirbhle's Church, a small primitive structure with a simple Romanesque west door with traces of badly eroded ornament. St. Deirbhle's bed or grave with an early cross-slab and Deirbhle's vat, a holy well which is reputed to have curative powers.

ST. DEIRBHLE'S LINEAGE

St. Deirbhle was a lady of gentle birth. Her genealogy speaks her nobility. She was the daughter of Cormac, son of Breech, son of Eochaidh, son of David, son of Fiachraidh, son of Eachraidh, son of Muire-Nach, son of Cairbe, son of Cormac, son of Art, son of Conn Cead-Cainidh that is, Conn of The Hundred Battles.

WHEN ST. DEIRBHLE LIVED

St. Deirbhle lived in the sixth century. This, I believe, to be fact for the following reasons:

1. According to the book of genealogy of the Irish Saints, she was 4th in decent from Dathe or David mentioned above, who was killed by lighting in the Alps, while attempting to invade Gaul in A.D. 427 and reserving thirty years for each generation, she lived in the middle of the sixth century.

2. In the life of St. Faranan her name appeared amongst those of the Bishops, Abbots, Priests, and Religious who met St. Columcille in Synod at Ballisodare A.D. 590.

3. Dr. Petrie, the famous antiquary, was convinced that the church in the Mullet bearing her name was indeed hers and that the style of its architecture belonged to the sixth century. There is no authentic evidence as to the date of her death.

Deirbhle came to the area in the sixth century fleeing from a prince in her native Meath she travelled by donkey and rested for the first time at the Holy Well in Carne.

The Prince pursued her and founded her at Faulmore and she refused to marry him yet again. She asked him "Why are you so intent on marrying me?" "'Tis on account of your two beautiful eyes" was his reply. So she promptly plucked out her eyes with her fingers. Where the eyeballs fell, water bubbled up. She washed her sockets in the clean spring water and her eyesight was restored. It is said that if you bathe your eyes in the water, you will never go blind.

ST. DEIRBHLE'S WELL

Situated on the coast, in a hallow amongst sand dunes, overlooking the little village of Surgeview to the west. St. Deirbhle's Church can be seen to the south-east.

The well itself is stonelined and measures 0.95 north-south x 3.9 east-west. it is 0.4m deep and fed by an underground spring.

A modern enclosure surrounds the well measuring 5.5m north-south x 3.9m east-west.

A memorial to the west dates to 1943. A conch shell and other offerings are present and 3m west of this is an altar or leacht. This consists of a large flat stone-flag averaging 1.6m in length x 1m wide. It rests on two courses of smaller stones.

Adjacent to the altar a natural spring rises and runs west. It is likely the altar/leacht may predate the well itself.

In the Irish calendar, some feast days are found on August 1st. One of these is St. Deirbhle, whose well, known as Babhach Deirbhle is at the southern tip of the Mullet peninsula. A pattern was held at this well until it was stopped by the parish priest there, Dean Lyons.

ST. DEIRBHLE'S CHURCH

St. Deirbhle's Church, in Erris, derives its name from a saintly virgin, Deirbhle. "Deirbhle de Iorras", of the race of Fiachra, son of Eochy Muighmedhoin. She lived in the sixth century, and was one of the holy women who attended the great meeting at Ballisodare in Sligo, held by St. Farannan to meet St. Columba, after the Synod of Dromceat, before his return to Britain, 590. The Martyrology of Donegal mentions two saints identical in name and race - Deirbhle, of the race of Fiachra, on August 5th and October 26th; one or both may possibly be the patroness of Fallmore Church.

The ruins occupy a knoll rising above the sandy beach; it is surrounded by a crowded graveyard with rude stone crosses, and monuments formed out of fragments of wrecks, "broken masts whose jagged ends, rising dark against the sky, add indescribably to the weird and desolate aspect of the scene": all these objects are thickly covered with grey moss and lichen.

The church is of two periods; the west gable is of polygonal masonry of gneiss or granite blocks strongly grouted. The east end is built with regular layers; the pitch of the gable is low. The foundation of the older east gable, and part of its window-head (which closely resembled that of the doorway), were recently unearthed.

The remains of the church measure 47 feet 9 inches on the south side and 47 feet on the north; the east gable is 21 feet 10 inches, and the west 22 feet in length, external measurements; the former is 3 feet in thickness and the latter 2 feet 9 inches. The side walls are 2 feet 6 inches in thickness.

EXTRACT FROM " THE ISLANDS OFF THE COASTS OF IRELAND."

"On the brink of the strand of Feorin in the Townland of Tearmainn is still traceable the site of an old graveyard called Cill beg, in contradistinction from which some say the Church of St. Deirbhle just referred to, was called Kilmore, but others are positive that the original Parish Church called Kilmore lied in Toin a Mhais nearly in the centre of the Parish."

"There is also another Termon in the south of the Mullet, containing another old ruin of a church, but I can find no historical references to it. Tradition makes it the Termon of the Virgin Saint Deirbhle, of whom I at present know nothing."

EXTRACT FROM " ORDNANCE SURVEY LETTERS "

"There is a quern stone located within the interior of Fallmore church. The base of a small quern stone measuring 0.4 m in diameter x 0.1 m thick. It appears to be composed it limestone with quartz inclusions."

ST. DEIRBHLE'S GRAVE

St. Deiribhle's Grave is located in Fallmore graveyard adjacent to the north-west corner of the Medieval Church.

A narrow headstone (0.7 m x 0.3 m x 0.16 m thick) bears a plain cross incised on its west face. It lies at the east end of a small square, drystone enclosure, 1 m high.

A noticeable feature is the absence of grass in an otherwise overgrown area, this proving to the locals that it is indeed the grave of a saint.

On the lands of Fallmore, in the southern extremity of the peninsula, within the Mullet, there is an old church and graveyard dedicated to the Virgin Saint Deirbhle whose remains were interred there, according to tradition, in a small enclosure apart from the church. To the north of the church at the distance of about twelve or fourteen perches is a well called Babhach Deirbhle or Saint Deirbhle's vat or keeve, which was much frequented as a place of Penance, and a pattern was held there on Saint Deirbhle's day, which falls on the 1st of the month of August, until it was suppressed by Dean Lyons on account of the abuses which were the consequence.

BRENDAN (BRANDAN, BRENANN "THE NAVIGATOR")
Clonfert, Co. Galway

Brendan was born the son of Fín Logue, in Kerry, some say at a place called Fenit, near Tralee, towards the end of the fifth century. His birth had been predicted by St. Patrick and on the night that he was born the whole area around the house was brilliantly illuminated while angels hovered over it. A local Bishop called Erc baptised him. He remained with his parents for only one year after his baptism. He was then put to fosterage with St. Ita at her monastery in Co. Limerick for five years.

The saint then went to Bishop Erc to continue his education, accompanying him on visitations when he reached the age of ten. After some time he expressed a desire to travel through Ireland and meet some of the other holy men. Erc gave him his blessing, but implored Brendan to return to him so that he could perform his ordination.

Brendan studied under Finian of Clonard for a time, and then spent some more with Jarlath of Tuam. He duly returned to Erc for his ordination and even at this early stage attracted disciples.

Early in the sixth century an Irish monk called Barrind had voyaged out into the Atlantic Ocean with some companion and found a distant and beautiful land before returning to Ireland. Barrind came to visit Brendan one evening and told him of his journey to the land he described as "The Land of Promise of the Saints".

Barrind's description fired Brendan with ambition to visit this far-off land himself. He and his monks fasted for forty days and nights, after which he set off for the Aran Islands where he met Enda, with whom he remained for three days, seeking information.

Returning to Kerry, Brendan and his chosen companions prepared their vessel and set off on their voyage. After forty days their food was exhausted. They spied an island, but could find no accessible anchorage.

Eventually, after circling the island for three days, they did fine a landing place and disembarked. They found accommodation and food prepared for them. They then voyaged on and found another island. On this too they found abundant nourishment, in the form of plenteous sheep. The next island they encountered caused some consternation, because as soon as they lit a fire on it, it moved. Brendan explained to his monks that they had in fact landed on a whale.

After they had voyaged for seven years, encountering many wonders and finding many lands and islands, they at last became homesick and returned to Ireland, having visited what we now call Iceland, Greenland and, probably America as well.

On his return from his legendary voyage Brendan founded his monastery at Ardfert, where disciples flocked to join him. He seemed to suffer from a sort of Wanderlust, for he shortly afterwards set off on a pilgrimage that took him only to Wales but, apparently, to Brittany as well.

On his journey home to Ireland he observed two monsters of the deep alternately fighting and swimming, one of them clearly getting the worst of it. Brendan hears it cry out in a human voice: "I claim the protection of St. Patrick". To which the other replied: "St. Patrick protection will avail you not". And the first cried out again: "I claim the protection of St. Brendan". To which the reply was: "St. Brendan's Protection will avail you not". Finally, the weaker cried out: "I claim the protection of the Holy Virgin Brigid'. At this the stronger gave up the contest and swan off.

Brendan was most impressed by this demonstration of the potency of Brigid's sanctity and, when he went to visit her, he asked how it came about. She explained that it was simply because she devoted her whole life and all her attention to God.

It was not until he was seventy-seven that Brendan eventually founded his celebrated monastery of Clonfert. It was at Clonfert that he had a conversation with Michael the Archangel, in the guise of a bird. He died at an advanced age in 577.

Brendan's fantastic voyage is the subject of a medieval tale, Navigation Seán Brendan (The Voyage of St. Brendan), which was translated into practically every European language.

The site of his monastery at Ardfert is marked by St. Brendan's Cathedral, into which is incorporated a fragment of a Romanesque church. At Clonfert the doorway of St. Brendan's Cathedral is one of the glories of Irish Romanesque architecture.

BRENDAN THE VOYAGER

One of the three most famous saints of Ireland. He was a great founder of monasteries, the chief of which was Clonfert. To his monks he gave a rule of remarkable austerity. He is best known in history fro his voyages, in which, it is said, he reached the American continent. Though they can scarcely be admitted as historical facts, that have nevertheless had some influence on history, since legends of St. Brendan journey to discover the Isle of the Blessed were popular throughout Europe. St. Brendan is most fittingly venerated as the patron saint of sailors.

INISHGLORA

This island off the coast of the Mullet peninsula in Co. Mayo, contains 37 acres and is shaped like a rough figure eight, lying north-west and south-east, with most of the ruined buildings at the south-east end. It was believed to be the holiest island in the neighbourhood and has been famous for hundreds of years. Geraldus Cambrensis wrote in the twelfth century.

There is an island called Aran situated in the western part of Connaught and consecrated to St. Brendan where human corpses are neither buried nor decay, but deposited in the open air remain uncorrupted .... There is another thing remarkable in this island. Although mice swarm in vast numbers in other parts of Ireland here not a single one is found. No mouse is bred there nor does it live if it be introduced: when brought over it runs immediately away and leaps into the sea. If it is stopped it immediately dies.

Some centuries later this was written in the Book of Ballymote:

On Inishglora in Iorrais the bodies thither brought do not rot but their nails and hair grow and everyone there recognises his father and grandfather for a long time after death: and no meat whatever will purify on it even without being salted.

This story is only a little less wonderful than that of the island where nobody could die, and it is taken as proof of the great sanctity of the place, and the absence of the mice here is a further proof of this unusual saintliness.

On Inishglora there are two ruined churches, one known as Teampull na bhFear and the other slightly smaller is Teampull na mBan. The chapel of St. Brendan is very small, 12 ft. x 8 ft. and built of dried stone, with the remains of a corbelled roof. Part of the wall of the castle remains. The seven Leachta are in two groups. Four are found on the north-west of the island and three on the south-east end, close to the other buildings. There is also a pillar stone nine feet tall with a heap of small stones at its base and another stone called Cloch na h-Athchuinge (The stone of the Petitions) on the troop of which O'Donovan saw two small heaps of stone. The holy well dedicated to St. Brendan is covered by a clochan called piprait (Tower of the well) and is approached by an uncovered passage nine feet long and down seven steps. It is a very special well and no woman may draw water from it.

When O'Donovan visited the island there was a wooden statue of St. Brendan there to which wonderful powers were attributed, but this has now disappeared. Among the many legends which have been told about Inishglora, the best known is the story of the Children of Lir who were buried there by St. Brendan, when they finally died after living as enchanted swans for nine hundred years. There is also the story of a causeway leading from the island to the old church of Kilmore on the mainland. It was also the practice that when a ship sailed close to the island the crew lowered the topsail in Honour of St. Brendan.

SEIPEAL BREANAINN

The little oratory of St. Brendan. This is a most curious example of Irish ecclesiastical architecture, displaying as it does, the earliest effort at laying aside the round form, and adopting the rectangular, though still remaining cyclopean.

It is 12ft. long and 8ft. broad, and was originally roofed with stones; but the roof has long since perished. The side walls are much injured and distorted; but the west gable, which contains the door, is nearly perfect. The door, which is of primitive construction, is 4ft. high, 2ft. 3 ins. broad at the bottom, and 1 ft. 9 ins. at the top.

In the North East corner of this chapel is preserved a well-weathered wooden figure, said to be a state of St. Brendan. It is about 4ft. high. The face is worn away; but the figure is evidently that of a bishop, with the hands raised in the position of thanksgiving.

TEAMPALL NA BHFEAR

Immediately east of St. Brendan's Oratory is Teampall na bhFear, or the Church of the men, said to be the church of a monastic foundation. It is of much more modern construction than St. Brendan's Oratory.

TEAMPALL NA MBAN

South of the monastic church are the ruins of Teampall na mban, the Church of the women. This is said to have been a Nunnery, and is somewhat larger than the monastic church. Its doorway is 5ft. 4 ins. high and 2 ft. 8 ins. wide.

TOBAR BREANAINN

South of St. Brendan's Chapel or Oratory is Teampall Breanainn, or St. Brendan's Well. It is enclosed by a little stone Tor of great antiquity. It sends out no stream; but its water is said to be very good.

GRAVES OF THE CHILDREN OF LIR

A short distance east of the doorway of St. Brendan's Chapel are two flag-stones, beneath which are said to be buried the children of Lir, famous in Irish legendary lore.

INISHGLORA

This is the most noted of the islands off the coast of Kilmore-Erris mainly because of the two legends associated with it, namely that the Children of Lir, who had been turned into swans, were buried there after they regained human form, and secondly, that bodies buried on the island did not corrupt. There is also a less well-known legend which says that clay from the island would banish rats and mice, even when brought to mainland.

On Inishglora there are the remains of a monastery with a group of three adjoining bee-hives and an oratory which is associated with the end of the life of St. Brendan. St. Brendan of Clonfert died either in 577 or 583. Despite the number of unlikely legends associated with his life, it is reasonably certain that he made a voyage to the Scottish Isles, and perhaps, to Strathclyde, Cumbria, and Wales, whatever about the long list of the other places said to have been visited by him. His feast day is May 16th. Some remains of a cashel, or uncemented stone wall, which originally surrounded the settlement on Inishglora are to be seen on the north-west side of St. Brendan's Church. The church is 12th. long x 6 ft. broad, with a doorway in the west gable surmounted by a large lintel. This is a description of St. Brendan's Statue given by the Ordnance Survey Letters: "In the north-east corner of this little chapel there is a wooden figure of St. Brendan, about 4'3' in height. The face is now nearly effaced from the action of the weather, and the hands, which were in a position of thanksgiving, are nearly worn away. The neck was bare. This is certainly a figure of the most remote antiquity, and one of those wooden images of Irish saints referred to by "Giraldus Cambrensis". Another oratory just south of St. Brendan's can be seen in ruins but it is considered to be of later date than its smaller neighbour. Another large chapel, somewhat more recent than the others, is also to be seen to the south-west of them.

St. Brendan's well, enclosed in masonry and steps down to it, has a peculiar taboo attached to it which says that no woman is allowed to draw water from it, and that if she does so the water she draws will immediately corrupt! There are also a number of "station monuments", including a pillarstone about 9' high, on the island. Four small enclosures lie to the north of this pillar in which garlic is said to be found growing. Tradition says that a monk named Walshe lived on this island around 1616. "Innishgluairibrandani cum pertinentiis suis" is given among the nonmensal possessions of the diocese of Killala in the 1198 list. By this time the native Irish monks had come ashore to Cross,

and the monastic possessions on the island had become absorbed into those of Cross. Bishop Francis Kirwan, in report to Rome on the state of religion in Killala diocese in 1569, when telling of the religious foundations which existed in former times, makes mention of little huts built by St. Brendan on a small island. This is obviously a reference to Inishglora, and shows that it was known to him then as having been religious centre in earlier times.

St. Brendan's chapel is called Seipeal Bhreunainn (Bhreunaill) in Irish. This is a most curious specimen of primitive Christian architecture in Ireland, the first effort at laying aside the round form! It is Cyclopean in every particular with the exception of its quadrangular form. At present its side walls are much injured and distorted but the west gable which contains the door is nearly perfect. This little Oratory of St. Brendan is twelve feet long and eight broad, and was originally roofed with stone but no part of the roof now remains. The doorway in the west gable, which afforded the only entrance to the Saint and the light, is as primitive and rude in its construction. It is four feet high, two feet three inches broad at the bottom and one foot nine inches at the top. In the north-east corner of this little Chapel lies the aforementioned wooden figure of St. Brendan. The resemblance which it bears to Father Molais on Inish Murray is striking, but the latter is better preserved as being placed in a roofed chapel. Are these Neptunes once placed on ships and washed ashore to form gods for the natives according to Nagle and his associates? I don't believe they are, because the natives of these shores and islands know too much about the wrecking and plundering of ships to take any thing belonging to them for a God. These preachers are greater fools than the islanders themselves, but unfortunately they are liars also. The person who takes up this figure of Brendan three times in the names of the three persons of the Blessed Trinity is believed to receive the power of relieving a woman in labour by touching her with her hands. In this chapel also there is a small leaden crucifix placed in a little niche in the east gable, but it is evidently modern.

EXTRACT FROM O'DONOVAN'S LETTERS. VOLUME I

Tobar Bhreunainn (Bhreunaill) or Saint Brendan's Well. It is descended to by many steps and enclosed by a little Tor (Tor Tiprat) of great antiquity. It sends out a stream and yet the water is said to be very good. No woman is allowed to draw water from this well, and should any of them, either through ignorance or infidelity, dip a vessel into it, it will instantly turn into red worms!

There are small enclosures within which garlic grown spontaneously from time in memorial. It is said that these little gardens belonged to the Monks of Saint Brendan, and that the garlic will continue to grow within them for ever.

So late as the year 1616 a Monk of the name Walsh lived on this island who, it is said, was supported by the Nuns of Galway. The island is now entirely waste and uninhabited. It is looked upon by the inhabitants of the opposite shores as a very blessed island, and they believe that all ships when sailing by it lower their top sails in honour of Saint Brendan, a famous old soldier of Christ who seems to have been the most distinguished Saint of these islands on the west coast of Connaught.

With respect to bodies not purifying on this island, many demonstrations of the contrary are scattered about. Human bones are bleached by the weather. The people, however, state that many bodies were found fresh and fair in graves on this island after they had been several years interred, but they are now convinced, from the number of bones they see scattered about, that human flesh actually rots and decays on Inishglora or the Island of Purity, but whether this was or was not the case form the period of St. Brendan until the friars were expelled from the island, no monument remains to prove.

A romance still repeated here states that the Children of Lir were transformed into the shapes of swans by the incarnations of their step-mother and doomed to live on three most rapid streams in Ireland which are, Sruth na Macile in Ulster, Sruth Mhadea Con in Dumha Chaochain, and Sruth Chinn Aola in Umhaill. They were afterwards restored to human form by St. Brendan and buried in Inishglora where their graves were until the ancient inhabitants of the island died.

ST. COLUMCILLE

In the whole range of Irish biography there is not a nobler or more attractive figure than that of St. Columcille. Endowed with many gifts, he was gained fame as a poet, statesman, scholar, patriot and missionary. We are fortunate in possessing the record of his life which was written by one of his own monks, St. Adamnan: a work which has been described as one of the most complete pieces of such biography that all Europe can boast of, not only at so early a period but throughout the whole of the Middle Ages - one of the most living, most attractive and most authentic monuments of Christian history. In the vivid portrait which Adamnan has drawn of the first Abbot of Iona, we can still feel the singular beauty and charm of the great Irish Saint who takes rank amongst the most splendid types of Christianity. Angelic in appearance, graceful in speech, holy in work, with talents of the highest order and consummate prudence, he lived during thirty-four years an island-soldier. He could not spend the space of even one hour without study or prayer, writing or some other holy occupation. So incessantly was he engaged night and day in the unwearied exercise of fasting and watching, that the burden of each of these austerities would seem beyond the power of all human endurance. And still in all these, he was beloved by all; for the holy joy ever beaming from his face revealed the joy and gladness with which the Holy Spirit filled his inmost soul".

St. Columcille was born at Gartan, Co. Donegal, on December 7th, 521. His father Phelim, a chieftain of the O'Donnell Clan, was the great grandson of King Niall of the Nine Hostages, and his mother Kith was a descendant of the Kings of Leinster, so that by both parents he was of royal lineage. After his birth, in accordance with the custom of the times, he was placed in fosterage with an aged priest Cruitneachan, and under his care the boy's mind became imbued with a deep religious feeling. According to the 'Leabhar Breac" he derived his name Columcille or 'Dove of the Church' from his gentle affectionate manners, and because he was so often met by his companions coming forth from prayer in the Church of Tullydouglas near his birthplace. When he passed from under the care of Cruitnechan, St. Columcille became a pupil of the Ecclesiastical School founded by St. Columcille became a pupil of the Ecclesiastical School founded by St. Finnian at Moville, Co. Down, where he was ordained deacon. He then studied for a time under Gemman, an aged bard of Leinster, and acquired from him the love of poetry which was one of his most distinguishing and beautiful characteristics. From Gemman, he went to the famous monastic school founded by St. Finnain at Clonard, near the Boyne. Here he had as his

companions the eleven great saints who with himself were afterwards known as the 'Twelve Apostles of Erin'. Columcille was ordained priest, while at Clonard, by Bishop Etchen of Clonfad, and after his ordination he went with three of his companions Comgall, Kiaran and Kairrech to complete his sacred studies in the school of St. Mobhi at Glasnevin.

When St. Columcille went forth on his missionary work he founded his first church on a high ridge over Lough Foyle, which was called 'Daire' or the 'oak Wood', and which was known for nearly a thousand years afterwards as Daire Columcille. The church was situated on the site of the present city of Londonderry. At the date when he founded the church 545, the Saint was twenty-four years of age, and during the seven years which followed he went through Ireland establishing many churches and monastic societies, of which the most famous were Durrow, Arran, Boyle, Swords, Raphoe, Kells, Tory Island and Drumcliff. His greatest work, however, was to be done outside of Ireland amongst the Picts of Scotland, who lived north of the Grampian Mountains. Tradition has it that the event which led to his exile was the great battle of Culdreimhne which was fought six miles north of Sligo between Diarmaid King of Ireland, and Columcille's kinsmen, the Clan Niall. The Clan Niall felt aggrieved because Diarmaid had slain one of their clansmen, the young Prince Curnan, who had taken sanctuary with him at Tara, and on account of a decision pronounced by Diarmaid on the question of the ownership of a book. St. Columcille had made a copy of a beautiful book of the Psalms that was kept by St. Finnian at Clonard. When St. Finnian discovered this he demanded the copy as his right. The book had cost Columcille much pain and trouble, and he refused to surrender it. The disputants referred the matter to King Diarmaid, and he decided in favour of St. Finnian of the principle that 'to every cow belongeth her calf'. Columcille protested against Diarmaid's judgment, and went back to his kinsmen who took up arms in his cause. King Diarmaid was utterly defeated at the battle of Cu Ldreimhne. After the battle Laisren, Columcille's confessor, told him that as penance for the deaths of the many warriors who were slain in the battle he must leave Ireland, and win as many souls for Christ as there had been lives lost.

This is the traditional account of the cause of Columcille's exile, but it is

to be noted that the Old Irish Life does not ascribe his journey to Scotland to the circumstances arising out of the quarrel with King Diarmaid, but merely states that:- "When Columcille had made the circuit of all Erin, and when he had sown faith and religion; when numerous multitudes had been baptised by him; when he had founded churches and establishments, and had left in them seniors, and reliquaries, and relics of martyrs, the determination that he had formed from the beginning of his life came into his mind - namely, to go on pilgrimage. He then meditated going across the sea to preach the word of God to the men of Alba and to the Britons and the saxons. He went therefore on a voyage. His age was forty-two when he went. He was thirty-four years in Alba. And the number that went with him was, twenty bishops, forty priests, thirty deacons, and fifty students. He went in good spirits until he reached the place the name of which to-day is Hii-Coluim-Cille (Iona)". It is also to be noted that neither Bede nor Adamnan make any reference to the quarrel between the Saints, so that the popular version of the cause of St. Columcille's exile is a story of a very doubtful character.

St. Columcille and his companions landed at Iona in 563 at the little bay of Port-na-Churraich, the 'Bay of the coracle', on the southern shore of the island. Above the bay on a hill is the cairn, that has been known since his time as the 'Carncul-ri-Erin', 'The Cairn of the Back turned to Ireland', which marks the spot where the exile found that Ireland was no longer in sight, and where he could work and pray without being tempted to return to his own dearly-loved country. The story of his voyage tells that he landed first at Oronsay, but when he found that Ireland was visible from one of the hills on the island, he went onward to Iona for he could not endure to live away from Erin, and yet within sight of his Fatherland. He established his church on the eastern slope of the island, and here trained his followers and disciples to become the Solders of Christ. His monks were taught by him to observe obedience, celibacy, caution and reason in speech, humility, hospitality and kindness to animals. The two years after his landing were spent in establishing his community, and in preparation for his mission to the neighbouring islands and the mainland of Scotland. He set out in the year 565 on a long journey through 'The Great Glen of Alba', the series of lakes and glens are now united by the Caledonian canal, in order to preach the gospel to the Northern Picts.

'It was a daring adventure', writes Mr. Morrison in this Life of Columba, 'full of hazard, thus to pierce into the heart of Pictland. It called for undaunted courage and resource, and unwavering trust in the leader. Yet how few of the travellers who pass through that glen today with light and shadow, know anything of the little band of heroes who threaded it many centuries ago'? Brude, King of the Picts, barred his gates against the mission, and his Druids and their followers opposed it in every way. Columcille and his followers triumphed over all natural and human obstacles, and the handful of undaunted men bore the standard of the Cross into the country where the legions of Caesar had failed to subdue the inhabitants. The devoted little company of Irishmen worked incessantly and indefatigably for many years amongst. They founded their churches and schools everywhere, and instructed the people in the faith, baptising and preaching. The gospel was brought to the Orkneys, Shetlands, the Hebrides and the Faroes. Even within the lifetime of its founder Iona sent forth missionaries to Northumbria, the Isle of Man, and South Britain. St. Columcille returned to Ireland in the year 575 to attend the great Convention to Drumceatt, near Limavady. He was attended, as an old poem tells us, by forty priests, twenty bishops of noble worth, thirty deacons and fifty youths. He had two important objects in being present at the Convention. He desired to secure the Dalriada, an Irish colony in Scotland, should be freed from an annual tribute, which was paid to the Mother Country, and also that the bards of Ireland, on condition was freed from all tribute to the Supreme King of Ireland, on condition that its inhabitants should join in expeditions or 'hostings' organised in Ireland, and that the Mother Country and her colony should mutually assist one another against the Saxons, Danes or Norsemen. The sentence of banishment on the bards was revoked on condition that they should lessen their claims to refection and maintenance at the hands of the people, and that they should curtail the retinues of their followers. Dallan Forgaill, the chief of the bards , expressed the thanks of the brotherhood to Columcille by composing a poem in his honour 'Amhra Columcille' - 'The Praises of Columcille'. Dallan tells us in the poem that the twelve hundred poets who were at the Convention composed a song of praise for their preserver, and that they sang it with music and chorus, and a surpassing music it was. But Columcille forbade his praise to further produced or published, adding that no one should be praised in a life that might end badly, and that he alone who had run well and ended his race successfully should be praised after death.

Adamnan Columcille's biographer, gives many particulars of the life of the great Abbot and Saint of Iona. He would often bathe the feet of the brethern after their daily labour, and used to carry the bags of flour from the mill to the kitchen. He practised great austerities, sleeping on a hide spread on the ground, with a stone for pillow, and was most strict and constant in fasting, prayer, and meditation. much of his time was spent in writing and the transcription of the Scriptures and the Psalter. In Old Irish Life of the Saint it is stated that he transcribed 'three hundred splendid, lasting books'. He was himself, too, a gifted poet, and in all probability a member of the order of the Bards. We have three beautiful latin hymns attributed to him, the Altus prosator, 'In te Christe' and 'noli pater', and he composed many poems in his own native Irish tongue, of which some still survive. His reputation for sanctity spread far abroad, and in the words of Adamnan: 'Though he lived in this small and remote island of the British Sea, his name not only became illustrious throughout the whole of our Ireland and Britain, but reached even to triangular Spain and Gaul and Italy, and also to the city of Rome itself, the head of cities'. Men who came into contact with him were charmed alike with his wisdom and his humility. "There was not born of the gaedhil', says the old biographer, "a being more illustrious, more wise, or of better family than Columcille. There came not of them any person who was more modest, more humble, or more lowly'.

The story of his death as told by Adamnan is one of the most affecting pasages in Christian biography. On the last day of his life he went to a little hill near the monastery that overlooked the whole island, and gazing around him for the last time, he blessed the island and its inhabitants. Then he told Dermot, one of his monks who was with him, of his approaching death. "This day', he said :is in the sacred volume called the 'Sabbath', which is interpreted, 'Rest' and today is truly a Sabbath for me, because it is the last day with me of his present oilsome life, upon which after all my toils and sorrows, I come to enjoy my Sabbath; and at the approaching hour of midnight, as the hallowed day of the Lord begin's, I shall , as the Scripture saith, be going the way of my fathers. For now my Lord Jesus vouchsafes to invite me to himself, and when this midnight, as I say, comes, I shall go at his own bidding to be with him".

As he was returning to the monastery he sat down by the roadside, wearied by age and his exertions. Whilst he sat here an old white horse that on the Saint's breast and began to whinny and to drop great tears. When the attendant saw this, he came up to drive the horse away, but

the Saint forbade him, saying, 'Let him alone, for he loves me. Whilst thou, a man possessing a rational soul, couldst in no wise know anything about my departure hence, this brute beast, devoid of reason, has been shown in some way by the Creator himself that his master is about to depart from him'. And saying this, he blessed his servant, the horse, as it sadly turned to go away. Then returning to the monastery, he sat in his cell transcribing the psalter until he came to the verse of the thirty-third Psalm which reads: "But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing". "Here ", he said, laying down his pen, "I must stop, and what follows let Baithene (his cousin and disciple) write". after attending vespers in the church he returned to his cell, and sat up during the night on his pallet, a bare rock, exhorting the Brothers to preserve mutual and unfeigned charity and peace amongst themselves. When the bell began to toll for prayer at midnight he went to the church, which he reached before any of the other monks, followed by his attendant Dermot, and fell on his bended knees before the altar in prayer. Dermot was unable to see St. Columcille in the dark church, and called out, "Where art thou, Father"? Then groping his way in the darkness he found the Saint lying before the altar, and raising him up a little he placed the holy head on his bosom. The little community of monks now began to assemble with lights in the church, and all wept when they beheld their dying father. The Saint opened his eyes and looked around him with great cheerfulness and joy of countenance. Dermot lifted up his right hand that he might bless the choir of monks, but the venerable father himself at the same time moved his hand as much as he was able, so that though he could not speak, he might give his last blessing to the Brotherhood. And thus signifying his holy benediction, the saint breathed forth his spirit, The author of the Old life says that in three places in the full habitation of St. Columcille, Iona, Derry, and down. To Iona he gave his 'stainless grace,' to Derry, his soul,' and to Down, where he was buried, his body.

The feast of St. Columcille is the 9th of June. Naturally, this man is honoured most in his native Donegal, but wells and churches dedicated to him can be found as far south as Ard Colum parish in Co. Donegal, many of his holy wells are still popular. The most notable one appears to be on Glencolumcille, where Morris said that the turras was three miles long and a very arduous one. Recently R.T.E. news showed the Parish Priest, Father Mac Dyer, leading the pilgrims as they made the pilgrimage barefoot. Another is on the shore of Loch Columcille, and the lack of fish in the lake is said to be due to the left handed blessing given it by the saint. At Gartan, where Columcile was born, there is another of

his wells. Also at Gartan, people visit what is believed to be his birth stone. A visit to this stone is said to cure loneliness.

Outside County Donegal, Columcille is popular in Mayo and in Galway, and near one of then there is a stone which bears the imprint of his knees. One of his wells has also been described on Iniskea North, a small island off the coast of the Mullet peninsula, which was the site of an ancient Irish monastic settlement. A more accessible well is in Oughval parish, also in Co. Mayo, beside an ancient ruined church. This was a famous well, which contained a sacred fish and had a cursing stone called St. Columcille's leat, near the well. This stone had been removed when O'Donovan visited the parish.

At Sandyford, Co. Carlow, O'Toole described St. Columcille's Well. This was said to be due to a miracle of the saint, who used the water to cure a man with disease of the head and face, and the water is still used to cure diseases. Both this well, and St. Columcille's Well in Durrow parish, Co. Westmeath, were able to defend themselves against their enemies.

The most famous of the saints of Scotland. He was a native of Garton, in Co. Donegal, studied at Moville and Clonard, embraced the monastic life at Glasnevin, was ordained priest, and forthwith embarked upon his life's work of founding monasteries and churches, first in Ireland, and after 563 in Scotland. On Whitsun eve of that year he landed with twelve companions on the island of Iona (Holy Island) where he established the greatest and most celebrated of his monasteries, which became hence forth the most potent factor in the conversion of Picts, Scots, and the Northern English. The description given of him by his biographer and successor Adamnan, is famous: **"He had the face of an angel; he was of an excellent nature polished in speech, holy in deed, great in counsel.... loving unto all".**

On North Inishkea, are the ruins of a small church dedicated to St. Columcille. It is about 16 ft. long and 12ft. broad and presents all the characteristics of a primitive Irish church. At some distance to the west of this church, there is a flagstone with a Greek cross sculptured on it.

St. Columba's church is on the highest point of the island, west of the village. It is now an extremely crude building of dry stone. 16 ft. x 12 ft. inside, built of enormous very uneven blocks.

The lintel is supported on one side by a huge monolith, and on one side

by a clumsy arrangement of upright and horizontal stones. It is most shapeless, the only definite feature about it is that it must have been roofed in wood, as it does not show any signs of corbelling, and it is too wide to allow for a stone roof.

There is a large granite boulder beneath which, according to tradition, St. Columba was buried. Commenting on it, Joseph Anderson called attention to the passage of Adamnan's Life of St. Columba where the death of the saint is described: .... he returns to his cell, and sits up through out the night on his bed, where he had the bare rock for pallet, and a stone for pillow which to this day stands by his grave as his monumental pillar". The stone has a cross carved on it, and the identification seems to be quiet possible.

EXTRACT FROM EARLY CHRISTIAN PERIOD ON INISKEA NORTH, CO. MAYO.

CURRACHS

THE CURRACH

CONTENTS

THE CURRACH

Ireland has close links with water because of its status as an island nation. Due to this close relationship sea going crafts devolved to help the inhabitants of this island take advantage of the maritime resources around them. One of the earliest and best known of these craft was the Irish Currach.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CURRACH

The history of the Currach has close links with the history of Ireland. No definite dates are available relating to the first appearance of the Currach in Ireland but many experts agree that it was first used, in its earliest form, about twenty thousand years ago. In Irish folklore it is believed that St. Patrick arrived on these shores on a Currach type craft. This country has always had close links with the Currach due to our reliance on the sea and rivers as a source of food. The earliest form of Currach was of the "Dug-out" variety being literally carved or dug out of the large tree trunks which were widely available many centuries ago. As the design of the Currach evolved a wooden frame was introduced and this structure was then covered with animal skin. This type of covering was very unpopular as it was expensive and had a tendency to leak. Canvas replaced animal skin as the main type of covering for Currachs as suitable animal skin became more difficult to obtain. When the canvas was stretched over the frame it was joined with hot tar to the body of the Currach. Once the tar had cooled this covering proved to be both tough and durable which was vital as these boats had to stand up to great deals of abuse. The canvas covering used with tar also had the advantage of being both inexpensive and extremely water tight. A final plus of canvas was the fact that it was very easy to repair. If it was holed the Currachs skin could be quickly fixed with the application of hot tar and a fresh patch of canvas. Even if the craft was holed at sea you could still limp home with your shirt plugging the hole.

TYPES OF CURRACHS

THE BOYNE CURRACH

These Currachs represent one of the oldest boat designs to be found in Ireland today. There is no certainty as to how or when they originated but experts believe that they date from the waning Ice Age. These stone age boats, while ancient and basic in design, were still being used on the Boyne river up to a few years ago. They are a very simple design of an oval shaped wicker frame design with hide stretched over it. Despite its simple construction it has to be correctly assembled by trained craftsmen in order for the craft to be fully seaworthy.

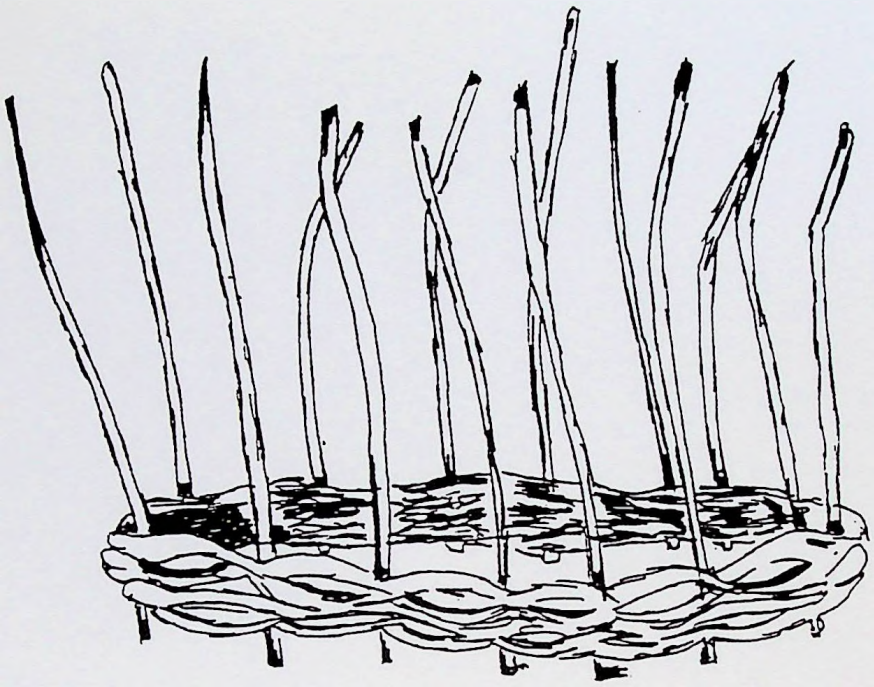
THE BUILDING OF A BOYNE CURRACH

(Stage One) The builder first marked out an oval 1.8m long and 1.4m wide on the ground with a piece of string and a couple of sticks. He then took thirty two hazel rods 3m or more in length and stuck these firmly into the ground at equal intervals all around the oval.

(Stage Two) He then wove strong rods through these along the surface of the ground so that they were all held in a band of wickerwood. Next the long rods were bent over to meet and be bound side by side in pairs to form strong double ribs, eight from one side to meet eight from the other and seven to meet seven from each end while the two remaining rods gave strength at the ends. The frame is then weighted down for several days with stones to give it the desired shape. When this desired shape is achieved all the crossing points in the ribs were tied securely with strong twine.

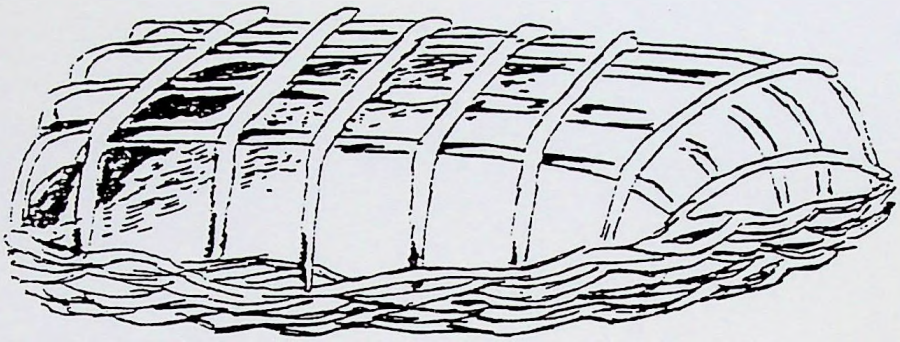
(Stage Three) This wickerwood frame was then turned upside down and covered with the tanned hide of a cow or bullock. This hide was made soft and pliable by a good soaking in water after which it is stretched over the Currach frame and laced all around the edges with strong twine. After the hide has been trimmed and tied up the seat was put in place. The Currach was now ready for use.

THE BOYNE CURRACH



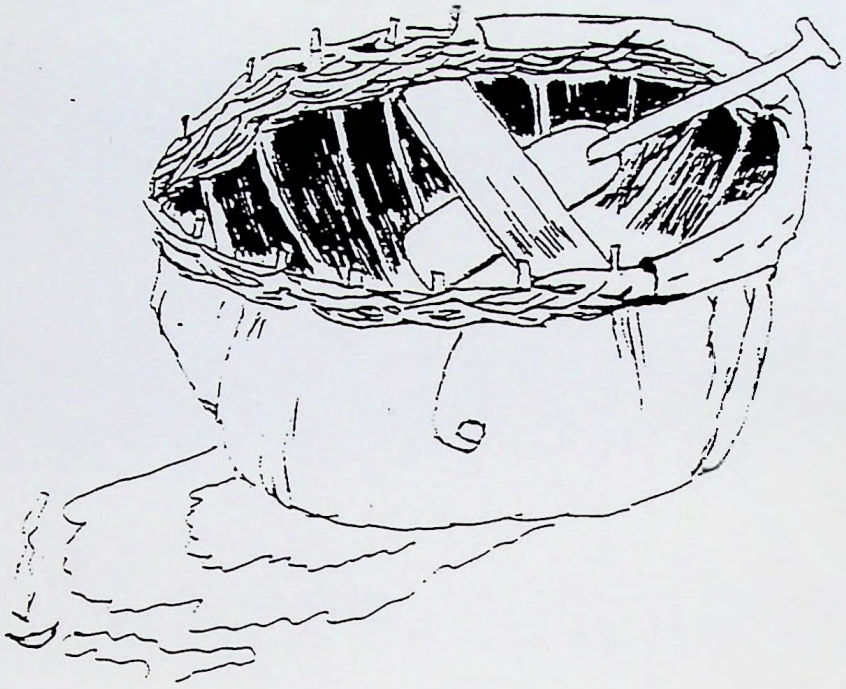
STAGE I

THE BOYNE CURRACH



STAGE II

THE BOYNE CURRACH



STAGE III

THE DONEGAL CURRACH

There are two main types of Currach which hail from Donegal. These are;

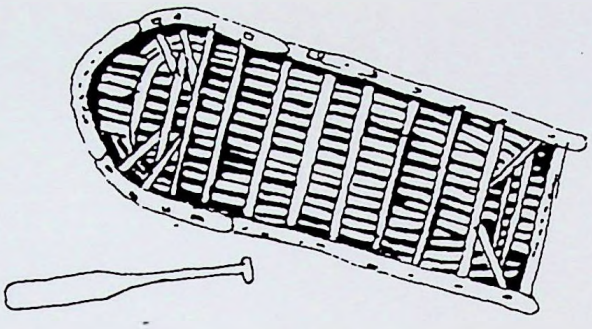
i) A small bath like boat.
ii) A larger banana shaped boat.

i) Despite their "Bath Tub" appearance these smaller Donegal Currachs are extremely safe and very manoeuvrable in the right hands. There were no seats in these basic crafts with the paddler having to knell on the floor of the boat in order to propel it. The man both propelled and steered the boat in the same fashion as the American Indians in their canoes. This Currach is shown as Type 1 in the illustrations.

ii) The larger of the Donegal Currachs vary in length from fifteen to twenty feet. They are usually about two feet deep and have only one gunwhale on either side. The normal crew for these Currachs is two men each using two sets of oars.

THE BUILDING OF A DONEGAL CURRACH

The Donegal Type ii Currach begins by shaping a gunwhale or single wooden frame, out of pieces of deal which is both tough and easy to carry. If the wood does not have a natural grain it has to be steamed and bent into shape by setting it in clamps. When the wood has set in the desired shape it is taken from the clamps and inverted. At this point the builder lays two gunwales, port and starboard, on the ground parallel to each other and bores a series of holes in both gunwales. He then nails the seats of "Thwarts" in place. The next step is to bend a withy to a semi-circular shape and insert each end into a hole in both the Starboard and Port gunwales. This withy now forms one of the vessels ribs (withies are only used in Donegal and in North Mayo). When the ribs have been fitted a series of parallel lathes, running from stem to stern, are tied to them. These are called STRINGERS and, with the ribs, form the complete frame of many Currachs. The final stage of construction on the Donegal Currach is to cover the frame with canvas soaked in tar and nail it in place. These Currachs from Donegal tend to be rough and ready in comparison to their counterparts in Kerry and the Dingle Currach.



The Donegal paddled currach, a close relative of the River Boyne currach, is still to set the lobster pots and tend fixed 'trammel' nets.

THE DONEGAL CURRACH

1. *The Rowing Curraghs of Sheephaven*, U.J.A., 3rd S., II, p. 28.
2. *Ireland: Industrial and Agricultural*, p. 240. *Handbook for Irish Pavilion at Glasgow International Exhibition, 1901.*
3. *Report of the Co. Donegal Transport Committee* (1938), p. 5.

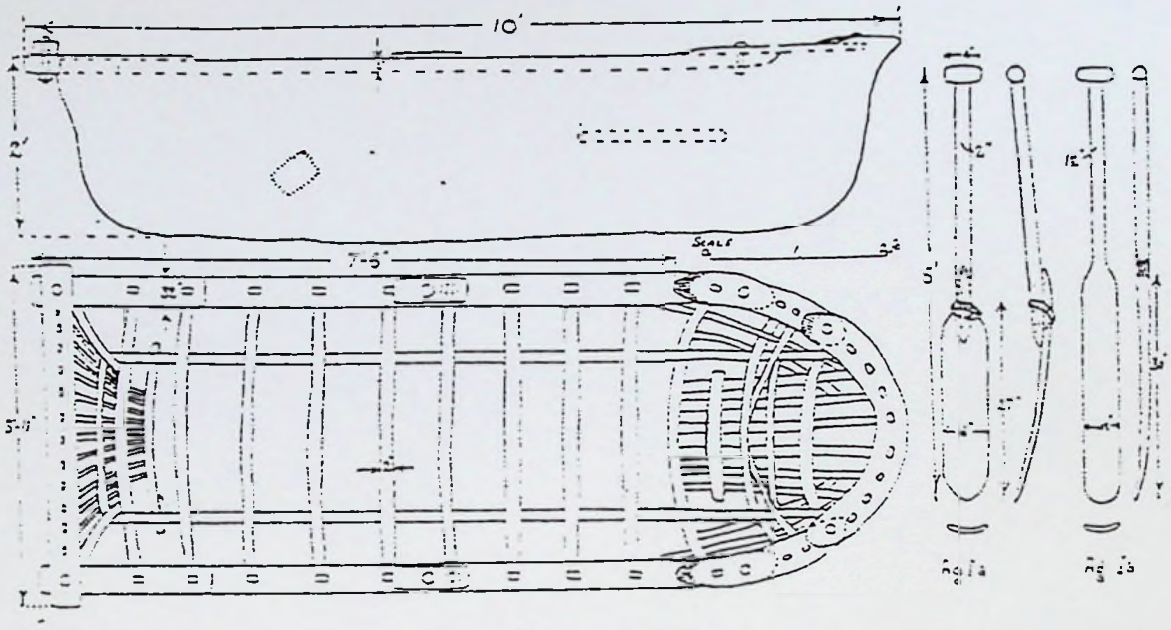


Fig. 1. The Bunbeg Curragh.

TYPE 1 SMALL

6. Lord George Hill, *Facts from Gweedore*, 3rd edition (1854), p. 26.
7. Ed. Wakefield, *Statistical and Political State of Ireland* (1812), p. 97.

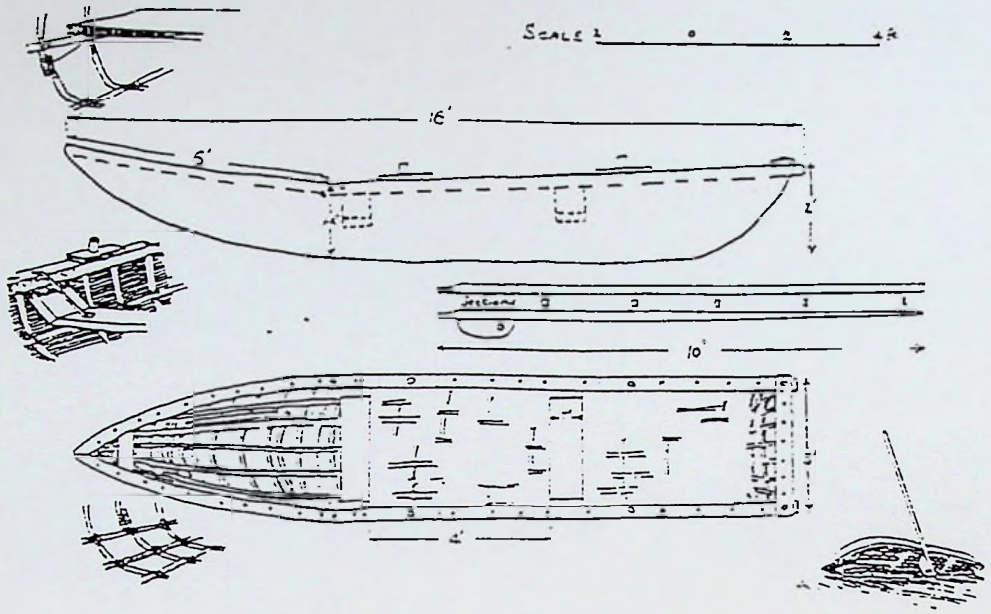
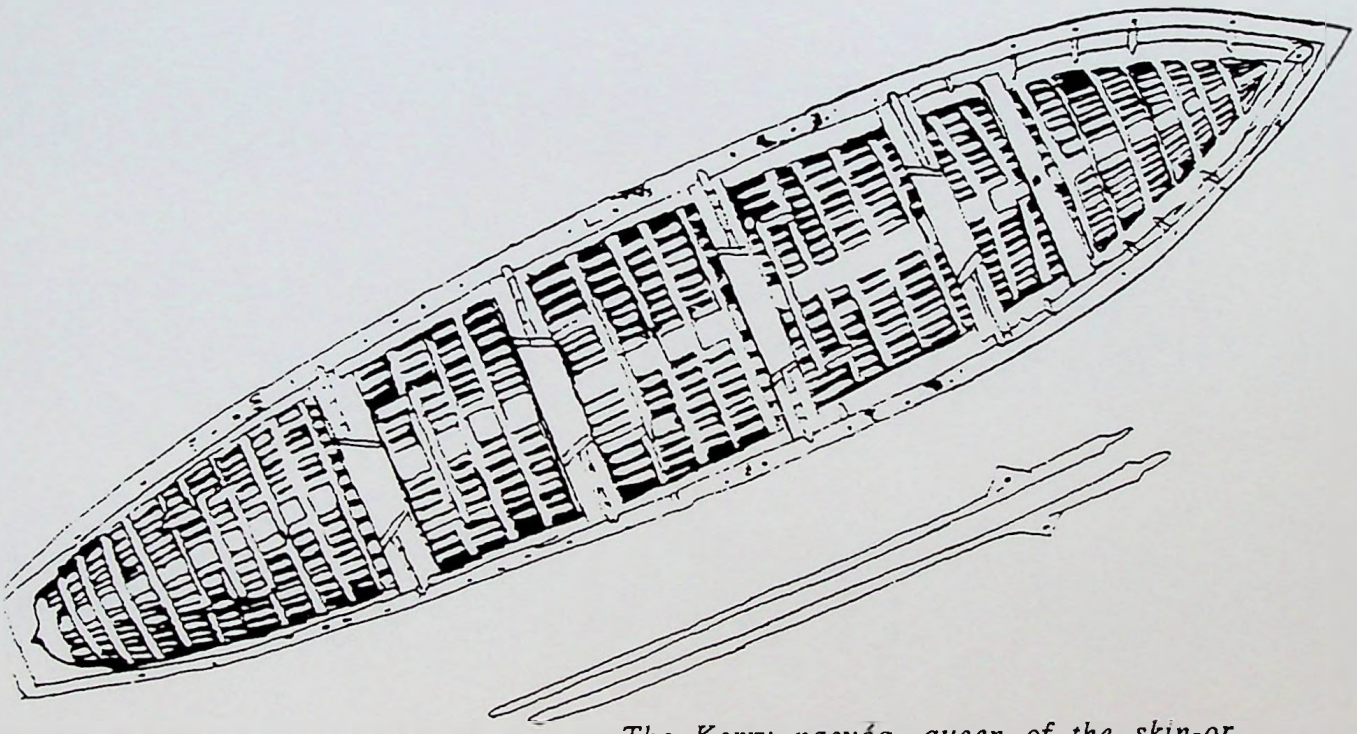


Fig. 2. The Sheephaven Curragh.

TYPE 1 LARGE

THE DINGLE CURRACH

This was, and still is, the most popular of the Currachs used in Ireland. These Currachs were so named as they were originally built in the Dingle peninsula in County Kerry. Of all the various types of Currachs made in Ireland the Dingle Currach variety tends to be the best and most professionally built. They also tend to be the best proportioned and the most Currach with no ugly angles anywhere to be seen. They are usually 8m long and 1.4m wide. The stern narrows to a little transom and the bow rises high out of the water. There are usually four seats for four oarsmen, each pulling a pair of oars. Due to this number of oarsmen the Dingle Currach tends to be one of the fastest Currachs on calm water.



The Kerry naevóg, queen of the skin-or canvas-covered boats, is the largest built today, being usually some 8m (26ft) long and 1.4m (4 1/2 ft) wide.

THE INISKEA CURRACH

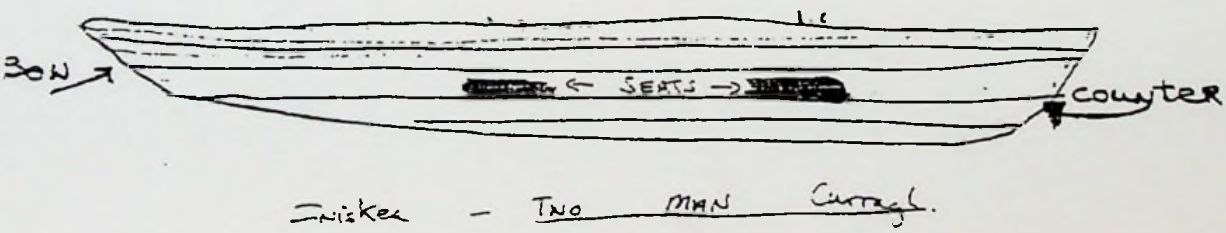
The Iniskea Currach, as the name suggests, originated on the Island of Iniskea which can be found about three miles off the north Mayo coastline. There are two main types of Iniskea Currach;

i) Two man.
ii) Three man.

The difference between these two boats is as follows;

a) The three man currach is slightly longer than its two man counterpart.

b) The three man has a counter while the two man has none. (A counter is a part of a boat which overhangs the water aft of the rudder).



Iniskea - TWO MAN Currach.

CONSTRUCTION OF THE INISKEA CURRACH

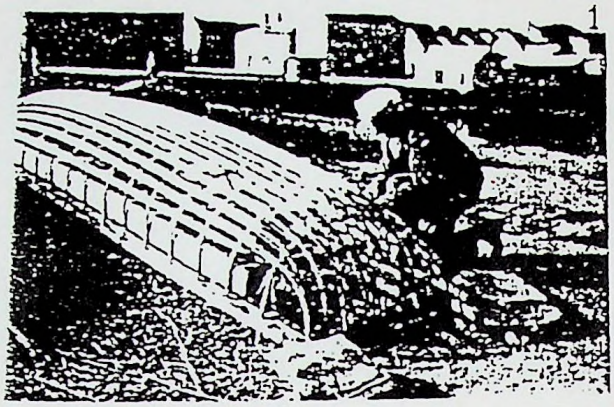
The construction in all Iniskea Currachs is close planked with the planks being butted close together in a barrel like fashion. This close planked design makes the boat structure extremely water-tight. When the planking takes place all the nails on the Currach are clinked towards the stern. This is to prevent the nets getting caught in the nails when they are being cast from the craft. These types of Currachs have only one gunwhale in the mid section of the boat. The Iniskea Currach is an inch to two inches wider at the shoulder cleats than it is at the tail.

All Iniskea Currachs. are fitted with maddaces. These are types of footplanks which allow the oarsman to transfer his strength/weight to the oars through his feet. A "Stringer" is used in these type of Currachs in order to hold the seat in place. This fitting also allows the fisherman to move the seat up and down the Currach until he finds his desired position.

These crafts are usually covered in calico and tar. Butter was sometimes put in the mixture with the tar to give the surface a slippery texture. This made the boat glide easily over the waves. Candle wax was also added for this purpose. Iniskea Currachs were tarred on the stones as the stones would attract the heat from the sun and thus dry the newly laid covering of tar. In the past the tar was put on Iniskea Currachs with old heavy fishermen's socks which were on sticks. These sticks were known locally as:

"Píosa Tatain agus Stocaí Greimhaidh"

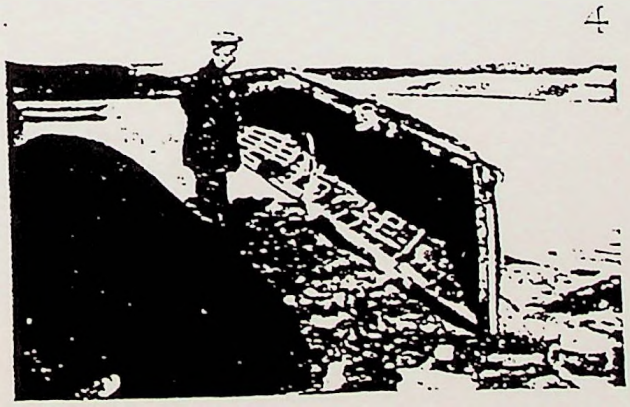
THE BUILDING OF A CURRACH



1.—Lashing the frame. The stones rest on the gunwale-projections.

2.—Lashing the last stringer at the bow, a difficult task.

3.—Trimming and wedging the ends of the coupies.



4.—The curragh is about to be carried into the water. Another curragh, on the left, secured with stones.

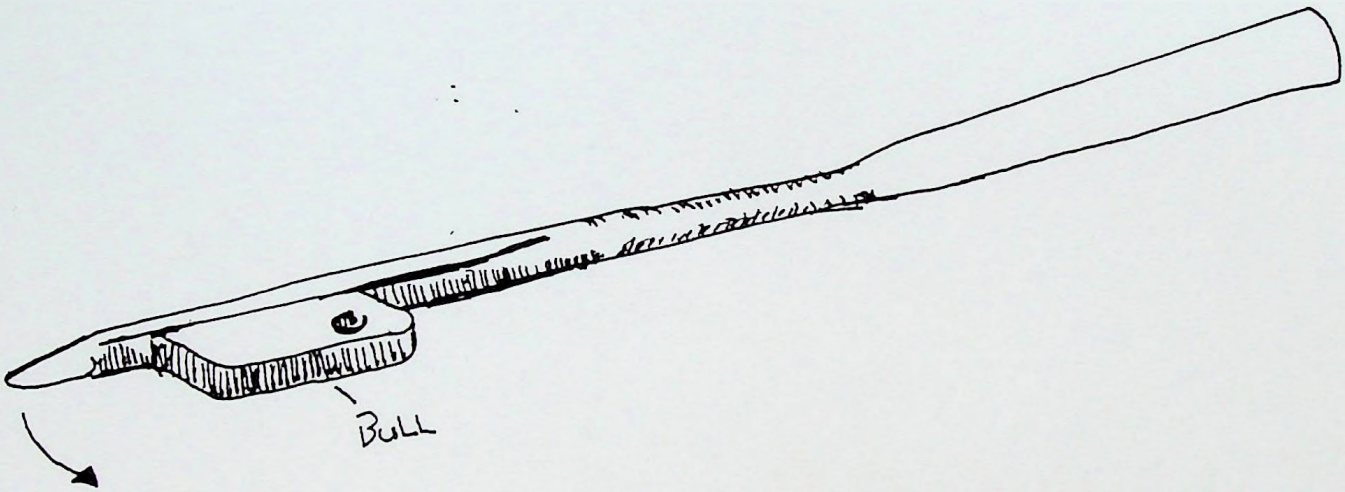
THE FUNCTIONS OF A CURRACH

The Currachs of Ireland had two major functions in the past which were:

i) Travel/Transportation.
ii) Fishing.

The Currach was the main form of transport for the people living on the islands and coastal areas of Ireland. The boats transported people, animals and goods between Islands and the Mainland. For many Islanders around the coast of Ireland the Currach was the only link with the outside world. Cows, sheep and even horses could be transported in Currachs proving just how durable these craft were. The Currachs other major use was in the area of fishing. The industry plays, as it did in the past, a dominant role in Ireland as this country is an Island and relies on fishing. The main type of fish caught by Currachs were lobsters and salmon. In the past Currachs were largely used to catch mackerel. The currach also served as the mailboat to the island, and for the transportation of seaweed used as fertiliser.

SCALE C1/24



CURRACH OAR,
DUNFANAGHY

THE CURRACH

THE CHARACTERISTIC SILHOUETTE OF A CURRACH BEING CARRIED TO THE WATER RESEMBLES A HUGE SIX-LEGGED BEETLE WALKING THE SANDS.

LIGHTHOUSES

Lighthouses

Lighthouses were built to serve seamen as through the hours of darkness they cast their powerful beams of light out across the sea. These lights serve as traffic signals for the seamen as they go about their tasks.

There are four lighthouses around the coast of Erris- Blackrock, Broadhaven, Eagle Island and Blacksod. Dwelling houses were built for those who worked on them and these can still be seen in Blacksod. Although now automatic it was originally necessary for them to be manned. Those employed for the task were required to stay in the lighthouses for agreed lengths of time. It was a lonely life but many used that time to maintain their hobbies. This provided an escape from the monotonous hours. It also provided them with the opportunity of maintaining and perfecting traditional crafts. Pieces sold meant an extra source of income. Men like Gerry Sweeney who worked from 1973- 1974 on the lighthouse produced items such as Ships in Bottles and Tweed Maps. Many houses in the Erris Area have a testament to these beautiful crafts.

BLACKROCK MAYO

In 1841 a letter was received from the Inspector General of Coastguards enclosing a copy of a communication from Lieutenant Nugent, Inspecting Commander at Belmullet stating that it would be advantageous to have a light on Blackrock to warn vessels from the many dangers in the neighbourhood and also as a guide to vessels seeking shelter in Blacksod Bay.

The subject remained in abeyance until the year 1857 when a letter from the Board of Trade inquired as to the special reason why the Board recommended certain lights including the Blackrock. This letter was referred to the inspecting Committee, who gave a full report in which they stated that "this part of the Irish coast is the point usually made by ships from the west going north; the place is full of dangerous rocks and it would also lead to Blacksod Bay."

The Committee of Inspection reported to the Board on 18th June 1857 that they had accompanied a deputation of the Elder Brethren of the Trinity Board to this locality, the statutory sanction of that Board was then given. Some delay occurred in obtaining legal possession of the

rock, however, by June 1858, building commenced on the lighthouse tower and dwelling for the keepers.

The entire cost of the buildings, apparatus, dwellings and walling to the end of the year 1864 was £20, 672.. 6s. 7d.

Blackrock Mayo is situated north of Achill Island and off the entrance to Blacksod Bay. The circular tower, 50 feet high, is positioned on the western extremity of Blackrock and built of the stone of the rock. The light, flashing white to sea and red to land once every 30 seconds, was first exhibited on 1st June, 1864; 282 feet above high water and visible for 22 miles. The tower, lantern and dome was, and still is, painted white.

In 1908 the candlepower of the light was increased by replacing the wick burner with an incandescent paraffin vapour burner and associated gear.

Since 1974 the light source is an incandescent mantle illuminated by a mixture of acetylene gas and air. Should the mantle break, a wooden fuse is burnt and one of three standby mantles brought automatically into position. The pressure energy of the gas, which is stored in 24 cylinders (one year's supply), is sufficient to rotate the lens. A sunvalve positioned outside the lantern opens a gas valve at dusk, closes it at dawn and a pilot light ignites the main burner. To prevent sun burning through the lens during day time the optic is kept rotating at a slow speed. The apparatus is monitored by the Attendant who lives at Blacksod; he informs Head Office, Dublin, as to the functioning of the light and equipment.

The Attendant, with his assistant, visit the station once every four weeks by helicopter staying on the rock for one night and returning the next day.

BLACKSOD

A lighthouse at the southern extremity of the Mullet was first mentioned in 1841, the result of a letter from Lieutenant Nugent of the coast Guard stationed in Belmullet and forwarded to the Board by Mr. James Dombrain, Inspector General of the Coast Guard, James Dombrain was later to be knighted and also became a member of the Ballast Board from 1848 to 1867 and of the Commissioners of Irish Lights Board from 1867 to 1871. The letter from Lieutenant Nugent requested a lighthouse

to be placed on Blackrock but in Inspector George Halpin's report to the Board, he disapproved of a light on Blackrock as a general sea light but stated that it would be useful light to lead vessels into Blacksod Bay with a light also on Blacksod Point, the Mullet's southern extremity.

The subject was postponed until 1857 when it was brought up again by the Inspecting Committee, Blackrock received sanction this time to go ahead but Blacksod Point was not mentioned and had to wait a further four years. In June 1861 the Inspecting Committee recommended placing a light on Blacksod Point which would, in conjunction with Blackrock, make Blacksod Bay a safe anchorage, a navigational aid which 273 years earlier would have been appreciated by one of the Spanish Armada commanders Martin de Berthendona of the ill- fated"la Sancta Maria Rata Encordata" when he turned into Blacksod Bay, only to run aground the following day near Doona or Fahy Castle as it is called today- but that is another story.

The Inspecting Committee reiterated their remarks again in their Inspection report June 1862. These, together with another letter from the Coast Guard and report from the Board's Inspector, Captain E.F. Roberts were all sent to Trinity House in August 1862. The Elder Brethren replied in November stating they would defer coming to any decision on Blacksod Point or Inishtearaght, which was also being considered at that time, they had an opportunity of visiting the localities in the spring of 1863. This inspection took place on the 8th and 9th June, Inishtearaght and Blacksod respectively, there and then it was agreed that Blacksod lighthouse should be near Blacksod Point pier, locally called Termon pier, (not the actual Blacksod Point which is about 1.6km to the south-west previously mentioned) with a fixed white light and red shade over Ardelly Point. The following month Trinity House and the Board of Trade sanctioned Blacksod lighthouse and they again emphasised that the light was to be positioned on Blacksod pier point as far seaward as practicable and should not be seen by vessels entering the bay until they can prudently haul up to anchorage. Also, they agreed to lacing a buoy at the end of the spit off Blacksod pier.

Plans were submitted in September 1863 by Mr. J. S. Sloan, the Board"s Superintendent of Works and Foreman, and were sent to Mr. C.P. Cotton, the Board's Consulting Engineer who approved the design. The Board of Trade's approval was obtained in October subject to a slight modification, and they suggested an octagonal lantern instead of a square lantern as shown on top of the square tower. The plans were altered but retained the two masonry sides of the square lantern and

introduced a semi- circular eight sided glazed lantern seaward over the bay. In November the secretary, Mr. Lees was instructed by the Board to apply to the proper quarter to obtain land and by December the Reverend W. Palmer's offer to grant one statute acre of land for £1 per annum for lighthouse premises was approved. During May the following year, 1864, the reverend gentleman who also owned and worked the local granite quarries kept his eye to business and wrote to the Board offering granite for building at a sum of £100 to be paid for at the commencement of works. The Board informed him his letter would be referred to the contractor when declared. Four tenders were received for building the lighthouse and dwelling, which were opened in June 1864, and considered by the board who selected Mr. Bryan Carey's tender for £2,100. With the Board of Trade's sanction which was received late in July, Carey must have commenced building in August or September, because payment of the first instalment was made in October and the contract was sealed in November. The Reverend W. Palmer was associated with the local granite quarries and having agreed to rent an acre of land for the lighthouse and its dwelling objected early in August 1864 to the Deputation taking possession of the land as it would prevent his access to the quay from the quarries. Inspector Roberts suggested the area be moved back twenty feet (6m) to allow a roadway between the lighthouse compound and the sea; Palmer agreed to this modification, but in October 1865 Palmer informed the Board that stones from the roadway had been used by the contractor and Palmer had been paid for them.

A proposed alternative was turned down by Palmer as being too awkward for the railway he intended to run on the railway, so a compromise was agreed by building a storm sea wall and leaving twenty feet for the road. To-day if one follows the raised track bed of the old tramway out westward from the wall of the compound of the dwellings which were for the keepers of Blackrock, the remains of what looks like a branch tract bed comes in from the seaward side of the Blacksod Lighthouse compound. This obviously was the "main line" from the quarries to quay via the south side of the lighthouse until June 1877 when this section close to the lighthouse finally fell victim to the powerful seas off the southern point of the Mullet. There are times when these seas toss boulders, of up to 600 mm in diameter, around like peas being shaken in a colander. With this section of the quarry looked for an alternative route in 1887 for their tramway to the quay, this time though the ground which then had been acquired by the board for the shore dwellings for the keepers at Blackrock. This was granted,

as I mentioned earlier and the tramway ran via this route for two periods between 1889 and 1891 and 1900-1909.

When the Board opened the two tenders in May 1865 for the 3rd Order Dioptric Apparatus, one from Messrs. Chance Brothers, the other from Messrs. Wilkins & Co. They found that the quotations were identical, £340, so the Board agreed to draw lots! The result gave a preference to Chance Brothers.

By the summer of 1865 Bryan Carey had completed his building contract and the inspecting Committee expressed their satisfaction with the work, recommending that the tower was ready for the lantern. In March 1866 a Notice to Mariners was issued stating that the fixed light showing white from 018° to 210° (168°) and red over Ardelly Point 210° to 189° (21°) would be exhibited on the night of 30th June ,1866.

In July 1877 sanction was granted by Trinity House and the Board of Trade to "colouring" the tower white with either paint or whitewash. Prior to this, the list of lights noted that the tower was reddish grey granite, and indeed, continued to do so up until 1893, sixteen years after the tower was painted! Today only the lantern is white. When the tower reverted to is reddish grey granite I have not been able to ascertain, but I have a suspicion that perhaps it was never painted or whitewashed; even the Victorians would have had respect for the very fine reddish grey granite stonework.

The Inspecting Committee on tour in 1923 recommended the approval of making a number of stations unwatched, Blacksod being one of them. Approval for unwatching was granted, but Blacksod was postponed. The question of unwatching came up again in 1929 and it was agreed to make provision in the Estimates for 1930-31, as an unwatched acetylene station. Two Moyes 56 acetylene generators were fitted into one of the store- rooms in the back yard and the light source was changed from an oil lamp to a group of seven 20 litre burners. The optic remained, but the character changed from fixed white and red to group flash (2) white and red every 7.5 seconds on 23rd December, 1931

At first, the relief keeper ashore from Blackrock looked after the light, but on 1st November 1933 Mr. Edward Sweeney was appointed as the Attendant and has the honour of being the second longest serving attendant on the coast. He was beaten by eleven months by Mr. P.

Byrne at St. John's Point, Donegal and for the record Mr. J. J. Rowan at Kilcredaune lies third longest.

Blacksod, like most of our other lights, fell victim to modernisation and was converted to electric on 31st May , 1967, complete with its standby diesel electric generator if the electricity failed.

Towards the end of 1969 Blacksod became the helicopter base for Eagle Island and Blackrock, and now boasts in its compound an eleven meter diameter concrete helipad, store and waiting room. Gone are the days of having to patiently wait in Belmullet for the weather or the sea to improve before the relief boats could get out to either Eagle or Blackrock; and correspondingly, having to wait even more patiently on either of two rocks to get ashore or replenish the food cupboard.

EAGLE ISLAND

In 1830 applications were made to the Ballast Board by commanders Blake and Glascock of the Coast Guard Service for a light on Blackrock or Inishmann Point. Mr. G. Halpin, the Board's inspector however, reported in favour of Eagle Island.

The Board informed Admiral Paget, through whom the application was made, that Eagle Island had been selected as the most suitable station and the Trinity Board gave their sanction on 27th November, 1830.

Two lighthouse were built, Eagle Island East and Eagle Island West, the base of the West Tower was 196 feet above high water and during the construction a great sea swept the partly built tower, two courses high, and much of the building materials clear into the sea. The two towers were finally completed and a massive storm wall was built on the sea side of the towers. The towers, 64 feet and 87 feet high were 132 yards apart with their lanterns at the same level 220 feet above high water. When the two lights at night or towers in daytime were in line they guided vessels past all dangers from Blacksod Bay to Broadhaven including the stags. The tower , built of cut stone from quarries on the island was painted white and could be seen for miles in clear weather.

The cost of the whole establishment until the end of 1839 was £36,428-10s-id., the works were not quite complete when the lights were first exhibited on the night of 29th September, 1835.

Eagle Islands seemed destined to be struck by severe storms. On the night of 17th January, 1836 the lantern of the West Tower was struck by a rock shattering one of the panes of glass and extinguishing the light but the keepers had the light working again within an hour. The keepers' dwellings were badly damaged and in those days keepers and their families lived on the island. Both lanterns were badly damaged by a violent gale on 5th and 6th February, 1850 and the lights were not restored until the 11th by the keepers because the man sent out to repair them could not make the passage, until the 14th when a landing was effected and the whole story told.

On the 11th March, 1861 at midday the light room of the Eastern Tower was struck by the sea smashing 23 panes, washing some of the lamps down the stairs, and damaging the reflectors with broken glass beyond repair. Truly an incredible wave to have come up 133 feet of rock and then a further 87 feet of lighthouse tower to cause so much damage. In spite of the efforts of the keepers to repair the damage it was not until the night of the 12th before the light was restored and then only with 2 lamps and reflectors.

Another interesting aspect of this disaster was that so much water cascaded down the tower making it impossible for the keepers on the island to open the door of the tower. They had to drill holes in the door to let the water out!

The storm which struck Eagle island on 29th December, 1894, and indeed many other West and North coast stations, damaged the dwellings of the East Station beyond repair and it also broke the lantern glass, put out the light and damaged the protecting wall. The families took shelter in the tower and it was not until the next day that the families at the West tower realised their friends' plight. Women and children were brought ashore and housed in Belmullet.

Mr. Douglas, the commissioners' Engineer-in-chief suggested in his report that the East station should be abandoned and the west should be improved and , in the meantime the fixed light apparatus that had been taken out of Tory island should be installed at the West station with a six wick burner and the East tower worked by keepers at the west dwellings. This state of affairs lasted until 1st November, 1895 when the new dioptric first order light at the west station came into operation and the East Tower was discontinued and loped by 20 feet so that it did not cause a shadow. The new light was group occulting and showed white towards the sea and red landward.

Shore dwellings for the keepers and their families were built at Corclough on the Termoncarragh Road near where keepers could semaphore to the Island. The families moved into the dwellings towards the end of 900.

A fog signal was looked for on Eagle Island in 1910 and 1914 but it was not until 1917 that at the expense of the Admiralty an explosive fog signal was installed. Although the Admiralty intimated that they had no further use for the fog signal in 1920 the commissioners retained it at the station until the Free state Army removed the explosive charges in May 1923, a notice to mariners was then issued as to the unreliability of the explosive fog signal! It became non- existent but was re- established in July , 1924 when the charges were returned!

A new 3rd order triple flashing catoptric lens was exhibited on 5th February, 1927 and the red cuts were abolished, and in September, 1927 a Diaphone Fog signal while the light as defective.

21st January, 1937 saw the establishment of another navigational aid, a Radio Beacon. This Beacon sends out a Morse signal , G.L., every six minutes in conjunction with five other Radio Beacon stations, two in Ireland, one in Scotland, one in the Scilly Islands and one in France. Thus a continuous service on a selected frequency can be picked up by a vessel and its position can be determined on a chart from two or three bearings obtained from these stations.

The shore dwellings were abandoned in 1955 and sold together with the dwellings at Blacksod, for Blackrock, in October 1956.

Finally the light was converted to electric on 17th July, 1968 with the same character group flash 3 white every 10 seconds, the candlepower increased to 1,400,000 and can be seen for twenty six miles.

Reliefs were for a long time carried out by private contractor's boat from Scotchport, two miles south of the island on the Mullet, however from 1969 a helicopter took over, landing the keepers at Blacksod.

Eagle Island lighthouse was made automatic unwatched in 1988. The light and associated equipment is controlled by a computer based monitoring system. The Attendant, with Assistant Attendant visit the lighthouse every four weeks by helicopter to carry out routine work.

BROADHAVEN LIGHTHOUSE

BROADHAVEN Lighthouse is on the mainland and is located at the mouth of Broadhaven Bay, in the seaside village of Ballyglass. It enjoys comparative peace, tucked up on Gubbacashel Point, and guides ships clear of hidden rocks on the Western side of Broadhaven, into safe anchorage.

A light or beacon was first looked for by the coast guards in 1843. The Board Inspector, George Haplin, reported that if a lighthouse was not approved a beacon could be built on floors with steps in the event of a lighthouse being erected at a later date.

The Board favoured a beacon but the idea was postponed until the end of 1845 due to difficulty in securing a plot of ground. Strong local representation was made to the Board for a lighthouse and buoys to mark the channel to Belmullet. This was supported by George Haplin, but the lighthouse was put on the long finger.

In June of 1845 the Inspector reported to headquarters that the tower was completed and suggested that it should be fitted up as a harbour light. The Board again concurred and ordered that Trinity house be informed. Their approval was given several months later and a lantern was delivered.

Meanwhile a dwelling and store for the keeper was designed and the construction work was carried out by the Board's workmen under the supervision of the Inspector. The 501 tower was left in its natural grey stone colour. The lighthouses became established on the first of June 1985, and was visible up to visible up to twelve miles. It cost in the region of 6,976.10d.

Several years later, 1924, an inspection committee gave approval for improvements to be carried out at an additional cost of £500.

The work was continually postponed until 1930 when the Board of trade sanctioned Broadhaven to be an unwatched station. The light power was increased and the colour of the tower changed to white at a cost of 434. 10s. 7d. Further alterations were carried out in the following years and by 1971 it was converted to electric power.

The first keeper to take up duty in 1846 was a man named Ryan. This fact was established when it was discovered that his name had been

carved out in a rock near the lighthouse. The last keeper in 1932 was a man Coupe, Belmullet, who spent seventeen years on Blackrock lighthouse.

It was known as a retirement station for keepers going into their final years of service. Those who served on the Broadhaven Bay station included people named Murphy and King. King incidentally, died in tragic circumstances at his home in Wicklow in 1923.

Food supplies were taken to Broadhaven by the present attendant,l Willie Padden, whose late grandfather, James had also held the contract, his uncle, the late Anthony Padden, was a supplier, too. The Coastguards were based in Ballyglass and the station was burned down in 1920.

DRESS IN ERRIS

THE DRESS OF THE IRISH BY MAIREAD DUNLEAVY

The Mantle was a very important element of the dress worn by the rich. Poorer people copied it. The Book of Kells shows drawing of the clothing worn by the Irish generation long ago. The hood on the cloak developed and become a shawl. In medieval times men wore dresses with britches underneath, but as time moved on these britches ended at the knee. Over this was worn a jacket, some with tails on them. Waistcoats were also quite popular. The women wore tight bodice dresses with flowing skirts and a shawl and no shoes. Linen was quite popular as were cotton and knitted items.

DRESS IN ERRIS

During The Famine

Before the famine feminine apparel in Mayo was characterised by bright colours, yet the standard of clothing had disimproved. Before the famine, the women in Erris were dressed in good quality fabrics, dyed bright with the use of vegetable dyes. After the famine, while very many of the women, particularly the young, were dressed in bright hues, the standard of clothing had disimproved. The ladies of the time attired themselves in garments of poor quality material such as shoddy mass produced by the English factories.

It was to remedy the clothing situation as well as to provide employment that Mother Mary Arsenius, who came to Foxford with perhaps four other sisters of Charity in 1891, brought two hand looms, that had been used in Ballaghaderreen, to Foxford and set them up in an unused corn store. Thus the tide began to turn slowly in favour of home produced superior quality cloth and lasted for many years after this period.

At that stage spinning was universal in all the cabins and people were able to spin and weave enough to clothe themselves with drugget for the women and frieze for the men. To realise how drab dress had become, one turns to a letter which described the dress in Erris before the Famine. "On days such as Sundays, before the Famine, the women were well and comfortably clothed; red cloth cloaks, caps with gay ribbons, shoes and stockings, stiff gowns looped up, so as to exhibit a portion of short red or black flannel petticoat which completed the dress of the women".

A description of life in Erris before the Famine is revealing in this context. "Their scrap of tillage supplied them with an abundance of potatoes, on their mountain land they reared cattle which furnished them with milk and butter and sheep which supplied all the wool they required for their coarse hand made clothing".

By the time of the Famine, the high prices of wool which existed for a few years previously meant that people were not able to cloth themselves in woollen garments. With the desperation of starvation, many people were forced by necessity to kill off their remaining sheep, thus leaving them without any supply of wool. This was a great disimprovement from the point of view of clothing and blankets. To make blankets, cloth called twill locally, had been woven as scrips of 27" wide on hand looms in the cabins. Then the individual strips were stitched together to form coarse blankets.

CLOTHING OF THE SEA- FARING IRISH MAN

The clothing of these fishermen was based on contemporary fashion styles. The trousers worn by fishermen changed. The upper leg become a little tighter while gores in the outer side of the lower leg made it easier to turn them up when wading.

From district to district the time it took for traditional and bainin to change to fashion based styles in shop brought fabrics varied. Many areas kept all their traditions aided by the purity of the Irish language, customs and life styles. Seasonal migration and emigration brought different versions of clothing in comparison to traditional dress.

On many of the islands around the west coast of Ireland the traditional dress consisted of wide-legged homespun trousers worn with oiled wool jersies, double breasted waistcoats, bainin jackets or short coats of light, undyed homespun flannel without collar or pockets. Men wore a knitted cap with a woollen bob. Pampooties, or single- soled raw-hide shoes were worn. These shoes didn't last very long, their life span being only about a month. They required regular soaking in water to keep them soft. The most colourful item worn was the crios. This was three and a half yards long while that of the women only two yards long. It was made up of homespun coloured wools woven without a loom.

INISHKEA CLOTHING

Clothing-the men of Inishkea retained a distinctive attire, their dress being composed of a navy-blue homespun, of which shirt, vest, and trousers were made. Many wore a loose blouse of frock of the same material, which was preferred to shop cloth as they said it was warmer, wears longer, and stands sea water better; it was certainly more picturesque.

The dress of the women was on the whole less changed than that of the men. Many of the elderly women wore the white frilled cap, others had a small red handkerchief tied under the chin. Over the shoulders a shawl or tartan or other string pattern was folded, but this was not so frequently of a bright red as in other districts, as the darker colours seemed to be more in favour; beneath the shawl of a bodice of some dark material. Many of the older women wore the heavy blue cloak and hood on Sundays and holidays. The young women to a large extent copied modern fashions on festive occasions, but the result was not

satisfactory as their taste in colours was curious, and they looked better in their native costume.

A great variety of homespun were made in the district, there being several weavers who turned out course flannel, tweeds, and friezes, some of which were very good specimens of hand-loom work. Almost all of the dyes were imported; the most popular of which being indigo and the makeup aniline dyes. Purple loosestrife, was formerly utilised for its colouring qualities, but later only used for dying stockings

On the islands the people made their own cloths from material they got from Belmullet. The people on the mainland were well dressed not because they had easy access to material, but because that was where the landlords lived. It was easy to distinguish between the poor and rich. The men on Inishkea worked all the time so they were not well dressed, but wore trousers which were homespun or corduroy. The shirts were of thick white homespun flannel. The boots they wore were heavy and longlasting and were purchased in Belmullet.

CLOTHING OF THE IRISH WOMEN

During the early nineteenth century frieze, flannel, drugget and linsey-wools were dyed at home with lichen and plants such as heather and briar roots. By the late nineteenth century garments such as petticoats, cloaks, and shawls were usually worn by widows and the appropriate colour was black. A woman's attire in this era gave a precise indication to the family status in the community. When people wore shoes this indicated a comfortable situation. Traditions in dress remained during the early nineteenth century although some of this changed due to economic factors. Striped red and blue petticoats were worn under gowns and skirts and although madder-red dye was very popular, indigo, shades of green, brown and grey also used. Ankle length full-skirted red petticoats were worn by the older more mature women, while the younger girls wore shorter petticoats. Usually these skirts were quilted, decorated with bands or a wide tuck above the hem. Bodices in the early nineteenth century were low-cut or rounded, with a v-shaped or square necked bodices with or without a high collar echoed the fashionable dress at the time, the sleeves were usually long, tight and buttoned at the cuff.

CLOTHING OF THE IRISH CHILDREN

For a very long period children were swaddled and as soon as they could walk both sexes were dressed as females. Boys were 'breeched' at any age - between the age of three and twelve - according to the changes in society in which they lived. All children were considered to be called 'Young Adults' and dressed accordingly even to the details of powdered periwigs, silk stockings, garters and stays.

In and around the years of 1860, children's clothes in the homes of the wealthy became less restrictive and of totally different style from those of their parents. Boys wore a skeleton suit of loose-legged, ankle-length trousers, frilled open-neck shirt, and a straight short jacket with rows of buttons from shoulder to waist. A sash was occasionally worn around the waist. From about the 1890's girls were wearing what their mothers wore, typically flowing white dresses or ankle-length gowns with a sash around at the waist.

For shoes children generally wore 'Brogues' if their parents could afford them. If they could afford them most of the shoes 'Brogue' were made by a nearby shoemaker. But times were hard and most of the families could not afford them so they wore none.

DRESS:- The crafts that were used.

Weaving

The techniques of weaving have remained essentially the same from earliest times. Crios Weaving still exists in the west coast of Ireland. The age-old craft of weaving the multi-coloured woollen belt or sash worn by most people (known as the Crios). It is done by stretching the warp threads between two chairs or stools or, more traditionally, between one hand and foot, tying the ends to the shoe, making the length 3.5 yards if they were to be worn by a man and 2 yards if to be worn by a woman. When the Crios is woven each is furnished with three plaits.

Handknitting

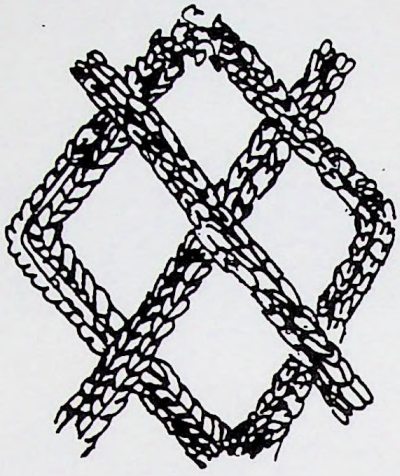
Handknitting, like weaving, is a craft with roots deep in the life of the Irish countryside. Handknit shawls or sweaters, caps, stockings, trousers and geansaí were commonly worn. The handknit sweaters of the west coast of Ireland are world famous. They were made of heavy oiled wool, guaranteed to keep out wind and weather, and are the traditional costume of the fisherman. The typical fisherman wore a sweater, homespun bawneen trousers and jackets, as he encountered the stormiest of seas in his currach. It was said that if a fisherman was drowned at sea and his body was washed ashore far from home he might be identified by the dress stitches or pattern of his gansey or other garment. The playwright Millington Synge, wrote in one of his works Riders to the sea, how a girl identified the body of her drowned brother who was fisherman by the stockings he was wearing, because she had knitted them.

Spinning

Spinning was important in early Ireland around 600 - 800 AD. The Brehon Laws were written then and stated that 'a wife' entitlement in the case of divorce or separation. In addition to her lap dogs and cats, looking-glasses, sieves and kneading-troughs, she was entitled to keep her spindles wool bags, needle, weavers reeds and a share of thread she had spun and the cloth she had woven. The word spinster is usually used to describe an unmarried women. Long ago a women was considered unfit for marriage until she had spun the yard for a set of household and personal linen. Cloth was spun and woven by the mistress of the house and her female assistants. The method of

spinning wool and flax has remained the same down through the ages. When spinning wool the fleece is broken up and torn into pieces and is given a rough hand-mixing and washed so that it will not tangle or felt (become matted). Once dry it is teased or pricked clean removing all briars and sticks. It is then greased. The various types of spinners use different greasing agents- oil, paraffin, rancid butter and traditionally goose grease. Next step is to card the wool. Carders have fine wire teeth mounted in leather. A handful of fleece is placed between two carders and combed forwards and backwards between the wire teeth until the fibres lie side by side. Finally the fibres are rolled on the back of the carder and the wool is ready for spinning. Before the use of the wheel spinning was done with a distaff (cuigeal). The wool or flax was fastened loosely on the distaff, which was held in the left hand while the spinning stick was held in the right. The material was manipulated dexterously so as to twist it into a thread and wind it onto the spindle, as it was spun.

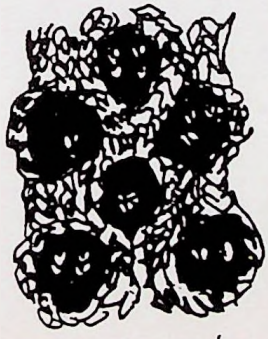
The spinning wheel soon took over this method of spinning. Three mains types of spinning wheel developed in this country. The big wheel, the smaller wheel and the flax or treadle wheel. The big wheel originated in the counties of Mayo and Galway. The spinster had to stand and turn the wheel with the right hand while drawing the roll with the left. "On the spinning wheel that Mrs. Morrisson uses, the spindle is held in place by two pieces of sally willow or woven rushes, called ears. It is driven by a band of wool which passes around the outside of the wheel. To start spinning, a short length of wool is drawn out of the carded wool and wrapped around the end of the spindle. A turn of the wheel starts the spindle revolving, which twists the wool fibres into a strand of yarn. As the spinner turns the wheel she draws out the roll of wool which increase the length as it is spun and ends up by being approximately the length of the distance between the spindle and the centre of the wheel. The spinner walks towards the spindle, winding the spun yarn onto it, and then starts again. This time, however, she deftly joins the end of a new roll of carded wool onto the ends of the previous roll. In Kerry the smaller wheel was used. The third type was used in Donegal. It is said that the fairies were talented spinners. A prudent housewife would remove and hide the wheel before going to bed at night, away from the hands of the fairies. It was also said that the spinning wheel was never to leave the house after midnight or there would be a danger that the owner would be led astray by the fairies.



Diamond.

Blackberry

TREE OF LIFE.



Honeycomb.

CABLE.

BASKET.

LINK.

DYEING:- NATURAL MATERIALS USED IN DYEING

Individuality in dress can be acquired through dyeing. For centuries dyes of all colours have been extracted from the roots, stems, leaves, berries and flowers of various plants, as well as from insects and shellfish. Lichen is one of the oldest and most common dyes which has remained throughout the years. This plant organism is composed of fungus and algae. This substance which grows on rocks, tree trunks, roofs and walls is of a greenish, grey and sometimes yellow colour. The most common lichen is known as crottle, used by traditional weavers. Long ago the children's job was to go out and collect lichen off the rocks after the rain. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries foreign dyewoods were introduced, and many of the native plants were displaced. Native plants fell into disuse when aniline dyestuffs made their appearance. A time came when native dyestuffs and the shades they represented were all but forgotten.

The process of dyeing

Mordants, or drugs are used to render the dyestuff permanent. The cloth is treated with the drug and then put into the dyeing solution. Alum, copperas and bichromate of potash are the mordants used with wool. Native alum could be obtained from wood ash, sheep manure, oak galls, human urine and the sediments of certain pools which may have contained alum or iron.

The vegetable substances most commonly used in homespun dyeing:-

BLACK: Sediments of bogpools which may have contained alum or iron. Yellow flag or iris and the bark of certain trees.

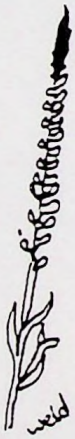
BROWN: Water lily, peat soot, dulse, onion skins and crottle.

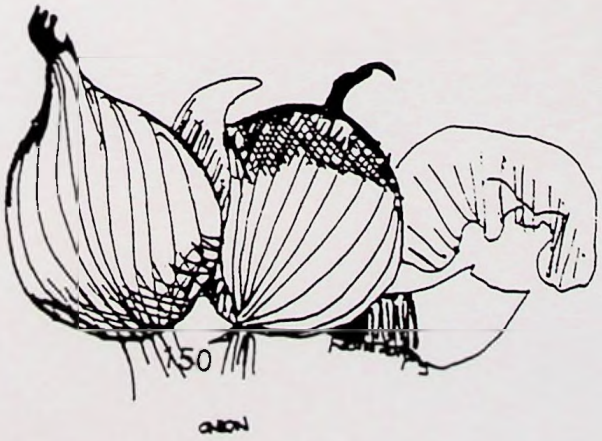
BLUE: Indigo, frauchens or blackberries, sloe or blackthorn.

Yellow: Fustic, autumn crocus, weld, common dock leaves, bracken and heather.

Crude colours were obtained from using ash or urine. Long ago urine was stored in large buckets. People came to collect the urine and paid an agreed price for it. Story has it that often the urine was watered down but people soon came to realise this because the colour of the clothes came out much lighter than usual.

Fox glove gives a purple colour. Moss and heather were two other sources of dyes. People who dyed their clothes with these substances put the plant into water and let the solution soak into the fabric for a certain length of time. The fabric would then take on the colour of the dye.





LACE MAKING IN ERRIS

In Erris there has always been a tradition of Lace Making. When Otaway visited the Barony in the mid 1830s he saw a class of thirteen and fourteen year old being taught Lace making by a lady from Crossmolina in the town of Glengad.

The Congested Districts Board considered Lace and Crochet making to be among the most suitable industries to establish in Erris. Owing to the lack of transport facilities in the district, this was especially so. Both the raw material and the finished product could be easily sent by transit post. Owing to the nature for the industry a minimum expenditure on carriage was associated with the maximum amount of employment on the article produced. Added to this was the fact that little capital outlay was required to start the industry.

The work produced by the establishments was marketed and sold by the Irish Lace Depot and Irish Industries Association which was founded by Lady Aberdeen. Under the scheme the Congested Districts Board. would build or rent suitable classrooms in the districts. They undertook to pay the salary of the instructress and help pay in the making of Lace. The board opened these 'Lace School' in districts where poverty was greatest. The parish of Aughoose was deemed the poorest in Ireland taking as a test the cash earnings of families excluding the amount of food raised and consumed on the holding. Cash receipts for the year did not exceed £10.00 a year.

Those who attended these schools were paid at the rate of 3d a day. This was to encourage regular and punctual attendance for the first four months of their employment. Many were able to earn up to 3s a week. When the attendance money was stopped a system of bonuses was introduced. Those who earned 7s and had attended 300 times were paid 1s. It was felt that due to the hard work and low earnings involved the Bonus System gave well deserved encouragement. By the late 1900's knitting classes had been established in Inver, Pullathomas and Aughoose.

In 1907 the Congested Districts Board. entered into agreement with the Irish Industry Development Association for the use of the Irish trade mark for genuine Irish Lace made at their class. This was to prevent the sale of machine made imitations.

In the words of Miss Breege Kiely (Mrs. Valkenburg) the Lace School 'Kept Erris going'.

The lace School's adapted their produce during the war. Instead of producing Lace and crochet, then considered luxuries, they produced buttons and clothes such as khaki cardigan's for the soldiers. This diversification was very successful with the result that in £111, 802 was from board's classes.

It was ideal for many women since they were able to remain at home and still work. In areas where poverty was greatest and other resources few, workers were more industrious and keen than elsewhere in taking advantage of these classes. In many of these poorer areas there was a general disposition towards factory work. In 1906 the money earned by the girls in seven electoral divisions of North Mayo considerably exceeded the total poor law valuation of land in these divisions.

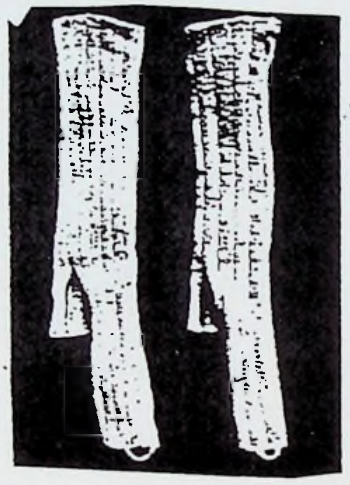
The value of the industry on the area was immeasurable. The earnings from Lace work enabled the families to live in relative comfort. Earnings of the girls in some localities exceeded the rent roll of the area. Their savings helped to stock the land with cattle. The income earned by these women put those on the land in a much better financial position than previously.

FOOTWEAR IN IRELAND

The main footwear was 'soleless stockings' (troighthini, loipini, mairtini, etc) in Ireland. In a maritime climate like that of Ireland's, footwear was very essential. People walked barefoot because of the social and economic circumstances surrounding them. They wore soleless stockings, gaiters or protection for the leg and the upper part of the foot. A knitted pair can be seen in the National Museum. They were of white wool and the maker of these often wore stockings in her youth, like the other ladies of her neighbourhood she went barefoot on the week-days. They reached the knee and are provided with two flaps a smaller one behind to cover the back of the wearer's heel and a larger flap was in place on the foot. The name 'footless stockings' is often used to describe these articles of dress but it is an ambiguous term since its obvious meaning is stockings which ignores the foot part altogether which these stockings certainly do not. They are designed as they are to protect as much of the foot as is possible.

It would be wise to remember how widespread poverty was in Ireland at that time. These stockings were made as makeshift foot covering and were devised by people who were too poor to buy shoes but who could provide themselves with stockings which they had adapted to barefoot travel by leaving them soleless. A closer survey of published sources revealed that the custom was more popular than might have been first suspected.

Footless stockings were called different names all over Ireland. One name was 'Treighthin', they were called this because this meant stockings without a sole. They were worn in the Spring when there was danger of "Ire" (oighreach) coming on the feet on account of the cold weather. Men wore other stockings without a special sole.



The Toighthini were worn by young and old. Up to about sixty years ago the elderly women often wore unsoled stockings which were known as Thrithein. The tops of the stockings were attached to the toes by loops, each toe being fitted to its own corresponding loop. The old women used to wear these to town and on long journeys. While the sole of the foot was bare and unprotected the upper part was kept warm and these soleless stockings had at least a modicum of utility as footwear which served the place of boots and were often sources of discomfort on long journeys. Once, a middle aged woman walked from Rossport to Belmullet Fair about sixteen miles from her home in these stockings. Walking to and from was a common occurrence in this area, because most people could not afford transport of what little there was. Women went barefooted around the house, all summer and sometimes in Winter too.

Most people in that era carried their shoes to Mass and put them on near the chapel. Troightini were worn out to the wrack which was the

beach or strand, or if their feet were sore walking. These stockings were made of white homespun.

In those severe times when money was scarce and footwear expensive, people made "trecheens" to keep their feet warm in winter time. They were made from worsted and were knitted by the woman of the house. They were knitted without the underneath part of the foot and loops were made to fasten them to the toes. These were usually girls and women's wear. The footless stockings were worn by women while working on their farms and around the yard to protect their feet from cracking and bleeding in the cold, snow, frost and March winds. It was a usual sight to see blood coming from a wound or crack on a woman's heel caused by the sharp March winds.

The men wore boots in every-day dress but the women and children did so only on Sunday's, market days and holidays. It was a common dress for women going to the market in Belmullet to travel there bare foot. They carried their boots in their baskets until they reached the outskirts of the town where they would sit down on the roadside or ditch and put on their stockings and boots. When they were returning home they would remove them again.

FOOTWEAR

In seventeenth-century Ireland leather shoes were worn by people who could afford them. There were many different types of shoes. One was the single piece shoe, which was made out of leather and sewn with gut. It resulted from forms which evolved from prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland. One form of this is the Pampootie, shoes made from raw cowhide (formerly sealskin) with hair worn outside. To get the shape of the foot, the foot was placed on the hide and an oblong section was cut out. This tradition continued up to the twentieth century on the Aran Islands, mainly because the islands were extremely barren and covered in razor-shaped limestone rocks. The Pampootie was ideal for walking and climbing over rocks, making full use of every crack and crevice. It was also useful for clambering in and out of frail Currachs, allowing for frequent wettings without coming to any real harm.

A study was carried out on footwear in Ireland, and found that the shoe most frequently worn was the 'Brogue'. It had vamp, two fastening flaps, an insole and the flat style of England and continental shoes but nearly always ignoring the heel-lift. The flat shoe was later the cause of the uncomplimentary remarks about flat-footed thick-legged Irish women. The 'Brogue' was singlesoled, more rudely sewn than a shoe but stronger and sharp at the toe with a flap of leather left at the heel to pull them on which suggests that, at least the toe shape of the shoe changed over the years.

Overshoes made to raise the wearer above the dirt. Made of leather uppers nailed to wood platforms.

When footwear was increasing in rural Ireland shoes were shop-bought or locally-made in shop-style. The shoemaker either made them in his own home or went to the family home with a 'bundle of lasts on his back' and made the family shoes and boots for the following year, using

a hammer, tacks, a well to soften the leather and steel tips purchased in the local shop.

By the 1870's every male down to the poorest labourer had 'well-polished boots on Sundays'. Working boots, which replaced 'Brogues' in the fields, were never polished just greased regularly with butter or grease.

HEAD DRESS

Irish people in medieval times went bare headed. Most wore a mantle or coverage when necessary. Poverty resulted in people wearing this type of head dress. Veils were worn by many people, mainly married women, from at least the ninth century. Men dressed their heads with phygian caps or helmets from the Viking Period.

The phygian cap was the first separate headgear worn by Irishmen. It went out of fashion in England during the early thirteenth century.

Irish women of the fifteenth century copied their overseas neighbours, but did not share their obsession about hiding their hair. Married Irish women concealed their hair with a white linen head-dress of "Kerchief", while unmarried women let their hair hang loose or filleted up and tied with ribbon.

In the sixteenth century there was a more distinctive Irish women's head gear; a cumbersome roll of white or patterned linen. It was loaded on the head rather than adorning it. This type of head gear was worn by married women after the birth of her first child. The quality of the linen depended on the status of the women. The poor wore coarse linen or lightweight wool.

A modest version of a felt hat made from a circular shape with a low shaped crown, peaked front and raised sides was discovered in Derrindaffderg, Co. Mayo,

The head dress of long ago demonstrates clearly that many Irish people preferred the traditional styles of head gear while others were more adventurous by welcoming the fashions of their peers elsewhere, importing them directly or developing home-made interpretations.

INTERVIEW'S

Interview No. 1

NAME: Eibhlin Lavelle DATE: 19/07/93

ADDRESS: Church road,
Belmullet.

Mary: Long ago what materials did they use to make the clothes they wore?

Eibhlin: Those who could afford it made clothes from 'Silk', silk was a beautiful material, what you would pay now through the nose for expensive stuff.

Mary: Where did they get the material from?

Eibhlin: Ah well, there were shops, drapery shops you see that sold them.

Michelle: Could they afford them?

Eibhlin: Oh Christ yea, they were not penniless, money was not scarce, but then I mean to say you got good value for money. Oh I tell you they were in bags the lot of them.

Mary: Do you remember if your parents wore shoes?

Eibhlin: They were never without them, but we had a business house anyway. They were O.K., there might have been a good bit of poverty in the country.

Michelle: What clothes do you remember your mother wearing?

Eibhlin: The ladies at that time wore long skirts down to the ankle and they wore furs around the neck, like you know a fox with the foxes head at the end of it, fox furs. They also wore their jackets long and everything like that.

Michelle: What age was this at?

Eibhlin: Jesus I am going back nearly a hundred years because I am going back to my grandmother.

Mary: Where did they get these clothes from?

Eibhlin: Oh there was no such thing as fashion shops or things like that in my grandmothers time, they made them from beautiful materials.

Michelle: Can you remember what the most common thing worn or the most traditional thing worn by everyone?

Eibhlin: Well, the ladíes always wore hats.

Michelle: Always?

Eibhlin: Oh yes, they never went anywhere without wearing a hat, now I am not talking about around the kitchen or around the house but going to the shop or out some where like that. They were never ever went out without wearing a hat.

Mary: Had they always Sunday clothes?

Eibhlin: Oh they had oh that was a must, the Sunday clothes were never put on Monday, they were put up washed and cleaned for the following Sunday. Then you had Monday clothes, it was the same for children going to school like me in those days.

Mary: You mentioned before your father was a police man. Can you see any difference between the uniform your father wore and the uniform of today?

Eibhlin: Oh yes, ah sure they went out kinda. They were very heavy and everything like that.

Michelle: Did he wear the round cap?

Eibhlin: Yes he did. I think the English cops wore them more than anything.

Mary: When you were going to school were there any Protestants attending your school?

Eibhlin: Oh yes, there were a few. There is a Protestant church just up the road.

Mary: Was there any difference in the clothes they wore and the clothes you and your family wore?

Eibhlin: None, none what so ever.

Michelle: Can you remember if people dyed their own clothes?

Eibhlin: Oh they did, like you talked of wool and that, but wool yes for winter and they had spinning wheels and all this stuff.

Mary: Did your mother spin?

Eibhlin: No she did not, well we were in the town I think you would want to be in the country. The people in the country usually made their own butter by churning it and by selling their hen eggs to buy some of their clothes. There were none of them going around naked and that's for sure. They also knitted their own jumpers and they dyed them.

Michelle: What did they dye their clothes with?

Eibhlin: That is a very good question. I don't think there was any such thing as a packet of dye long long ago. They would go to the fields and pick anything green, anything yellow and anything red to put along with the clothes to colour them.

Mary: Did you see alot of poverty in this area?

Eibhlin: Oh yes, there was alot of poverty. People could not afford the good suits, furs or anything like that.

Michelle: And what did they wear?

Eibhlin: Oh they made homespun things like jumpers, socks and shawls.

Mary: Am I right in saying that the shawls were really common?

Eibhlin: The shawls were really common. they were going up to fifty years ago. Women did not want to get rid of their shawls especially the older women because they were most beautiful and warm. They mostly spun their shawls with all their beautiful colours and all that.

Michelle: Did they wear stockings?

Eibhlin: Yes, they wore stockings. Nylon was not out but there was knee length stockings. They had not the pantyhose or anything like that.

Michelle: What sort of underwear did they wear?

Eibhlin: They wore linen, slips, knickers and vests. They hand made an awful lot of things you know.

Mary: Do you remember when there was a death in the family what the people wore?

Eibhlin: Oh 'Black', black for sure, they mourned for a long time in black.

Mary: What did the men wear?

Eibhlin: Ah, the good suits and everything good on Sunday and the caps. Then on weekdays their ordinary clothes just like the women.

Interview No. 2

NAME: Not supplied

ADDRESS: Resident of Belmullet

Mary: Was there any difference between the clothes people wore on Sunday and the clothes the people wore on week days?

Answer: Oh yes, I remember wearing a suit on Sunday.

Michelle: Were there different clothes for working in?

Answer: Yes there were different clothes for shift of work during the week those things, now there wear the denim jeans to Mass with holes in them.

Mary: Can you remember the clothes your father wore?

Answer: He wore a suit, a jacket waistcoat, a chain and a gold watch and a flower.

Michelle: Always a flower?

Answer: Oh yes.

Mary: Where did he wear his gold watch?

Answer: In his waistcoat pocket, he always had it there.

Michelle: Was it passed down to him.

Answer: No not at all, he bought it himself.

Mary: Where used he get his clothes from?

Answer: He bought them of course. There was tailors in the town in those days.

Michelle: Was there any Protestant in your school when you were going?

Answer: Oh yes.

Mary: Did they wear the same clothes as you?

Answer: Oh ya. Why wouldn't they?

Mary: You know the way some religions dress differently to others.

Answer: Oh ya I see, no difference at all.

Michelle: Did your father wear brogues?

Answer: Brogues, no brogues were only for the paupers.

Mary: The poor people.

Answer: I never seen brogues.

Michelle: Can you remember what the poor people wore?

Answer: I haven't a idea, there was none of them around here.

Mary: Do you remember seeing any of them coming to town?

Answer: No I never seen any of that.

Michelle: Can you remember if any people spun their clothes or did any people weave their clothes?

Answer: Oh no none around here, out in the country yes they did, that was a way back.

Mary: Can you remember what your mother wore?

Answer: A blouse, a skirt, a coat an' a hat with a pin on the side of it.

Michelle: What, was the pin for decoration?

Answer: No, to hold it in place.

Mary: Did she wear alot of jewellry?

Answer: Well, no they didn't go into alot of jewellry in those days, there was none of the "Gary Glitter" about them.

Mary: Did you know any of the tailors that were in Belmullet?

Answer: There was Tom Barrett, Richard Carmell, Dessy Gaughan and people like that.

Michelle: Did you see alot of poverty in this area?

Answer: No not in this area.

Mary: Wasn't there alot of poverty out in the country?

Answer: People have a totally different idea of how it was, it wasn't as bad as everyone though they were happier people. There was alot of good times, dances, the races, things like that.

Michelle: Did they dress up for the races?

Answer: Oh yes, the best clothes.

Michelle: Thank you for your information.

Answer: Ye're welcome, good luck with ye're research.

Interview No. 3

NAME: Annie Barrett DATE: 19/07/93

ADDRESS: Church Road, Belmullet.

Mary: Can you see any difference in the clothes they wore long ago and the clothes they wear today.

Annie: The only thing I think has changed, now, the ladies always wore a hat or cap, now that is the only thing that had changed now. When we were growing up you wouldn't dare go into the Church without your head covered, you had to have a cap or hat. That's one thing that has changed.

Michelle: Why was that tradition?

Annie: Don't know, I'd say that it was respect for the sacrament I suppose and now they don't wear any hat at all.

Michelle: What about the Protestant and Catholic clothes, was there any difference?

Annie: There was no difference at all. There was a Protestant lady who lived beside me and I can't see any difference in the clothes she wore and the clothes I wore.

Mary: Can you remember the clothes your mother or granny wore?

Annie: I was looking at the pictures of my parents and couldn't see an awful lot of difference. All my mothers' clothes were below the knee, before that again they they wearing they wearing them long well below the knee but I can't remember.

Mary: Can you remember any clothes the people from the country wore?

Annie: Well, we didn't take much notice I remember them wearing shawls alright but when you young you don't pay any heed.

Michelle: Have you any memories of when you started sewing first?

Annie: Yes, at first everything was fitted, nothing loose.

Mary: Was it the same fabrics that was always used?

Annie: Yes I think so, but of course I don't think there was nylon at that time.

Michelle: Did people dye their clothes?

Annie: People use dye alright to dye their own clothes but you know Belmullet was a great place for materials and all of that at that time. All the clothes were made locally by tailors.

Mary: Can you remember the place where the material shops were?

Annie: I can, I can tell you all the material shops that were in Belmullet, Michael Mc Donnells, the pub, that was a material shop.

Michelle: Was it, can you remember who owned it, the Gaughans?

Annie: No, the Gaughans of Barrack street had another shop, Agnes Gaughan. Another one was the hotel, the Western Strands now that was a material shop. And where Londis is now there was another material shop there.

Mary: If you were getting some thing made for yourself would you buy the material yourself?

Annie: Oh get the material and bring it to a tailor or dress maker.

Interview No. 4

NAME: SHEILA REILLY DATE OF VISIT: 10-8-93

ADDRESS: Carne, Belmullet, Co. Mayo.

DESCRIBE "DRESS" LONG AGO: C. 1990

MEN: Bainin shirt-jacket, frieze trousers, cloth peaked cap.

SUNDAY WEAR: Tailed ling navy jacket.

WOMEN:
Wool shawl with deep fringe in colours beige to brown. Full length gathered black serge skirt with three bands of satin or velvet circling near bottom hem.

WHAT FABRIC'S WERE USED?:
Flannel, tweed and serge calico.

WHERE DID THE FABRIC'S COME FROM?:
Flannel and tweed were home spun.

DID PEOPLE MAKE THEIR OWN CLOTHES OR DID THEY BUY THEM?:
Clothes were homemade - rarely bought - local tailors made jackets.

HOW LONG DID IT TAKE THEM TO MAKE THEIR OWN CLOTHES?:
It was an on-going occupation - garments were adjusted to fit.

WERE THEY MORE EXPENSIVE TO BUY OR MAKE?:
Younger members of the family clothes were far more expensive to buy.

DID PEOPLE SPIN, KNIT, SEW ETC?:
Yes and weaving was a valued skill, weavers and spinners settled in Doohoma from Armagh and Monaghan.

DID PEOPLE DYE THEIR OWN CLOTHES?:
Yes, woollen thread was dyed tan and dark wool from black sheep spun with white to gibe tweed effect.

IF SO WITH WHAT WERE THEY DYED WITH?:
Yellow lichen and carefully selected seaweeds.

HOW WERE THEY DYED?:
Boiled with colouring agent in metal pots and stirred with tongs.

WHAT WAS WORN ON THE FOOT LONG AGO?:
Leather boots laced with leather thongs, barefooted mostly.

WHAT WAS THE HEAD THEN?:
MEN: Cloth caps - hard black hats, WOMEN: Black woven kerchief - Black velvet bonnet with ribbons.

DID EVERYONE DRESS THE SAME OR WERE THERE DIFFERENT CLASSES OF DRESS?:
General similarity of dress among "country people", Gentry: short cloaks, skirts and bonnets - never shawls.

WAS THERE A VAST DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CLOTHES OF THE LANDLORDS AND THE TENANTS?:
Yes, velvet and satin dresses and blouses, tailored suits and stiff shirts.

WAS THERE ANY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANT DRESS?:
Very few Protestants in Erris and they were dressed as "gentry".

RIOCARD BAIREAD

Roicard Bairead:

Riocard Bairead (Dick Barrett) was one of the most renowned poets and song writers to come from the Erris area. He composed many humorous poems and yarns in both English and Irish which were the delight of all the locals in the Erris area. He was born in Barrack on the Mullet in 1740 and his mothers maiden name was Bourke. From the various descriptions of him we can ascertain that he was about 5ft 7ins in height, had fair hair and a ruddy complexion. He was believed to have received his education from one of many itinerant teachers who travelled around the country at this time. This education paid off as Barrett could speak four to five languages. In his twenties he became an Itinerant of Hedge School teacher for which he received only one shilling per quarter per child.

He caused consternation in his home area of Barrack when he eloped with Nancy Tallot, the Daughter of a wealthy local Landlord. Barrett was not a suitable match for Nancy, according to her father Jack Tallott, because he was a Catholic and had a poor reputation in the locality having at least one illegitimate child. This falling out with a Landlord was unusual because Barrett was on good terms with most of the landed gentry in the Erris region, some of whose families he taught. In 1790 he moved further north on the Mullet to Carne where soon afterwards his wife Nancy died without having any children. Within two years Barrett had remarried, a woman by the name of Mary Margan with whom he had two children. His son, Roicard of, joined the R.I.C. and died in Castle rea without having marries. Marie Barrett, his only daughter, married a member of the R.I.C. in Dungloe, County Donegal where she died with no family.

Richard Barrett composed Songs, Ballads, Poems and stories about the people and places in the Erris region. Most of his work was of a humorous nature with the local Landlords and bailiffs being his favourite targets. He usually composed songs for special occasions in the Erris area.

Barrett received great praise from the planner of Belmullet, Mr. Knight. Here is Knight's glowing tribute to the Erris poet:

"One man of real genius, though entirely unknown to the world, and his productions, in verse and song, only now recollected by his countrymen in their convivial moments, lived in Erris, and died about sixteen or eighteen years since. This was Dick Barrett, the poet; a more original,

feeling, delightful composer in his native language to all the grand and soul-searching airs of Carolan, never delighted a native Irishman. Sweet, correct, mellifluous in his language and verse, his songs were sung and listened to, by every one who understood the beauties of their native language, with the pleasurable feeling, that a remnant of the Bards of old had yet survived in Ireland. His humorous composition, in Irish, were exceedingly pleasant, generally ironically satirical; he extravagantly praised those for qualities of which they had the opposites and seemed to follow the style of Swift more than that of any other; indeed, he was an enthusiastic admirer of his. His English compositions, which were few, never exceeded mediocrity, and were generally produced on some convivial occasions. He seldom attempted any in English, being conscious of his own deficiency in that language, though he could write it in prose with great spirit and correctness. He showed me some correspondence he had with the late Bishop of Killala, which was extremely well written, and some unfinished verses (written on the soiled leaf of a scholl boys copybook) intended to be sent to Henry Patton Esq., of Westport, in return for a present of Burn's poems, which that gentleman had sent him, having met Barrett either accidentally, or hearing of his genius; they were excellent and I begged of him to copy and send them, but his modesty would not allow him. Though I am sure he had more composition than he ever showed anyone, he so dreaded the eye in criticism, that I fear they died with him; and to this day there has been no collection made of his beautiful Irish songs, nor of his poor English productions. He did not seem to admire Burns but he talked of Swift with rapture. He was of the humbler class, got some education and became School Master. His genius soon recommended him to the gentry of Erris with whom he associated on the most friendly terms, and no society was considered complete in Erris without Dick Barrett presence. He held piece of land from Mr. Fowler, of Mecklenburgh Street, at Carn, near Belmullet. I believe he left one son by his second marriage but I have heard nothing of him lately. Though I have fallen in with some on Barretts English productions it would be scarcely doing him justice to give a specimen of any one of them without such a translation of his Irish compositions as would redeem the others; and could fall into the same feelings, except more himself, as are so pathetically given by Barrett in his native songs. I will venture to give one English verse of his:

That I am a philanthropist I do declare,
and in my affections all persons may share,
from this declaration, my love's not confined,
but boundless as ocean to those of my kind,

It shan't be engrossed by two or by three,
With mankind I glory and boast to be free,
And boast to be free,
And boast to be free,
With mankind I glory and boast to be free".

Dick Barrett never mentioned the 1798 rebellion in which the native Irish rose against English rulers. This was a strange omission because he was imprisoned in Castlebar for six months due to his membership of the United Irishman. He played no active part in the Rising but his sympathies laid firmly with the rebels. Barrett died in Carne on the 8th of December, 1819. He was buried in Cross Abbey which is about two miles west of Binghamstown. Each year in June there is a Barrett weekend held to celebrate the work of the Erris poet.

PREAB SAN OL

RIOCARD BAIREAD

Riocard Bairead (c.1740-1819) a chum an dan seo. Ba as Iorras Domhnann in iarthar Mhaigh Eo e agus fuair se oideachsa maith. Bhi eolas aige ar an nGaeilge agus ar an mBearla araon, agus chum se saothar filiochta sa da theanga. Chaith se tamall ag muineadh scoile, ach nior thaitin an ghairm bheatha sin leis; agus mar sin chaith se formhor a shaoil ina fheirmeoir, agus cuig acra taluin aige! Bhi meas mor ag Eireannaigh agus ag Sasanaigh araon ar an bhfile agus ar a shaothar. Bhi baint aige leis na hEireannaigh Aontaithe agus chaith se roinnt mionna i bpriosun da dheasca. Ta cail bhuan ar an dan seo da chuid agus ar an aoir dhomhain leathmhaguil a chum se ar mhaor airithe tiarna taltin ..i."Eoghan Coir". Bhi feith na hiorona le sonru ar a lan da shaothar.

Is iomai sli sin a bhios ag daoine
ag cruinniu piosai's ag deanamh stoir
's a laghad a smaoinios ar ghiorra an tsaoil seo
's go mbeidh siad sinte faoi leac go foill;
mas tiarna tire, diuic no ri thu.
ni cuirfior pingin leat ag dulfaoin bhfod -
mar sin 's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
na bheith go siorai ag cur preab san ol.

Ta dream de dhaoine le ba 's le caoire
ag dul chun aonaigh 's ag fail dochar mor
a gcur chun cibe 's as sin milnligh -
pointi crionna do deicthear dhoibh:
ach deantar fianais' ar an mi seo
go mbeid ag caoineadh 's ag sileadh deor -
mar sin 's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
na bheith go siorai ag cur preab san ol.

An ceannai craosach, nil meon na sli ar bith
le or a dheanamh nach bhfeicthear dho -
an rata is daoire ar an earra is saoiree
's ar luach she bpingne go gcuirfeadh coroin;
do reir chaint Chriosta, is ni do-dheanta
an camhall ciocrach a thabhairt trid an gcro -
mar sin 's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
na bheith go siorai ag cur preab san ol.
Is olc an tsli bheith ag ardu ciosa
ag deanamh daoine o theach 's o dhidean,
ag cur na ndaoine o theach 's o dhidean,
ni, faraoir! 'ta cinnte dhoibh;
an te 'nionn sin is do is baolai
a bheith in iochtar a bhruith 's a dho -
mar sin 's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
na bheith go siorai ag cur preab san ol.

Is measa choiche na ag ardu ciosa
gan an deachu a shuiochan mar is coir -
tabhairt saothar Criostai gan bhlaith gan buíochas
don chleir nach ndeanann aon tsaothar dhoibh;
ni he Crosta d'orda' an dli seo,
ni he Peadar a mhinigh e, na Pol -
mar sin 's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
na bheith go siorai ag cur preab san ol.

Is gearr an saoghal 'ta ag an lile sciamhach
ce gur buighe 'gus gur geal a groil,
agus Solamh crionna 'na chulaith riuil
nach bhfuil baol air in aille dho;
nil sa tsaol seo ach mar shionan gaoithe,
ga a scaoiltear no slam de cheo -
mar sin 's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
na bheith go siorai ag cur preab san ol.

Ach siud e an Criostai 'gus lamh na daonnacht',
maxwell dilis 'ta in aice an phoit,
a bhios gan baosra le boicht a thire
's a bhainfeadh a bhriste de Thony Mhor;
's e a phleisiur saolta de lo 's d'oiche
clann na saoithe a bheith aige ar bord,
beoir agus fion a thabhairt doibh go lionmhar,
comhra saoithiuil - agus preab san ol.

MEADARACHT: Ochtfhoclach is meadaracht don dan seo.
Seo i an deilbh ata ar an gcread vearsa:

GAMES OF LOVE AND DEATH

It should not, I suppose, surprise us that something resembling a nursery-rhyme should owe its existence to an episode of slaughter; after all, 'Ring-a-ring-a-rosy' accompanies a game invented by London children in the seventeeth century to express their reaction to a plague which ravaged their city. Games and humour can be attempts to cope with the facts of death - a fact attested to by the former prevalence of "wake games". A game could take the following form: "one of the gathering simulated the dead man, stretching himself across some chairs and covering himself with a sheet. The others who took part in the game would then gather round and sing verses, for the most part of an impromptu kind, until the seemingly dead man would get tired and come to life again,"(169) One song associated by some of the placenames mentioned, must have been sung in Mayo:

Ta Damhnaigh i Lincoln, ta Damhnaigh i Leeds,
Ta Damhnaigh ina chodladh 's nar eiri se choiche
Ta Damhnaigh in Acaill, ta Damhnaigh i gCliar,
Ta Damhnaigh ina chodladh 's nar eiri se choiche...(170)

(Downey is in Lincoln. Downesy is in Leeds,
Downey is asleep and may he never get up ...
Downey is in Achill, Downey he is in Clare (island)
Downey is asleep and may he never get up...)

Obviously wakes were not the only occasion on which 'game-songs' could be sung: they could accompany work, and thus take their place among the 'songs of occupation', of which relatively few were collected in this country, but which must at one time have been quite common. One can imagine the following lines being tossed to and fro between girls at the their respective young men:

'D'fheicfea thall i Sasana an lasadh ata ar mo ghra' ...
'Ta lasadh bui na heitinne i bpluicin do ghra'.
'Chuaigh mo ghra an baile seo o ghoid seo o ghoid se an gandal ban'. ...
'Nior ghabh do ghra an baile seo o ghoid se an gandal ban'. ...

'Caroline as Ballindine is leggings as an gClair'. ...
'Up and down the market town and into Johnny Ward's'. ...
'Ghabh do ghra go Sasana 'failpeireacht ar na mna'. ... (171)

('You'd see beyond in England the radiance of my love' ...
'There is the yellow blush of consumption on the cheeks of your love' ...
'My love went through this town in his jaunting car'...
'Your love did not pass through this town since he stole the white gander' ...
'A Caroline from Ballindine and leggings from Claremorris' ...
'Up and down the market town and into Johnny Ward's' ...
'My love went to England to earn a pound a day'
'Your love went to England to sponge on the women' ...)

Lines like these could be improvised, but some, it seems, were fixed. "They are as a rule very personal in character, but I suppose half their attraction lay in the fact that, under cover of the game, the singer could be insulting with impunity".(172)

A humorous song once popular all over Connacht is "Tuirne mhaire" ('Mary's Spinning-wheel'): it has been attributed to poet named Owen MacGowan from Coolcarney, near Bunnyconnellan. It concerns a spinning-wheel belonging to an old half-blind lady named Mary Jordan; the wheel has been put out of action by some practical joker, but she blames the fairies and resorts of various means to have it repaired. (173)

Tar eis a nduirt me, nil se i dtiuin
Go gcuirfidh me a siul e amarach.
Sios go Cill Ala a feachaint an caspaig
Go dtogfaidh se suas ina laimh e
Mar bhí se mallaithe, ni féidir a bheannú
Go dte se chun Ard Naoimhe Padraig,
Le neart a shoirne's a mheid a shoigfeadh
Ni choinneodh ceathrar snaithe leis.(174)

(After all I've said, it isn't in tune.
Until I send it off tomorrow.
Down to Killala to see the bishop.
To let him take it up in his hand.
For it was cursed an cannot be blessed.
Till it comes to the Hill of Saint Patrick:
With the size of its snout and the amount it would swallow.
Four people couldn't keep it fed with thread.)

Another humorous Mayo song. 'An Chailleach', (The Hag'), immortalises an old lady whose nimble fingers were put to less noble use than Mary Jordan's: her name was Molly Coakley, and she earned her place in folksong by stealing a golden guinea from a man called Micheal O Briain, of Druinnin, (Dringeen), who had given her lodging for a night. The following is an extract from his search warrant:

As Cill Iomair a d'ealaigh an chailleach
In aice le Báile an Roba,
As sin síos go Condae Shligigh
Agus thart le Coill an Tochair ...
'Seard a chuala me ag Feichin Breanthnach
Gur ionsaigh si Duiche Sheoigeach,
Is ma castar leat i gConamara i.
Bain mo ghini oir dhi.(175)

(Out of Killimor the hag escaped,
Hard by Ballinrobe,
From there down to County Sligo,
And over to Kiltogher (?)...
I heard from Festy Walsh
That she advanced on the Joyce Country,
And if you meet her in Connemara,
Get my golden guinea from her.)

It is good to know that the people of Mayo humorous songs to sing in the dark days when they were given so many occasions lament. Indeed, at times their merriment could reflect their relief at some relaxation of the misery which so often oppressed them. A case in point is that great satirical song 'Eoin Coir' ('Honest Owen') by Riocard Bariead (Richard Barrett), the bard of Erris (1739-1819). The subject of this delightful mock-elegy was one Eoin O Conmachain. (Owen Conway), a rapacious land-agent employed by the Binghams in Erris: he died in 1788 and is buried in the graveyard of Tearmon Ceathrach (Termoncarragh), about four miles north-west of Belmullet. (176) Barrett's song attributes exaggerated grief to the people who have most to gain from the tyrant's demise:

Nach e seo an sceal deacrach san tir seo,
In anacair chroi 'gus bron'
O fhagas tu Creagan an Line
Go dte tu go dti an Fal Mor?
A Leitheid de screadadh 's de chaoineadh
Nior chuala tu ariamh go foill,
Ce nil againne aon ionadh,
O cailleadh, faraor, Eoin Coir!

(Isn't this the most pitiful story
That ever touched heart to the core?
Today we saw Owen to glory
From Creagan-a-line to Fallmore,
Such wailing and loud lamentation
Were ne'er heard in Erin before,
For we've lost our best friend before,
The kind, tender-hearted Owen Coir!)* (177)

Particularly happy is the alleged 'prayer' of one Seamus McGreevy:

Se' dúirt Seamus Pheadair Mhuic Riabhaigh,
is e ag agairt ar Ri na ndeor,
"Do reir mar bhí seisean do dhaoine,
Gurab amhlaidh a bheas Criosta dho!"

('Twas thinking of all his good labours
Made Shamus as he was to the neighbours
"May Jesus be to him today!")*(178)

One of the song's editors offers this interesting tit-bit of information: 'It was a favourite song with the late patriotic Archbishop of Tuam, the most Rev. Dr. MacHale, who sang it with great animation and spirit when he found himself in congenial company'. (179)

" LET US BE MERRY BEFORE WE GO"

One may be tempted to wonder if the Archbishop ever brought the same energy to a rendering of Barrett's other still-popular composition 'Preab san Ol', one of the best-known drinking-songs in the language:

Is iomai sli sin a bhionn ag daoine
A' cruinniu píosai 's a' deanamh stoir,
'S a laghad a smaoinionn ar ghiorra an tsaoil seo,
'S go mbeidh siad sinte faoi leac go foill.
Mas tiarna tirc, diuc no ri thu,
Ni cuirfear pinghin leat a'dul faoin bhfod:
Mar sin's da bhri sin, nil beart nios crionna
Na bheith go siorai' cur preab san ol.

(Why spend your leisure bereft of pleasure
Amassing treasure? Why scrape and save?
Why look so canny at every penny?
You'll take no money within the grave!
Landlords and gentry, for all their plenty,
Must still go empty - where'er they'er bound:
So to my thinking we'd best be drinking,
Our bumpers clinking in round on round.)*(180)

It has been suggested - and it is quite plausible - that John Philpot Curran borrowed the metre of Barrett's song for his 'Deserter's Meditation' on the same theme, and that the English poet Lord Byron took it from there for use in one of his own lyrics.

"IT'S A LONESOME THING TO BE AWAY FROM IRELAND ALWAYS"

We have considered many songs of Mayo. We have rested on some of its mountains and by the banks of some of its rivers, wandered through the streets and markets of many of its towns: we have heard the clink of glasses and the sound of gunfire, the laughter of people at work and the sighs of people in exile. We have watched a procession of fine women and witnessed the heartbreak of their admirers. We have listened to stories of men enlisting in armies and fighting or deserting, and of men going down to the sea in ships, and often not coming back: we have seen men languishing in prison or hanging from the gallows, attended a wedding or two, and many a wake. It is appropriate that we should finish by looking at one song which offers, as it were, a microcosm of that varied Mayo experience: the joys of drinking in the company of fine women, the adventure of enlisting, the pain of exile, the threat of the law's long arm and the fear of the hangman's rope. It is fitting too that this song, like the one with which we began, should bear the title 'Contae Mhaigh Eo'. Various versions of this song exist, and it seems that it is in reality an amalgam of (at least) two separate songs. Some verses obviously concern a man who enlisted in the army and then deserted; others refer to a smuggler or pirate - named as Micheal O Bruadair, from Carrowkeel, in one account (182) - and as Thomas Flavell (or Lavelle), from Inishbofin, in another (182) - who was arrested in Santa Cruz and hanged. As is usual, the song provides little information which would allow a detailed reconstruction of the protagonist's circumstances, and no doubt the implications of certain verses commonly sung together are contradictory. Facts, however, seem to matters less to singers and listeners, than feelings, and much of the appeal of 'Contae Mhaigh Eo' is due to to its emphasis on its hero's sadness at not being able to revisit his native place or realise the desire of so many exiles: 'bas in Eirinn':

Agus da mairfeadh mo shean-athair agam bheinn
maith go leor,
Bheadh buideal ins gach laimh liom is me i
gcomhluadar ban of:
Marach sior-ol na gcartai
Is an dli a bheith ro-laidir,

Ni i Santa Cruz a fagfai mo chnamha faoin bhfod.

Ta punt is fiche amuigh agam i gContae Mhaigh Eo.
Is ni racha me da n-iarraidh choiche na go deo;
Ar fhaitios go mbearfai thiar orm,
Is go ngabhfai ngeall le fiacha me
Is go bhfaiscfi boiltai iarainn ar bharr-iachalla no bhrog.

Is go dtaga Cnoc na Cruaiche ar cuairt go hAbhainn Mhoir.
Acaill go Cul Luachra ag buachailleacht na mbo.

10. EOGHAN COIR

RIOCARD BAIREAD

(FEIC DAN 9, ROINN A)

Nach e seo an sceal deacrach sa tir seo,
anacan chron gus bron
o fhagas tu Creagan, i line
go dte tu go dti an Eal Mor:
a leitheid de screadadh 's de cnaoineadh
nior chuala tu ariamh go foil
ce nach bhfuil againn arln ionadh
o calleadh, fa-raoir! Eoghan Coir:

Bhi gnaoi 'gus gean ag gach aon air,
an seanduine crionna 's an t-og,
bhí an saibhir 's an daibhir i ngra leis
mar gheall ar a chroi maitin mor:
le togha gus e roghia na tire

do daoine bochta eile nior spid leis
buideal den tsibin a ol.

Ba soibh ag togair an chiosa e -
ba bheag aige mi no dho
no go ndioltai an bho ar an aonach
no an glota do bhiodh sa tseol;
's e dúirt Seanas Pheadair Mhic Riabhaigh
's e ag agairt ar Ri na ndeor,
'do reir mar bhí seisan do dhaoine
gurb amhlaidh bheidh Criosta dho'.

Ta Aindrias O Gabhain ag caoineadh
's ni bheidh Sean O Baoill i bhfad beo
o cailleadh a gcaraid sa tir seo -
's e d'fhagaibh a gcroi faoi bhroin:
i dTearmann Caithreach nior sineadh
le fada faoi liag na fhod,
aon neach ba mheasa don dis seo
na an duine bocht maoi, Eoghan Coir.

Breag ata siadsan a dheanamh -
nior cailleadh an fear croí go foil
ach chuaigh se ar cuairt chun a ghaoita
go bhfeiceadh se an rionnt is mo,
ma thigeann se ar ais chun an tsaoil seo
ni tniomainfidh se choice aon bho,
ach cuirfimid amach as an tir e
's an leanbh O Baoill bheas leo.

An haon is an seacht ina line
's an hocht a chur síos faoi dho
o ghlac seisan cead lena dhaoine
's nior labhair se giog nios mo;
ta se i ndeireadh na scribheann
gur talamh is croch gach beo
's a fhad mhairfeas muid beo ar an tsaol seo
ca miste dhuinn braon beag a ol?

MEADRACHT: Meadaracht aicenta ata sa dan seo, i cosuil leis an Ochtfhoclach. Seo i an deilbh ata ar an vearsa:

BEATHA AN FHILE

Rugadh Riocard Bairead - fil Iorrais - ar an mBearic timpeall na bliana 1740. Nuair a bhí se meanaosta d'aistrigh se a ait conaithe go dti an Carn, ait a raibh teach deas ceann tui aige.

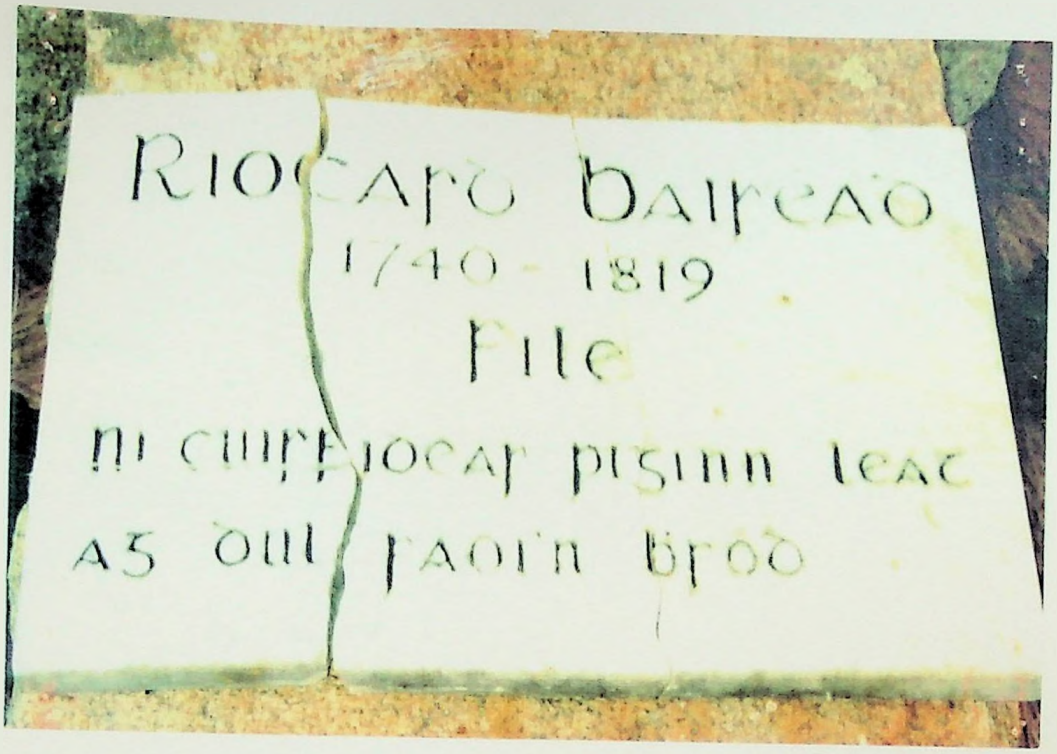
Ce go mba duine den iseal aicme e, fuair se oideachas maith agus thuil se clu agus cail do fein mar mhaistir scoile ar fud an cheanntair. Thagadh se slu agus cail do fein mar mhaistir scoile ar fud an cheanntair. Thagadh clann na nuaisle mar dhaltai chuige.

Is beag duine nar chuala tracht ar "Eoghan Coir" - aoir a scriobh se. Ba aortha cuid mhaith dena danta ab fhearr a bhí aige. Ta feith an ghrinn go laidir freisin in amhrain an Bhaireadaigh - "Giolla na Peice" agus "In Aimsir Fearthaine". Is leir ona chuid anhrain leis go n-otai cuid maith sa cheanntair agus ta cail ar leith ar "Preab san ol". Ba nos vearsai eile a chuir leo. Is mor an t-ionadh e nar lua se eirigh amach 1798 i ndan ar bith leis, go hairithe os rud gur chaith se seal gearr i bpriosun i gCaislean an Bharraigh de bharr a chuid naisiunchais agus e bheith ina bhaill dena hEireannaigh, Aontaithe.

B'iontach an fear cuideachta e agus ba bheag cruinniu sa cheanntair gan é. Thug roinnt mhaith taistealaithe eagsula cuirt ar cheanntair an Mhuirthid lena linn agus casadh ar a cheile iad.

De reir tuairisc bhí an Baireadach posta faoi dho, an chead uair le Nanny Tallet, cailin saibhir lenar eiligh se toisc a hathair a bheith mishasta leis mar cliamnain, agus nios deanai le Maire ni Mhorain. Deirtear go raibh inion agus mac aige leis an dara bean.

Ba mhor an tionchar a bhí aige ar fhili na haite. Fuair se bas timpeall na bliana 1820 agus ta se curtha i Mainistir na Croise in aice an nGeata Mor.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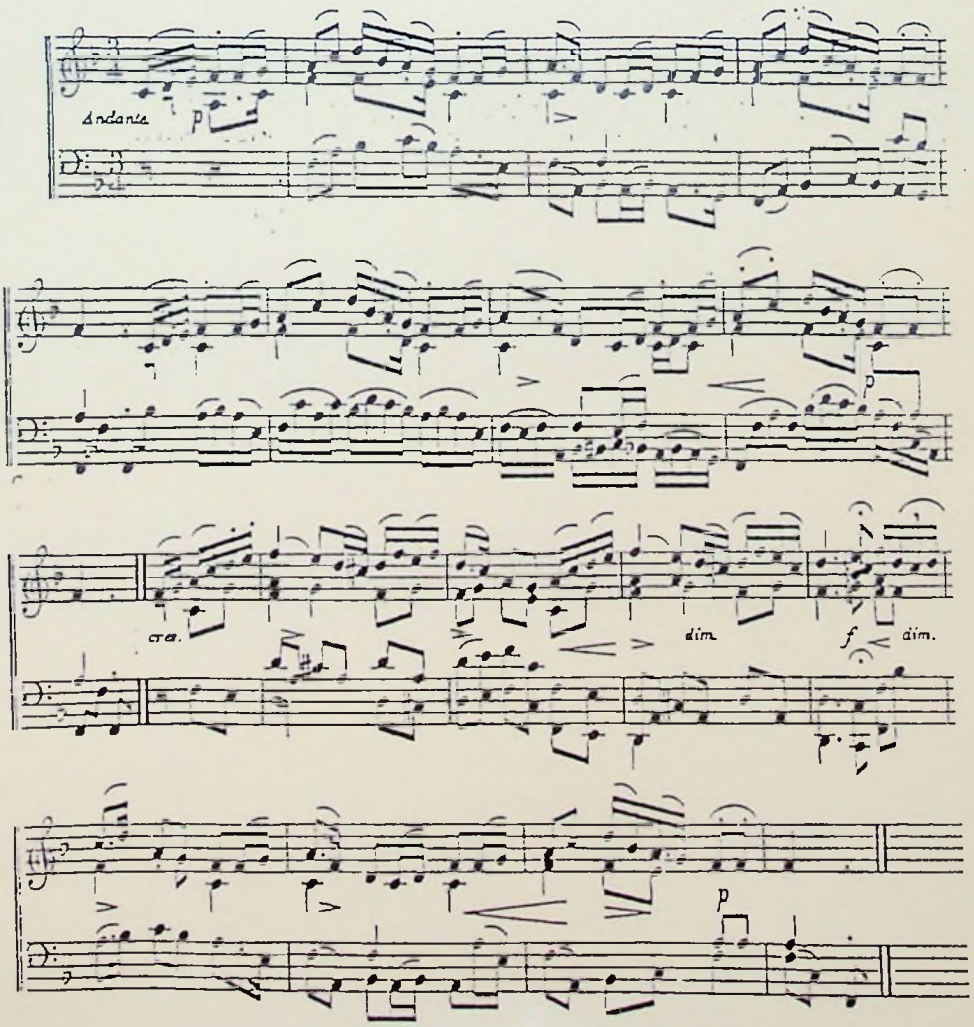
PREAB SAN ÓL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GRACE O'MALLEY

Grace O'Malley

Grace O'Malley or Granuaile is a name associated with Western coastline around Clew Bay. Born in 1530 she was brought up in a time when English rule was limited to an area of about thirty miles around Dublin , and also in Waterford, Wexford, Cork and Galway. The rest of the country was controlled by native Irish clans like Grace's family and by the Anglo-Irish (descendants of the Norman Invaders). Most people lived according to the old Gaelic customs and life - styles and were to a large extent unaffected by the English Administration. It was a time of exploration and discovery of wars and invasions, where rules and empires were at the pinnacle of their power.

EXTRACT
FROM
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF GRACE O'MALLEY
BY ANNE CHAMBERS

According to contemporary English accounts, sixteenth century Gaelic women were:

Very comely creatures, tall, slender and upright, of complexion very fayre and cleare skinned but freckled with tresses of bright yellow hayre, which they chayne up in curious knots and devises. They are not strait laced nor plated in their youth, but suffered to grow at liberty o that you shall hardly see one crooked or deformed, but yet as the proverb is, soone ripe soone rotten. There propensity to generation causeth that they cannot endure.
They are women at thirteen and old wives at thirty.....
Of nature they are very kind and tractable.

From all accounts Grace was of strong character and a powerful leader. Sir Henry Sidney in 1577 said of her. "There came to me also a most famous feminine sea captain allied Grany Imallyne, and offered her services unto me, where so ever I would command her, with three galleys and 200 fighting men either in Scotland or Ireland, she brought with her, her husband for she was as well by sea as by land well more than Mrs. Mate with her. This was a notorious woman in all the Coasts of Ireland". She was an exceptional woman, alive, daring and possessed all the requirements necessary fro survival in that era. She put her own interests and those of her domain first in her flight for survival.
Grace married Richard - an - Iarainn (Iorn dick Burke) around the year 1566. He was the chief of the Burkes of Carra and Burrishoole and

tanist to the Mac William title which was held by Shane Mac Oilverus. Tradition has it that they married and agreed to stay married for one year at least. Then if either party wished to separate they were able to. They resided as man and wife in Rockfleet, where Grace spent much of her life and had one son around 1567 called Thoubald of the ships. He was reared at Rockfleet. This castle is situated on an inlet of Clew Bay, it is a square tower measuring 56 feet in height with four stories. It is in a good state of preservation today. As chief (chiefers) of the powerful sept of the O'Malleys Lord of the Baronies of the two "Ooles" (Burrishoole and Murrisk), Grace was said to have built Dunnach castle. This castle lies on the west side of Blacksod Harbour in the mountains of Erris. Very little of it remains here today.

In 1584 Queen Elizabeth appointed Sir Richard Bingham to be the Governor of all Connaught. He sent his brother Captain John Bingham into Grace O'Malley territory in order to arrest her because there was high levels of unrest. She and her followers were arrested and brought to Galway City to be hanged. She was saved from hanging when Richard Burke, promised to give himself up as hostage if Grace continued to disobey British authority. Bingham punished her by confiscating her herds. Captain Bingam inflicted further punishment on her by murdering her eldest son and taking all the family's livestock thus leaving the class destitute. Grace fled to Ulster and did not return to Rockfleet Castle until 1587 when Sir Richard Bingham was sent to Flanders. She sought a pardon from Queen Elizabeth and was granted on the 4th May 1588. Shortly afterwards Sir Richard Bingham returned to Connaught as Governor.

Grace O'Malley's life is outlined in chronological order in the following section.

1530	Grace O'Malley born
1546	"Marries Donal - an -Chogaidh
1549	Donal murders Walter Fada
1565	Death of Donal - an - Chogaidh , Grace seizes Hen's castle. Returns to Clare Island.
1566	Grace marries Richard - an - Iarainn.
1567	Grace's son Tubbot is born.
1577	Grace is captured and imprisoned by the Earl of Desmond.
1579	Grace is released from prison.
1580	Grace submits to Malby. Richard - an - Iarainn becomes "The Mac William " chief of Mayo Burkes.
1583	Death of Richard - an - Iarainn
1586	Grace arrested by Bingham. All her cattle confiscated.
1593	Grace meets Queen Elizabeth.
1594	Grace reduced to poverty from having to maintain soldiers quartered on her by Bingham.
1603	Granuaile dies.

O'Brien Junior Biography Library. Granuaile, Chieftan, Pirate Trader Mirarty and Sweeney O'Brain Press Ltd. 1988.

The character of Grace O'Malley, when examined within the confines for this eventual century, emerges not as that of a mythical or legendary figure, at rather as that of an exceptional woman, alive, vital and daring, who lived life to its limits, and who possessed all the requirements necessary for survival in that era. A woman who plied her family trade with all the expertise and enterprise it required, and who above all else put her own interests and those of the small remote domain over which she ruled first, in the never ending struggle for survival. The last remaining obstacle left to dispel the legendary mists surrounding her name may be due to the fact that she was a woman. A woman 'that hath impudently passed (overstepped) the part of womanhood' perhaps, but in doing so she played a unique role in history.

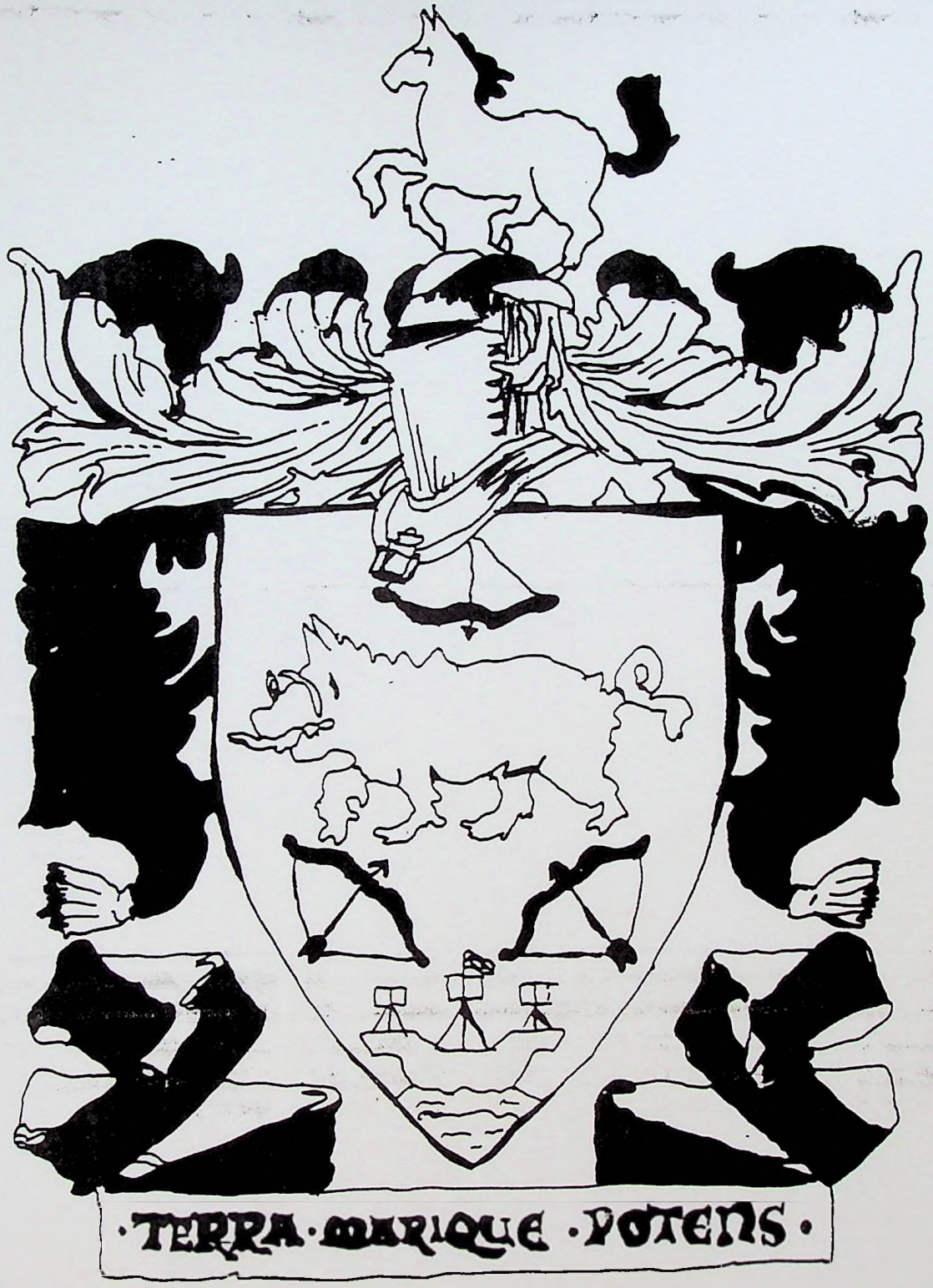
ROCKFLEET CASTLE

It was a bleak castle of Rockfleet (Carriag-an-Caghlaigh) that Grace spent much of her life after her son Theobald was reared and from here that she conducted most of her forays on land. Rockfleet castle is situated on an inlet of clew Bay and its ramparts command a fine view of the bay. This stark, square tower measuring 56 feet in height and compromising four stories, is in a good state of preservation today.

DUNAH CASTLE

Lies on the west side of Blacksod Harbour in the mountain of Erris. These walls are almost entire, thirty feet square, seven feet broad, with a great many aqurtenant compartments all strong and extensive, surrounded by the remains of a strong wall seven feet broad. The love of the foundress for sailing became proverbial,and her love for marriage, having had six husbands; it was for her the famous Irish ballad called Grawnnya Wael had been composed.

Dunnah Castle is said to have been built by the celebrated Grace O'Malley, the Chief (Chiefess) of the powerful sept of the O'Malleys, Lord of the Baronies of the two "Ooles", that is the Burrishoole and Murrisk. She was noted not only for her great energy and power by land, but for keeping a small fleet at her disposal; and to her is attributed the building of many castles along the coasts of Mayo from Erris to Connemara in Galway. Among these Dunah is said to be one and this would seem to be another confirmatory proof that once Ballycroy did once belong to Burrishoole.
Grace O'Malley was once contemporaneous with Elizabeth.
Extract from O'Donovans Letters.



The Coat of Arms of Grace O'Malley

DEAN LYONS

DEAN LYONS

Dean Lyons was born in the final years of the eighteenth century and spent the early years of his life in the parish of Bekan. There were four children in his family one other boy, Luke and two girls. He was the son of a wealthy farmer who could afford to keep servants and a well stocked library. The Lyons family were very friendly with Bishop Waldron and it was under the influence of this man that young Lyons decided to enter the priesthood.

In 1818 Dean Lyons started his long career in the priesthood when he entered St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. He was a good literary man who also wrote well and had a good grasp of the Irish language. He was ordained in 1821 and took up his first position which was as the administrator of the Parish of Kilmoremoy, which also included Ballina. Lyons was involved in the development of the Education System in Ballina. In this Parish from 1821 to 1825 he set up Parish Registers and also established a National School in the Ballina area. He set up three such schools in the area with the help of the Kildare Place Society.

By the year 1825 he had become the Parish Priest in Kilmore Erris. In his new Parish he was dedicated to the improvement of the Religious, Moral, Educational and Social standards of the peoples. He was responsible for the building of new Churches in both Binghamstown and Terrane. In late 1825 he started St. Patrick's School in Binghamstown, and seven years later he registered this school with the National Education Board. Further schools were established in Inishkea, Brannah, Shanahee, Corclough, Terrane, Lurgacloy and Termon. He was very concerned with the fall in the number of Priests and the fact that there was only a 50% attendance level in the masses in his area. He led his own campaign to try and remove all the ancient superstitious beliefs among his flock.

Between 1827 and 1831 there were long spells of bad weather and storms which caused a number of very poor harvests. This situation led to a number of "mini famines" in Lyons Parish of Kilmore-Erris. The Government of the day gave ú40,000 in order to aid those who were affected. Fr. Lyons went to England himself to collect relief funds for his suffering people.

One of the major causes of the mini famines, apart from the poor weather, was the old methods of farming used by many people in Kilmore-Erris. The local Landlord Bingham showed little interest in the

plight of his tenants, ignoring the calls for help from Lyons who he disliked. Lyons rented 700 acres in 1931 in Shanahee and with the help of an Agricultural Graduate from Dublin divided it up into a number of proper farms. A model farm was also established as a guide to the new methods of farming being used. This venture was quite successful up until the famine.

Dean Lyons was in the news in 1833 due to his two court cases for libel he took out against a variety of people. In April 1833 he brought a libel case against fifteen defendants. This was the result of a petition which was sent to Bishop MacHale complaining about Fr. Lyons. The Petition to Lyon's;

(i) Exorbitant financial extractions and his (ii) harsh and crude treatment of his parishioners.

At the end of this petition they called for his immediate removal from the Parish of Kilmore-Erris. These claims were investigated by Rev. P. Flannelly who was the Parish Priest of Easkey in County Sligo. Rev. Flannelly found no grounds for the complaints and thus Lyons was fully cleared. Thirteen of the fifteen defendants in the libel case received jail terms of two to four months.

The second libel case taken by Dean Lyons took place in December 1833. This case was against Major Bingham, his son William and their head driver Pat Lavelle.

The libel mentioned in this case was contained in a letter written by Pat Lavelle to Arch Bishop Kelly in 1831. This letter was published in a number of local publications in October 1831. Lyons was demanding libel damages of ú4,000 and he engaged the famous Daniel O'Connell as council for the prosecution. This case ended inconclusively however and no verdict was given. The Connaught Telegraph carried an ad offering ú100 for information leading to the arrest of the person who fired at Fr. Lyons through the window of his Binghamstown house.

He was both very anti-drink and anti-violence. He spent 1842 and 1843 in Rome and it was while he was in Italy that he found the twenty volumes of the original Louvian Collection of Fr. Michael O'Cleary in St. Isidores College in Rome. It was Dean Lyons who began the negotiations to bring this collection back to Ireland. He died in Binghamstown on the fifth of March, 1845. Deans Lyons was buried in Cross with some other members of his family. As well as the tombstone there is an memorial to him in Binghamstown Church.

THE GLENAMOY AMBUSH

THE GLENAMOY AMBUSH

This is an account of an ambush which took place during the Irish Civil War near the town of Glenamoy in the Barony of Erris. This engagement took place in September 1922 just three months after the conflict began with the bombing of the Four Courts in Dublin. After the start of the war the National Forces (Regulars) moved quickly and by August 1922 they had control of the East and most of the South. There were, however, many areas in the West that were still in Republican (Irregulars) hands.

In September 1922 National Troops were posted in the Workhouse, Railway Station and Bridges in Ballina. On Tuesday, the 12th of September, The Republican Forces attacked Ballina using one hundred and fifty well equipped Troops and an armoured car, "Ballinalea", which had been captured from Nationalist Troops, at an earlier stage. Shots were fired at the sentries on the bridge which resulted in the death of a young girl on her way to mass. This incident was followed by a short engagement at the railway station.

The Republican Forces never wanted a full battle at Ballina so their forces split up into two groups. One of these units, commanded by General Kelly, moved westwards along the coast road. His armed escort, the armoured car "Ballinalea", left him in Ballycastle leaving Kelly and his men to continue westwards. They spent Wednesday, the 13th digging their trucks out of the poor muddy roads between Ballycastle and Glenamoy.

On the following day, Thursday the 14th September 1922, a force of Nationalist Troops, numbering around thirty, arrived at Bangor. They arrested two men, one of whom was armed. Later on this date these Troops were fired upon by a group of armed Republicans. After a short skirmish the Nationalist Troops surrounded the enemy Troops taking five of them prisoner.

These National soldiers now moved on to Glenlossera Lodge, Glenamoy, where they surrounded the building. When they discovered that it was occupied by a large force of Republicans the Nationalist leader, Brigader General Neary, sent for reinforcements. By this time General Kilroy and his force of Republican Troops had arrived at the scene from Ballina. The Nationalist Troops were unconscious of this large number of Republicans, under Kilroy, who now had them surrounded.

Kilroy's men placed themselves in ambush position and opened fire at the Nationalist Forces. In this first burst of gun and machinegun fire four Nationalist Troops were killed they were:-

Captain Healy; Pontoon
Lt. W. J. Gill; Ballinalea
Vol. Sean Higgins; Foxford
Vol. Thomas Rall; Dublin

After this initial shock the Nationalist Troops reorganised themselves and returned fire. This ambush raged in open fields for many hours. The Nationalists fought bravely despite the Republicans having the advantages of greater numbers and better equipment (machine guns) seventeen Nationalist Troops were surrounded and taken prisoner by General Kelly.

Later in the ambush the Nationalist forces surrounded a house in the area owned by the Irwins. They were of the belief that it was being occupied by General Kelly. As there was a woman and her children in the house they refrained from bombing on the Republicans, on seeing the house surrounded opened fire on the enemy Troops. In this brief engagement two further Nationalist Troops were killed they were:

Serg. Major Edward Carbbe
Vol. Patrick Bray

Both of the above men were killed by explosive bullets.

After this final confrontation Neary knew the battle was lost. Those at the rear of his force retreated to their cars and escaped. Those at the front who were now outgunned decided to surrender. The Nationalist Force had fought bravely but had lost six men. The Republicans captured forty two rifles, revolvers and a large amount of ammunition. Prisoners taken by the Republicans at Glenamoy were later released by General Kelly.

The dead and wounded from the ambush were later collected by Doctors Walsh (Ballina) and Kelly (Westport) and transported back to Ballina in Red Cross trucks. A memorial stone was later erected in the memory of the six men who died in the Glenamoy Ambush.

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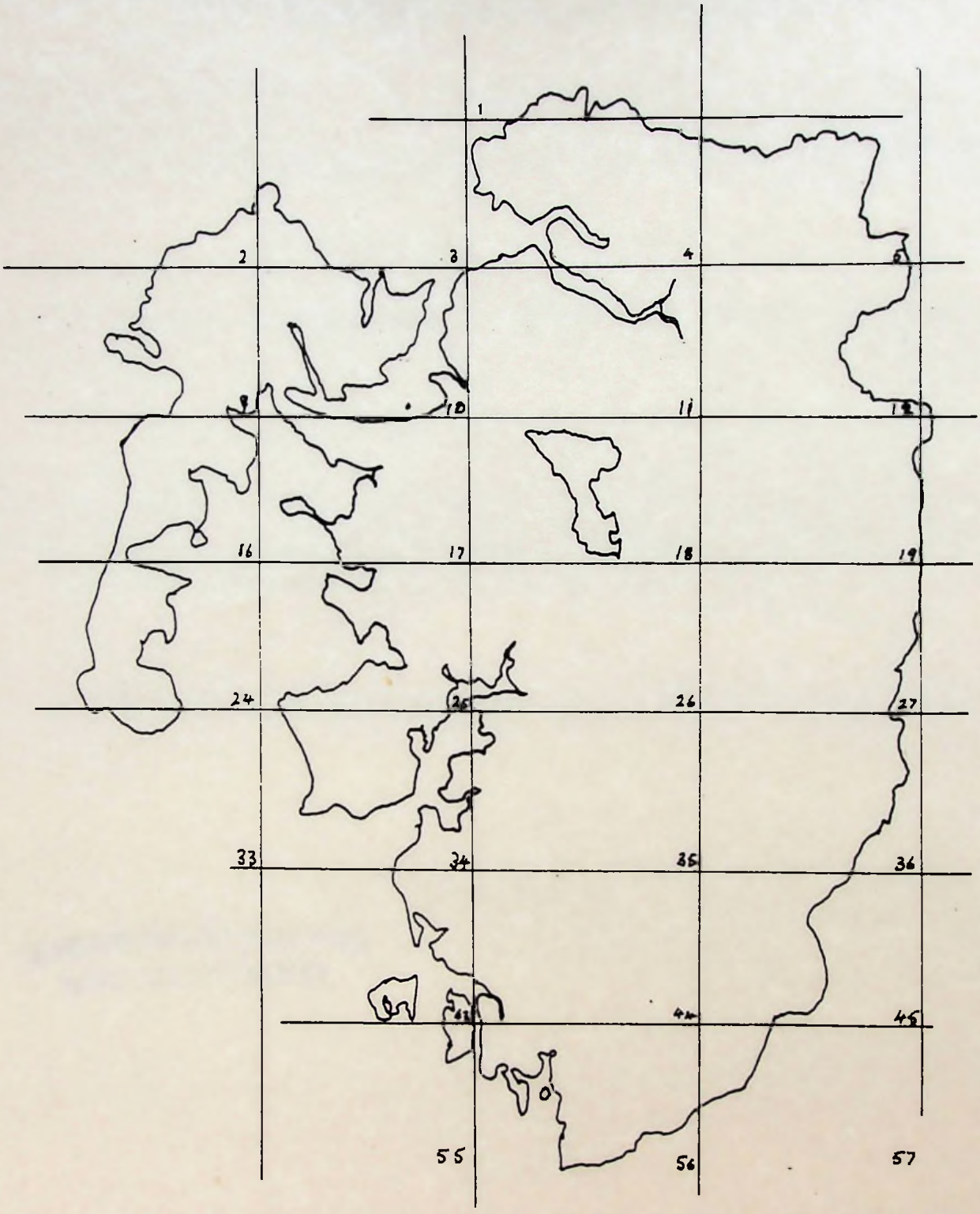
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