

Report of the Erris Survey

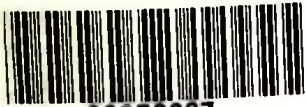
August 1990 - May 1994



Part VI

A Community Response Project.

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Fás and Turasóireacht Iorrais Teo




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CRAFT WORK IN ERRIS

CRAFTWORK IN ERRIS

Irish Rural Society has persisted, with much of its culture intact to the present day.

Yet everywhere the thrust of industrialisation is pushing into the last outposts of traditional society. It is because of these circumstances that we need the reassurance of living with objects which are quite clearly the work of one particular identifiable individual person, working in a particular place, on a particular day, and within a particular tradition. We need human objects as part of our own search for identity and wholeness. We need the wood and clay and stone and natural fibres speaking directly to us as part of our search to re-establish contact with nature.

If we must (as we must) learn truly to esteem and love the cultures of other people, and the quality and uniqueness of what they do, surely it can only be from a knowledge and love of what we do ourselves, of its quality and uniqueness.

That any traditional crafts at all survived to the present day is a small miracle, some crafts stayed alive more for social than economic reasons. A household of bachelors and spinsters required to look after old parents would lack the drive of spouses and children to force them out of their narrow existence as they clung to the old ways and the old crafts, and sadly all too often, the craft was doomed. Other crafts such as handspinning were a necessity, associated with the struggle to rear large families with little money. They became symbols of poverty and hard times best forgotten. (David Shaw - Smith)



The aim of this study, was to collect information on the traditional crafts that are still being carried out in Erris.

This chapter includes primary research (i.e.) interviews with local craftspersons including photography and video taping, and secondary research in the form of library reference material.

The seemingly inevitable present situation was the momentum for carrying out the survey, recording details on crafts and their associated traditions became a priority, before their predicted extinction.

A comprehensive list of all the people involved with traditional crafts is also included. This list contains some of our interviewees - those involved in crafts of :

- Patchwork,
- Knitting,
- Dyeing,
- Painting,
- Woodcarving,
- Thatching,
- Basket Weaving,
- Tapestry,
- The making of Ships-in-Bottles,
- The Armillary Sphere,
- Blacksmithing,
- Lace Making.

Details on the Congested Districts Board and the advantages that accompanied their intervention are also included.

Material included in this chapter contains extracts from David Shaw - Smith's book on Ireland's Traditional Crafts

PATCHWORK:

Patchwork occupies a special place in Irish Craft Tradition. It is one of a small number of crafts identified almost exclusively with women and was regarded as a housewifely skill rather than a specialist means of livelihood.

Patchwork was used for bedcovers in the makers own home and it thus provided a creative outlet for people who had few means of expression as well as combining symbolic significance, practical function and visual beauty.

Many landlords and the Council of National Education encouraged the making of patchwork as it encouraged the Victorian virtues of industry and thrift, along with improving the comfort and beauty of the home. Money saved by the creation of homemade bedding freed money in the home for other purposes. In time all social classes became involved in the craft. Due to the fact that the more affluent upper- and middle-classes abandoned their worn clothes, or changed them with the trends of fashion, they had material for patchwork to hand. However, the lower social classes generally purchased fabric scraps from dressmakers and textile factories as their own clothes were either too worn to be re-used, or they were compelled to re-model garments for the use of other family members as "hand-me-downs".

The technique of patchwork is ancient and universal and it is not known when it first appeared in Ireland. There are early literary references to what is thought to be a type of applique, but the craft as it is known today is accepted as having been introduced by the aristocracy from England during the eighteenth century, spreading from the top to the bottom of the social scale and from east to west across the country. The earliest known surviving specimens date from the late eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Most are applique, this method allowed almost total freedom, in design, but block or frame arrangements are most common and although flowers and birds remained popular motifs, later examples are more primitive and use plain instead of printed fabrics.

Mosaic is perhaps the truest form of patchwork, as the entire fabric is composed of small pieces of cloth sewn together either over a paper template with overcasting or by a running stitch without the use of templates. Mosaic designs must be geometric so that they fit together like pieces of a jigsaw, but elaborate patterns can be created by combining several simple components like squares and triangles. Despite the limitations of technique on design, there is ample evidence of individual interpretation, whether in cotton or silk. Care must be taken to have fabrics of equal type and weight to prevent uneven wear.

Over the origin of the log cabin method there is some dispute. It was formerly thought to have been introduced through emigrants who sent patterns home or through women's magazines in the late nineteenth century, the period to which most survivals belong, but it may be that it was made here earlier and that examples have simply failed to survive. It is made by sewing strips of equal width of light and dark coloured fabric on opposite of adjacent sides round a central square until the required size is reached. The squares can be assembled in many ways to give different patterns. Despite its complicated finished appearance, log cabin is a simple method and can be made with or without a background. It is usually found with a background as this made it possible to combine fabrics of different type and weight. It is one of the few methods in which it is possible to use men's heavy woollen suitings which, despite their dismal appearance, were warm; bedcovers of this type were popular for winter use.

Quilting was a special social activity and quilting parties, where neighbours gathered in each other's houses on winter evenings to quilt in return for food and entertainment, are remembered with affection.

Irish patchwork mirrors the lives of those who made it. To look at it without understanding this is to underestimate its value.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Bridie Keane

ADDRESS: Glosh, Blacksod, Ballina.

DATE OF VISIT: 3/5/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Quilting

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Mostly shops in Athlone

COST OF MATERIALS: £5 per yard of Cotton Material

TOOLS NEEDED: Sewing Machine, Needles, Thread, Materials and Wadding

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Combat Poverty came into the area and started to show different people how to make these quilts

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Maggie Meenaghan

ADDRESS: Glosh, Blacksod, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 3/5/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Quilt Making

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Materials and Wadding bought in Dublin

COST OF MATERIALS: Not sure but they are very expensive

TOOLS NEEDED: Sowing Machine, Needles, Thread, Material and Wadding

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Combat Poverty came into the area and taught the people this particular craft.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?:

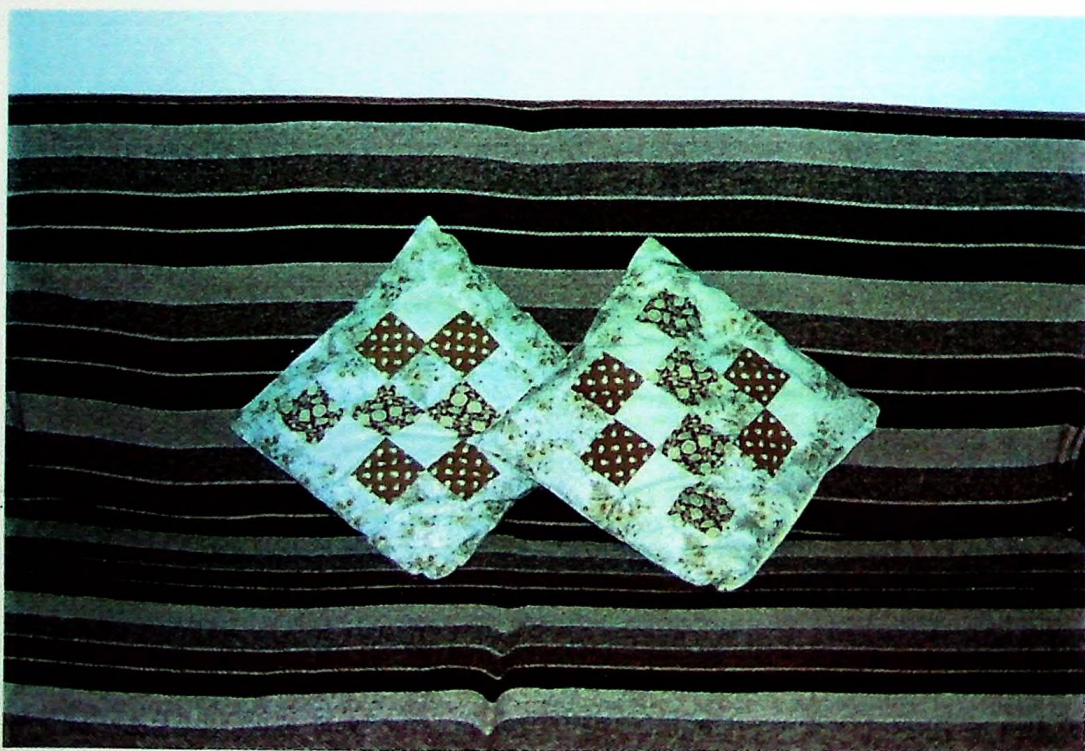
 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

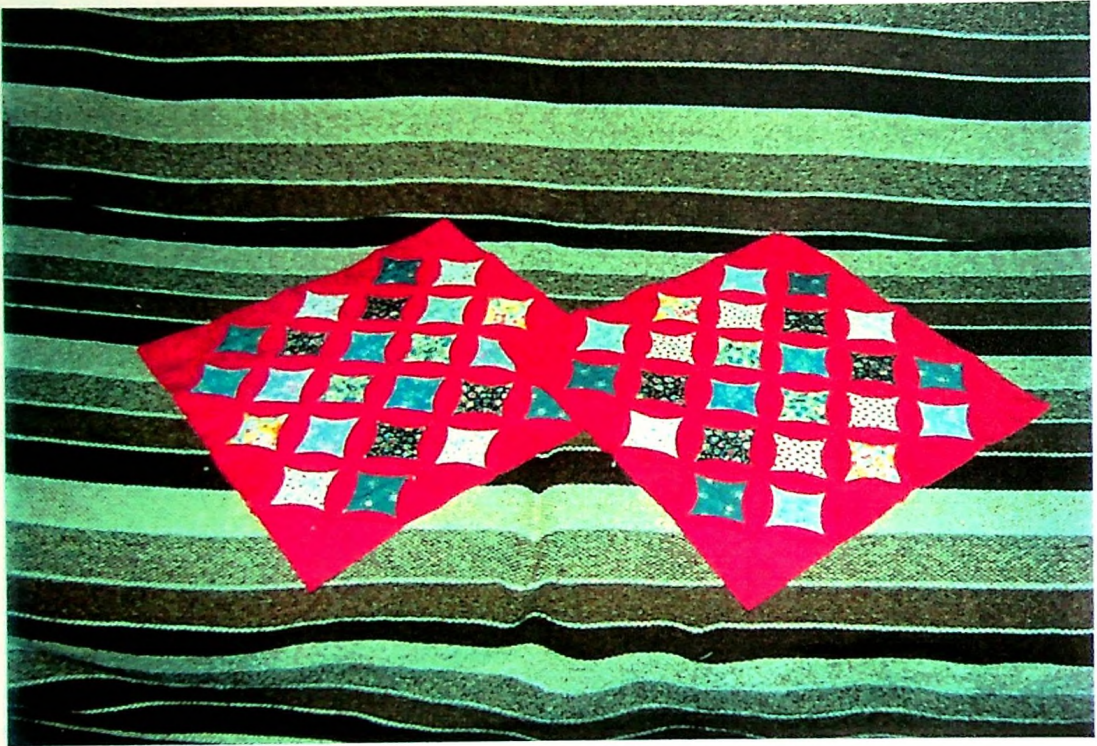
Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



KNITTING:

Handknitting is a craft with roots deep in the life of the Irish countryside. Handknit 'Ganseys' or sweaters, caps, stockings, trousers, and shawls were once commonly worn, but the 'cottage industry' of Irish handknits has lasted longest along The Western Seaboard.

Equipped with sweaters, homespun bawneen trousers and jackets, fishermen braved the stormiest of seas in their currachs. It was said that if a fisherman drowned at sea and washed ashore far from home he might be identified by the stitches or pattern of his gansey or other garment. In certain places the locals will tell you that the stitches in a gansey have a meaning or tell a story, relating to life of the fisherman - sea, earth, sky, marriage, sons to take to his place.

Many stitches are also supposed to have a religious significance. Some traditional stitches and the significance of each are explained below:

The Trinity (Blackberry Stitch)

Supposed to represent the Holy stitch. It is done by making three stitches from one and one from three.

The Marriage Lines or Crooked Road

A zig zag stitch, depicting the ups and downs of married life, usually shown running from shoulder to hem of the garment.

The Ladder of Life

Purl or twist stitches, worked to form the poles and rungs of the ladder of life, against a plain stitch background. It symbolises the pilgrims road to eternal happiness.

The Tree of Life (Fern Stitch)

Symbolises a long life and sturdy sons.

The Irish Moss

Represents wealth to fisherfolk.

The Trellis

An intricate pattern of plain stitches worked to form a trellis effect over purl stitches. It represents the stoney fields of the West, and the nets of the fishermen.

The Honeycomb

This is made by twisting stitches forwards and backwards across the panel. It is a tribute to the sea. It was considered a lucky omen if a fisherman saw a swarm of bees before setting out to sea: A good catch was assured.

Cable and Rope

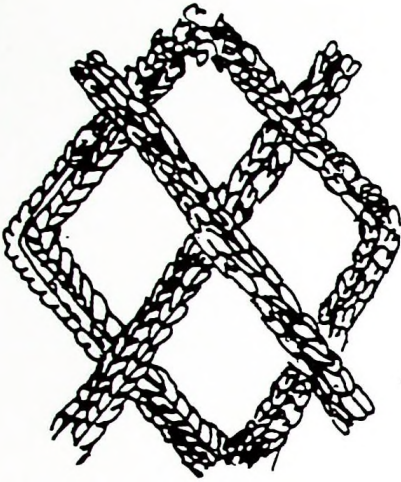
Of all types they represent the fishermans ropes.

Diamond

Usually formed in moss stitch and is said to represent wealth.

From the crafts deep roots flowers a tradition that remains intact to the present day.

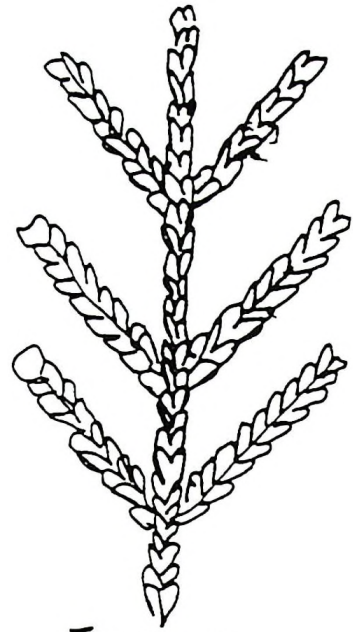
Irish handknit garments are not worn solely for their durable and practical qualities but for their eternal fashionable appeal.



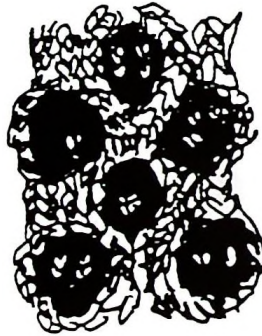
Diamond.



Blackberry



TREE OF LIFE



Honeycomb.



Cable.



BASKET.



LINK.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Mary Kate Padden

ADDRESS: Ardmore, Binghamstown, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 4/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Knitting

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Locally

COST OF MATERIALS: £12 before made

TOOLS NEEDED: Knitting Needles

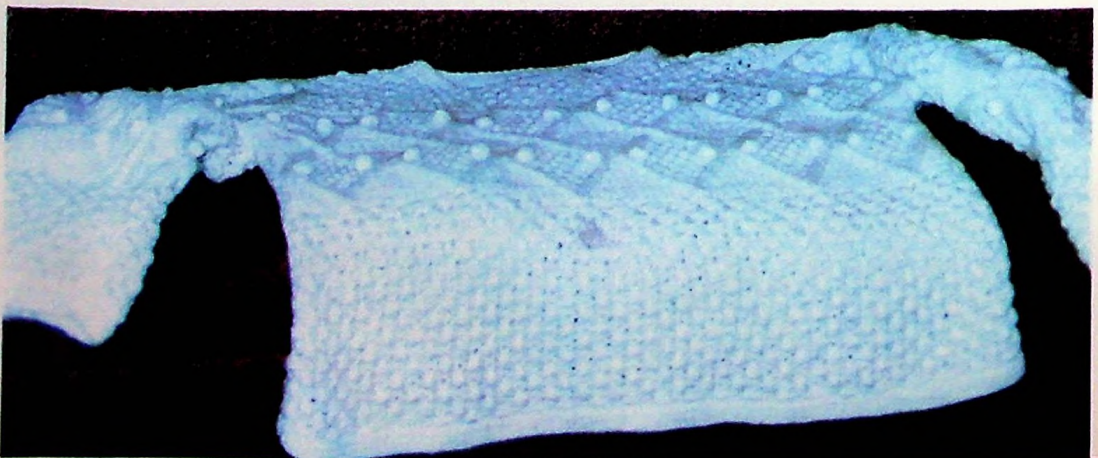
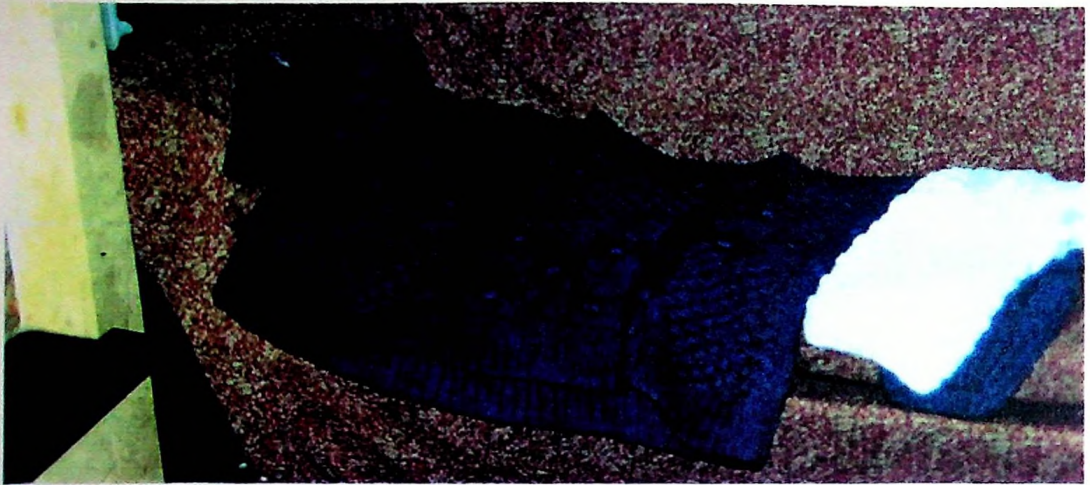
HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Learned this craft at school - I have always done this.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Mary Geoghegan

ADDRESS: Lurgchloy, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 3/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Knitting and Crochet

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Mrs Barrett

COST OF MATERIALS:

TOOLS NEEDED: Knitting Needles and Wool

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? I have been knitting for forty years

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Lena Doocey

ADDRESS: Geesala, Ballina, Co Mayo

DATE OF VISIT: 5/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Knitting

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Billy Mc Andrew

COST OF MATERIALS: Approximately £3 per hank

TOOLS NEEDED: Knitting Needles

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? I was brought up with it in my family

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 / LOCALLY / NATIONALLY / INTERNATIONALLY

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: John and Mary Reilly

ADDRESS: Emlybeg South, Binghamstown, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 11/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Knitting

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Gaeltarra Eireann supply the wool for their garments

COST OF MATERIALS: £3.95 per hank (balls are dearer)

TOOLS NEEDED: Needles

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?John got it from his mother and I was taught

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

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DYEING:

The process by which for many people a piece of fabric acquires its individuality is the dyeing. For centuries dyes have been extracted from the roots and stems, leaves, berries and flowers of various plants, as well as from insects and shellfish. Of all the traditional dyestuffs used, lichen is the oldest and has remained the most popular down to our own times. Lichen is a plant organism composed of fungus and alga; usually green, grey or yellow in colour, it grows on rocks, tree trunks, roofs and walls. The most common lichens, sometimes referred to as crottle, are the *parmelia saxatilis* and the *parmelia omphalodes*, much used by traditional weavers. Often it was the children's job to go out after it had rained to collect lichen for use in dyeing.

The first break in the long continuity of the craft came with the introduction of foreign dyewoods in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and in many places the native plants were rapidly displaced. They fell into almost complete disuse during the eighteenth century when aniline dyestuffs made their appearance, so that in time many of the old dyestuffs and the shades they once represented were all but forgotten.

The process of dyeing has three stages: washing, mordanting and the dyeing itself. In order to allow the colouring matter to penetrate freely, the material must be thoroughly scoured, otherwise its natural grease comes between the dyes and the fabric.

Mordants, or 'drugs' - usually metallic salts - are used to render the dyestuff permanent. The fabric is treated with the mordant and then plunged into the dyeing solution.

The most common mordants used with wool are alum, copperas and bichromate of potash, but formerly crude native alum could be obtained from wood ash, sheep manure, oak galls, human urine and the sediments of certain pools containing alumina or iron.

The vegetable substances most commonly used in homespun dyeing down to our times are as follows:

Black: Sediments of bogpools, containing alumina or iron; iris or yellow flag, and the bark of certain trees.

Brown Crottle: Dulse (a type of seaweed), peat soot, water lily, onion skins.

Blue and Blue-Black: Indigo, frauchens (billberries) or blackberries, sloe or blackthorn.

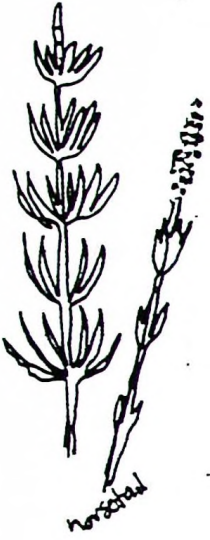
Red: madder

Yellow: Heather, bracken, common dock, weld, autumn crocus, fustic.

The three most useful dyewoods are logwood, fustic and madder, used singly and in combination with various mordants a great variety of shades may be obtained.

Dyeing was traditionally a woman's task and it was considered unlucky for a male to be present when the dyepot was down.

More details on the natural materials and the vegetable substances most commonly used in homespun dyeing, together with the actual method of dyeing and the resulting shades and colours, may be found in the chapter - "Dress in Erris and North Mayo".



PAINTING:

Painting styles range from the conventionalised tomb, paintings of ancient Egypt through the realistic works of the Renaissance's, to the numerous fashions of modern times.

Modern western painting began to emerge as we know it today in the middle ages, under the influence and patronage of the Christian Church. The first attempts at realism are usually associated with Giotto, an Italian master of the early 14th century. Van Eyck, a founder of the Flemish school, developed the new technique of painting in oil.

During the Renaissance (15th and 16th centuries), painting reached a new level of authority and grandeur under such masters as Leonardo De Vinci, Michaelangelo, Raphael and Titian. The ensuing centuries saw the rise of a number of new painting styles, each a reaction against its immediate predecessor. The lurid colours anguished forms of post - Renaissance mannerism were replaced by the exuberant riches of the baroque style.

By the mid 19th century, the most innovative movement was impressionism, pioneered by Renoir, Monet and Manet. Seurat, a neo-impressionist, invented pointillism - using tiny dots of pure pigments that fuse into solid colours when seen from afar.

Since 1945, the frontiers of painting have been pushed to the limit. But far from being alarmed by novelty, the art public has responded to it enthusiastically.

Having briefly examined the history of the art of painting, we looked to Erris and visited a number of artists in the area. The following sections of this chapter take four examples of local craftspersons and looks at some of their work. A questionnaire was also distributed to the artists and replies consist of details on their crafts, the type of materials and tools used, the worth of their work and the potential for sale and marketing.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Ursala Steiner

ADDRESS: Muings, Barnatra, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 22/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Painting

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Ink colours and drawing paper all from France

COST OF MATERIALS:

TOOLS NEEDED: Fine Pen, Ink and Drawing Paper

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? started as a pastime while pregnant

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ LOCALLY / NATIONALLY / INTERNATIONALLY

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

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CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Margo Geraghty

ADDRESS: Bridge Road, Belmullet, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 1/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Paintings

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: O'Dowds Castlebar

COST OF MATERIALS: Board £7/10 (canvas), Paints vary

TOOLS NEEDED: Brushes and Knives

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? From school art classes in the Convent.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

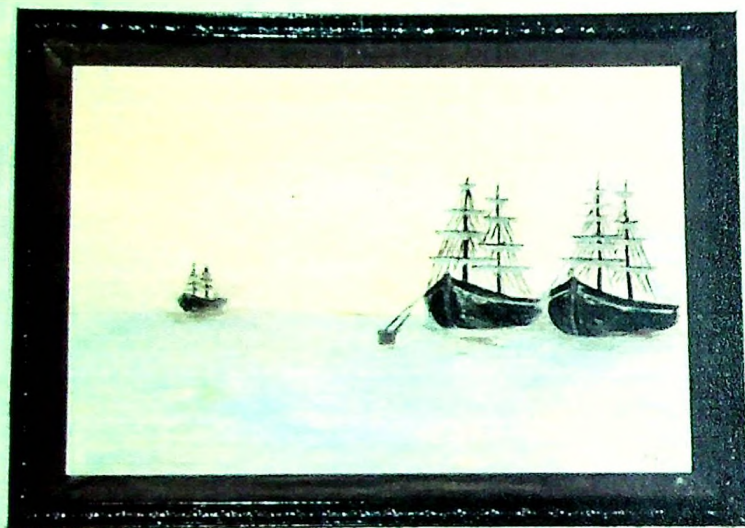
 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

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Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Martin Healy

ADDRESS: Ballinaboy, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 22/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Painter

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Castlebar and Ballina

COST OF MATERIALS: Water Colours, Books £5.10

TOOLS NEEDED: Paint Brush, Water Colours, Paper (heavy duty),
Frames from Callaghans in Ballina, from Mrs Noone in Belmullet.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Very
interested in Craftmaking - Craft Centre in Town, Painting Classes.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

**WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR
EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:**Yes

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CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Michael Anders

ADDRESS: Tallaghanduff, Geesala, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 4/5/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Carving, Painter, Sculpture, Toys, Unique Furniture, Dolls House, Play Grounds and Photography.

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Bog and any waste Timber

COST OF MATERIALS: Depending

TOOLS NEEDED: Bant Saw, Chisels, Mullet.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? I am a Draughtsman & Engineer and I took it from there.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

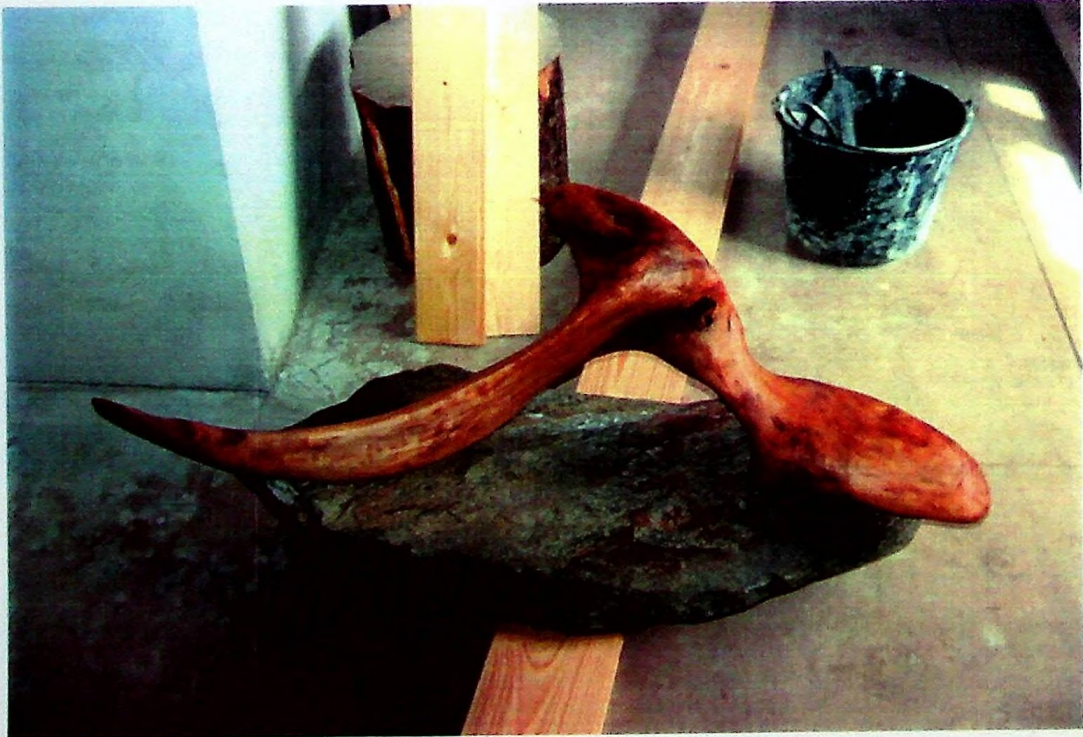
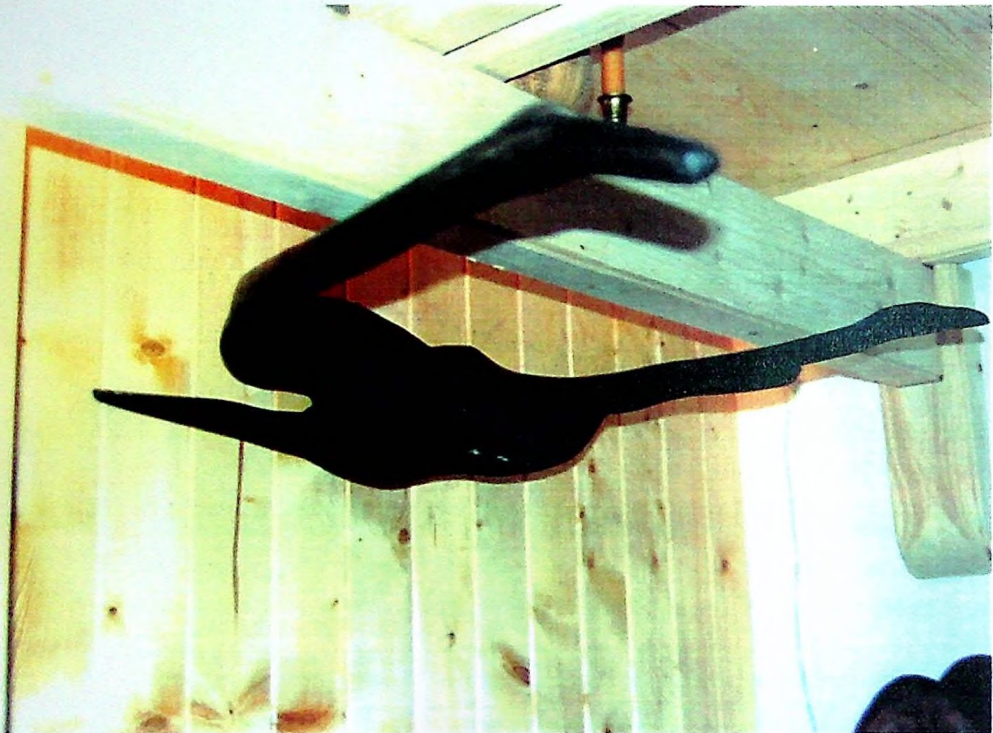
 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

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WOODCARVING:

Woodcarving began with a tree trunk or branch being crudely shaped to the form of man or beast. It reached heights of intricacy with the medieval and Renaissance masters and has now returned to simplicity in the massive shapes of modern sculpture.

Woodcarving was used by the Vikings to create the intricately patterned serpent figureheads and stern-tails on their longboats. In China and Japan wooden carvings of Demons and fabulous beasts decorated temples and homes.

Tomb effigies were originally made in wood. The 15th and 16th centuries were perhaps the height of the art of wood carving. Some modern artists though among them Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth have produced some of their most interesting work in wood.

The wood longest in use, of course is oak, while mahogany came into use as lately as 1725, or that may work in lime, burrwalnut, yellow-pink, rosewood, and many more. The earliest work of saxon and medieval carvers nearly all in oak, is recognisable by a comparative simplicity which called for fewer tools than later work.

Wood carving has survived in the Erris region, although 20th century styles may differ from those referred to above. Interviews with six local wood carvers serves to prove that the craft is alive and well in the area.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Martin Reilly

ADDRESS: Mullaghroe, Clogher P.O., Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 3/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Traps, Gifts, Jaunting Cars and Ass Carts.

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Northern Ireland

COST OF MATERIALS: £150 - £200

TOOLS NEEDED: Sanders, Jigsaws, Carpenter Tools and Welding.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? I have always been interested in carpentry

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

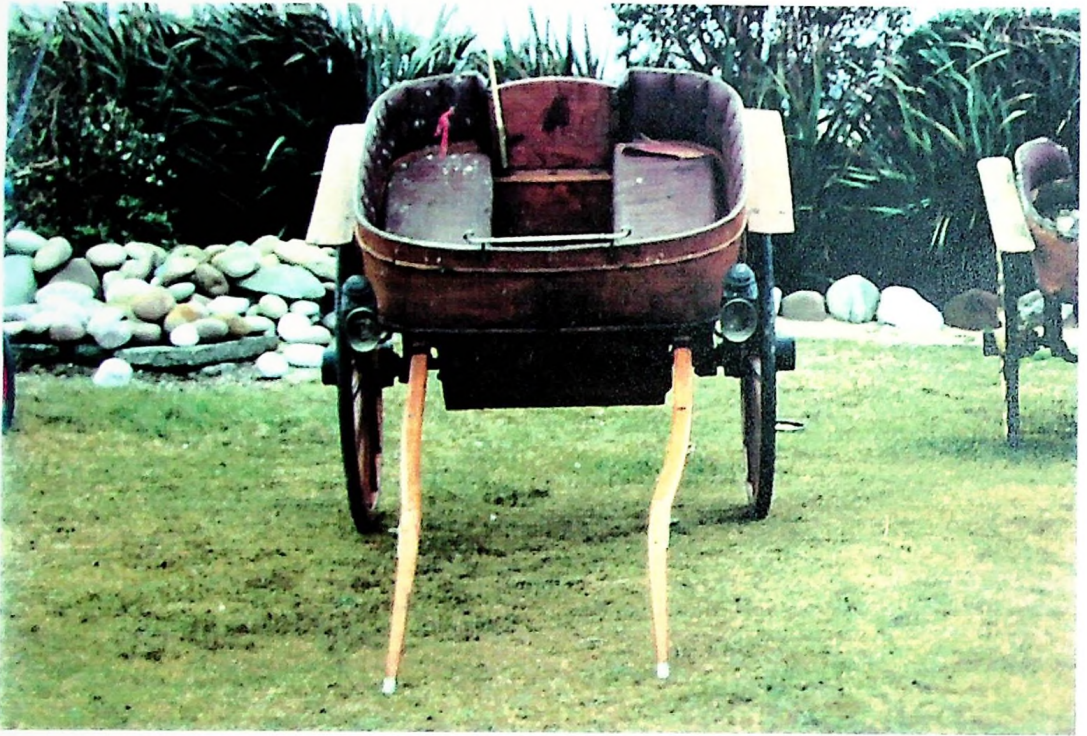
 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

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CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Elsie Tighe

ADDRESS: Carrowtighe, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 23/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Wood craft, Wall plaque, letter rack, key racks.

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Off cuts of plywood from Archers & Diamonds in Ballina.

COST OF MATERIALS: Sheet of Plywood £18 - £20

TOOLS NEEDED: Varnish, Frett Saws, Designs and Sandpaper.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Her father used to do wood carving and she learned from him.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Anthony Dixon

ADDRESS: 29 Seaside, Belmullet, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 1/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Traditional Crafts (cottages, currach etc.)

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Materials are all bought locally

COST OF MATERIALS: A cottage costs approximately £5 to make

TOOLS NEEDED: Stanley Knife, Hammer etc

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Because I like traditional things

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

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CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: John Reilly

ADDRESS: Carne Rock, Belmullet, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 4/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Small Cottage

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Co-op

COST OF MATERIALS: £30 - £35

TOOLS NEEDED: Hammers etc

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? I have always done this

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

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CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Patrick J. Murphy

ADDRESS: Cartron, Clogher P.O., Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 11/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Wood worker (Windows, Miniature Sailors)

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: What's available (eg) drift wood etc

COST OF MATERIALS: Prices vary from 15p per foot of softwood oak - £2.50 per foot

TOOLS NEEDED: Hand tools and some power tools

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? I have been interested in woodworking since I was fourteen years old

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

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Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Paddy Gorham

ADDRESS: Barnatra, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 22/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Small boats

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:

COST OF MATERIALS: £5 - £8

TOOLS NEEDED: Knife, Sandpaper, Saws, White Deal, Tarcy, Lolly-pop Sticks

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Boats seen from a young age, as a hobby in winter

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Michael Lavelle

ADDRESS: Ballina Rd, Belmullet, Co Mayo

DATE OF VISIT: 21/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Small Boats

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: They are bought in local shops

COST OF MATERIALS: £100

TOOLS NEEDED: Small drill, split pin, wood, clock fittings, nylon, white deal, timber, liner thread, nails, straight pins, drill and paint

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Inspired by a picture of the Asgard

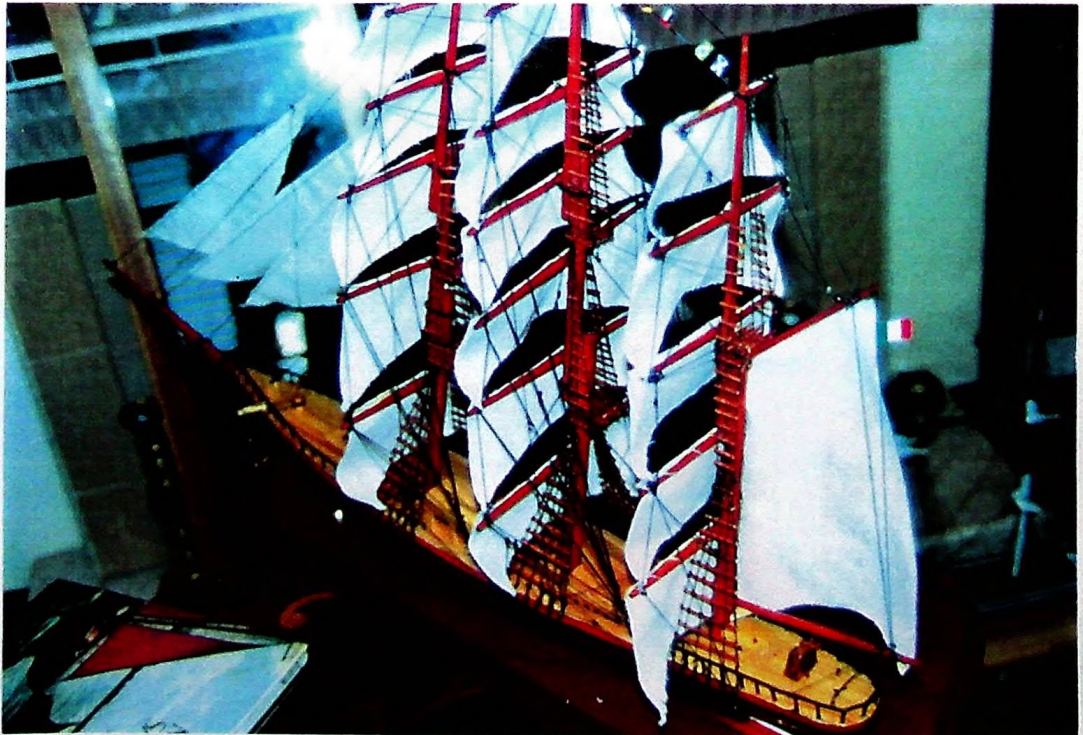
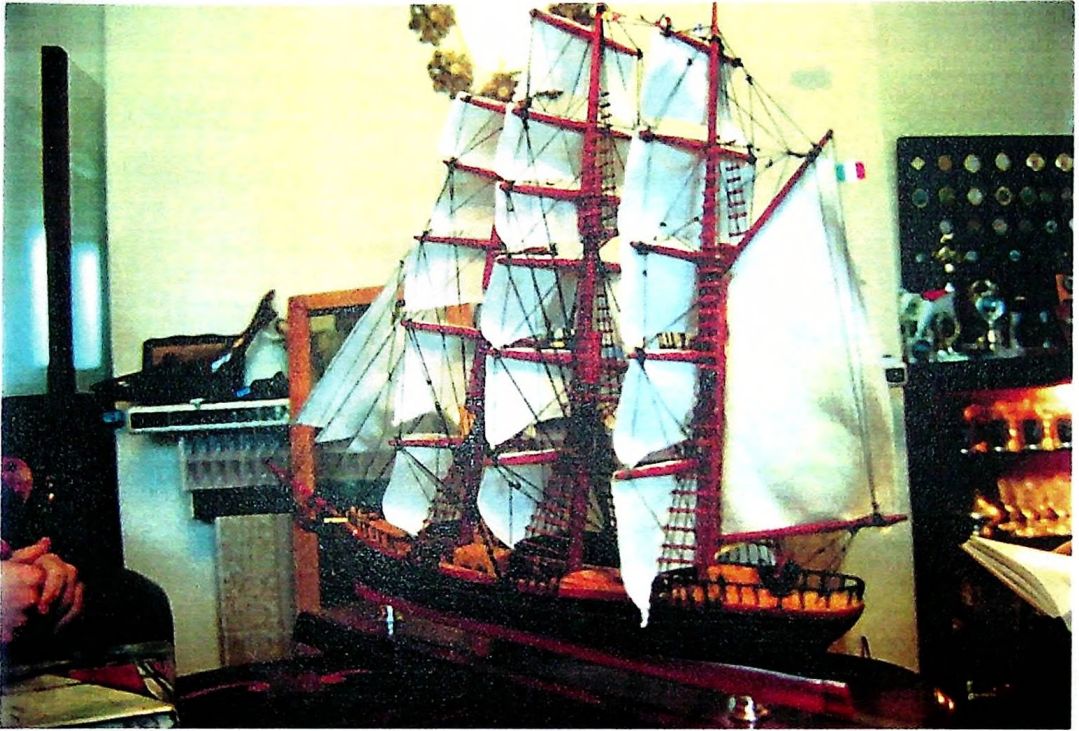
DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

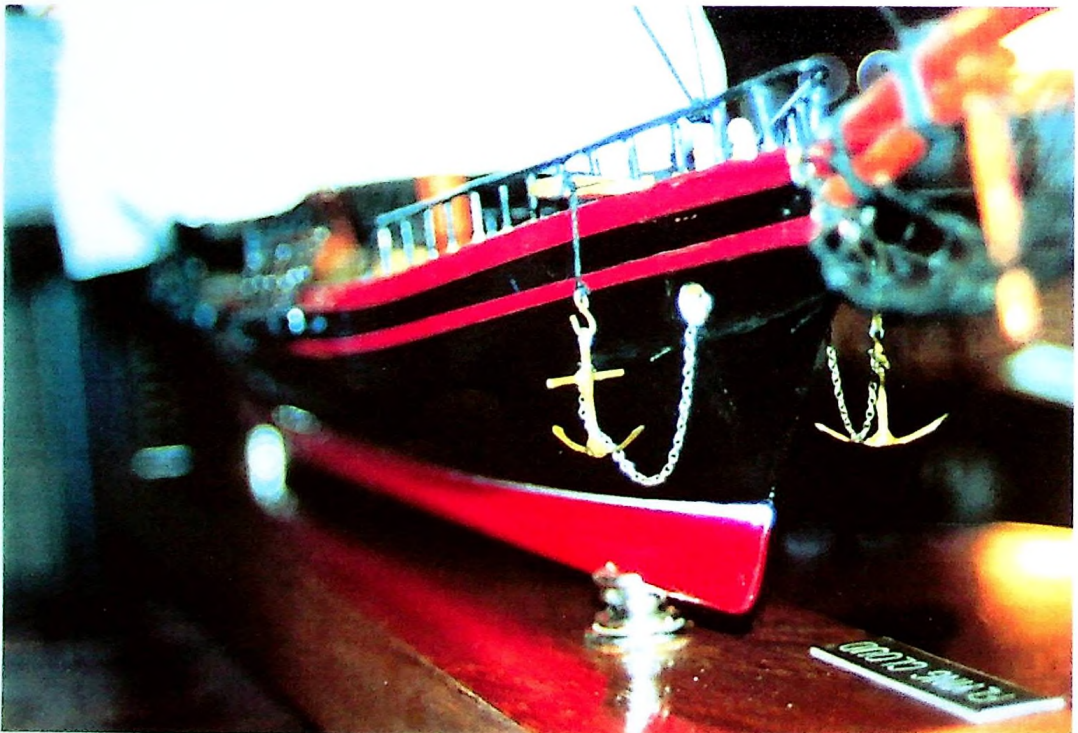
WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

Leabharlann Co. Mhuilgeo
Mayo County Library

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



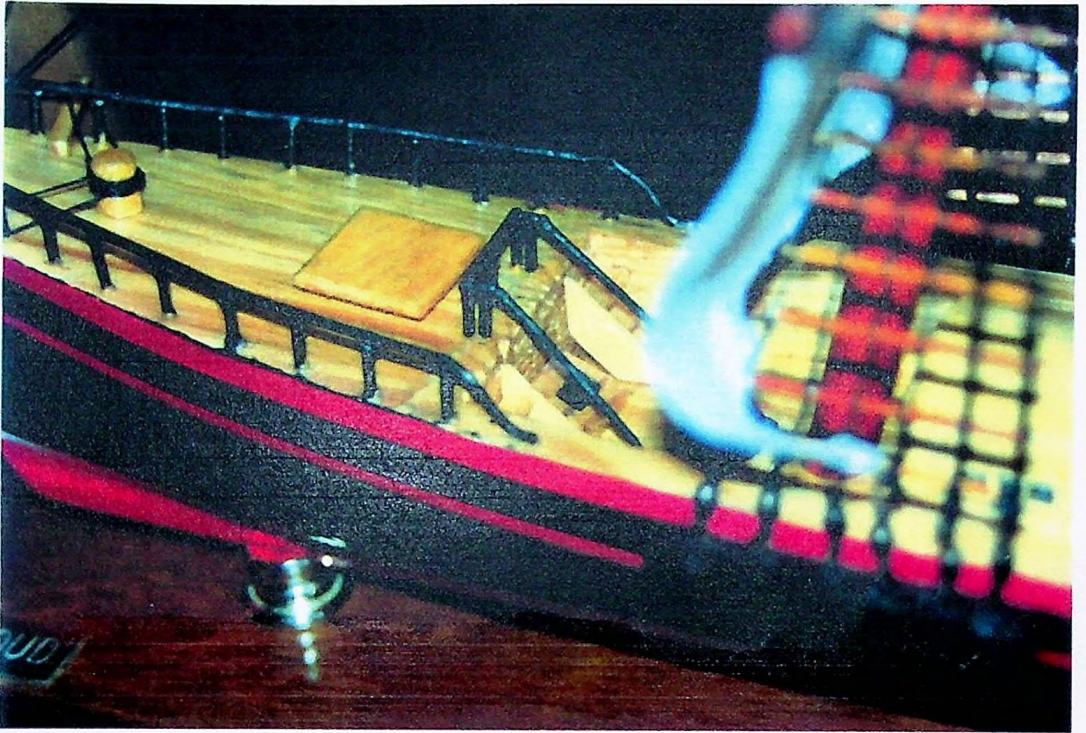
Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



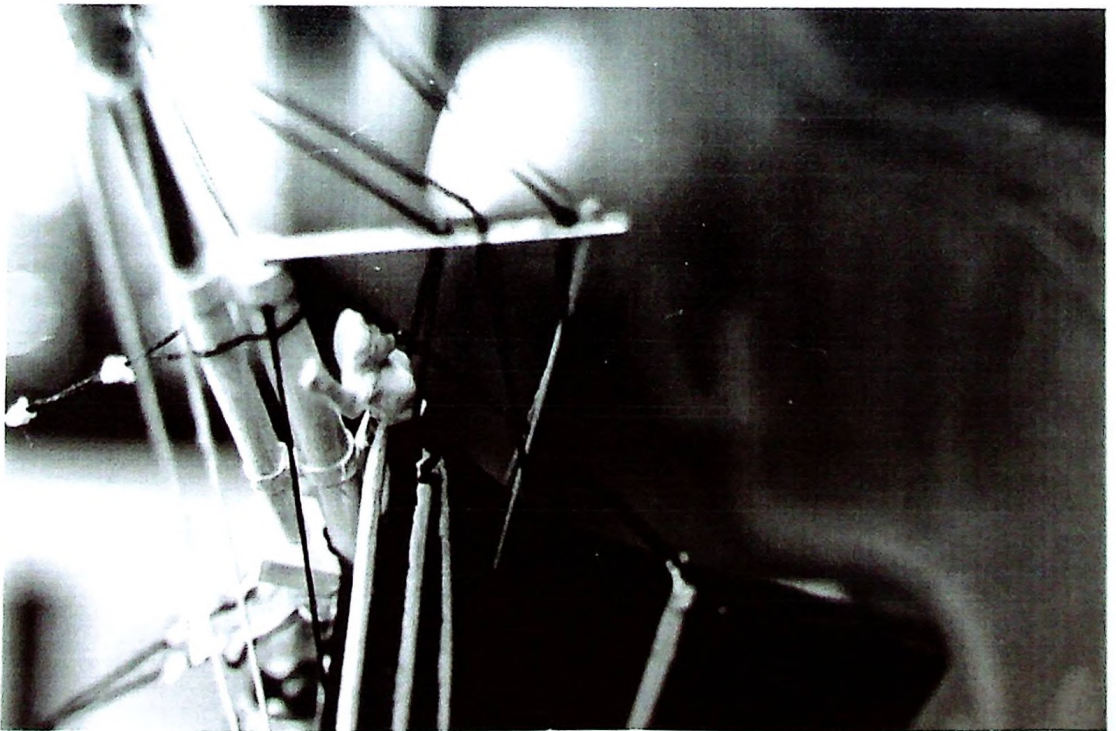
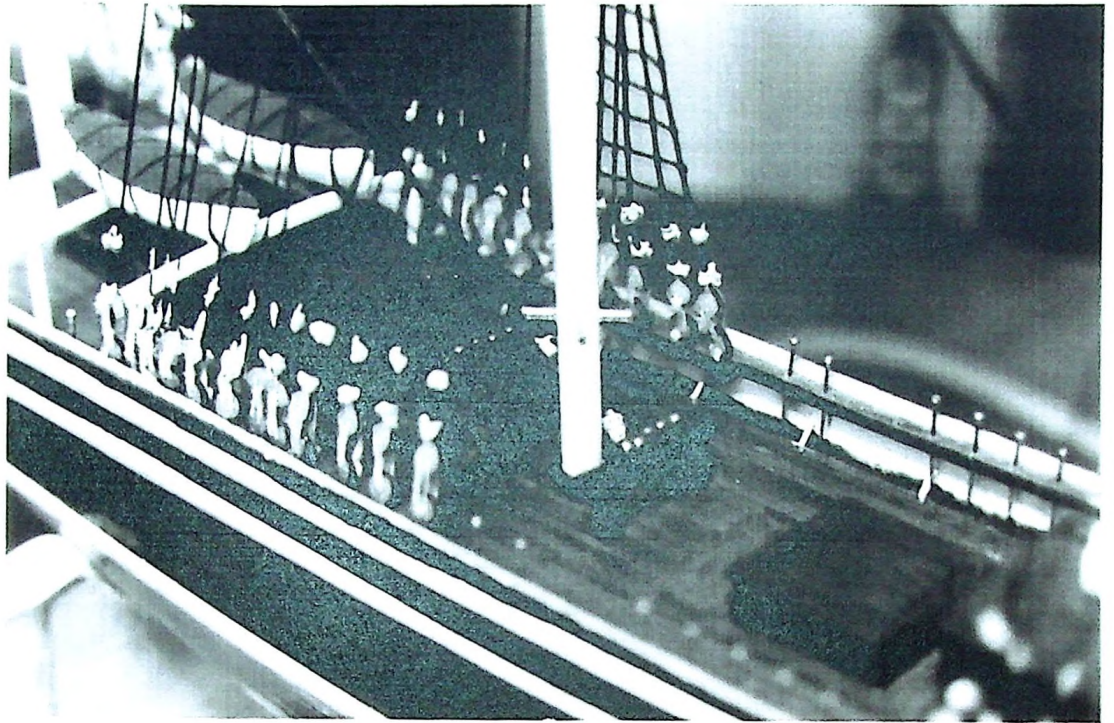
Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



THATCHING.

Before the development of modern rail and road transport, that is to say up to about a hundred years ago, only the very rich or very powerful Lord or prelate could afford to bring heavy loads over long distances. Hence, when the ordinary man built a house he had to use local materials. The type and quality of these materials varied from place to place: some were easy to handle and gave good results, others were less so and made some methods difficult to use and some results impossible to achieve. On the other hand local materials and their skillful development to meet local conditions often led to the creation of forms notable for their beauty as well as their utility.

The Irish climate, mild and moist, demands house roofs which are sloped for the rainwater to run off and of course, covered with a material which keeps the water out. One system of covering roofs employs a coating of small overlapping plates familiar to use in Ireland since at least the middle ages, tiles less frequently - in some towns and on some larger buildings - slates more often, found even on farmhouses and outbuildings in those areas where suitable materials could be quarried locally, as in parts of Counties Clare, Cork, Waterford, Mayo and Donegal. In the past, when large woodlands provided abundant timber for all purposes, some roofs were covered with shingles - flat plates of split timber - but with the spoliation of the Irish woods in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries this craft died out.

Irish traditional houses are very rarely of any ground-plan other than rectangular; thus the roofs are of simple construction, falling into two types: hip-roofs and gable roofs. In the gable-roofs, there are only two surfaces, front and back; at the ends of the house the gables rise up to the ridge of the roof. With the hip-roof there are four roof surfaces; the roof slopes at the ends as well as at the sides. In some cases there is a full hip, where the end walls of the houses are half-hipped, with end walls somewhat higher than the side walls. In Ulster, North and West Connacht and South-West Munster the gabled roof predominates and in many areas is the only kind, while in the South-Eastern areas of Ireland the opposite is the case with hip-roof as the usual type.

Wheat straw is the most popular material in most parts of the country. In Derry, Donegal and Fermanagh flax is preferred to wheat. It is also used to some extent in Antrim, Armagh, Monaghan and Tyrone, and occasionally in other districts, in spite of a belief that flax is unlucky - a belief arising, according to a Fermanagh correspondent, from the fact the flax is more inflammable than other materials. In many counties rye straw came second to wheat, and some thatching and cut before the grain had ripened. Oat straw used to be popular too, and took pride of place over wheat in Counties Kildare, Louth, Laois, Offaly and Westmeath. Barley straw is used very rarely. In some counties where reed grows in lakes and rivers it is used in preference to other materials. This is the case in particular in Munster; it was rarely used elsewhere until recently, when new methods of tillage and harvesting led to a shortage of suitable thatching straw. In mountainous districts, especially in Donegal, Mayo, Galway and Kerry, rushes and certain tough grasses were often used instead of and sometimes in preference to straw.

Opinions vary as to the length of time each material will last. An average of these opinions (for thorough thatching) would be; flax or reed, about twenty years; straw, eight to twelve years (wheat or rye, slightly longer than other kinds); rushes or grass, three to five years.

It should be pointed out that the thatched roof and the thatchers have vanished from wide areas of the Irish countryside. There is a shortage of straw and a reluctance on the part of local and central authorities to allow the building of thatched houses; there is the refusal of Insurance on thatched roofs. As a result of this, thatching as a craft has virtually disappeared. Fifty years ago every rural parish had its thatchers; now there are whole counties without one.

We spoke to Christy Mc Hale, a local Belmullet man who works with straw. He specialises in the production of miniature thatch cottages and straw hats. Christy learned the craft from his father which seems to indicate that the tradition of thatching has been handed down through generations, and survives in Erris on a minor scale, up to the present day.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Christy Mc Hale

ADDRESS: Muing, Belmullet, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 4/5/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Straw Hats/Small Houses

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Most of them grow in the field

COST OF MATERIALS:

TOOLS NEEDED: Knife, Twine

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Learned from my father

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 / **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



BASKETS:

Basket or wickerwork is generally acknowledged as being one of the oldest of all traditional crafts. Evidence of its antiquity has been found in many parts of the world. Evidence of this craft has been found in many of the crannógs or lake dwellings of Ireland. These habitations generally date from the late bronze age to early Christian times in Ireland and many examples of wickerwork in flooring, walls and huts have been recorded. In the famous Ballinderry Crannóg in Co. Offaly in central Ireland, the late bronze age layers, dated between the fourth and the first century BC, revealed a number of small wicker huts and a larger structure which was also possibly of wicker. The Crannóg builders show us ways in which the basketmakers put his skills to good use in the construction business. These same excavations also produced tenth and eleventh century evidence for the use of wickerwork in fences between plots, walls of houses, pathways, floor mats, internal kerbs for marking off bedding areas within houses and also wicker doors. The main materials used were willow, hazel and silver birch.

Many diverse materials are used by basketmakers and wickerworkers, but by far the commonest are the willow and the osier. There are many reasons why these are so popular: they grow easily in most areas; they occur in many varieties and more than sixty have been recorded in Ireland alone; they grow very quickly and rods of just one year's growth can be used. They are relatively durable and resist knocks well; they reproduce themselves quite rapidly and the worker can always be assured of a good supply; the most important of all; perhaps, is that very few tools are needed and generally the rods are pliant enough for the worker's hands to fashion what he will from them.

In Ireland, when referring to the material used by basketmakers, the word 'Sally' is used. In the Irish language this appears as saileach, while the slat refers to the osier. At one time Sally gardens were as common a feature of rural Ireland as the potato plot and as with other crops grown, the Sally was planted in springtime and carefully weeded and tended. Where Sally rods were grown in banks and hedgerows, the cuttings were often grouped in threes - one central and two at a 45 degree angle at either side. This helped the growth of the thick woody clump which is a common feature of Sally growing in Ireland.

Harvesting occurs annually and in Ireland the ideal cutting time is between November and February. When harvested, the rods are tied in bundles and left in a dry and safe place for a certain length of time. An idea, spot is the loft in an outhouse, where the rods are inaccessible to farmyard animals, sheltered from the elements and in an atmosphere where they will not dry too quickly or too much. Although the ideal cutting time is in the winter months, there are no hard and fast rules about the preparation of the rods.

For finer and more intricate work, the rods were spilt into three or more sections. A simple tool called a fender was used for this work; this was commonly made from bone, but some workers used fenders made from beech, horn and even sycamore.

In Ireland there were many different types of basket or wickerwork container as varieties of material which went into their making. In Co. Mayo, a straw basket called a Tiachog was used for holding eggs, especially when bringing them to the market. It was made in a similar way to the cisean, using plaited straw rope coiled on itself and stitched with laps of straw. The word tiachog literally means a bag or a pouch, while in parts of the west of Ireland it was a container in which hens laid eggs. In the Erris district of Co. Mayo, there were two other types of Tiachog, formed from rush plaits. The rushes were first steeped in water, then beaten and plaited. The plait may have been of any width providing it was made using an odd number of rushes. In one form the rush strips were about 20 cm (8 in) wide and sufficient in length to form both back and front of the container. The strips were then sewn together along the edges to form a continuous piece which was folded on itself in the form of a sack. An open-mouthed bag was the end product once the two edges were sewn. Generally a hem was turned down and sewn at the mouth, a rush rope being placed in the the fold as the work proceeded. This becomes a draw string to close the bag.

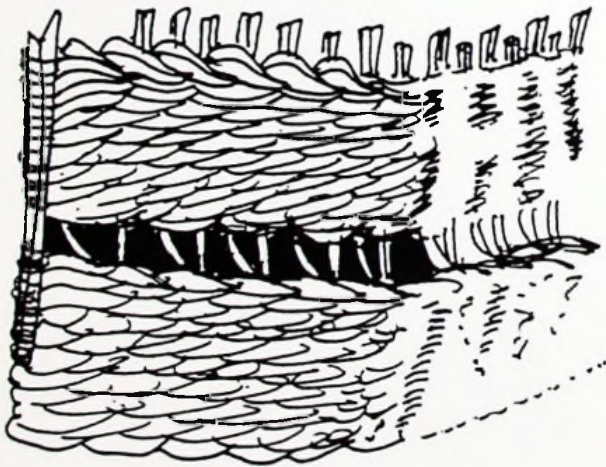
Another form of Tiachog was made by taking a very long strip of this plait and then coiling it on itself in lipe work fashion as was done with the baskets of straw. This form of tiachog was cylindrical in shape, the edges of the overlapping coils being sewn together with thread. Whatever shape of pattern the tiachog, it always formed a container for household commodities. It could be a clothes basket which hung on the wall; it could be lined with cloth for holding meal and salt; it could be a hen's nest or an egg basket.

Many items of wickerwork were used by fishermen. These included crab pots, eel pots, wicker fish traps, and baskets for holding spillet lines. The lobster pots had the greatest variety in shape, size and material of construction, being made from Sally rods, hoops of wood and green netting and also heather. The heather lobster pot was used particularly in North-West Mayo.

Basketmaking was also a specialised craft carried out by professional craftsmen. There also used to be many itinerant basketmakers who journeyed around the country and offered their services at a small charge. Good basketmakers were very jealous of their craft and often they would not let anyone see them either starting or finishing a basket.

The making of fancy basketwork from Sally rods also forms part of the traditional craft of Ireland and has long been associated with two areas in particular. The shores of Lough Neagh in the northern part of the country and the Suir Valley in the south.

Carriers of the craft have avoided the application of machinery over the years, as it retains its authentic charm and skillmanship. It is indeed a true handicraft.



TAPESTRY:

Tapestry is sometimes referred to as "picture weaving". The fact that it often uses short ends of yarn suggests that it was the earliest form of weaving, as the materials used for weaving centuries ago would only have been available in short lengths. Weaving began long before the advent of even the simplest looms as we know them.

Weavers of modern tapestries employ techniques which have been used by various peoples for thousands of years. Traditional techniques are combined in unusual ways and weavers experiment freely with new ideas.

The term, 'tapestry', is used in two senses. First, it refers broadly to any woven material, even one which has been embroidered. One hundred years ago, the meaning was narrowed to refer specifically to a weave in which the weft threads were packed so tightly that the warp yarns were concealed altogether, giving a solid weft -faced surface. This implies that many so called modern tapestries are not tapestries at all; nor is the Bayeux tapestry a true tapestry. In a true tapestry, front and back are identical except for any loose ends which, if not turned in, will hang loose on the wrong side. The weft threads are woven in where their colour appears in the design, so forming the pattern and completely covering the warp.

The actual method of weaving differs from one country to another. In European tapestry, a slit is left where wefts of one meet with wefts of another colour. Wefts of different colours interlock in oriental tapestry while in many primitive tapestries weft threads of one colour are dovetailed with threads of another colour.

Present day tapestry takes a similar form to that of the former ornamental works. String art, fairy embroidery, rug embroidery, pin and thread and pure tapestry pictures are the main products of our interviews.

All craftspersons involved in tapestry, said when asked, that they would be willing to sell their wares and believe that the potential is their for local, national and international scale of the crafts. This belief serves to prove that there is still an interest in and appreciation of the art of tapestry and the resulting work.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Teresa Reilly

ADDRESS: Shraigh West, Bunnahowen, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 1/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Fairy Embroidery and Thread & Nail

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Arnotts, Dublin.

COST OF MATERIALS: £15 for the set 12 years ago

TOOLS NEEDED: All tools are included in the pack you buy.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Her daughter started it first and she picked it up from there.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

Leabharlann Co. Mhuigh Co.
Mayo County Library

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Mary Ann Lally

ADDRESS: Shraigh East, Bunnahowen, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 1/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Rug Embroidery

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Rug plan came from Cork

COST OF MATERIALS: £100

TOOLS NEEDED: Latch Needle

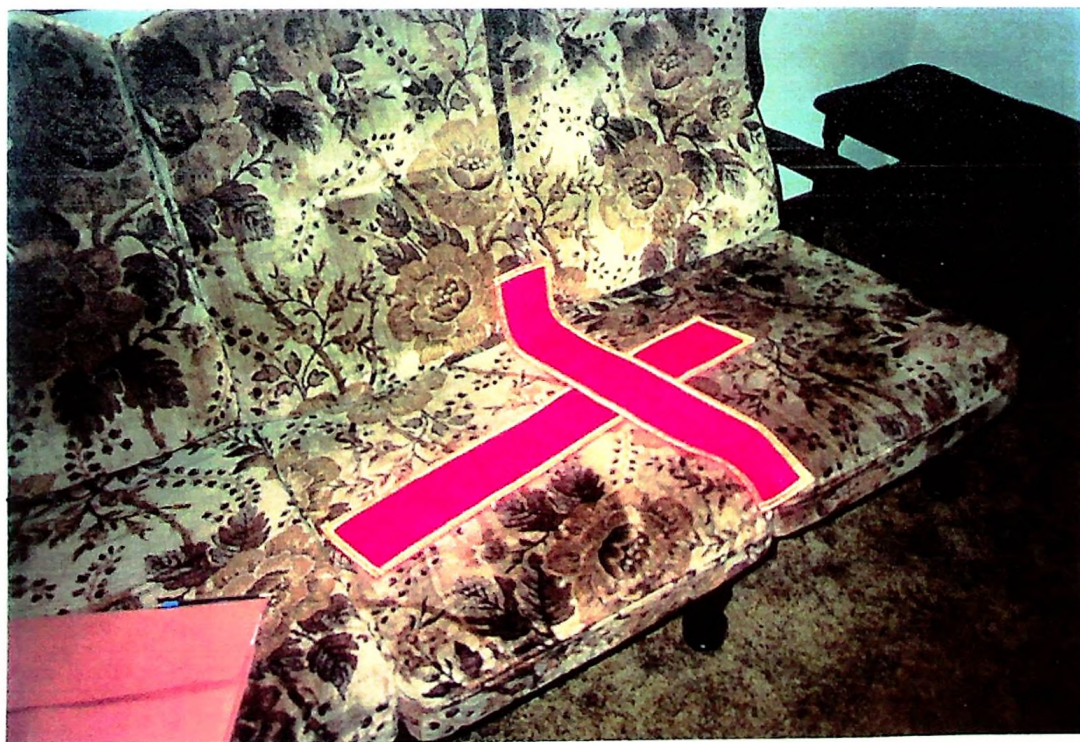
HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Started as a hobby

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Josephine Geraghty

ADDRESS: Elly Bay, Blacksod, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 18/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Pin & Thread Pictures, Shellard, Fairy Embroidery

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Locally

COST OF MATERIALS: Sticks 400 £2

TOOLS NEEDED: Glue, Sticks, Varnish, Paint Brush and Knife

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Learned in Galway Hospital

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Maureen Reilly

ADDRESS: Piper, Binghamstown, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT: 12/3/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Tapestry

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Dublin/Ballina

COST OF MATERIALS: £30 - £35 for Wools etc, £16 for frame

TOOLS NEEDED: Thick Needle

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Her sister made this craft, and she started from that.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Una Kelly

ADDRESS: Shraigh, Bunnahowen, Ballina, Co Mayo.

DATE OF VISIT:

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT: Upholstery, Jewellery Boxes, Key Holders and Plaques

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?: Castlebar

COST OF MATERIALS: £250 - £150

TOOLS NEEDED: Bradial, Small Tack Hammer, Mallet, Stapler, Gimp Pins, Button Machine.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING? Did a course in Belmullet and then in Castlebar for 6 months

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT? Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?: Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Mrs Eileen O'Rourke

ADDRESS: Bangor-Erris, Ballina, Co Mayo

DATE OF VISIT: 9/3/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Fairy Embroidery

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:England and Switzerland

COST OF MATERIALS: £100

TOOLS NEEDED: Needles, Sewing Machine, Velvet Thread and Frames

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?She likes all crafts and hobbies

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US OUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: David Thompson

ADDRESS: Tirrane, Clogher P.O., Ballina, Co Mayo

DATE OF VISIT: 3/5/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:String Art

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:It is a shop bought kit

COST OF MATERIALS:

TOOLS NEEDED: Hammer, Nails and plan

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?His grand-daughter was doing it in the convent

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



SHIPS IN BOTTLES:

The technique of putting ships into bottles developed during the early years of the 19th century in the forecastles of the old sailing ships. In an era when sea voyages lasted months and years, and entertainment was self-evolved, off-watch sailormen occupied themselves creating bits of nautical folk art from whatever raw materials came to hand. On whaling vessels the most abundant scrap materials were the teeth and bones of whales and walruses, which the whalersmen fabricated into many familiar items collectively known as scrimshaw. But other materials such as wood and rope and yarn were also used, and many interesting and decorative objects were made from these. It is not surprising then that an empty bottle might have piqued the imagination of some long gone salt and led him to devise the technique for displaying miniature ships.

Whatever the origin, the technique for putting ships into bottles was well known to sailormen of all the major seafaring nation. Evidence of their work can be found in nautical museums throughout Europe and on both coasts of the United States. The collection in the seamen's bank for savings in the city of New York includes approximately 100 examples housed in bottles ranging from gallon size down to miniatures smaller than a hen's egg. Good examples can also be found in nautical collections.

Unfortunately, despite widespread knowledge of the technique, good early examples of ship-in-bottle have become scarce. Even well known dealers in maritime art rarely have them available, and when they do change upon one the price quoted is well outside what most individuals would be willing to pay. This is a shame, for there are few decorations as evocatively nautical as a ship-in-a-bottle. Even crude examples foster vivid memories of the sea, and a model which has been carefully done can stand by itself as a true work of art.

As with the sailors and whalersmen of long ago, Gerry Sweeney of Blacksod took up the hobby as a method of passing free time. Mr. Sweeney began making the bottled ships while working in the local lighthouse but continues to enjoy the art up to the present day.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Gerry Sweeney

ADDRESS: Blacksod, Belmullet, Co Mayo

DATE OF VISIT: 18/2/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Ships and Bottles, Tweed maps one of Erris.

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Locally

COST OF MATERIALS:

TOOLS NEEDED: Special tools needed home-made, wire

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?1973 -
1974 I was working in the lighthouse, and it was a hobby

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

/ **LOCALLY** / **NATIONALLY** / **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

ARMILLARY SPHERE:

The Armillary Sphere is in the shape of the earth and the time is read from numerals around the inside of the sphere. Designed by Owen Duigan, they grace the grounds of many businesses and homes confirming their usefulness as 'Garden Furniture' or focal points, regardless of the weather.

The sphere is actually made up of four rings, representing the equator, meridian, horizon and the East/West ring, and Owen Duignan has compiled a chart to enable either Greenwich mean time or summer time to be calculated accurately, for those of a scientific disposition. Ted Sweeney originally from Erris, made the unusual modern sundial in the rose garden and another at the grounds of the Bank of Ireland Computer Centre in Cabinteely.

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



BLACKSMITHING:

Up to the late 1950's, and in places possibly later, almost every parish in Ireland had at least one forge and a Blacksmith.

The Blacksmith's work ranged from repairing agricultural implements, shoeing wheels, and making gates and railings. to shoeing horses, ponies and donkeys. He thus provided a service for all classes of farmer.

The importance of the Blacksmith in Irish Society is well known. Apart from his iron working and horse-shoeing, the blacksmith was known to have pulled human teeth and the water in his trough was a favourite cure for warts.

More usually, the town and country forge in Ireland was a fairly small building with a dark interior characterised mainly by a large raised hearth around which most of the life of the blacksmith was conducted. The fire was fanned by a hand-operated bellows. This was either a huge pear-shaped, black leathered 'melodeon' or a hand-wound metal pole. A long bench stood against one of the side walls and on it was mounted drills and edging stones; leg and clamp vices were attached. Other tools were suspended from wall pegs though many larger tools like sledge-hammers, wrenches and dogs were ranged about the anvil in the centre of the floor.

In respect of making his own tools the blacksmith was unique among craftsmen. He also made, repaired, sharpened and pointed tools for other craftsmen such as carpenters, stonecutters, masons, wheelwrights and harness-makers, as well as for farmers.

There are very few smiths of the old type left today. In just a few years they seemed to have disappeared along with their forges, which not so long ago were such a conspicuous feature of the countryside.

Others concentrated purely on farriery where that was possible and a few opened up ornamental ironworks. The economic recession of the late seventies and early eighties encouraged the exploitation of local, traditional resources and stimulated a revival of interest in the ancient craft of blacksmithing that gives hope for the future.

However, the onslaught of modernisation saw the decline of the old style farms with its working horses and manual tools. Mechanisation and modern farming discards the necessity for blacksmiths, their trade and their produce. As with our interviewees, much of the contemporary blacksmith wares are used for their ornamental value alone.

CRAFTS QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME: Gerard and Monica Muller

ADDRESS: Rossport, Ballina, Co Mayo

DATE OF VISIT: 23/4/1993

DESCRIPTION OF CRAFT:Blacksmith/Goldsmith, Tongs, Candlestick Stands and Holders, Jewellery.

WHERE MATERIALS COME FROM?:Steel, Ballina Archers, Old Iron, and Natural Materials.

COST OF MATERIALS:

TOOLS NEEDED: Fireplace, File, Hammer, Chisel and Punches.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INTERESTED IN CRAFTMAKING?Trained as a Blacksmith in Berlin for 3 years.

DO YOU THINK THERE IS A MARKET FOR THIS CRAFT?Yes

 LOCALLY **NATIONALLY** **INTERNATIONALLY**

WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN LENDING US YOUR CRAFT FOR EXHIBITION PURPOSES?:Yes

Craft Survey Photograph Sheet



LACE SCHOOLS:

The importance to the country of a flourishing lace industry in both economic and social terms was recognised by Dean Swift at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As a result he encouraged Lady Arbella Denny to introduce lace-making to the inmates of a Dublin orphanage, thus enabling the fashionable to buy home-produced goods instead of expensive imported European lace, and the needy to earn a useful living. The Dublin Society encouraged high standards by the introduction of premiums for proficiency. This combination of philanthropy and patriotism and the use of foreign laces as models for Irish ones coupled with the active involvement of individuals, often with church affiliations, was a pattern that remained unchanged even in the heyday of the Irish lace Industry.

During the eighteenth century, lace-making centred around Dublin Society and when the Act of Union abolished the Irish Parliament, thus removing the patrons of luxury trades from the city, the need to find other markets became acute.

In addition, the need to stimulate employment compatible with the country's social structure and settlement pattern increased with rapid population expansion and the decline of old industries. Perhaps the only positive thing to happen during this time was the relaxation of the Penal Laws, which allowed Catholic philanthropists and convents to be active in economic and educational development - a part for which in relation to the lace industry they were appropriately equipped.

Lace-making within the home was not an integral part of native vernacular culture. Lace was not designed by the makers or primarily intended for their use but was introduced so that large families living on small uneconomic land holdings could remain there. The making of lace was executed by women and girls who, once trained, practised at home, doing as much as house or farm work allowed.

Training in lace-making was given free of charge at lace schools, of which a countryside network sprang up in the middle and late years of the nineteenth century, different areas being identified with different techniques, though in many cases more than one type of lace was produced in one place.

The amount of training needed varied according to technique, from a few weeks for basic crochet to many years in the case of needlepoint. As a result the quantities produced and relative costs of different laces varied, as did their end uses. the most expensive ones were generally used by the church and on state occasions. Even when the proprietors of lace schools had financial assistance from the state of commerce they were bedevilled by marketing and design difficulties.

Crochet lace is probably the commonest of all Irish laces and its character and quality vary enormously according to place and time of production.

The importance of the Irish lace industry should not be underestimated because of its loose structure, but it suffered during the first world war and never regained a firm foothold, though small quantities of Carrickmacross and crochet lace are produced for haute couture and the tourist trade today and individuals sometimes make it for their own use. The story of the Irish lace industry is the story the women of Ireland, not just of the rich and successful who wore its products, but of the poor and underprivileged they tried to help - flawed though these efforts sometimes were. Despite its identification with hard times past, there are few of those who ever made lace who do not have a deep and abiding affection for their craft.

There has always been a tradition of lace making in the Erris region. Owing to the restrictions of transport and infrastructure the Congested Districts Board considered the craft the most viable choice of industry for the Barony.

Maximum employment could be achieved with little amounts of capital expenditure on transporting the produce for sale in other areas.

Women and girls in Erris (as in other regions) worked from home and the earnings served as a welcome and necessary boost to an otherwise unfavourable economic situation.

CONGESTED DISTRICTS BOARD:

“Afflicting as is the general condition of Mayo, there is here a yet lower depth in misery, a district almost as distinct from Mayo as Mayo is from the eastern part of Ireland. Human wretchedness seems concentrated in Erris the culminating points of man’s physical degradation”.

So James Hack Juke said of Erris in 1891. Such a comment illustrated the need for some form of positive intervention into the lives of the Erris people.

Lord Balfour founded the ‘Congested Districts Board’ in 1891 to help those people who were rendered incapable of helping themselves. An area was considered ‘Congested’ when the total ratable valuation divided by the number of inhabitants amounted to less than 30 shillings per person. In 1891 this definition produced an area of just over 3.5 million acres and a population of approximately 0.5 million spread over parts of the counties of Donegal, Leitrim, Roscommon, Sligo, Mayo, Galway, Kerry and Cork.

THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF THE C.D.B. WERE:

1. The purchase and amalgamation of uneconomic holdings.
2. The assistance of migration from impoverished areas to newly amalgamated holdings.
3. The promotion of local industries by subsidies and technical instruction.
4. The improvement of the quality of agriculture in the congested areas.
5. The improvement of communications through the extension of the railway, building of roads, piers and bridges.

The board was authorised to proceed in the execution of these duties either directly or indirectly and by application of its funds, gifts or loans. All decisions made by the board were considered final. The government had often come to the rescue of the distressed west. The Congested Districts Board hoped to break the people’s dependence on the potato. Those living in Erris wanted to live in economic holdings with dignity.

For convenience the Board divided the areas into natural natural divisions - divisions bearing no intended resemblance to defined administrative areas, baronies into four natural regions; Rath Hill, Bangor, Belmullet and Knocknaduff.

An average of 27% of Erris families were very poor. Therefore over quarter the population were almost destitute.

Success of the Congested Districts Board in Erris is difficult to ascertain. In general the economic situation had improved by the 19th century and it is thus unclear as to whether or not the improvements that resulted would have occurred regardless of the actions of the Congested Districts Board. However, as Síle Ní Éineacháin writes, "... if all the Congested Districts Board did was to raise the hopes of a people living in misery and squalor to achieve a better way of life, might it not be considered successful?".

The lace and crochet industry was the most successful commercial undertaking carried out by the Board in Erris, with the infrastructural constraints the fundamental concern was the transportation of raw materials and finished products. Both could however be sent by transit post as they were relatively light.

The earnings from the lace and crochet industry proved invaluable, and offered many, families in Erris a life of relative comfort.

The Congested Districts Board was dissolved in 1923. L.P. Curtis felt that: "If the western seaboard was not transformed into a land of milk and honey, at least the living conditions of the people had been ameliorated".

With the help of the Congested Districts Board survival was no longer the greatest struggle in life. The people of Erris were given the means to improve their lifestyle, and an opportunity to achieve their aspirations.

Much of the information included in the section was collected from "The Congested Districts Board" in Erris, Co. Mayo, which was written by Síle Ní Éineacháin.

CONCLUSION:

The survival of traditional crafts in Ireland to this day owes much to the work of semi-state organisations, private companies and individuals.

The impetus craft received during the past twenty years has led to a greater understanding and respect for the manual skills of these craftsmen and women.

Ned Garvin the Cooper summed it up well when he said,

“When you made a churn you really achieved something: that was the great satisfaction. You made a thing from start to finish and you were always trying to improve the next one. That’s something that gets into you; you’d even sacrifice money to have the thing one hundred per cent right. I think it is beginning to dawn on people now that our future lies in the things that we create and that we will live or die by the things we make”.

There is a sign of hope for the survival of traditional crafts. Living with the realities of redundancy and unemployment many young people reject the idea of a conventional business career. They are beginning to realise that an alternative exists which can offer a fulfilling and rewarding life. The future of traditional crafts rests with them.

(David Shaw-Smith)

RESOURCE INVENTORY

INTRODUCTION

Iorras - Erris - this is the name given to the extreme north west of County Mayo. The word Iorras has been variously interpreted throughout history as meaning "a borderland, a headland or a promontory, a peninsula, "

In the early historic period Iorras belonged to the Cinel Fedhlimadh, a branch of the kingdom of Hy Fichrach of Lir, the ocean God. Recorded in the Annals of the Four Masters is a chieftain O Caithraidh (Canny) his death being in 1180.

Erris is dominated by various families throughout the medieval period, principally the O Dowds until after the Norman invasion when the Barretts and the Burkes both Norman families established themselves as Barons of Erris.

In the late 16 Century Mayo as a county became established and ten "Baronies" were created as administrative centres for the then ruling English. Erris (then known as Invermor) came under the governorship of Sir Henry Sidney who became Governor of Connaught in 1560, Who appointed sheriffs and officials. They in-turn introduced Landlords who were allowed to take estates under grants from the English Crown.

Erris was formally divided into two parishes - Kilmore and Kilcommon. The parish of Kilcommon which comprised the whole of "mainland" Erris was the largest parish in Ireland. In the 19 Century Kilcommon was divided into the present day parishes of Kilcommon, Belmullet, Kiltane and Ballycroy.

The vast extent of Erris is 203,396 acres. Now covered for the most part in mountainous heather and new forests with the vast majority of its population along the coastal regions and rivers.

Its limits are formed by Belderrig harbour at the North, Bellacorrick and the Oweninny river at the West and at Bellavenny Bridge (Ballycroy) at the South.

The following is a list of the resources that Erris has and some explanations. It is true as on date of completion - April 1994.

POPULATION

Settlement in Erris is very dispersed due in large to the nature of the landscape.

Belmullet is the primary town of the region. Its role is that of a small service centre providing almost all the retail and service functions for the area.

Bangor Erris is the second level centre which provides service functions for the population as far south as Ballycroy.

Below this settlement centres on local village nodes such as Geesala, Carrowtigue, Belderrig, Glenamoy and Blacksod.

The Irish language is important since it does mark an aspect of the area that is markedly different from most of the country at large. The area is part of the North-West Mayo Gaeltacht and is therefore affected by the various Government policies and aid programmes designed to stimulate development in Gaeltacht areas.

Within the NW Mayo Gaeltacht, Carrowteige and Kilgalligan represent the last truly linguistic Gaeltacht area in Mayo.

Population Trends

The population of the Erris district totalled 10,304 persons in 1986. Analysis of the census figures for the area from 1956 to 1986 reveal that the population decreased dramatically over the period in absolute numbers from 14,412 in 1956 to 10,303 in 1986. In percentage terms this amounts to a fall in population of 40% over 30 years.

POPULATION ERRIS DISTRICT AND MAIN CENTRES 1956-1986

AREA	1956	1961	1966	1971	1981	1986
Erris	14,412	13,092	11,973	10,839	10,363	10,304
Belmullet Town	742	724	718	744	1,023	1,033

The population of Belmullet town by contrast has shown a different trend. It experiences a slight decrease in population between 1956-1966 and from 1971 to 1966, this trend has been reversed.

Since 1971 the population of the town grew by 19% between 1971 - 1979, by 15% between 1971 and 1981 and by a further 1% between the last intercensal period 1981 - 1986.

POPULATION BELMULLET TOWN 1956 - 1986

YEAR	POPULATION	% CHANGE
1956	742	-2%
1961	724	-1%
1966	718	3%
1971	744	16%
1979	885	13%
1981	1023	0
1986	1033	-

The population figures show that there are two distinct trends, firstly the massive depopulation that has occurred over the entire area. Secondly, although in the context of the overall trend, though minor, an increase of population in Belmullet town have probably arisen from local shifts from the DED'S adjacent to the town itself rather than from the wider Erris area.

Extract:

**Mayo population Down to 110,000
Erris shows 7.6% decline.**

Statistics from the Census have revealed that the Erris area has lost 7.6% of its population since the last Census in 1986.

The Belmullet rural area has suffered a decline in population of 694 people from 9160 to 8466 over the past six years. That marks a percentage decrease in population of any of the seven Mayo rural areas.

All seven rural areas suffered a decrease in population according to figures obtained by 'Western People'. Of the country's three urban centres, only Westport shows a population increase.

After Belmullet, the Swinford area shows a decrease of 5.7%, Ballinrobe 5.5%, Westport 4.9%, Ballina 3.7%, Claremorris 3%, whilst Castlebar fares best with population decline of only 1.1%.

Overall the population of Mayo has dropped by 4500 to stand at 110,696. a 3.9% decline. In total the population of Connaught is down 2%.

Mayo's net migration statistics is calculated to stand at 10.8% of population over the past six years.

The biggest percentage decline of the three districts occurred in Castlebar where the population fell by 4.4%.

Numerical breakdown of figures = Belmullet: 8466 (down 694)

Western People dated 23-10-91.

Diocesan Statistics 1993

<u>Parish</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Households</u>	<u>Children</u>
Ballycroy	817	250	118
Belmullet	1890	510	405
Kilcommon	1795	568	324
Kilmore	2401	718	390
Kiltinne	1823	503	335

INDUSTRY:

	Area in Metres	No. Employed
Belmullet Industrial Estate		
Erris Grave Services	1219.51m	5
Warners	10975.61m	194
Cow Comfort		
Telecom Eireann	1829.67m	17
Fás		10
Attycunnane Industrial Estate		
E.S.D.		21
Solar Enterprises	225.36m	25
Others Throughout Erris		
Eagle Isle Sea-food, Doohoma.		15
Hacket & Turpin Teo, Carrowteigue		25
Bartex Clothing Ltd	457.32m	4
Ionad Ciontala Na Muing		15
Kenmare Products, Geesala.		22

The location of the industrial floorspace in Belmullet and Attycunnane resources the importance of Belmullet as the main industrial centre for a large hinterland. The other main sources of employment in the Erris area are in retail, fishing and farming. The number of shops, in Belmullet especially has increased thus providing more employment. Many people find it necessary to subsidise their income from farming by either working or by fishing in season.

Unemployment

Over 60% of Mayo's 115,000 inhabitants are under the age of 40 and many thousands of our emigrants would return if suitable employment opportunities were available here.

Leabharlann Co. Mhuigheo
Mayo County Library

Rates and trends:

The data on the unemployment is taken from the Central Statistics Office and covers the whole of the Barony of Erris.

Male (under 25)		Female (under 25)
248		89
Male (25 and over)		Female (25 and over)
585		293
Total Male	833	Total Female 382

Total Unemployed: 1215

Figures taken : 25 February 1994.

Agriculture

Agriculture is constrained by (1) poor soils, (2) Difficult climate in terms of rainfall, (3) small farm size and (4) large areas of commonage.

In 1986 census shows that 78% of farms have holdings of less than 30 acres and only 9% of the land holdings are more than 50 acres.

In the recent past some 25,000 hectares of commonage has been divided and fenced and some 1,300 hectares of land has been improved.

Numbers of Agricultural Holdings Exceeding 1 acre, classified by size, in each county and province, - June 1980:

Connacht	3,861	6,067	6,821	24,485	19,740,	12,346	1,839
Mayo	1,689	2,267	2,603	8,612	5,081	2,699	363
Connacht	504	301	267	76,231			
Mayo	93	71	77	23,555			

Dairying is a significant contributor to the local economy with over 1 million gallons being produced per annum to a value of approximately £1.8 million with almost 755 being produced on the Mullet. There is an obvious potential of downstream industry giving value added products.

Sheep production offers the best possibility for livestock expansion although the exposed nature of the topography will depress production rates compared to the better soils and physical condition in the eastern part of the county.

Land in the Mullet Peninsula by virtue of the soils and exposure is unsuitable and large areas of the boglands are of a questionable economic viability for a forest station.

In 1986, over 36% of total occupants in Erris were employed in the primary sector of which agriculture represents the most important component. Up to 80% of all farms are less than 30 acres in size. Sheep and cattle are the main farming pursuits with up to 200 farmers involved in dairying. Sheep farming is well suited to the poor soils and hilly land in Erris. Much of the land used for grazing is in need of improvement. Cattle and dairy farming are concentrated on the better soils of the Mullet Peninsula. In 1993 there are 198 dairy farmers, a reduction of 122 since 1983/84. Milk production has decreased marginally from 1.229 m gallons in 83/84 to 1.176m gallons in 92/93.

Strengths:

- (1) In Erris there is a tradition of farming and husbandry.
- (2) There has been much farm consolidation undertaken. Approximately 25,000 hectares of commonage has been divided amongst local shareholders. By 1991 over 1,100 hectares of land were improved and a further 2,500 hectares were fenced in preparation for reclamation.
- (3) Erris is classified as a severely handicapped area and as a result farmers are entitled to higher levels of premium payments and other grants than those in other areas.
- (4) There is an established local co-operative which provides farm services, forestry development and environmental projects, primary processing and marketing of fish, general trading and research and development services. This is owned by the community in the form of shareholdings.

Weaknesses:

- (1) There is a substantial amount of poor land - less than 20%. The remainder is made up of poor rough grazing on bogs and mountains.
- (2) While some farm consolidation has taken place, farms are small with 80% of holdings less than 12.1 hectares.
- (3) Because of the small farms many farming family members are forced to seek alternative sources of income. As a result farms are being run by an aging population. As this continues there is a less likelihood that the younger generations will return to the land.
- (4) Erris is based in a remote location and as a result there are difficulties. This restricts the possibility of farmers looking to alternative farm enterprises.

Forestry:

The amount of hectares of forestry cannot be calculated for Erris only but takes in the entire county of Mayo. The figures are not accurate due to the forestries running across the border of the Barony of Erris.

Ballycroy - 1,000 hectares

These figures would include approximately 500 hectares of forestry in Mulranny.

Bellacorrick - 3,000 hectares

These figures would take in Geesala, Doohoma and Bangor.

Glenamoy - 6,000 hectares

These figures would take in a large area of Ballycastle.

Glenamoy forest started in 1955 near the Agricultural Research station and was run as research. It is on Blanket bog 4' to 24' deep overlaying gneiss and mica-schist. Planting has been carried out since 1956 at a rate of about 100 acres a year.

A number of grants are given for private forestation. For example in 1991, 74 grants were given to Mayo in respect of 875 hectares. This converted into money would be approximately total £550,000.

There is also a scheme available called the Coillte Farm Forestry Partnership. This is an innovative scheme to enable farmers use their land for forestry and receive an annual income from it. The scheme operates as a partnership between the farmer and Coillte. Coillte contributes the trees and management expertise to produce a quality crop along with access to markets when the crop matures. Farmers who qualify for the farm forest premium can continue to qualify for this payment and in addition will receive from Coillte supplementary payments for the remainder of the life of the crop. The scheme is flexible enough to suit the income needs of the individual farmer while providing a number of different payment options over the life of the crop. Farmers also have the security of being in partnership with the State forestry company.

Comhar Iorraís Leader:

The Comhar Iorraís Leader programme is managed and implemented by Comhar Iorraís Teoranta; the Erris Farm Services Co-operative. This co-operative has been trading successfully since its establishment in 1968 with 1,240 shareholders currently. The co-op declared a profit of £58,900 in 1989 from a turnover of £2.2 million.

LEADER - Liaison Entre Actions De Development De L'Economie Rurale.

Leader is a European initiative for Rural Development designed to find innovative solutions to local problems by availing of local organisational capacity and expertise. The programme is administered by representative Local Action Groups with particular emphasis on co-operation and partnership between all sectors of the local community.

LEADER enables local people to have an input into development of their own areas by devising strategies which will create employment and wealth to revitalise the less developed and fragile rural areas of our country.

Comhar Iorraís Leader has been operating since March 1992. It has a community cooperative structure and is representative of community interests across a wide spectrum. A large number of applications have been received and 62 have been approved. The investment in these

projects has resulted in the creation of full time sustainable jobs.

Applications were considered under rural tourism, farm, forestry and fishery services, training, small enterprises and crafts and were assessed under commercial potential, level of employment creation, uniqueness and environmental consideration.

Tourism:

Erris is a quiet, green, unspoilt area where visitors can enjoy beautiful scenery, outdoor activities and a distinctive heritage and culture in the company of a friendly, welcoming people. Its tourism product comprises all the facilities, attractions and activities used by visitors, together with a wide range of infrastructure and services. Tourism can disperse people to, and generate high levels of activity in areas which are otherwise disadvantaged. It can serve to enhance the quality of life locally through the improvement of amenities and also generate awareness of and protects the culture and heritage. Through continuing the long-term investment and marketing strategy for the tourism industry, Erris will become competitive as a tourist destination and increase the importance of the tourist industry and generate employment.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF ERRIS AS A TOURIST DESTINATION.

Strengths:

- (1) High quality, unspoilt environment with one of the lowest population densities in the country which is an ideal base for all outdoor activities eg. golf, fishing, cycling, walking and equestrian.
- (2) Erris has a rich cultural and literary heritage.
- (3) It has two gaeltach regions - Achleam and Carrowteige where the population possess unique living Gaelic cultures.
- (4) It is in fairly close proximity to two regional airports with international connections - Knock and Galway.

Weaknesses:

- (1) Lack of suitable accommodation, while the numbers of registered B&Bs is increasing there is a need for better quality hotels and youth hostels.
- (2) Limited availability of private sector capital owing to the peripherality of Erris.
- (3) Poor internal infrastructural facilities, eg. water, sewage and transportation network.
- (4) Lack of marketing skills and resources within the industry.
- (5) Lack of coordinated government policy in respect to the management of tourism fisheries and forestries in order to obtain maximum benefit for Erris.

Strategies that need to be undertaken to redress these weaknesses:

- Need to continue to invest in products in order to improve the quality and improvement.
- Need to develop the products so they can compete firstly on a National level and in-turn on an International level.
- there is a need to further develop rural tourism by investing in natural, agricultural and other countryside resources.
- There should be an investment in the authentic and natural elements of the Erris Heritage.
- While improving the weakness that Erris has it must be remembered that we need to protect the environment by employing sensitivity in its development. There is no point carrying out developments that take away the distinctive features that Erris has (ie) its natural unspoilt beauty and friendliness.

When a tourist is setting about to decide on a holiday destination they are looking for a place or resort that will fulfil all their expectations. Holidays are about dreams and any tourist area needs to go about helping to make the tourists dreams come true. The product encountered during a holiday must satisfy certain criteria. It must live up to the image which has been promoted to the visitor. It must maintain a reasonable balance between supply and demand for the various elements of the product. It should aim to reduce any weaknesses and structural deficiencies in the product.

Before anything can be achieved a number of objectives need to be set in place.

- Protect and enhance the scenic resources and improve access to the countryside for tourists.
- Help visitors to encounter the rich heritage and culture and enhance the presentation of the various components of this heritage.
- Expand the range and quality of special interest activities and organise them so the visitor can arrange to participate in them with confidence.
- Ensure that the supply of facilities and services increases in step with the growth in visitor numbers.
- Encourage the development of more products of a scale which will enhance our ability to compete Nationally.
- Encourage products which can attract visitors for a long season rather than just at the peak times.
- Promote the highest standard of management and protection of every element of the environment.

Below we will set out the amenities and facilities that Erris has.

A large number of locations outside the main tourism centres have the potential to establish themselves as areas specialising in holidays steeped in the living tradition of rural Ireland. There is a small but fast growing market segment which is seeking a quiet holiday away from the mainstream tourism activity where the visitor can get to know the area intimately. They have the same needs as other tourists - accommodation, food, interesting things to see and do. Where they differ is that they get more pleasure from satisfying these needs at small scale attractions which they can explore at their own pace without

having to compete with thousands of other tourists. The other essential ingredient is a welcoming community which is prepared to take the tourist into their hearts, organise their every need and encourage them to encounter the normal life of the area during their stay.

Erris has been selected as one of the twelve areas for promotion as a Rural Tourism Holiday destination. When one visits a rural tourism holiday destination one is invited to be a guest and not just a tourist and is offered an opportunity to experience a relaxed way of life and the traditional heritage of rural Ireland.

The Holiday package offers a choice of accommodation in Bord Failte approved farmhouses, guesthouses, self catering accommodation including hostels, one family run hotel with a warm hospitality and personal service especially emphasised. Other elements of the package include admission to a visitor farm, together with one other attraction in the area, an information pack, an Irish coffee on arrival at the chosen accommodation and the personal services of the Co-ordinator.

The promotion of the Barony of Erris through Irish Country Holidays, was undertaken by Iorras Domhnann Co-operative in co-operation with all the tourist organisations and interests in the area.

Facilities and amenities within this Rural Tourism Group:

- * Visitor Farm.
- * Boat trips.
- * Boxy Making.
- * Smoking Salmon.
- * Registered Accommodation.
- * Adventure Centre.
- * Riding Centre.
- * Craft Making.

Another important tourism organisation in the Erris area is Turasóireacht Iorrais(Gabhaltais) Teo - Erris Tourism (holding) Ltd.

Erris Tourism, a private limited company, was established in 1984. Its main aims are ...

1. To promote, foster and develop tourist amenities and traffic within the Barony of Erris.
2. To promote and foster the Irish language.

In 1986 the company bought 260 acres of sand dunes at Carn on the Mullet Peninsula. This land, which was commonage was about to be divided among 17 local land owners and the opportunity to acquire such a property would not present itself again. Udaras na Gaeltachta bought the land and leased it back to Erris Tourism.

A feasibility study was carried out and a decision was taken to provide an 18 hole championship links course, Caravan Park and a Holiday Village comprising twelve chalets. Golf Architect Eddie Hackett was commissioned to plan the Golf Course.

The short term developments included -

- The provision of an 18 hole championship golf course at Carn.
- The development of a Clubhouse facility.
- An Archaeological and Heritage Survey of Erris.
- The provision of a Tourist Information Point.
- The development of Mullaghroe Beach to qualify for Blue Flag Status.

Long term plans include further development of Carn.

- The provision of a caravan park.
- The development of bowling greens and a 50 acre adventure area.
- A holiday Village comprising 12 chalets.

The ongoing development by Erris Tourism has given local people the confidence to develop further tourism projects in Erris. These developments include a Riding Centre, Watersport Adventure Centre, the provision of a boat bringing people to the islands, tea rooms, visitor farm, craft shop and a Boxty making home industry. With the help of the Comhar Iorrais LEADER programme the Erris area is poised to become the No 1 Tourist destination in Ireland.

In 1993 a year long cultural celebration of rural civilisation in Mayo over five millennia took place. In the North of the country the earliest known habitation, dating back five thousand years, has recently been excavated. Archaeological research has shown that an intact field system, now known as the Ceide Fields, covers an area of at least 2500 acres, making it the most extensive stone age monument in the world. The area has one of the greatest concentrations of Stone Age tombs (megaliths) in Europe. It is known to possess the intact farms of the tomb builders, preserved beneath the bog which covers the region. Tír Sáile has created a trail of permanent sculpture from the Moy Estuary to the Mullet Peninsula marking in a contemporary way this ancient landscape.

Sculptors began by looking at the landscape itself in a sculptural way; the balance of light, of sky and land, hills and valleys; the way the Irish have always done - naming mountains after their perceived sculptural qualities. The interaction of the artists with the natural environment by way of imaginative and physical endeavour achieves the primary aim of Tír Sáile, which is to celebrate the past, relish the present and embrace the future. The sculpture symposium employed the traditional Irish method of working - the Meitheal where a group work to achieve a common objective.

Tír Sáile is representative of the shared memories, ideals and labour of the artists, organisers and local community, who have welcomed new statements onto their landscape and into their hearts.

Other important tourism resources in Erris include:

Wildlife Sanctuaries:

- (1) Termoncarragh Bird Sanctuary
- (2) Carrowmore Lake
- (3) Inishkea Islands

Nature Reserves:

Knockmoyle / Sheskin
Owenduff

Others:

Pitch and Putt

Community Centres

Summer Schools - Eachleim and Carrowtheige

Walks: Bangor Trial, Northern Cliff Walks, Ben Gorm Horseshoe.

Beaches: Elly, Mullaghroe, Rinroe, Doohoma.

ACCOMMODATION IN ERRIS

L o i s t i n I n I o r r a s

BELMULLET

Western Strands Hotel	(097) 81096
Mairin Maguire Murphy	(097) 81195
Teresa Cafferkey	(097) 81270
Anne Healy	(097) 81377
Kathleen Horan	(097) 81231
Bridget McGrath	(097) 84626
Eileen Gaughan	(097) 81181
Anne Reilly	(097) 81260
Kathleen Reynolds	(097) 81137
Josephine Geraghty	(097) 85741

BANGOR ERRIS

Evelyn Cosgrove	(097) 83494
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GEESALA

Bridie O'Toole	(097) 86770
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SELF-CATERING HOUSES TO RENT IN ERRIS

BELMULLET

Mrs. Teresa Kilmartin	Corlough West, Belmullet,	(097)81103
Mrs. Maura Mooney	Corlough West, Belmullet,	(097)62888
Mrs. Mary Walsh	Erris Belleek, Ballina (House in Belmullet)	(096)21730
Mr. Owen Goonan	Geesala, Ballina, (House near Belmullet)	
Mr. Martin Mills	Pollagurrane, Barnatra, Ballina, (House near Belmullet)	(097)84508
Mr. Mixey Lavelle	Barracks St., Belmullet,	(097)81145

BANGOR

Mrs. Anne Bourke	Gortmore, Bangor-Erris, Ballina,	(097)22608
Mrs. Margaret Ody	10 Crodaun Forest Park Celbridge, Kildare, (House in Bangor Erris)	(01)628891
Mrs. Fay Carey	Old school Lodge, Ballina Rd., Bangor Erris,	(097)83532

BELMULLET

Ms. Cafferkey, Sea View House,
Belmullet. (097) 81270

Mrs. E. Gibbons, Attycunnane,
Belmullet. (097) 81299

Mrs. A. Geraghty, Tallagh Hill,
Belmullet. (097) 81299

MULLET PENINSULA

Mrs. P. Munnelly, Clogher,
Blacksod, No Number

Mrs. J. Geraghty, Elly,
Clogher,
Blacksod, No number

Mrs. M. Geraghty, Termon,
Blacksod, No Number

Mrs Bridie Keane, Fallmore,
Blacksod. (097) 85746

Mrs. M. Edwards, Barnagh,
Clogher. (097) 81187

Mrs. O'Malley, Sea Field House,
Carne,
Belmullet. (097) 81270

GEESALA- DOOHOMA

Mrs. Bernadette Barrett, Sea Rod Inn,
Doohoma. (098) 86767

Mrs. E. O'Toole, Achill View,
Doohoma. (097) 86770

Mrs. A. Welsh, Bay View,
Tallaghan Bawn,
Doohoma. (097) 86788

HOTELS IN ERRIS

Western Strands Hotel, Main Street,
Belmullet, (097) 81096

Owner (Bord Failte Approved),
Mrs. Nora May Welsh.

Ostan Synge Hotel, Geesala,
Ballina. (097) 86801/86802

Owner (Unregistered)
Mrs Helen Stack.

YOUTH HOSTELS

An Oige Youth Hostel, Pullathomas,
Ballina. No number.

Kilcommon Lodge, Pullathomas,
Ballina.
Owner A. Shultz. (097) 84621.

Owenmore Lodge, Bangor Erris,
Ballina.
Owner B. Bashford, (097) 83497.

UNREGISTERED ACCOMMODATION

BALLYCROY - BANGOR ERRIS

Mrs. Sheila Murray,	Ballycroy, Westport.	(098) 49120.
Mrs. Mary Ellen Grealis,	Slivemore view, Castlehill, Ballycroy.	(098) 49119.
Glenmore Lodge,	Bangor Erris, Ballina.	(097) 83476.

REGISTERED HOUSES TO RENT IN ERRIS

BELMULLET

Mrs. Teresa Kilmartin,	Corlough West, Belmullet.	(097) 81103
Mrs. Maura Mooney,	Corlough West, Belmullet.	(071) 62888
Mrs. Mary Walsh,	Erris Belleek, Ballina, (House in Belmullet).	(097) 86759
Mr. Owen Goonan,	Geesala, Ballina, (House near Belmullet).	(097) 84506

BANGOR

Mrs. Anne Bourke	Gortmore, Bangor Erris.	(096) 22608
Mrs. Margaret Ody,	10 Crodaun Forest Park, Celbridge, Co Kildare, (House in Bangor Erris).	(01) 628891

Fishing:

SPECIMEN FISH FROM BELMULLET, CO. MAYO 1960-1992

1.	Coalfish-	15 specimens
2.	Cod-	1 specimen
3.	Dab-	6 specimens
4.	Dogfish-Spur-	5 specimens
5.	Dogfish-Lesser Spotted-	3 specimens
6.	Dogfish-Greater Spotted-	3 specimens
7.	Gurard-Tub-	18 specimens
8.	Gurard-Gray-	2 specimens
9.	Gurard-Red-	10 specimens
10.	Haddock	9 specimens
11.	Hake-	1 specimen
12.	Halibut-	2 specimens
13.	John Dory-	2 specimens
14.	Ling-	1 specimen
15.	Mackerel-	4 specimens
16.	Megrin-	1 specimen
17.	Monkfish-	1 Specimen
18.	Mullet-Gray-	2 Specimens

19. Pollack-	11 Specimens
20. Ray-Homelyn-	10 Specimens
21. Red Bream-	4 Specimens
22. Shark-Blue	2 Specimens
23. Tope-	1 Specimen
24. Turbot	6 Specimens

(including ex Irish Record)

25. Whiting	3 Specimens
26. Wrasse-Cuckoo-	5 Specimens
27. Wrasse-Ballan	1 Specimen
28. Sea Trout	1 Specimen
29. Blonde-Ray	1 Specimen

COMMERCIAL FISHING

TOTAL LANDINGS INTO BELMULLET/BLACKSOD DURING 1989

Species Name	Total Kg.	Total IR£
LOBSTERS	19613	169778
CRAWFISH	10480	140869
EDIBLE CRAB	124466	65585
FLAT (CUPPED) OYSTERS	38185	114306
PERIWINKLES	24799	10223
<hr/>		
TOTAL SHELLFISH	217543	500761
<hr/>		
TOTAL ALL FISH	217543	500761

Landings of Seafish (excluding salmon) during 1988

TOTAL ALL FISH		DEMERSAL		PORT NAME
VALUE	KILOGRAM	VALUE	KILOGRAM	
275563	244995	699	1553	BELMULLET/ BLACKSOD
239312	302608	71813	88177	BALLYGLASS
PELAGIC NAME		SHELLFISH		PORT
VALUE	KILOGRAM	VALUE	KILOGRAM	
0	0	274894	243442	BELMULLET/ BLACKSOD
0	0	167499	214431	BALLYGLASS

BELMULLET SEA ANGLING CLUB

The Club was founded in 1964. The aims were to promote Sea Angling as a sport, to provide an information service, and to attract angling tourists to the area thereby increasing tourist revenue.

Although the potential of the area was clear to everybody the waters off the Erris coastline were still untested. Consequently the first number of years were spent in research and development. It was only then that the true richness of the fishing grounds became known. Valuable help was forthcoming from the Inland Fisheries Board. Press angling correspondents both national and international were reporting on the excellence of the fishing both as regards quantity and variety.

Almost all species known to inhabit the waters around the British Isles can be caught in Belmullet. Thirty five varieties were caught in 1974.

Initially competitions were run on the basis of the heaviest catch but later Belmullet Sea Angling Club were proud to be the first to introduce conservation measures. Only one variety of each species can now be submitted for weigh in.

In 1986 Belmullet Sea Angling Club very successfully hosted the Master Angling Competition when the best anglers from the 32 counties fished our waters. Peter Ross angling correspondent of the Sunday Independent stated "Belmullet is one of the best boat angling centres in

the country. The Irish records for Halibut and Red Garnard stand there".

The club was awarded the United Dominion Trust Endeavour Award for tourism in the Galway-Mayo region.

Members of the club has represented Ireland with distinction in international competitions at senior and junior levels. In the interests of safety it is a rule of the club that a flotation device must be in the possession of every angler.

Angling in Broadhaven Bay to the North and Blacksod Bay to the south are ideal for a sea angling holiday. They provide unrivalled fishing. Modern sea angling boats can be hired. The region has proved to be on a par with the best in Europe, forty seven varieties have been recorded to date.

SEA ANGLING ON THE MULLET PENINSULA

The shore fishing is mainly for pollack, coalfish, and mackerel, using a large silver lure. The beaches on the west side from Elly Bay to Aughleam produce three pound sea trout to a piece of mackerel cast into the surf. The piers are good places for children who want to catch something. At Blacksod lug worm fished on the bottom will take tabs and flounder. At Ballyglass mackerel near the bottom will take coalfish and mackerel. At the deep end of the pier there are quite decent conger. Needless to say, you will catch more and a greater variety of fish from a boat and traces are very reasonable compared to other places. The festival week (usually the week after the 15th August) includes a raving shoe competition, a casting competition, and a two day boat competition.

FISHING IN BALLYCROY

There are many fishing loughs around Ballycroy. Owenduff is one of the best fishing places in Mayo. Other Loughs such as, Loughanillaun, Lough Bellagaravaun, Lough Gall, Scradaun Lough (White Lake) and Black Lough are well stocked with trout.

All information available from Francis T. Chambers,
Rock House,
BALLYCROY,
Co. Mayo.

CARROWMORE LAKE

Carrowmore Lake lies 2 miles North-West of Bangor in Co. Mayo. The slopes of Knocknascollop rise up along the West shore. The lake is over 4 miles long and 3 miles at its widest part, though it narrows to 1/2 mile at one point. It holds spring salmon from opening day (1st February) and sea trout with some good ones among them. The predominant angling quarry - at the height of the season from July onwards - is the sea trout. Favourite fishing areas are around Herrity's Island on the south side, around Derreen's Island on the North-West side, all along the North shore and at the mouth of the Glencullen river to the East.

All the usual traditional fly patterns work, as does dapping an artificial (only the artificial fly is permitted). This lake is shallow all over and boats for hire from Seamus Henry, but on a lake this size the angler would be well advised to take along his own outboard. The season for trout, sea trout and salmon is from 1st February to 30th September.

SHORE FISHING

Shore fishing is particularly good all round the area, on the Atlantic coast and inner coastline of Blacksod and Broadhaven bays. There are some recognised sports from which large catches have been taken, while there are many more inviting and interesting places which have not yet been fished.

TROUT FISHING

The estuary that runs from Glengad, Pullathomas and Glenamoy to join the sea a distance of about 5 miles has an excellent supply of salmon and trout during spring, Summer and Autumn. Fishing is mostly done at low water or when the tide is slack between the full and new moons, and the trout fishing can be at its best during the hot summer season.

PORTACLOY

Bottom fishing from the inner pier for ray, turbot, flounder, dogfish, plaice, dab, and gurnard. Float fishing for wrasse. Spinning from both piers at high water for mackerel, coalfish and pollack. Beach fishing for flatfish and occasional ray.

PORTURLIN

The finest fishing ground in Mayo is off Porturlin. Bottom fishing on flooding tide from outer breakwater for flounder, dab and freshwater eel. Spinning for small pollack and coalfish. Float fishing for mullet with small strips of mackerel.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ERRIS BOGLANDS

For thousands of years over as much as a sixth of the surface of Ireland's decaying vegetation slowly filled up the maze of pools and shallow lakes that the ice age had left behind. Peat formation in Ireland began after the last Ice Age.

Down the centuries, around the edges of the bogs, local farmers scooped out the peat and after long drying in the sun carried it home to use it as fuel in the domestic hearth. The sod is cut 20cm in width and 6 or 7cm in depth to form a strip of peat about 30 cm long. Each layer is cut off before descending to the next layer. The peat which is usually cut in May or June is brought home in September depending on the weather. Turf can also be cut by machine either in sausage or sod form. This has led to an increase in the speed at which the bogs are being cut away. But by and large, Ireland's millions of acres of bogland were always seen as a waste - except by the occasional visionary that dreamed of somewhat turning it into wealth

BOGLANDS OF ERRIS

"We have not inherited the earth we have simply borrowed it from future generations".

Of the many diverse landscapes presented by the area surely none is more spectacular than that of the vast tracts of bogland to be found in Erris. To the casual observer these areas of blanket bog appear as lifeless deserts stretching far into the distance. However a closer examination will reveal these landscapes for what they are, all living records of Ireland's past, vital habitats for the conservation of Ireland's wildlife, and a potential source of energy to fuel Ireland's development in the future.

Erris contains the largest undisturbed tract of bog in Ireland consisting of 10,000 ha. Much of this bogland is of the highest ecological value with no less than two sites (Largan More and Glenamoy) having been judged by the department of the environment to be the top priority sited of very high scientific and conservation value. In addition nature reserves have been set up at Knockmoyle, Sheskin and Owenduff to help preserve these valuable peatland habitats.

State development of the bogs began in a small way in 1933 and the infant Irish peat industry showed enough early success to justify setting up in 1946 an organisation to take on the massive task of developing the country's peat resources on a nationwide scale. A new era had begun.

BORD NA MONA (THE ERRIS AREA)

Bord na Mona is an Irish state owned enterprise whose mission is to develop the country's extensive peat resources on a fully commercial basis. Since 1946 it has developed more than 80,000 hectares of bogland harnessing modern technology to produce a range of fuel and horticultural products that have created wealth out of what had been waste land.

Bord na Mona operates in the North Mayo area which is divided into two main areas, one the Erris area covering Bangor bogs while the main or biggest portion of bog area is located around Bellacorick or outside the Erris area.

The first generation unit went into production in 1962 with a second unit following in January 1963. The total cost of this power station was 2.5 million pounds.

The plant is made up of two 20,000 kw turbo alternators driven by two boilers capable of producing 210,00 pounds of steam per hour. This power is passed through transformers to the 110,00 volt transmission network.

Milled peat is the fuel used in the Bellacorick station. This fuel is harvested in the nearby bogs and transported to the station in railway wagons. A normal day can see anything from 130 to 150 wagons of peat being burned.

During an average year the station burns about 400,000 tons of peat and generates about 100 million units.

Bellacorick Wind Farm:

Ireland's first commercial wind farm is located twenty miles from Belmullet in Bellacorick. This huge project was opened on the 23rd of November by the then Industry Minister Padraig Flynn. The wind farm is the result of co-operation between Danish, German and Irish companies and cost over 7 million pounds to complete. Many more of these farms, which use our oldest source of power, are planned for the rest of the country.

The farm consists of 21 turbines built on 120 tons of reinforced concrete. The biggest windmill is 35 metres in height and has a rotor

diameter of 37 metres. All the Bellacorick wind turbines were manufactured by the Danish company Nordtanks who have in excess of 1800 such turbines installed worldwide.

The power output of these 21 wind turbines is as follows: 20 of the turbines generate 300kw each while the remaining turbine generate 450 kw yearly production, on this wind farm, is estimated at about 17,000 mw (17 million units). This amount would be the normal consumption for about 4,500 homes. This production would be enough to supply the towns of Castlebar and Westport.

The total cost of this project was 7.1 million pounds. The project was started by the Department of Energy who received 3.9 million pounds from the E.C. under the Valoren programme for the development of renewable energy. Over 3 million pounds had to be raised from the government. The cheapest form of electricity is produced by coal at a cost of 1p per unit while wind power produces power at a cost of 3.7p per unit.

Advantages of Wind power.

(a) The most valuable advantage of wind power over conventional energy sources is that it is totally pollution free. Wind turbines produce no harmful gases or other gases when they are being operated. compared to a coal burning station the wind farm station could avoid the production of an estimated 120 tons of sulphur dioxide, 95 tons of nitrous oxides, 20,00 tons of carbon-dioxide and 850 tons of ash. It is quite clear that the further development of wind power could substantially reduce the amount of pollution in the environment.

(b) Windmills use a resource that is inexhaustible - the wind. This source of power is available at all times and is not affected by economic or political crises. Fuel shortages, as in gas or oil, would have no effect on the production of wind power.

(c) Many tourists come to visit these great mechanical farm, situated in the middle of the Mayo bogland.

Why Bellacorick was suitable for wind power:

The flat bogland which surrounds the site means there are few obstacles to break the flow or speed of the wind. This allows maximum

advantage to be taken of the power source available.

The wind regime on the Western seaboard is one of the most suitable anywhere in Europe. For most of the year the winds are strong in that area.

The site is close to the E.S.B. station in Bellacorick which means there is very low line losses and a minimum investment in feeder lines.

Bellacorick can be marked down as the starting point for wind power in Ireland. For the present the scale of wind power generation in this country will be limited due to the cost of power production and construction of farms. Despite their minute role in the production of electricity in Ireland wind farms do play a key role in the National Energy Supply. As gas and fossil supplies begin to diminish it is more than likely that we will have to turn to alternative power sources such as wind farms to bail us out.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF BOGS

Each layer of peat represents a period of time. These layers consist of material, whether organic or other wise, which were present at the time that the layer was formed, remains such as megalithic tombs, houses, pottery vessels and tillage gardens dating back almost 5,000 years from the stone age have been found. Numerous sites in the North Mayo area have been discovered by searching for further sites. The Céide Fields situated 8km west of Ballycastle is part of a neolithic landscape which to date have been mapped as covering 2,500 acres. This makes it the most extensive stone age monument in the world.

In 1971 excavations began at Belderrig to look for traces of tillage farming as a contrast to the prehistoric pasture farming which was being investigated at Céide Fields previously. The sites here had been largely uncovered as a result of turf cutting in recent times. Walls of farms dating back over the 5,000 years have been discovered here, as well as flint implements, a stone axe and pottery.

BLANKET BOG

The very beautiful Blanket Bog of North Mayo is a must for inclusion in any list of elite Irish panoramic places, which stimulate and excite the imagination. It is at once lonely, awesome and rich in colour, especially in summer, when the heather is in bloom. Peatlands are unbalanced systems in which the rate of production of organic matter by living organisms exceed the rate at which these compounds are broken down or respired. The result is an accumulation of an organic layer, which we call peat or bog. More than fifteen species of bog-moss, or Sphagnum, grow in Ireland, all found in boggy places, where they form thick soft masses and retain water like a sponge. Their older stems die annually, but due to the special conditions existing in our bogs, they do not decay. This layer of dead bog moss is continually increasing in depth, and the lower compressed layers form peat or bog. As the peat grows, or thickens, the surface vegetation becomes isolated from underlying soil and rocks. This results from the environmental changing water and chemistry content of the bog surface. Bog is, therefore, constantly changing, growing and spreading. The dominant plant species growing on the Mayo blanket bog includes purple moor grass, black bog, rush, heather, bog cotton, sedge and mosses.

Irish bogs offer unrivalled opportunities for ecological investigations. For two decades now, An Foras Taluntais Scientists, based at Glenamoy, have been engaged in valuable and interesting research. The Peatland Experimental station at Glenamoy was established by the Department of Agriculture in 1955, on lands formerly occupied by Min-Fheir Teoranta, (The Grassmeal Company).

DISAPPEARANCE OF BLANKET BOGS

The original area of blanket bog in Ireland was about 772,000 ha. By 1992 almost 140,000 ha. had been afforested with conifers. This process has since accelerated with the availability of EC grant-aid, the results of which are all too obvious when travelling through Mayo, and recent surveys have indicated that almost 1/3 of the blanket bog in Western Mayo has now been afforested.

At present a small number of sites are protected in National Nature Reserves under the Wildlife Act. If the present rates of exploitation continue, the remaining unprotected bogs will have been destroyed or seriously damaged by 2010. Fortunately Knockmore/Sheskin is one bog that has escaped extinction and is conserved for present and future generations to study and enjoy.

FLORA AND FAUNA

The boglands of Erris consist of complex mosaic patterns of land and water, hill and hollow. This diverse landscape combined with the maritime climate of the area form a unique variety of habitats for the huge number of species of fauna and flora which inhabit the area. As bogland habitats are becoming increasingly used as wild-life sanctuaries for rare plants and animals.

The surface of the bogs are dominated by plants such as purple moor grass, deer sedge on the flat areas, cushion moss and silver haired moss on the hummocks, and cross-leaved heath, sundew and bog cotton in the hollows. The many pools and small lakes of the boglands contain bog bean and pondweed with ling heather being common on the islands.

The pool and bogland landscape also provides an ideal home for a large variety of species which include ground hoppers, water scorpions, water boatmen and dragon flies. Larger animals to be found on the boglands include the lizard and common frog while the more sharp eyed visitor to the boglands may see hares, foxes and even the occasional otter. Birdlife tends to be more visible and more likely to be heard. The golden plover, the kestrel, the snipe, the greenland white fronted goose as well as the increasingly endangered corn crake and many more can all be found in the vicinity of the boglands.

NATURE RESERVES

KNOCKMOYLE/SHESKIN

The Knockmoyle/Sheskin bog is located on the remote Bangor Erris peninsula in North County Mayo. The bog is some 1200ha. in extent and lies to the North of the Board na Mona works at Bellacorick. The bog occurs on a low plateau 90m to 20, above sea level.

FLORA OF KNOCKMOYLE/SHESKIN

The Knockmoyle/Sheskin bog contains a variety of different habitats, including flat areas, lakes and pools, hummocks and hollows, streams, flushes and knolls of mineral soil. The flat bog surface is dominated by grass and sedge species, principally Purple Moor Grass, Deer Sedge, Bog Cotton and Black Bog Rush.

A complex drainage system has developed to remove the excess water falling on the bog. These drainage features include swallow holes and natural surface streams. Swallow holes are steep-sided holes leading to under-ground water channels in which water movement can often be heard.

Shallow streams are also present at Knockmoyle/Sheskin, which can run on the underlying mineral soil, some of which are tributaries of the Oweninny river. The vegetation in such areas form a sharp contrast to that on the bog surface.

FAUNA OF KNOCKMOYLE/SHESKIN

A variety of animals have their homes on the Knockmoyle/Sheskin bog. Fecal remains or feathers testify to the hidden presence of a diverse fauna.

Insects are perhaps the most familiar of the invertebrates found, and of these the Butterflies and Moths are the most conspicuous group likely to be encountered on the bog.

- * Development of Bord na Mona commenced in 1951.
- * Production commenced in 1961.
- * Hectares within the Erris area only 750, actually in production.
- * Hectares within Erris area only 800, under development for the future.
- * Annual tonnes supplied to Bellacorick Generating Station is 80,000 tonnes on average.
- * The percentage of electricity produced from Erris supplies is around 25% of the annual output of the Power Station, which burns 330,000 tonnes of peat each year on average.

THE FUTURE OF THE BOGLANDS

The value of the boglands as grazing land, as a fuel source and as a source of tourism revenue mean that strong measures must be taken to ensure their survival as wildlife sanctuaries.

The case for conserving the boglands is very strong. They help ensure the survival of organisms which are of medical, cultural, scientific and educational worth. In addition they record environmental changes by trapping pollen dust, and the remains of organisms. This helps us learn about Ireland's past and may even help us predict changes in the future.

PEATLANDS THROUGH THE AGES

A glance at Irish history will give an idea of the importance of our peatlands down through the ages. In North Mayo we find that Stone age farming communities were gradually overwhelmed by the rising tide of peat as bogs spread down from the hills and up from wet depressions, eventually merging. In the process the ancient field boundaries and cultivation ridges were buried and preserved. All this happened thousands of years ago and removal of the turf exposes the settlements today. Increasingly from that time, bogs presented formidable obstacles to communication and ancient routeways often followed the drier lands between them, as they still do today. Where such 'corridors' were narrow they became known as 'passes' (e.g. Tyrellspass, Co. Westmeath), as though referring to mountains! Where there was no choice but to cross bog tracks. They were made from timber and these are occasionally revealed by turf cutting. Again they have given us place names, the Irish name for such construction being Togher.

PRE HISTORY (STONE AGE)

Archaeological investigations have shown that Neolithic man was settled along the North Mayo Coast as far back as 4,500 years ago. As the blanket bog which has covered much of the country in recent millennia has been stripped away, dramatic evidence has come to light particularly in the Belderg-Glenulra area of the types of dwelling, field systems, and methods of cultivation used by these late Stone-age farmers. These early 'Mayomen' have left a very tangible reminder of their presence by the kind of tombs in which they buried their dead. Tombs, and numbering over 300 are to be found mainly in North

Connacht and South Ulster of these, the largest concentration is about one fifth of the total located in Co. Mayo.

PRE HISTORY (BRONZE AGE)

As we move on to the early Bronze age, we have evidence of settlers in the Belderg who may have exploited a seam of copper laid bare by coastal erosion. Excavation in the Glenree Valley, East of Ballina on the low slopes of the Ox Mountains, have uncovered the remains of a Bronze age farmstead dating back almost 3,000 years. Numerous huge cairns, and a fine group of stone circles, such as that at Nympsfield near Cong in South Mayo, testify to the fact that this fertile limestone area was heavily populated in the early Bronze Age. A bog road perfectly preserved, built to aid transport across the developed bog about 4,000 years ago. This road from Dromard More, Co. Tipperary.

Because bogs are wet and acid places, dead things do not decay very well. Dead plant remains do not decay but build up to make peat. For the same reason a persons body that is thrown into a bog does not decay but can be preserved in the peat. Thousands of years ago people were quite often buried in bogs. As people started to cut turf, some of these bog bodies which are perfectly preserved have been uncovered. Over 80 bog bodies have been discovered in Ireland since 1750. Much of that part of Ireland now covered with blanket bog once supported mixed forest. Clear that they could no longer support the trees, the farmers moved on and the bog plants took over.

Not only was the bogland a habitat for man but it has also housed much of our wildlife and nature to the present day.

Such plants would include:

- (1) Blooming marvellous - A bank of peat thrown by drainage of part of a blanket bog becomes a riot of colour as bell heather and furze or gorse burst into bloom. The former grows naturally on the lowland blanket bog, liking the drier spots. The latter is an invader. A member of the flower family, it has nitrogen-fixing nodules in its roots, which enrich and change the whole nature of the bogland.

- (2) Living signposts - Pale butterwort, another bogland carnivore, cross-leaved heath, purple moor grass and bog asphodel growing on a carpet of pupillose big moss. The butterwort is another of the special lusitanian plants and it only grows in the warmer wetter blanket-boggy west.
- (3) Butterwort - Traps insects on its sticky butter-yellow leaves and raises its violet flowers as much as 20cm above the blanket bog. One of the very special bog plants which locates the bog and the botanist.
- (4) Cranberry - It gets its name from the shape of its flowers, which bear more than a passing resemblance to the head of a crane, complete with long neck. This member of the heather flower keeps a low profile, creeping over the bog moss hummocks, and produces dark red berries.
- (5) For two years the caterpillar of the emperor moth feeds on the bogland plants. It then spins an intricate silken case at the top of the heather shoots, inside which it changes into an adult to start the cycle off again. The target spots on its wings deflect the beaks of marauding birds.
- (6) Dragonflies are some of the most conspicuous peatland insects. Their larvae live in pools. The hairy dragonfly is a relatively scarce species.
- (7) Ling or heather, a common plant of all boglands. Its young shoots provide food for sheep and grouse alike, and its myriad flowers provide ample nectar for the honey bees. This plant may well hold the world record for pollen production. In a good season one square of heather, can produce 16,000 million grains.
- (8) Common bog cotton is a plant of acid peatland, growing in company with heather, sundew and bog asphodel. The fluffy, white heads have no practical use but make a spectacular display in summer. The tough fibrous remains of the plant in peat are troublesome for the turf cutter and are commonly known as 'wig'.

BIRDS

- (1) *Lagopus scotius hibernicus*. A male Irish red grouse surveys his territory from a vantage point on an upturned sod of turf. Sweet vernal grass in the foreground shows that the area has been disturbed by drainage and either burning or fertilisation. One can only wonder.
- (2) The white fronted goose breeds in Greenland and overwinters in Scotland and Ireland.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

The archeological sites mentioned in this listing are only a small sample of all the sites presently known in Erris.

They have been chosen for the reason of accessibility and condition. In general they are all relatively well preserved and easy to locate.

TOWNLAND	SITE TYPE	COMMENTS
Fallmore : (Mullet Peninsula)	Medieval Church Burial Ground Saint's Grave Holy Well Quern Stone	Signposted, easily accessibly. Now a national monument. Substantial remains survive.
Nakil or Surgeview : (Mullet peninsula)	Signal Tower	Built in early 19th century. Easy to reach Substantial remains survive.
Cross : (Mullet peninsula)	Medieval Church Grave Yard Poet's Grave	Accessible via rough track. Remains survive in reasonable condition.

TOWNLAND	SITE TYPE	COMMENTS
Elly : (Mullet peninsula)	Site of Bingham's castle.	Easily accessible . The castle itself has gone but numerous pieces of cut stone survive in the area. An earthen folly also survives from this time, as does a portion of a small chapel.
Binghamstown : (Mullet peninsula)	"Leacht air Iorrais"	A stone built stepped burial mound associated with the scene of a great battle against the King of Munster in 1178. Involves a short walk across the present golf course at Cross. May be seen from the road at the club house
Tirraun : (Mullet peninsula)	Standing Stone	Involves a short walk from the road directly west to Tirraun Point.
Macecrump : (Mullet peninsula)	Kilmore Burial Ground.	A sub-circular enclosure with enigmatic internal divisions. Easy access by walking south of road to Annagh Head.
Aghaglasheen : (Mullet peninsula)	Doonamo Promontory fort and childrens' burial ground.	Accessible via rough road followed by a short walk along headland.
Glencastle :	Ringfort (Dún Donal)	Easily accessible to south of road. In good condition.

TOWNLAND	SITE TYPE	COMMENTS
Glengad : (Inver)	Stone Circle	Pagan ritual site overlooking Broad Haven Bay. It is in very good condition and easily accessible from the road.
Kilgalligan : (Carrowteige)	Large burial Cairn of earth and stone.	Found in the present graveyard of Kilgalligan. Easily accessible
Fahy : (Ballycroy)	Castle	Easily accessible. The best surviving remains of any castles in Erris. Reputed to have been built by Grace O'Malley.
Fahy : (Ballycroy)	Medieval Parish Church.	Located close to Fahy castle. Recently done-up by FAS. Easily accessible and structurally sound though changes in consistency with the building style have been made.
Kildun : (Ballycroy)	Decorated Pillar stone	Located in the disused graveyard.

ISLANDS

SITE TYPE

Inishkea North and South :	Ecclesiastical settlement. Now national monument.
Inisglora :	(As above)
Duvillaun More :	(As above)
Inishderry : (Inner reaches of Broadhaven)	Ecclesiastical settlement. Carved stone figure found here in the 40's. Now in National Museum.
Derreens Island : (Carrowmore Lake)	Church remains.

A comprehensive list of all archaeological sites in Erris are available in the Office of Public Works "Sites & Monuments Record" for Co. Mayo.

