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33

GUAIRE

MAGAZINE

Guairé Magazine Issue 33



GORT'S LONGEST RUNNING COMMUNITY MAGAZINE - ESTABLISHED 1978



HURLERS CONOR HENNELLY AND JASON O'DONOGHUE WITH THE GUAIRE CUP.

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Editorial Board: Brian Brennan, Christine Brennan (Editor), Dick Burke, Mossey Clabby, Paddy Cooke, Mary Counihan, Maura Helebert, Monica McGrath, Marty O'Connor, Evelyn Roche, Colm Ward, Josephine Ward.

Contributors: Tom Fahy, Mary Lynskey, Mary Moran, Angela Donoghue, Renee Brennan, Josephine Ward, Fiona Buckley, Patrick McLoughlin, Dick Burke, Mike O'Connor, Mossey Clabby, Edel Nolan, Yvonne Nolan, Sheila Walsh, Anthony Coppinger, Jerry Sheehan, Pat Flaherty, Áine O'Loughlin, Mary Hawkins, Eileen O'Connor, Peadar Ó Conaire, Brian Brennan, Howard McCarthy, Tony Lannon, Pauline Della Chiesa, Michael O'Grady, Stephen Cunniffe, Anne Burke, Michelle Fitzmaurice, Margaret Walsh, Gerry Tuohy, Mary F. Long Moore, Cathal Broderick, Austin McInerney..

Cover: View of Gort from the Pound Road, Lavally by Josephine Ward,

Illustration: Dick Burke, Josephine Ward.

Photographs: Tony Lannon, Sean Curtin,, Richard Wall, Frank Cahill, John Scarry, David O'Reilly, Brian Brennan, Josephine Ward., Mike Muldoon, Jim Earley

Designer: Brainstorm Design

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WELCOME EDITORS NOTE

Welcome to the 33rd issue of Guaire Magazine – Gort's longest running community publication. We're delighted to bring this issue to you in full colour and hope you enjoy some of the wonderful illustrations and photographs which help to bring our stories to life.

This issue includes the work of writers, historians, artists and poets who are part of our community and indeed our extended Gort diaspora around the country and further afield. We are grateful to our wide network of contributors. I would particularly like to commend our youngest writer, Edel Nolan for her touching and insightful tribute to the Polish diver, Artur Kozlowski. We are also very lucky to have the artistic direction of Josephine Ward who lends her talents to produce our front cover painting – which is a unique feature of Guaire.

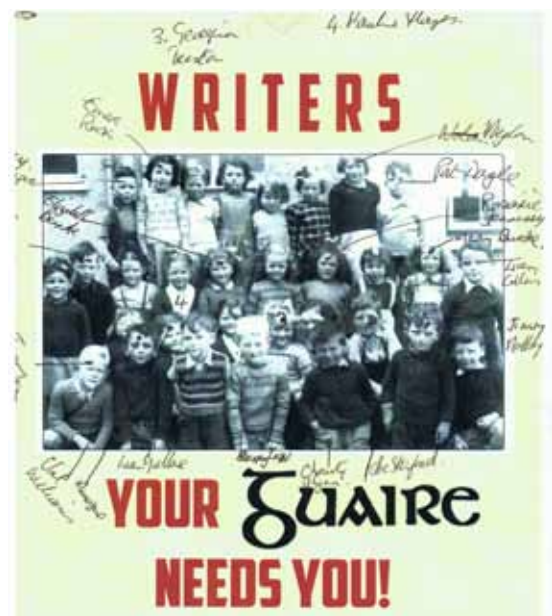
For over 30 years the Guaire has highlighted the news and creative output of our community, providing a voice for our stories and reflections but also recording our history for generations to come. Our collective memory was brought to life this year, with the overwhelming response we received to our poster featuring a class of pupils from the Convent of Mercy, Gort in the 1940's. Within days of the poster circulating the town, a campaign had begun to name all those young faces. We were delighted to see posters coming back with handwritten notes, identifying the students in the picture. (Image below) Guaire is now also available online on www.guaire.ie. The most popular section is our archive and image library which goes back to the first issue in 1978. This site allows us to preserve our magazine but also builds links with our followers abroad. We always welcome submissions and ideas so feel free to get in touch by emailing guairemagazine@gmail.com

I would like to thank our very dedicated committee and network of distributors who are vital to the success of the magazine. Guaire is a non-profit organisation and the proceeds from the sale of the magazine are put back into the community through the support of local charities.

On behalf of the Guaire Committee, we hope that this issue will add to the fine tradition of Gort's magazine and most of all that you enjoy reading it.

Christine Brennan

Editor



Running for over 30 years, Guaire features the news, stories, reflections and history of the local community at home and abroad. Guaire Magazine is a non-profit organisation. Proceeds from the sale of the Guaire Magazine are donated to local charities. We would be delighted to receive your comments and ideas for future editions – contact guairemagazine@gmail.com

The opinions and views in this publication are those of the contributors. In the compilation of this publication, every care is taken to ensure accuracy. Any errors or omissions should be brought to the attention of the editor. Guaire does not accept any liability to any person for loss or damage arising from anything contained in this publication or for any error or omission in it. All material is copyright.



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JOURNEY TO THE PAST

by Renee Brennan

Cousins Tom and John Mullins pictured in Mullins Pub on Saturday the 28th September 2012, the night John returned to Gort after 30 years.

While waiting for the Gort bus in Galway one cold Saturday evening, I noticed a frail old man with walking stick, battered brown felt hat and a tiny old suitcase. I was surprised that he was traveling alone. The bus driver kindly put his little bag in the luggage hold and as I was seated beside him for the journey, I heard the story of John Joseph Mullins.

Both his parents were from the Ballyturn area and he was brought up in London. John had a real cockney accent with his 'cor' and 'blimey' remarks when he noticed how things had changed as he hadn't been in Ireland for thirty years.

Life hadn't been good to him and he was living in ('the Dog House' as he referred to it) St. Johns Retirement and Sheltered Housing, Isle of Dogs in London. He had a longing to taste a pint of Guinness in his cousins pub in Georges St as the Guinness in London just wasn't the same. John had left St Johns home at 8am that morning and told 'the warden' (as he called him) that he was going to Ireland. His relatives did not know of his where-

abouts for many years and several attempts had been made to find him in Camden town. This eighty year old man with the sparkling and mischievous blue eyes was warmly welcomed by his surprised and delighted cousin.

John never married, his sister had died many years previously and he had lost touch with relatives in the UK. He did not like where he was living as it was "full of old people" as he told me. He said he had many regrets in life but he was determined to get to Gort once again and sup that pint in Tom Mullins pub.

Being an independent man, John had booked himself into Sullivans Royal Hotel and enjoyed the hospitality and kindness shown to him there by the staff. Just two nights after his arrival, John passed away in the hotel after a wonderful day out with his Irish relatives. He died knowing he had found kindness and acceptance amongst his own.

Safe at Last.

OYSTER FISHING

HOW WORLD WAR II BENEFITED SOUTH GALWAY

by Dick Burke

Arrival of the Oyster Queen, Catherine Glynn, Portuma, 1967 Clarinbridge Oyster Festival. It shows how serene she looked after a turbulent sailboat ride in gale force conditions. The others in the photo are (L-R) Jack Conole, Richard Burke, owner of the boat and Patrick Holland.



The Day's Catch: (L-R) Mr Ferricks, Peadar Shaughnessy, Mr. Hardy, (Oyster Merchant), Jack Donoghue, Harry Walsh and Stephen Walsh. Image courtesy of 'A Portrait of Maree'.

There was always great excitement about the activities involved in the oyster fishing. The boats had to be prepared and fitted out for the task. A wooden stage was fitted, anchor and dredge put on board. Any new ropes had to be stretched and some of the twist released to make them easier to coil. Some boats had to have new caulking done and pitch and tar applied, especially those that weren't earlier looked after or were not in use during the summer.

A new dredge net bag had to be made

using a hard twine and fitted to the dredge. Most fishermen were handed down the skills needed to form the special knot used, and how to keep all the meshes the same size. A homemade wooden net needle was used to make the net.

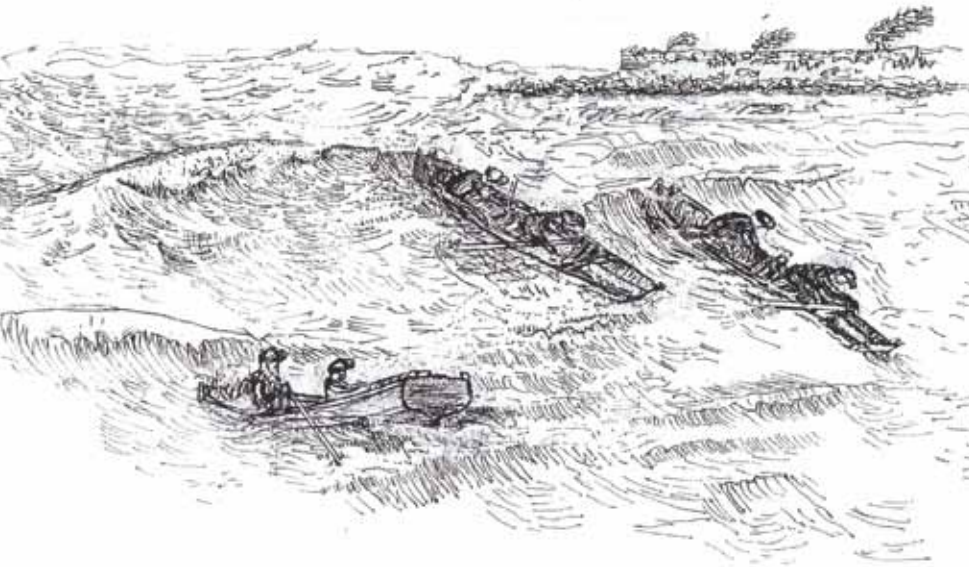
In the late forties and early fifties, dredging was only allowed for the first ten working days in December. The time of year suited farmers who comprised nearly 100% of the fishermen. They would have all the harvesting done by then. Permission was extended to the full month of December later when new oyster beds were discovered further west of the Clarinbridge beds.

One day in National School, it must have been November 30th circa 1946, the mistress offered to give us a half day if we had someone of our family going fishing the next day. Of course we all had, and that teacher was none other than Angela Coen (RIP) of The Spinning Wheel in Gort who was acting as a sub-

stitute in the school. When we got home we immediately rushed down to Lynch's Quay to get involved in the excitement. Checking back now on the people and boats there on that day the number would have been thirty with owners jostling for positions for their craft. Some boats were anchored outside to relieve some of the congestion at the quay.

I ran down to the quay next morning at 8.30am to have another look at the boats before school, and was amazed that there wasn't even one of the thirty boats there. All had taken off before dawn and were not visible anywhere. They were all hidden in the distance by a high headland, and were part of a fleet of approximately 200 boats involving 400 fishermen raking the sea bottom with their dredges, until they reappeared before dusk to deposit their catch in the water in prepared holding areas, or take them to the safety of family sheds to await their sale at a later date. Sometimes buyers were there to meet the fishermen and set a price.

There was a scramble by all able-bodied men to take part in the dredging to



This sketch depicts a typical scene that made getting home difficult when a westerly gale combined with a high tide and high waves tested the muscles and skill of the fishermen. Each man used an oar fourteen feet long – strong enough not to fail under the testing conditions. Occasionally, if the gale was strong enough, they would seek temporary shelter at an island or headland until the wind eased enough to complete the journey home. If they failed to make headway against the force of the wind, they would have to turn around and secure the boat in some nook or other quay for the night. But all boatmen like to get back to their own harbour. There is no record of anybody ever being lost during oyster fishing although there were drownings during other sea activities.

earn some of the good money available to them. World War II was just over and there were large numbers of US soldiers all over Europe, especially in Germany and France. They had plenty of money and they took a liking to Galway Bay oysters. A great export trade developed, and oyster merchants were in competition with each other to buy the oysters in order to fill the export orders. The fishermen couldn't believe the amount of money they could make on a daily basis.

There were no engines used during the earlier years and no winches of any description even thought of. Flat bottom boats were used in the Clarinbridge and the Weir areas. They were cheap and relatively easy to build. The round bil-lage boats were made at Long Walk in Galway by the Reaney and O'Donnell families who had a long tradition of boat building.

My own experience of oyster fishing was as a sub, when a crew member failed to turn up around the last days of the season. Gloves were not much in fashion at that time. Each man used pieces of flannel about the size of the ace of spades on the palms of his hands, and it was surprising how it tended to stay put while pulling the ropes, but still, you would have very hot palms and a red face in the evening.

In the mid-fifties, new oyster beds were

discovered about two miles further west by a few fishermen who kept the secret to themselves, and fished there only at night until a local buyer deliberately spilled the beans, so that he could have more dredgers work there to access the larger oysters that were available. Soon they became available to all. Shortly afterwards, members of the St. George landlord family of Tyrone, Kilcolgan, laid claim to a large portion of the area, and marked their claimed section with buoys. However, the markers were moved inwards from time to time, and much poaching took place both day and night. Many disputes and quite a number of court cases followed, but the St. Georges never profited much from their own oyster beds because of the cost of security, as well as not having the facilities to harvest them. Eventually they sold them to the state to be included in the public area. In all, the beds covered thousands of acres.

Then in the late seventies, a plague of star fish encroached from the western end, and destroyed all kinds of shellfish in their path until they reached the area of less saline water where they eventually disappeared. The fishermen took ashore all the starfish they had taken aboard in the dredges, and deposited them above the tide line at the various harbours. However, even this failed to reduce numbers completely, and the destruction continued until nearly all shell-

fish were wiped out. The beds have never recovered to produce any worthwhile quantities of oyster as was seen in the pre-starfish era. There are probably other reasons too for the decline including pollution and disease.

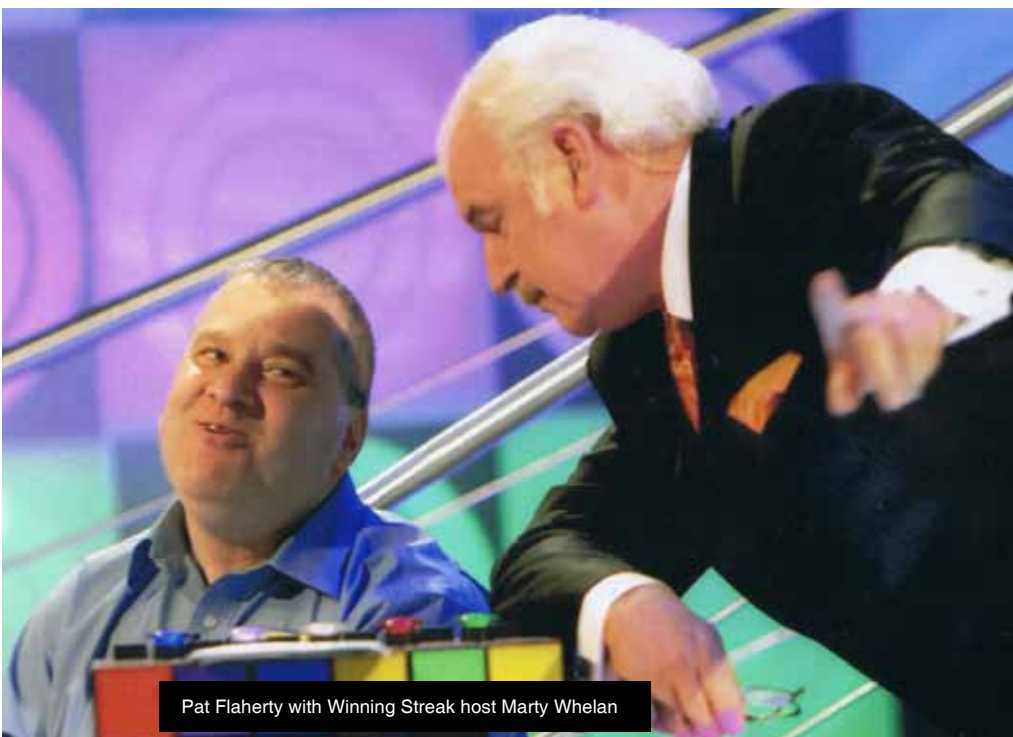
All in all, the forties to the seventies were good times for South Galway, at least for a while around Christmas for those involved in oyster fishing including boat-builders, suppliers of timber and other materials, buyers and exporters, and of course, the many fishermen involved.

The type of boat most favoured for oyster fishing and general work was round hulled and carvel built, on strong oak ribs, usually about fifteen feet long and propelled with two sturdy oars fourteen feet long – with three pairs of rowlocks and tholepins (cruigí as they were called).

The total number of boats dredging in the late forties was approximately 200 which involved 400 fishermen from areas including all Maree, Tawin, Renville, Oranmore, Clarinbridge, Kilcolgan, Balindereen, Kinvara and Doorus as well as numbers who had migrated to work in Galway and came back to join in the 'Goldrush'.

WINNING STREAK

by Pat Flaherty



Pat Flaherty with Winning Streak host Marty Whelan

I buy 1 or 2 Winning Streak tickets a week. As everyone knows you send your 3 star ticket to the National Lottery TV show in Dublin. I have been sending them in for years. There are 40,000 of them sent in every week, out of that there are 100 tickets put into the box, and out of that again there are 5 names picked to appear on the show. I always watch it. On Saturday night, August 28th my name was picked out to appear on the show the following week September 4th. I bought my ticket as usual in Hawkins shop in Gort. I was very lucky and excited. My phone was ringing all night with congratulations and best wishes.

I got a call from the National Lottery on Sunday telling me that they were coming to my house, to let me know what would happen on the day. I was also told that the RTÉ cameras were coming to film me for the short video clip that is shown at the start of the programme. I was recorded at home and at my workplace – Apple Tree Centre in Gort. It was a 2 minute video during the show but it took all day to record. I was also interviewed over the phone.

I hired a bus and filled it with family and friends who came to Dublin with me. Twenty-two people were allowed to attend the show. They sat in a special section of the audience. We had great fun going up on the bus. It was a great start to a day I will always remember.

We went to the RTÉ studios in Dublin. All 5 contestants had lunch before make up. It felt funny having to put make up on before recording the show. It took 3 hours to record. I was treated very well by the presenters, Marty Whelan and Kathryn Thomas, I had good fun with the other contestants. It was exciting when I won the car. I was very happy receiving my cheque after the programme. I enjoyed the experience and I would like to thank the National Lottery and RTÉ for a great day. A special thanks to Kevin Glynn and Austin McNerney for all their help making posters and banners, and for the support on the day. I also thank Mary O'Dea, staff and friends of Apple Tree Centre, where I work. They also made a banner for me which was much appreciated. Thanks to all my friends in Gort and

Apple Tree for a great week leading up to my appearance on the show. I really enjoyed the day. It was an experience of a lifetime, I won't forget that September day. It was the luckiest day of the year for me.

GORT & DISTRICT SHOW 1981 - 2012



Judge Helen Gordon in the ring as the clouds approach the the show grounds at the 30th Annual Gort Show. Image: Sean Curtin Press 22.

The annual Gort & District Show in its present form grew out of a suggestion by Padraic Giblin at a meeting of the Gardening Club in 1981, that a full flower, garden produce and handcrafts show should be organised under the Chairmanship of the late Michael Birmingham. The first four shows took place in the pre-fabs attached to the Vocational School. One exceptionally warm Show Day the pre-fabs were sweltering between the heat of the sun and the large attendance – so much so that the exhibits in the butter classes began to melt!

The first shows had 51 classes, including home and garden produce, flowers, handcrafts and children's section. Now there are over 200 classes. Dogs were added in 1982 and sheep in 1983. The sheep section was abolished in 2004 because of complicated rules around the movement of animals, and also because many farmers in the area had given up keeping sheep. The Horse and Ponies Show joined with the Indoor Sections in the early 1990s, and the Gort

& District Show Committee became a limited company.

The show was the very first activity in the new Community Centre – the plaster was still wet on the walls! The Horse Show was held in a separate field until 2002 when the Community School allowed it to be held on their playing fields, which has made a great difference to the overall gathering of the crowds.

The changing face of life in rural Ireland can be traced by the differences in the various classes down the years. In 1981, 32 ladies entered the 'Brown Soda Bread' class, in 2011 only 7. Traditional skills like home-made butter and cheese-making or hand knitted men's socks have disappeared completely to be replaced by healthy salad dishes, painting and a large photography section. Up to 1985, prizes were trophies only, after which money prizes starting at £4 for a 1st prize, £3 for a 2nd prize, and £2 for a 3rd prize were given, as well as trophies and special prizes donated by

local businesses and individuals.

From 1981 to 2004 the Show was held on a Saturday. This meant that many people were unable to attend because their shops and businesses were open. Now, since the change to Sunday, everyone can come and more emphasis has been placed on a family day out.

This year's show was held on Sunday 12th August 2012 in the Community Centre and adjoining school grounds and fields.



Rachel Kelly. Image: Sean Curtin Press 22.

2



Vincent Moloney with Rocky. Image: Sean Curtin Press 22.

3

SEAMUS CLANDILLON AND THE EARLY YEARS OF RADIO BROADCASTING

Seamus Clandillon



During the summer of 1925, details of a curious job vacancy appeared in the Irish newspapers. A man (was sought) of 'broad views and wide sympathies, interested in life and literature - especially Irish literature and culture'. These requirements were listed for the job of Station Director, or manager, of the first Irish radio broadcasting station which was known in its early years as '2RN'. Its name was changed to Radio Éireann in 1937.

The successful candidate was Seamus Clandillon, a native of Lough Cutra, Gort. He had appeared in front of a selection board consisting of Irish government officials and Sir John Reith, Director of the British Broadcasting Corporation. Mr. Clandillon had been educated in St. Flannan's College in Ennis, and qualified with a BA Degree from UCD. He had worked as a teacher in the Department of Agriculture and as Senior Inspector in the National Health Insurance Commission. He was a fluent Irish speaker and a well known Irish ballad singer.

News of his appointment was covered in the press as part of publicity for the establishment of a radio service in Ireland. The Irish Free State government assumed responsibility for providing a public service and had rejected an offer from Marconi to establish a commercial radio station. On 1 January 1926 at 7.45 p.m. the Dublin radio station transmitted its first programme on a wavelength of 390 metres amidst national and international attention, as the BBC broadcast

the programme on its transmitters. The opening programme consisted of an address by President Douglas Hyde and a programme of musical performances. Seamus Clandillon and his wife Maireád Ní Annagáin also sang a selection of songs. Dublin listeners living close to the station could use a cheap 'crystal' radio set but elsewhere a more expensive 'valve' radio set was used. Distance governed the type of radio set which people used. Although at least twenty radio sets had been tuned to receive the opening programme in County Galway, only members of the Galway Chamber of Commerce managed to actually receive the opening broadcast because they used a powerful four valve radio set connected to a very high aerial. A transmitting station was opened in Cork in 1927, but signals were effectively boosted when a high power transmitter was opened in Athlone in 1932.

Mr. Clandillon presided over a service that was different from the radio service of today in that broadcasting hours were limited, and radio programmes were uninterrupted by advertisements. In the early months the programme consisted mainly of live performances of music. From time to time, a special programme of local musical talent was relayed from the Cork station. Worried newspaper editors were opposed to the effect radio

news bulletins would have on newspaper sales so the first news bulletins were not broadcast until 1927. The radio service continued to develop as programme content was gradually expanded to include talk programmes and children's programmes. Agricultural talks were given in gardening and poultry keeping. A programme pattern emerged with the first part of the evening programme devoted to language lessons and talks, the second part to radio plays, music and BBC relays. The final part of the evening programme consisted of news bulletins, weather reports, jazz music and from 1930 advertisements in the form of sponsored programmes. In sport, P D Mehigan provided a live commentary of the 1926 hurling semi final between Kilkenny and Galway. Kilkenny won the match (6-2 to 5-1) but Cork won the final match. This broadcast was the first live commentary of an outdoor field match in Europe as the BBC were prohibited by rugby and association football organisations from giving live commentaries. Sometimes the personal tastes of management influenced content. James J Walsh, the Minister responsible for radio, had a personal dislike of horse racing and prevented results from being broadcast.

In 1928, the station was moved from Denmark Street to the General Post Of-

face. The number of listeners who possessed a radio licence grew from 4,200 listeners in 1926 to 26,000 listeners in 1931. The signal seemed to have improved sufficiently enough for radio sets to be introduced into some public places. Central Hospital Galway Nurses raised sufficient funds to provide three radio sets for patients in the fever, maternity and medical sections of the hospital.

Special programmes were provided at Christmas and St. Patrick's Day. The Dublin station gave full coverage to the 1932 Eucharistic Congress. The high power transmitter in Athlone was built in time to enable listeners to hear John Mc Cormack's memorable singing of 'Panis

Angelicus' and the Pope's address to the Irish people which was relayed by the Vatican radio station. Throughout the country, special arrangements were made for people to hear the broadcasts, with public address systems. The Roscommon Herald reported that 'the ceremonies were very clearly followed by people in Boyle by means of a broadcasting set at the Boyle Catholic Club, in Mr. Coleman's Bridge Street and Mr. Leonard's, St. Patrick's Street. Numbers of people assembled at these places and the loudspeakers, with a new high power station at Athlone relaying made it possible to hear at quite long distances'. The high power transmitter was officially opened in February 1933 and a

special programme was broadcast to commemorate the event.

Seamus Clandillon was to remain as manager of 2RN for nine years and was the longest serving director. He was succeeded by Irish soccer player John Mac Donnell (for a few months), TJ Mc Kieran (1935- 1941) Seamus O Braonain (1941-1947) Robert Brennan (1947-1948) Charles E Kelly (1948-1952) and Maurice Gorham (1953-1958).

This article has been adapted from 'The origins and development of Radio Broadcasting in Ireland' by Mary Hawkins, unpublished MA thesis (Department of History, NUI Galway: 2001)

KILBRENCAH - GORT'S NEWEST MUSICAL GROUP

Gort's newest musical harmony group, Kilbrencah debuted at the Lady Gregory Hotel in early 2012 and followed up with a new show in October. Led by musical director Nicola Cahill, (harp, concertina, piano), Kilbrencah includes vocal harmonists; Renee Brennan, Lourda Killeen, Olivia Killeen McNama and Karina Cahill (flute/piano-accordion player). Great credit is due to the musical director Nicola Cahill who not only played harp/concerti-

na and piano but who also composed the beautiful harmonies for songs such as Steal Away, Siuil a Ruin, Skye Boat Song and many more. Guest artist Stephen Killeen performed a number of pieces including the Lakes of Pontchartrain and Billy Joel's Lullaby. For further information check out Kilbrencah on Facebook or contact Nicola Cahill, email kilbrencah@hotmail.com



Kilbrencah (L-R) Olivia Killeen McNama, Renee Brennan, Nicola Cahill, Lourda Killeen, Karina Cahill.



Back Row (L-R) Mike Carty, Roy Costello (Tubber Road), Luke Kelly (Crowe Street), John O'Donnell (Galway Road), James McMahon (Crowe Street), Gerry McMahon, Peadar Grealish (Ennis Road), Shane Donoghue (Ennis Road), Cathal Moran (Kiltartan), Brian Murray (Rindifin), Howard McCarthy. Middle Row (L-R) Brian Coen (Crowe Street), Matty Fahey (Crowe Street), Anne Kelly, John Melvin (Ennis Road), Micheal Fahey (Crowe Street), Richard Molly (Galway Road), Front Row (L-R) Bernard Williams (Glenbrack Road), Garrett Nestor (Church Street).

IN THE DAYS OF JACK CHARLTON

by Howard McCarthy

The participation of the Irish football team in Euro 2012 brought back some pleasant memories of the days when Jack Charlton's Ireland were terrorising the cream of international football in the 1980's. Remember when the country was festooned with tricolour flags and bunting stretched across towns from Cork to Donegal. As the matches were played the streets of Dublin, Galway etc were emptied and pubs packed to the rafters.

This summer the Irish fans did the country proud as they ole ole ole'd their way around Poland and the Ukraine just as they had in Germany '88 and Italia '90.

As Ireland was gripped by football fever in the 80's the youngsters of Gort were not immune to it. In the local com-

munity centre Friday night was football night from 4 until 7, as the lads trained and played under the watchful eye of coaches Gerry McMahon and myself.

AS IRELAND WAS GRIPPED BY FOOTBALL FEVER IN THE 80'S THE YOUNGSTERS OF GORT WERE NOT IMMUNE TO IT.

5 a side competitions were organised against teams from Galway, Ennis, and Oranmore, as well as amongst the boys themselves via street leagues.

So popular had the game become that the idea was mooted to form a club to compete in the Galway and district schoolboy league, as a result Gort Youth Soccer Club was born, and entered a team in the U-12 Cunningham

Cup competition. Many parents of the boys showed their support by joining the committee. Ann Kelly agreed to buy a kit for the team, yellow shirts with green trim, green shorts, and yellow socks.

The boys kicked off the campaign with a win at St. Colman's Park over our friends from Oranbay '90, and went through the season undefeated, thus qualifying for the final against Our Lady's Boy's Club from Galway. Sadly it was a game too many and the lads ended up losing the match, a good crowd from Gort travelled to watch the final played in the Franciscans pitch. I recently came across the photo taken before the first game vs Oranbay.

The modern day football wannabees in Gort are well catered for by Coole F.C. Regular training sessions are held on the astro turf pitches at the community centre, and they also have teams playing in the Clare League at U-12, U13, U14, and U16 age groups, as well as a senior side. If you are interested in joining the club then contact Stephen Cunniffe (085 1442879) or call at the centre for more information. Your support is always welcome so please watch the local press for details of matches.



THE TREES OF COOLE

by Áine O'Loughlin, Guide, Coole Park

The Autograph Tree, Coole Park, by John Scarry

There are many reminders of the past still visible at Coole today. The trees themselves bear witness to the many generations of Gregorys who once lived here. Robert Gregory, great grandfather of Sir William, bought the 600 acre estate in 1768 and first planted the 'Seven Woods' later to be immortalised by Yeats in his poetry.

Some woods already existed when the estate was first acquired by Robert Gregory and these are likely to be 'natural' woodland, that is, wooded continuously since pre-historic times. The remains of this original woodland are still visible at Inchy Wood down towards the lake. The oaks here grow right on the edge of the turlough in places and may be up to two metres underwater in winter. This is a unique habitat, being the only place in Ireland with seasonally flooded oak wood.

Arthur Young wrote of Coole in 1776 in his 'Tour of Ireland': 'Mr Gregory has a very noble nursery from which he is making plantations which will soon be a great ornament to the country.' Subsequent generations of Gregorys continued planting at Coole. The woods provided them with cover for game, valuable supplies of timber and fuel, as well as pleasant walks.

In 1847 William Gregory, aged 30, inherited the estate from his father Robert who had died of famine fever contracted while caring for his tenants. This was the era of the great Victorian plant hunters, intrepid explorers who probed the farthest corners of the world, sending back seeds and plants. Exotic conifers were

particularly popular and several can still be seen at Coole. Sir William was a self-confessed 'coniferomaniac' and the Pinetum at Coole, completed in 1856, is considered to be his greatest contribution to the estate.

A few years after his death Lady Gregory wrote: 'My husband planted rare pines that now tower skywards and many larch and spruce for he believed in home-grown timber.' Lady Gregory herself had a great love of trees and an interest in forestry. She planted trees that grew well, mainly larch and silver fir, often by her own hand. 'Nearly all my book royalties grow into trees' she told a guest once.

The Big Wind of 1903, a hurricane which swept Britain and Ireland, caused great damage to the woods at Coole where thousands of tall conifers were overthrown. Lady Gregory planted 2,500 trees to replace those destroyed and set up a second hand sawmill to make use of the fallen timber, selling the results at cost.

When Coole was sold to the State in 1927 the Forest Service took on the management of the estate. Lady Gregory wrote: 'a great joy to me to see the work beginning again that I had been forced to abandon. And they will plant great spaces in comparison with my few acres at a time. This will be an interest henceforth.'

The Forest Service carried out an ambitious programme of clearing and planting so that by 1968 the estate had been almost completely stocked with timber.

Gradually, Coole began to be recognised as a unique natural environment which required special care. The primary management objective changed from commercial production of timber to conservation of the flora and fauna. The plantations were removed from the walled garden and nature trails were laid out. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has been managing the nature reserve for wildlife conservation and public amenity since 1987.

Long-term plans for Coole include the removal of the remaining commercial plantations in order to allow natural regeneration of native species. Some areas have already been cleared and left to regenerate naturally. This is a slow process and looks untidy but is very important in terms of preserving biodiversity and our natural heritage.

"The beauty, the romance of our Seven Woods, the mysteries of the ebbing and flowing lake are dear to me, have been well loved, and are now in hands that will care and tend them it is likely for ever" Lady Gregory, 26th May 1929

Reference: Report for the OPW on Coole Park by Ana Dolan & Maryann Harris 1994

Coole/Garryland Nature Reserve is open year round. The visitor centre and tea rooms at Coole are open from Easter through the summer season. There are regular free events including walks covering the trees of Coole, the history of the Gregorys, nature activities for children and family walks. During the school year there is an Education programme available free to primary schools.

COOLE MUSIC

First Fiddle Fun Group, 2005



Seven years ago, Coole Music School welcomed its first young students excited about learning to play an instrument. Many of those students now form the core of the Coole Music Youth Orchestra, that has played numerous concerts at festivals and events from Kilkenny to Inis Oirr, including a performance at the National Concert Hall in 2010, and a tour to Germany. Just one of the multiple activities now available at Coole Music, the Youth Orchestra includes over forty wind and string players and is closely followed by the Junior Orchestra, this year also approaching forty members. Not limited to instrumental groups, Coole Music also hosts Coole Harmonies, a young choir with a busy agenda of workshops and performances.

The founder and musical director of Coole Music is Katharina Baker who moved to the area 10 years ago. Growing up in Lübeck, Germany and later graduating from the Royal University College of Music in Stockholm, Sweden, her vision for Coole Music as a centre for joyful and creative music-making was inspired by her own musical experiences along the way. Working in partnership with Katharina is Fiona Buckley, a Kinvara resident who originally joined Coole Music as a parent volunteer and now manages the day-to-day operations of the organisation.

Notably, one of the major differences between Ireland and most other European countries is the lack of specific state funding for music schools in Ireland. Not easily discouraged, however, Katharina enlisted the help of some

enthusiastic parents and Coole Music was established as a non-profit, community organisation governed by a voluntary steering group. As with any other community group, keeping it going depends on lots of ongoing voluntary work and fundraising. With approximately 200 students currently participating in Coole Music's activities and a faculty of 14 teachers, the hard work and commitment has paid off, and it is hugely rewarding to see how vibrant the organisation has grown in every aspect.

Today, Coole Music offers tuition in violin, viola, cello, double bass, recorder, flute, oboe, clarinet, saxophone, piano, percussion, as well as music theory and group classes for younger children. One can en-



Coole Music Youth Orchestra Performance in Castalia Hall, Kilkenny, 2011

counter Toddler Tunes for 1-3 year olds, Music Macaroni from 3 years upwards, Playful Percussion from 4 years upwards and the Fiddle Fun Programme, from 5 years upwards. Other groups include Starter Strings Ensemble, Capriccio Recorder Consort, Allegro! Wind Band and Sonic Strings, a teenage string group about to embark on a year-long musical project that will culminate in appearances at Arts Festivals around the country and a trip to Sweden. Sonic Strings have recently received funding from the Arts Council for this project, which is a great achievement in a very competitive scheme.

There are also an additional ten chamber music groups - quartets, trios and quintets who have performed at numerous community events such as launches, poetry readings, award ceremonies, and provided lobby and reception music. One group, the Kyleneano Quartet (named after one of the seven woods at Coole Park), recently featured live on RTÉ Lyric FM for National Music Day.

Coole Harmonies choir, have become known for their beautiful St Lucia Concerts in Scandinavian style around Christmas time. They have performed in St Nicholas, Galway, St Colmans, Kinvara, the Gort Library and have been invited to take the St Lucia Performance to Kilkenny in 2012. In February 2011 and 2012 Coole Harmonies participated in the Peace Proms concert with the Cross Border Orchestra of Ireland at Leisureland, Galway. They also travelled to Cork to participate

in the International Choral Festival in 2011 and 2012 and are planning to approach even bigger projects within the next two years. Since 2010 the choir has been under the direction of Noreen McDermott and is open to members age 8+. Currently working on a promotional DVD, the choir accepted new members by audition in September.

Events are a major focus for all at Coole Music, as performance opportunities for the young musicians are considered a vital part of their music education and confidence development. Coole Music's largest event, which had its 5th anniversary this year, is the award-winning Annual Orchestra Festival, which to date has seen more than 1,000 young orchestral musicians visit Gort. Players have travelled from Donegal, Kilkenny, Sligo, Dublin, Laois, Ennis, Mountshannon, Limerick and Stockholm, to perform for and with orchestras from Galway city and county. Now about to enter its 6th year, the Festival is the only event of its kind in the West, and has become a highlight on the calendars of young orchestras throughout the country.

Other regular events at Coole Music include the Annual PlayDay, Annual Teachers Seminar, weekend and summer camps, the winter and summer student concert series, and participation in National Music Day. There is also an outreach programme in place which offers drumming, violin and now classical guitar, to schools in the locality.

One of the most exciting developments for Coole Music has been collaborations with other schools, both nationally and internationally. For example, three different music groups from Sweden have visited Gort in the last two years and were hosted by orchestra families. The social benefits of these collaborations are just as important as the musical benefits, and many friendships have been formed as a result.

Coole Music would like to take the opportunity to thank the community of Gort for their support over the years. To find out more about joining the organisation, see www.coole-music.com or find us on Facebook.



Young musicians performing at the finale of the 2012 Orchestra Festival



WOMEN WRITERS OF THE WORLD UNITE FOR GORT GATHERING 2013

by Sr de Lourdes Fahy



Lady Gregory

Gathering 2013 received widespread coverage in Croke Park during the half-time interval of the Galway-Kilkenny All-Ireland Hurling Final on 9th September.

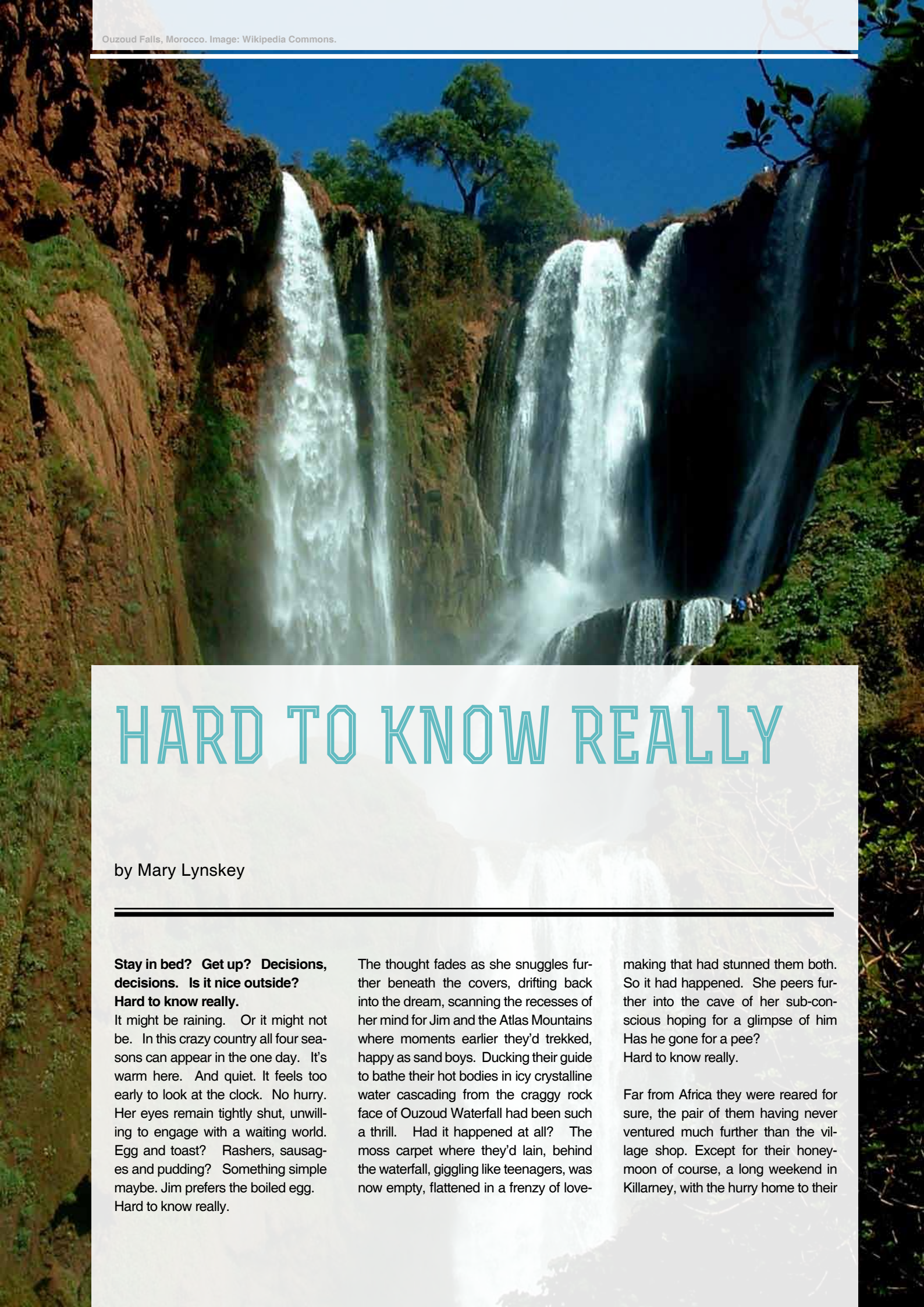
A meeting authorised by Failte Ireland and Galway County Council was held in Loughrea on 18th September in which ways of attracting people to the county were discussed. Much of this had already been done for the past two years by Ireland Reaching Out where South and South-East Galway have been the pilot areas. People of Irish descent have come to the Week of Welcomes in June and have thoroughly enjoyed themselves. The 'Ireland Reaching Out' office in Loughrea has established world-wide contacts. The Loughrea meeting offered an opportunity to local people to learn more about The Gathering and how they can be involved. Whatever parish, community or group you belong to should be planning special events in 2013. No idea is too big, too small or too quirky. The event doesn't have to be an entirely new one – a town or village can also add to an existing local event. Organisations such as The

Irish Farmers' Association, the GAA, The I.C.A. and Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann are mobilising members all over Ireland.

Examples of such Gatherings are clan gatherings, genealogical projects, school reunions, twin-town visits, sporting events, music festivals and many, many more.

What will Gort do? An event which we suggested at the Loughrea meeting received enthusiastic support. Basically it is this: invite to Gort and South Galway all the women writers of the world who can claim descent from an Irish ancestor. After all, a Galway woman, Lady Augusta Gregory, blazed a trail as a playwright, poet, collector of folklore and translator of Irish epics.

We have many contacts in Ireland and abroad but we need your support to make our dream come true. The plan is still in its infancy, but it is obvious that it has huge potential for the local economy. Please contact Rena McAllen at 086 8252164 or renamcalen@eircom.net.



HARD TO KNOW REALLY

by Mary Lynskey

Stay in bed? Get up? Decisions, decisions. Is it nice outside? Hard to know really.

It might be raining. Or it might not be. In this crazy country all four seasons can appear in the one day. It's warm here. And quiet. It feels too early to look at the clock. No hurry. Her eyes remain tightly shut, unwilling to engage with a waiting world. Egg and toast? Rashers, sausages and pudding? Something simple maybe. Jim prefers the boiled egg. Hard to know really.

The thought fades as she snuggles further beneath the covers, drifting back into the dream, scanning the recesses of her mind for Jim and the Atlas Mountains where moments earlier they'd trekked, happy as sand boys. Ducking their guide to bathe their hot bodies in icy crystalline water cascading from the craggy rock face of Ouzoud Waterfall had been such a thrill. Had it happened at all? The moss carpet where they'd lain, behind the waterfall, giggling like teenagers, was now empty, flattened in a frenzy of love-

making that had stunned them both. So it had happened. She peers further into the cave of her sub-conscious hoping for a glimpse of him. Has he gone for a pee? Hard to know really.

Far from Africa they were reared for sure, the pair of them having never ventured much further than the village shop. Except for their honeymoon of course, a long weekend in Killarney, with the hurry home to their

small farm where good neighbours had seen to the milking. What had possessed them to go to Morocco? Up to recently Anne would have been hard pushed to tell anyone where it was, except maybe to say it was somewhere "out foreign". Seeing Jim furtively tearing pages out of a woman's magazine that time in the doctor's waiting room had astonished her. What the hell was he playing at, she'd wondered?
Hard to know really.

She listens keenly, her thoughts muddled, part present, part in dreamland. No rain pounding on the window but sometimes it's sneaky, falling softly to catch you out. Is it Saturday?
Hard to know really.

Jeans or tracksuit? Tracksuit, and it's a leisurely walk in Coole Park to wander in its vast loveliness. Jeans, and it's a trip around the shops searching for bargains. Her favourite haunts were charity shops with their bizarre mix of gems, books and rubbish. Well, mostly rubbish, or so Jim says. A few drinks afterwards perhaps, a spot of supper?
Hard to know really.

Something is different. She struggles to unscramble a collage of questions, whirling around at top speed in her head, dragging her under and pushing her to the surface simultaneously, making her gasp for breath. If it's Saturday it probably is raining and on Saturdays the fridge is always full of eggs, rashers and sausages. Coole Park must be full of strollers and kids and dogs. Will they need raingear? Is it Saturday? Are they back from Morocco? Why is her good suit hanging on the handle of the wardrobe?
Hard to know really.

Sliding her hand slowly across the cold empty expanse fresh tears pour freely as reality strikes, bringing her back to The West where her fridge is devoid of eggs, rashers and sausages, and in their sitting room lie the remains of her beloved Jim, taken from her in a flash on the rugged slopes of the Atlas Mountains. Had he died in peace, the scent of her still fresh in his mind? Had he tried to call her, lying in the damp grotto, clutching his chest, his face relaxed into a gentle smile? Had he tasted her again as she'd

pressed her lips frantically to his, forcing air through the slight gap?
Hard to know really.

Recalling the morning he'd skipped from the surgery, the stolen magazine article shoved up his jumper, brings a smile to her face as she remembers the devilment dancing in his eyes. It was so unlike him, a mad gesture like that. A man who'd refused to venture beyond the local inn for the past 30 years had grabbed her hand, dragged her across the carpark and insisted they go straight home to plan 'a trip'.

"What trip? You mad eejit! What the hell is wrong with you, what about the shopping?" She'd protested as he'd bundled her into the car like a bold child. "Feck the shoppin'! You and me, Missus, are going to Morocco!" He'd roared, gunning the Fiesta at full speed onto the main street, putting the fear of God into Madge Brady who'd toddled out in front of him on her way to the post office. "Will

Arriving home, Anne had watched helplessly as Jim had ransacked the sideboard, stuffed to the gills with old schoolbooks and paraphernalia, before emerging triumphant with a battered geography book of Brian's. "Now! Let's have a look at where we're going!"

"Jim, that book is twenty years old, surely it's out of date?"; she'd protested, concerned at his flushed complexion. Her usually docile husband had taken on the persona of a young buck, charged with a palpable energy she hadn't seen in donkeys years. "Yerra what are you talking about woman! Are you telling me that somehow Morocco has moved?"; before adding "Sit down there now like a good girl and help me find it." With that he'd plonked himself at the kitchen table and, glasses perched on the end of his nose, had pored over the territory as alien to him as the back end of the moon, with an intensity that would

CHILDREN? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU? THAT CROWD IS REARED AND NOT BEFORE TIME!

you slow down, you lunatic!" Anne had screamed, as Madge had to hop back onto the footpath to avoid annihilation, brandishing her walking stick while glaring venom fit to burst the windscreen. Anne couldn't resist laughing, which enraged the nosey ould bat even more. "How'ya Madge, me ould flower!" He'd roared at the shaken pensioner forcing Anne to duck onto the car floor where she'd pretended to search for something, thinking the whole village would have it that Jim Riordan had lost his marbles as soon as Madge recovered her power of speech. At the time she herself had been wondering the exact same thing, despite a shiver of excitement running through her. Morocco? What had come over her man?
Hard to know really.

have put Columbus to shame.

"But Jim, Morocco? How...where are we getting the money for all this? What about the children?" was all she could stutter as the shock set in. Had he gone cracked? Tearing off across the world without as much as a by or leave? She wondered had he had some kind of stroke, or seizure. The doctor had changed his blood pressure tablets. Maybe they didn't agree with him, had softened his brain.

"Children? What's wrong with you? That crowd is reared and not before time! And as for money, we have money, and by God 'tis time to spend some of it on ourselves!" He'd yelled before pulling her onto his lap,

grinning from ear to ear. The pot-bellied balding man sitting under her willing to squander their savings on a whim had never done a rash thing in his life and she hadn't known whether to laugh or cry. You don't expect a mid-life crisis to hit at eleven o'clock on a Thursday morning. It was a far cry from the man she'd married, whom she knew many believed wouldn't give you the steam of his piss. His tightness had never bothered her, having learned long ago how to squeeze money out of him, but now, it seemed, he'd changed his tune completely. Bringing up five children on a modest budget had been difficult but she'd managed despite his frugality and if there was one thing Anne Riordan knew in her heart and soul it was that he loved his family very much. As for this new-found display of affection and affluence, where had that come from? Hard to know really.

Two weeks later, to the utter bewilderment of their family and neighbours, they

everything from plates to slippers, spices to silks. He haggled and bargained, arguing the toss with bemused traders, language no barrier, like he was back home in the local mart. A new suitcase had to be bought for their mound of purchases, leaving Anne wondering if they would be robbed blind in additional charges at the airport. Jim dumped his herringbone suit in favour of khaki shorts and psychedelic shirts, topping them off with a massive straw hat, bought from his new friends down the market, the man from the bog left firmly behind in Galway. Anne for her part got into the spirit of things by wearing bright kaftans decorated with jewels and intricate stitching and fancy sandals she'd bought in Dunnes the week before. He showered her with jewellery, beautiful rings with matching earrings, ropes of delicate gold tooled to perfection, insisting she deserved them all, a reward for her years of doing without, and she accepted them with pleasure. They surprised themselves over and over again as they travelled across Morocco in

Burrowing deeper under the quilt she relives the past three weeks, the most wonderful of her life, in slow motion. Wasn't it the curse of God that after all their hard work, when they'd re-captured a zest for living, that the arse should fall out of their world? Not that they hadn't been happy before they'd gone away. They were, but in an automatic, subdued kind of way. In Morocco a childish innocence, coupled with a burning desire, had catapulted them back in time, recapturing a youth of laughter and dancing, excitement and light heartedness.

She mulls this over in her mind as hushed voices penetrate the silence, a reminder of the ordeal awaiting her downstairs. Her Jim, back in his old self and his good suit, was leaving her soon to finish his journey. She reflects on the Jim of Morocco, the animated free spirit that loved her to bits in the wild desert heat. The man who'd insisted on riding a manky camel that took off like an express train, leaving her laughing so hard she almost wet herself. Had God nudged him that day in the doctors surgery, to hurry, to have one good blow-out, a last hurrah? In His kindness and compassion had He engineered that their souls would soar to the heights of the Atlas Mountains to blend as one, to provide her with memories to cherish in the challenging times ahead?

Hard to know really.

LONG WITH YOU? THAT NOT BEFORE TIME!

struck off, Jim done up like a dogs dinner in his good suit that had seen better days, herself in a nice linen suit she'd worn to a wedding the previous summer. Boarding a jet for the first time ever, they fortified themselves with a few shots of brandy to celebrate, marvelling at candyfloss clouds that parted occasionally, teasing them with mysteries far below. Arriving, they took to their surroundings like seasoned travellers, loving the buzz, the melting pot of cultures, the heat a salve on their chilled Irish bones, their hotel the very lap of luxury.

From the outset, Jim had spent money hand over fist, like a man possessed, galloping from souq to souq, disappearing into cubby-hole workshops, bartering to beat the band with artisans flogging

style, marvelling at their new-found freedom. Both terrified and exhilarated, they embraced the strange surroundings and culture as easily as they would have the Ring of Kerry. They swam in the great Atlantic Ocean and dined each night like sultans, sampling with abandon whatever was offered to them. Strictly a bacon and cabbage man, Anne laughed in amazement as Jim dug into the local fare of harira, aromatic tajines, dates and olives. But it was the resurgence of their love life that had blown her mind away entirely. Like many their age, they'd become lazy and complacent, but the magic of Morocco awakened their natural attraction to each other that, over time, had become dormant. And what was she to do now?

Hard to know really.



Teachers Attending Confirmation Ceremony in Gort, 1983

L – R: Sr John, Sr Peter (R.I.P), P Ó Conaire, Sr Marcella, Gretta Cafferky, Mary Connolly (R.I.P), Bishop Eamonn Casey, Finola Murphy, Marion Diviney, Rosemary Lahiffe, Nicholas Cafferky.



James Joynt was a well known farm labourer in the North Clare, South Galway area. He died in 1996 aged 88, most of his relatives are in the US, England and Australia. A grave-marker for The Joynt family, Poulataggle, Tubber, was donated by George Taafe, Tubber and recently unveiled at Kilmacduagh cemetery by Fr. Brian Geoghegan and Michael O’Donohue, Rockvale, Tubber. The grave was renovated by Bernard Cummins, Kilmacduagh. Image Credit: Tony Hannon



Pateen Cahill (on the left), Lavally, Ploughing with Pat Hart. About 1940



Gort Boys School - 5th and 6th Class, 1974.

Back row (L-R) Kieran Nestor, Gerard O’Connor, Alan Counihan, Pius Lally, Frank Shaw, Dermot Duffy, John O’Reilly, Gabriel Piggott, Colman Roche, Enda Cunningham, Stephen Fahy, P Ó Conaire, Michael Carty, Michael Nestor.
 Front row (L-R) Andrew Forde, Jarlath McInerney, Brendan Spelman, Kevin Glynn, John Mulcair, Declan Spelman, Michael Kilroy, Brendan Long, Patrick Cahill, Kieran Reddy, John Kelly, Mel Conway.

DOWN MEMORY LANE



Below Left: L to R: Frank Cahill, Tony Ruane, Antony Carty. Ballylee Castle, 1970.

7th Battery of the 5th Artillery Regiment, Gort F.C.A – Late 60's circa '66, '67, F.C.A. Grounds, Barrack Street, Gort.

Back Row (L-R) Tom Donoghue (Kilbecanty), Vincent Walsh (Derrybrien), Desmond Flaherty (Kilbecanty), Tom O'Loughlin (Kilbecanty), Anthony Hughes (Kilbecanty), Terance Moran (Kilbecanty), Frank Fahy (Kilbecanty).

Front Row (L-R) Brendan Head (Derrybrien), Eoin Broderick (Derrybrien), John Walsh (Ballyturn), Pakie Walsh (Ballyturn), Michael Coen (Cloone), John Mahon (Gorteen Bui), Marty Kerins (Kilbecanty).



Below Right: Children in Gort 1950's pictured beside the Old Forge, Georges Street.
Back row (l-r): Miriam Cunniffe, Lorna Broderick, Kathleen Hanlon, Annmarie Courtney, Johnny Kelly, Valerie Broderick. Front row: Gus Kelly, Sean Brennan, ?, Michael Brennan, Mary Brennan.

A TRIBUTE TO RYNAL COEN



Gort Billiards Team

In the late 1950's, Gort Billiards Team were winners of the Galway County League. The League final was played in Ballinasloe Social Club against Athenry and Gort won 4 – 2. The team was captained by Tom Lambert (Georges Street) and included (Rynal Coen (Gallaghers Lane), Pat Fennessy (Garrybeg), Paddy Burke (Glenbrack), Sean Ruane (native of Athenry), Jimmy Madden (native of Limerick). The Galway County Billiards League included teams from Gort, Portumna, Loughrea, Athenry, Ballinasloe A & B, Banagher, Co. Offaly.

Pictured are members of the team and club outside the Gort Town Hall, Church Street.

Back row (L-R) Jack Corcoran, Paddy (The West) Burke, Stephen Ruane, Joe Cooney, Jimmy Madden, Michael John Cloran.

Middle row (L-R), Jack Hayes, Michael Joe Sylver, Paddy (Pudney) Piggott, Denis Madigan, Josie Gallagher, Mick Hayes.

Front Row (L-R) Edmond Treston, David McNevin, Tom Lambert, Pat Fennessy, Rynal Coen, John Nally, Kieran Manto.

Rynal Coen who died earlier this year, was a leading businessman in Gort and Co Galway for over 50 years. Born in Gort, he was eldest son of Bernard and Eileen and was educated in Gort and Blackrock College, Dublin

On the death of his father Bernard, he became Managing Director of Bernard Coen & Sons, which was a leading General Merchants, Timber & Hardware Suppliers in the west of Ireland. The Company motto at that time was "Coens of Gort have everything". During his tenure the company expanded by opening branches in Galway, Oranmore and Tullamore to become one of the major companies in its field in Ireland. He also established a branch in London. In the early 2000's the Company was taken over by J.P Corry which continues to operate at those locations.

Rynal is well remembered in sports circles particularly in Rugby where

he excelled for Galwegians. He was a member of the team that won 5 Connacht Senior Cups and Leagues in a row from 1955 onwards, being Captain in 1959. He represented Connacht from 1954 to 1959 and was part of the great wins over Ulster at Ravenhill in 1954 and 1956. He also played a part in a win over Munster at Musgrave Park in 1956. After his playing career finished his interest remained and he served as President of Galwegians in 1975/76. Though he is mostly associated with Galwegians, he was also a life-long supporter and adviser to the local Club in Gort. His love of sport went beyond Rugby to include golf and billiards.

Another lesser known side to him was his charity work especially in his efforts for the Galway Hospice. He had experienced the family loss of a younger brother, Berry, from cancer in the 1950's. In the mid 1980's when the first efforts were being made to establish a Hospice in Galway, Rynal became a member of the



Board and was the driving force in building an Inpatient Unit. He was responsible for raising €1.4 million of the €1.6 million required to fund to build the Hospice. He served as a Board member until his death being Chairman for many years.

His devotion to Gort was well known and he took every opportunity to promote the town and surrounding area and many clubs, organisations and people benefitted from his support.

Rynal is survived by his widow Dairin, sons Peter, Richard, Bernard, daughters Susie, Sheena and Jennie, brothers David and Dermot and sister Rita.

GORT PUBLIC LIBRARY AT THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY

by Eileen O'Connor



Portuguese Night at Gort Library

Gort public library is housed in St. Colman's Old Church of Ireland on Queen Street, a picturesque building which has an illustrious past going back over two hundred years (see Peadar Ó Conaire's article on Queen St page 32). The building has always been a place of gathering and community for the betterment of the soul and, as a library, it continues to be a place of warmth where families and neighbours gather to pursue the pleasure of reading and learning in a social setting.

In addition to the core service of maintaining a quality collection of reading material for public lending, the library also hosts many cultural and community events which contribute to celebrating and defining our local identity. Since my arrival in Gort in 2007 I have been struck by the creative talent and strong sense of community here. It has been my pleasure to allow the library to become a place where this talent and togetherness can flourish.

During 2012 Gort library has worked in association with individual artists and local groups; the Western Writers' Centre, the Gort Family Resource Centre, the Gort Vibes Cinema Club,

Cooile Music, Orchard Services, Active Retirement Association, VEC and local schools; all of us working together to delight, enquire and inspire with a range of exhibitions and activities open to all.

The Western Writers' Centre has been fantastic in organising literary events in the library, and they should be thanked especially for organising 'The Forge at Gort Literary Festival' which has taken place annually for five years now, in multiple venues throughout the town, during the last weekend in March – a weekend to note in your diaries for 2013.

The Family Resource Centre (FRC) held an exhibition for Idaho Tea Day to challenge prejudices around gender identity. The FRC also organised a visit from the Domestic Workers' Action Group to Gort library to perform a striking drama highlighting the issues facing immigrants working in Irish homes. Annie, Trish and Sandra in the FRC were instrumental in supporting our summer intern, Stefania Bove from southern Italy, in developing outreach projects between the library and the local Brazilian Community. Stefania liaised with local contacts through the FRC to develop a collection of Portuguese literature in the library, and to co-ordinate a wonderful subtitling project where local

children; Marie-Eliza Broto da Souza, Rayssa Bueno de Medeiros and Caroline Bueno Garseis created subtitles in Portuguese for the animation Granny O'Grimm's Sleeping Beauty by the award winning Brown Bag Productions. Check out the video on Brown Bag Film's YouTube channel.

Every autumn we look forward to the return of the Gort Vibe Cinema Club for their winter season, with films being screened in the library on the first Thursday each month. For the summer season, the film club adjourns to the old VEC building on the Ennis Road.

Talent abounds in Gort, as demonstrated by the Gort Active Retirement Association's Art Group, who held a very successful art exhibition in the library last May as part of the nationwide Bealtaine festival - celebrating creativity in the older years. The launch of the exhibition turned into quite a hooley with a fabulous spread of home baked treats, with music kindly provided by local musicians, Clare Sawtell and Mary O'Sullivan.

Other local artists who have exhibited their work in the library are Jenni



Gort Active Retirement Association's Art Group Celebrating Bealtaine.

Maguire (paintings), Valentine Tynan (calligraphy), Andrea Lippert (stained glass), Thomas Coyne (sculptural paintings), Eamon Perkins (weaving), Deirdre Holmes (photography) and Renata Hochmanova with her beautiful silk paintings. Not to mention young artists from the Art Box, taught by Shona MacGillivray.

And as if artistic talent wasn't enough, musical talent is in no short supply either. The children of Coole music have also performed in the library. Their wonderful St. Lucia concert has been a seasonal delight in the lead up to Christmas for the past few years.

Of course, reading is also a creative endeavour. A book is only started by its author, it is the reader who completes the creation, so all of our readers contribute to the creative energy here. As well as the thousands of bestsellers and international authors you will also find plenty of local authors on the library shelves; Sr. DeLourdes Fahy, John Quinn, Sean Spellissey, Jackie Queally to mention just a few. Books have also been writ-

ten about inspirational people from Gort; Lord Gough and Lady Gregory for example. One of our library members is even an award winning author whose works have been translated into several languages. Kate Thompson won the Whitbread award for children's literature for her book "The New Policeman" which is set in Kinvara. In the library you will find translations of Kate's books in Chinese, French, German, Danish, Finnish, Spanish and Portuguese!

In an era where, as Richard Swift describes, almost everything is accelerated causing profound cultural and political disorientation, the public library provides a special place which recognises that time is not something which is gained or lost, but a continuum in which we live. The library can be a place to take stock, to step away from the rush to nowhere.

To quote writer and illustrator, Oisín McGann: "Think about it for a minute: a publicly-funded, well-resourced place, complete with expert advisors, where a person has room and time to sit and think.



Bilingual storytime in Gort Library

A place where you can better yourself, but at your own pace. A place to sit and work out ideas; where new events and projects can be encouraged and supported in a spontaneous, organic, community-driven way. A place where a community can develop and grow, and engage with the wider world."

Aren't we so lucky to have such a place in Gort? Along with my colleague, Margaret Bourke it is my pleasure to work in this wonderful library and to serve the lovely people of Gort.



ARTUR KOZLOWSKI (1977 – 2011)

By Edel Nolan

Artur Kozlowski

On a fine Saturday in March 2008, Dad was mowing the lawn when a friendly looking young man walked in the drive and introduced himself as Artur Kozlowski from Poland whose hobby is diving, especially in caves. He had been told that there was a cave on the farm and would Dad mind if he had a look. Dad immediately said yes as he was intrigued by the cave since he was a child.

The cave called Pollonora 10 is about 100m from our house in Corker, Gort. We were strictly forbidden to go near the cave as our parents did not know how deep it was and if the land around it was secure. Mom always worried that we would wander near the cave and the ground would cave in under us!

Artur gave a quick exploration of the cave that day. He seemed really pleased with what he had seen and asked Dad if he could call again. After that, Artur became a regular visitor to area. He was really excited about the cave and was amazed at how extensive the cave system was - he often brought his friends; Jim, Frank, Dave and Walter cave divers from England, Belgium, Ukraine and Poland.

Dad was always very interested in what they had to say about the cave. Artur mapped the cave and was still modifying this map right up to his death. Artur and his friends had travelled 810m in a south-westerly direction within the cave, which is called the known limits of the cave. However, experts agree that the cave extends beyond this distance, the cave has a known depth of 52m below ground level.

As the 'new M18 motorway' is to be built directly over these huge caves Galway County Council enlisted Artur's help as a consultant to give his opinion if the terrain could withstand the weight of a road on top of it. Artur got paid for work like this and also for items he submitted to newspapers, all money he received was spent on up-dating his diving equipment. He might have holes in his shoes but he would buy an underwater compass instead.

Artur became really friendly with our family and began staying in my grandparents house during bad weather, and in the summer he would sleep in a tent on the farm. He would turn up unannounced and would depart just as suddenly, it was only after his death that we realised how friendly he was with all the neighbours. He had such a friendly nature that anyone he met liked him,

OFTEN I WOULD SEE HIM WALK PAST THE SCHOOL AND ALL THE CHILDREN WOULD WAVE AT HIM AND I WOULD TELL THEM WHO HE WAS.

and because what he was doing was so unique he had everyone captivated with this unexplored world right outside our back door. Often I would see him walk past the school and all the children would wave at him and I would tell them who he was.

Sometimes months would pass without seeing him at all, and then he would

return and tell us about other caves he was diving in Mayo, Doolin or Fermanagh. He also couldn't dive if the caves were very flooded so the bad summers in 2009 and 2010 kept him away. He holds the record for the deepest cave dive in Ireland and the UK at a depth of 103 m (338 ft) in Pollatoomary, near Killylally, Co. Mayo.

On Sept 3rd 2011, Artur and two of his friends called to the house. He told Dad he was really excited as he was about to go further into the cave than he had previously been. In order to do this he would need to do a lot of preparatory work and he intended starting that weekend. Artur dived as usual on Sat and again on Sunday, on Monday he entered the cave at 2pm and told his friends he would exit again at 5pm. As it was an extremely wet day, his friends relaxed while Artur dived. However, when Artur wasn't back by 5pm his friends got concerned and as they were quite novice divers they contacted his more experienced friends, very quickly the alarm was raised. We were told and we all started to pray that he would be found alive.

New spread very quickly that he was missing and by the following afternoon Kiltartan was a hive of media activity. Numerous TV and radio stations descended on Kiltartan as everyone waited anxiously for news of Artur. Our garden was centre of operations with specialist search and rescue teams from Ireland, Wales and England involved in the rescue attempt. Our hopes of finding him alive were short-lived as experts in the field explained it would be impossible to survive in such conditions. Hourly

there were conflicting reports that possibly he had travelled too far into the cave and may never be found, or even if his body was discovered they may not be able to bring it to the surface. It was with huge relief that we welcomed the news that they had found his body and also it was going to be possible to bring it to the surface. On the day his body was taken above ground it was treated with utmost dignity. Fr Marrinan was present to bless him, and a doctor from Gort was there to confirm that he was deceased. Artur's friends formed a guard of honour and carried him carefully to a hearse. He was taken to University College Hospital Galway for a post-mortem. Everyone was very sad to realise that we wouldn't see him again, by this stage the story of Artur had reached the rest of the country, and the whole country united in grief when it was confirmed that he had died.

Artur's family came from Poland for his funeral and were so touched by the kindness of everyone in Kiltartan, when they witnessed the obvious affection everyone felt for Artur they decided to bury him in Kiltartan graveyard. His family write to us regularly and send us little personal mementos to place on his grave, in return we take photos of his grave and send them to his family. Fr Tommy Marrinan officiated at his funeral Mass which was a lovely celebration of his life, the church was packed and it was celebrated in both English and Polish. His friends were inconsolable at his death, and as a mark of respect to him they have filmed a documentary of his life with lots of footage from his own camera, this film titled 'Riders on the Storm' was shown in Trinity College Dublin and University College Galway through the Sub Aqua societies of these colleges, and at a Polish film festival. The film won a prestigious award at the Polish film festival.

People often remarked to us that we must have regretted letting him dive in the cave because of all the bother it caused during the time he was missing. But my family always say although it is sad that he died on our farm we have no regrets; it was a pleasure to have met him and we are honoured to now maintain his grave.

GORT NO NAME CLUB SUCCESS

by Cathal Broderick

The No Name Club is a national youth organisation which was first founded in 1978. Legendary hurler, Eddie Keher was one of the main men behind the founding of the club. He said he didn't like the way that the young people of Ireland had nowhere to go and nothing to do except go to the pub. So he, along with Fr Tom Browne and Garda Eamonn Doyle, set up The No Name Club as an alternative to pub culture for the youth of Ireland.

Today, there are more than 15,000 young people involved in No Name Clubs across the country, Gort hosting almost 70 members. Gort No Name Club meets in the V.E.C building on Friday nights to organise events, fundraisers or just to meet up with your friends. We get involved in as many community events as we can. This year we were involved in tidy towns, the St. Patricks Day parade, and we are currently trying to set up a youth café in town.

Every year the National Youth Awards are held for the members of all the No Name Clubs across the country. This year they were held in the Lyrath Estate in Kilkenny. Over 1,000 people attended the event. Every year, ten finalists are selected to compete for Host and Hostess of the year. The winners are decided by a judging panel of three. They judge you on a private interview with the judges, an on-stage interview at the Youth Awards, and a party piece that followed. This year, I was lucky enough to be one of the finalists and even more lucky to win Host of the Year award. It is the first time Gort have won the title so I feel very privileged and proud. Éadaoin Ní Mhaicín from Claremorris No Name club won Hostess of the year. This set up what turned out to be a fantastic night which everyone enjoyed. Over 50 members from Gort attended the awards, and we stayed at the Lyrath until 6 the next morning before a very sleepy bus journey home.

The No Name Club would not be possible without the amazing help of all the adult volunteers both in Gort and across the country. On behalf of every member of No Name clubs nationwide, a huge thank you goes out to all the helpers and volunteers in No Name Clubs. We are all looking forward to another busy year in Gort No Name Club in the coming year. For further information go to www.nonameclub.ie



Cathal Broderick and Bobby Kerr, Chairman, *Insomnia* and judge on *Dragon's Den*.

TRAINS, GORT STATION AND ME

by Mossey Clabby

3rd April 1976 – Last Ballina – Limerick Passenger Train stopping at Gort Station. Image: Richard Wall.



All my life trains, both steam and diesel, have held a special place in my psyche (a 'quare' place that to be sure!). My first memory of rail travel is a family journey on a steam train to Ballinrobe, as we made our way to Clonbur, my mother's home place, in the 1940's. I still feel the excitement and wonder of the rail carriage with its padded seats and luggage racks, the leather strap window openers, the shrill whistle of the locomotive, the smell of the steam, the smoke and smuts from the coal-fired engine which left black mark on my face and clean shirt as I viewed the countryside through the open window. My mother's dismay at the sight of my new shirt (there were no washing machines in those days) is still clear in my mind. Then there was the noise of steel on steel as the train came to a halt in the station. Another memory of that day is the taxi of Paddy Burke from Clonbur - a big American car with real leather seats - I can still sense the smell of the leather; we only had my father's bicycle at home!

Gort Railway Station, its stores and signal cabin, were fascinating places. Martin Halvey was the signalman. Then there was Jack Corcoran with his horse and dray delivering goods to the shops around town. The 'Rocks' - a rocky piece of waste ground abutting the tracks about 500 metres the Ennis side of the station - the Gort playground of our youth, where Carn Row and Crow Lane fought many memorable battles, and where the various cowboy and Indian films from the cinema were given a live re-run.

My next major railway encounter was a day in late August 1953 when I and two other local lads were 'escorted' by my late (Garda) father to Secondary school

in Cork City. That was a big travel day, first Gort to Limerick station; then to Limerick Junction, and thence to Cork City and the wonder of its 'huge' railway station! I also remember my first conscious experience of loneliness as Dad walked away from me to make his solo journey home. Cork seemed a world away from Gort, especially when I looked at the big map of Ireland hanging on the classroom wall - there were no mobiles or texts in those days, you were allowed to write home once a week.

Returning home at Christmas took a full day - starting from Cork in early morning darkness, and it was pitch black again when the Limerick/ Sligo train rolled into Gort at 5.30 pm. I can still hear the conductor as he called out the station names, Cratloe, 'Clicksmilebridge' (he had a lisp), Tubber and then Gort - oh the joy of being home!

Another milestone train day in my life was Jan 12 1959 as I took the train from Gort station to my first job in Dublin. Another local lad was on the train that day and he has remained in my memory all my life; I was on my way to my secure job and pre-booked digs, he by contrast was heading on his own for the boat to England - no digs, no job, and loneliness. I also regret that I made no effort to chat with him, something that has stayed with me since then, and the more as I never saw him again.

The closure of Gort station in 1976 was a major blow for Gort and South Galway - which we took with our usual apathetic indifference. Now, thankfully, due in the main to the Trojan efforts of the lobby group West on Track we're back on the rails as of 29th March 2010. I was so lucky

to be on the inaugural reopening journey which was a truly historic occasion. Now for the first time since 1976 we have a direct train link with our capital city. It is possible to leave Gort at 7.30 am, get to Dublin, do some business, and be back in Gort that evening. Think of the benefit this service can be for third level students on their daily commute to Galway or Limerick and the economic plus for the area that the local spend of these young people would bring. With good marketing tourists would come by train from Dublin to Coole Park, Kilmacdaugh, Thoor Ballylee, the Burren and many others. All it needs is the will to get up and fight for it. On a longer term basis, when rail freight services recommence there will be a major benefit to the environment in the reduction of heavy trucks on the roads. We constantly hear of our carbon footprints and the need to reduce them, a train is the ideal vehicle to achieve this; number one by being itself eco-friendly, and two a full train, means less carbon from motor travellers and indeed less heart attacks from driver stress.

In conclusion, let's keep in mind that the work is but half done, for we need to keep the pressure on until the line is continued through Tuam, Claremorris and on to Sligo - a veritable Western Rail Corridor, a great thank you is owed to Fr. M Mc Greil S. J, Colmán Ó'Raghallaigh, Martin Cunniffe of Claremorris and indeed to Tom Baker and Tom Naughton (ex Bank of Ireland Manager) of Gort for the persistent campaigning for West on Track which eventually led to what we now have. Some weeks ago I had the joy of reliving my first train journey to Cork - I even got to the English Market! There is so much we can do for ourselves if we just get up and do it!

COUNTRY LIFE

by Mary Moran

Self-sufficiency was a way of life growing up on a farm in the seventies and eighties. On our farm there were jobs for everyone young and old, all contributions noted and accepted according to your age and ability. When killing the pig, we the youngsters were confined to the house and protected from the butchery. My grandfather would be on the beat early that day; fondly known as 'the Boss'. He would stand a water barrel on four cement blocks, two on top of each other at the right and left base of the barrel. The barrel would be filled with water, and a fire lit underneath. Health and Safety would not approve today.

The fire was fueled and tended, the water boiled, the ass-cart scrubbed clean. A razor was left in readiness to prepare the skin of the beast. The pig knives were sharpened on the whet stone or against the porch wall of the house with a swishing noise that gave them a glinting edge.

It was a big event, a lot of help was needed. All the male neighbours and relatives gathered to part-take. One of them was called upon to do the deed. He was renowned for his skills in sticking pigs, quickly, cleanly, without cruelty and drawing the blood into a white enamel bucket when the feat was achieved, with

this animal securely roped to the cart.

They were continuing the skills of ancient man, pursuing the need to survival before the era of household freezing and refrigeration. We would not be allowed outside that day, not even near a back window. We would hear the pig squeal as the impact of the act drained his life away. It never took long. We accepted it as we did with calving and lambing. Soon the clean white bucket would be handed into my mother, half filled with warm blood. Then we would be distracted, some of us afraid of the contents but would still gather to watch her mix her recipe to make black pudding.

The men helped with shaving the beast and removing the offal, leaving the yard swept clean with the remainder of the boiling water. Letting it go for fear anyone would get burned, this scrubbing the only exterior indication of the days events. Inside the pigs carcass hanging off the stairs, kept open by skinned scallops. The crowd was gone, each with a griscin - a gaelic pork steak, a reward for the much needed help. Some would return after a number of days. The job of cutting, curing and barreling the fletches of bacon for it's preservation was still to be done. An evenings work on the kitch-

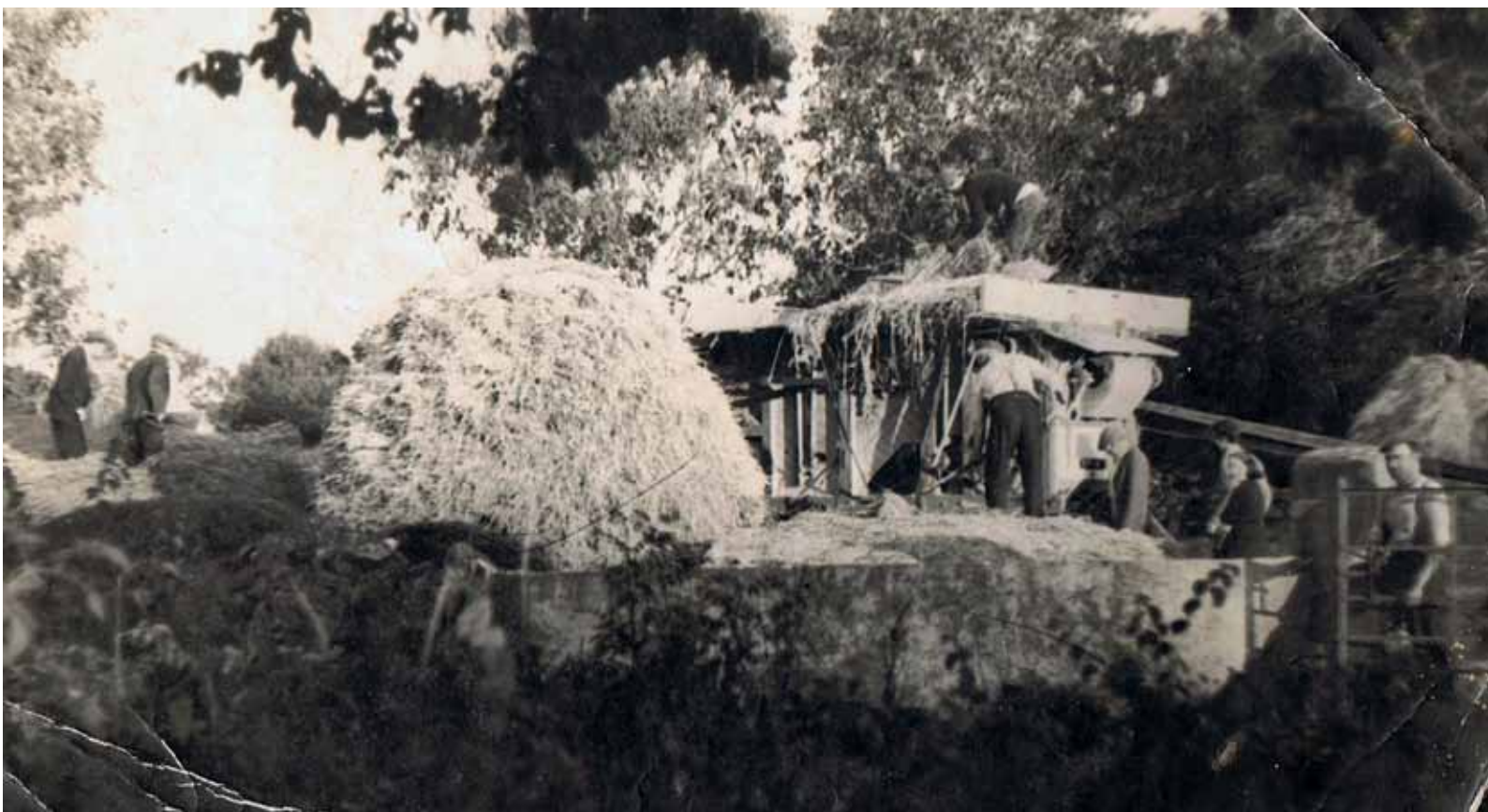
en table with salt all over the floor, a sight to behold, a household trade no more.

When golden meadows smelled sweet and swayed in July breezes; it was time to "take them down"! The forecast was listened to and analysed well in advance of the decision to "knock" the meadow, for the heat of the summer sun was required to dry and season this crop into hay.

The race was on. The farmer under pressure to complete this task versus the rain that would lodge his weighty crop onto the ground making his task more difficult or worse still; causing it to rot.

Preparations involved dusting off the fingerbar mower and getting it greased, it's long arm of triangular blades were removed and edged with a slimline circular file. A set or two of blades were also edged on standby. Sometimes a neighbour would do the edging for it was considered a skill onto itself to put a good edge on a blade. The comments would flow; "he's a great man to edge a blade, marvellous, sure no one could touch him".

The harvesting began. My job as a child was to open and close gates after the majestic Massey Ferguson, as it cere-



Thrashing at the farm of Michael Carr, Seehan, Gort. 1960. L-R: Mattie Moran, Michael Carr, Padraig Quinn, Pakie Shaughnessy, Pat McGrath, Tom Loughrey, Annie Quinn, Tom McAllen.

moniously entered the meadow. The bar of blades was lowered and pulled into position by my father around the side of the tractor, the powershaft powered this mighty machine and away it went taking down the tall straight hay like soldiers falling in battle. Pheasants would rise from their nests, their chicks would scatter if they were lucky. Unfortunately they didn't always survive the mechanised event.

Next we waited while time and sunshine seasoned hay, changed its colour and texture and developed its sweet aroma. The hay turner replaced the mower on the tractor to travel the swarths of the cut crop again, turning the downside up to get its fair share of the sun. It was turned again and again at intervals to shake it up and dry it out. The amount of turning depended on the weather and the heaviness of the damp morning dew. Nature dictated all the way.

Dry seasoned hay was next rowed in straight full bodied lines for its final mechanised destination into a baler. The bal-

er was a noisy object pulled by a bigger, stronger, uglier Nuffield tractor. Its rhythm in motion bounced square bales onto the well cut stubbled field. It caused a bit of trouble from time to time bursting sheer bolts which were repaired on site by my father. We children got the job of standing on the tractor brake with our two feet and full body weight to hold the vehicle while the problem was inspected. The noise of the machinery was overwhelming. You had to shout at the top of your voice to be heard. The baler made the tractor rock back and forth while diesel fumes filled the air.

Twine tension checks from time to time were important to make sure the baled hay was held together properly and securely. A silence descended on the field when the job was done. The machinery left and the bales had to be stacked into groups of four with twine knots out and down to minimise absorption of moisture if rain fell. Everyone helped to stack the bales, the sooner it was done, the better, if you could roll a bale you were eligible

to help. Groups of four were rolled together, stacking depended on strength, so as one got older and stronger your job description changed. Our stacks of four manned the field until the tractor and trailer delivered them load by load to the hay shed for storage till winter foddering.

The proof of the pudding is always in the eating. The analysis of this fine hay would yet again continue as it was shaken out to hungry cows on frosty mornings. Characteristics of good hay included; light dry bales, easy to handle, free from the rubbish of thistle and dock leaf, clean and dust-free and smelling so great the farmer might be seen with a single sprig hanging from his teeth to chew himself!

A STROLL DOWN QUEEN STREET

by Peadar Ó Conaire.

I took a stroll down Queen Street in Gort recently and what a fruitful, enlightening, experience it turned out to be. My first port of call was Gort Library, located in the former St. Colman's Church of Ireland. There I met the current faces of the library: Eileen O Connor, a native of Prosperous, Co. Kildare and her assistant Margaret Bourke. Eileen arrived in Gort in 2007 to fill the post previously held by Jo Hickey. She is current Chair of the Western Regional Section of the Library Association of Ireland and is to the fore in promoting training and standards within the profession of librarianship and encouraging co-operation across the library sector in the west of Ireland, facilitating links between academic, specialist and public libraries.

Eileen told me that she has found that working in a community library provides the perfect environment to utilise and share her love of learning and literature and interest in people and cultures. She is passionate about her role in the community in providing a social and cultural space where people can develop their life-long learning in a friendly, informal and stimulating environment. Eileen particularly enjoys facilitating book clubs and cultural activities in the library and is delighted to be working amidst

such an open and vibrant community as is to be found in Gort.

Margaret Bourke lives on Circular Road in Gort. She loves working in the library as she gets to meet old friends and make lots of new ones as so many local people use the library. She particularly loves her role of facilitator of the Evening Reading Circle, a monthly book club open to library members. This enables her to sample a wide variety of books, to learn from the book club members as well as imparting her own knowledge.

While Eileen and Margaret were busy dealing with library members, I viewed an exhibition of modern art displayed in the Gallery and delved into some of the material in the local history section. I was keen to inform myself regarding the history of the building.

The building, with its pinnacles, two storey tower and spire was designed by James Paine in 1811, built circa 1812 and extensively renovated and a chancel added in 1877. It was the place of worship for the local landed gentry and military families for close on a hundred and fifty years. Famous families who worshipped there include the Gregorys and the Goughs. There were two galleries reserved for the households of the two families. The

Gregorys attended the East Gallery and the Goughs used the West Gallery. Lady Gregory had a household rule that her Catholic guests had to attend Mass in the Catholic Church and her Protestant guests would accompany her to Sunday service in St. Colman's Church of Ireland.

The building fell into disrepair in the 1960's with many of its beautiful windows broken before being boarded up. Fortunately this beautiful building in the heart of Gort town was saved for posterity through the wisdom and generosity of the Church of Ireland authorities. The building, now a protected structure, was gifted to the Catholic Bishop of Galway, Dr. Michael Browne, in 1972 by the Church of Ireland Bishop of Killaloe. Galway County Council took it over and its doors were open to the people of Gort and surrounds as a public library in 1978.

Interestingly the present back door of the church was originally the front door and a new street, Queen Street, was opened from Bridge Street to give easier access to worshippers. I asked Eileen to give me a brief account of book stock in the library and was told that it houses approximately 10,000 books, divided into nine main collections; adult fiction, adult non-fiction, children's collection, teenage col-

lection, large print and audio, adult literacy, Portuguese collection, Coole collection and the reference collection.

Eileen informed me that Gort library issued over 15,000 items to over 1,000 library members locally in 2011. She told me that it is a misconception that more children use the library than adults, although children are more frequent visitors. There is plenty on offer for people of all ages and interests and the library provides a comfortable environment where people can come and spend some time reading or browsing the internet and it is indeed a place where people bump into friends and neighbours and exchange news and views.

I asked Eileen about outreach activities and she pointed out that the library has worked closely with many community groups and organisations including Orchard Services Centre, the Family Resource Centre and Gort Vibes, Galway Music Residency and Western Writers Centre.

In appreciation of the library's support with the annual Forge at Gort Literature Festival, the Western Writer's Centre has presented the library with a portrait of Lady Gregory by the artist Tom Byrne. This portrait now hangs in the library and as Eileen so succinctly put it "it is as if her ladyship is gazing on in approval of her old place of worship being preserved as a place of culture and learning".

Conscious that I had taken up far too much of the librarians' time, I thanked them for their very warm welcome and put my notebook in my pocket. A simple plaque among the many ornamental ones commemorating military men caught my eye and I went to read the inscription; "There the weary be at rest" a reminder that the building I was in is practically surrounded by the graveyard. I took a short diversion from my intended stroll to see the cemetery, the silence broken by a blackbird perched on a head-

stone. I walked as far as the plaque recording the gift of land donated by the Mercy Sisters for an extension to the graveyard. The names of people who helped to bring the restoration project to fruition are inscribed on the plaque: Mícheál Breathnach, Tommie Minogue, Stephen Sexton, Dermot Keran, Patrick Connors, Tony Connors, and John Lally.

I crossed the street and sat on the wall of Canon Quinn Park. This public park is named after the late Canon George Quinn, former parish priest of Gort. A flamboyant, larger than life character he was also a keen historian and photographer. His sermons, invariably peppered with historical and travel references are still talked about in Gort. Possessing an extraordinary zest for living and a natural gift for storytelling, being in his company was never dull as I discovered the day he invited me to join him in a fishing trip on Lough Corrib. When he arrived to pick me up he had two clerical students in the car – Atty Brennan and Martin Downey. He turned out to be an able boatman who also knew how to pack a good picnic basket, which we enjoyed on Inchagill Island. Unfortunately, we didn't catch any fish, but we certainly knew a great deal about Corrib Country by the time we left

Oughterard that evening!

As I sat there thinking, a group of young people came around the corner and sat on the mill wheels in the middle of the park. Lucky them I thought to have such a tranquil place to pass sometime in the middle of town.

I crossed the street again to Orchard Centre where I met Geraldine Connolly a most cordial and welcoming secretary. She introduced me to Area Manager Margaret Kearney who informed me of the various programmes being conducted at the Centre and in the general area. Subsequently Geraldine Connolly and Geraldine Bane, Social Care Worker and now Mayor of Loughrea, put their heads together to give me a comprehensive report on the work being done by Orchard Services.

ORCHARD SERVICES

Orchard Services was developed in 1982 to provide a service to people with learning disabilities with an emphasis on community integration. The main centre on Queen Street was destroyed by fire on 9th February 2003 and was re-established in 2006 to meet the changing needs of the people using the service. The day programme consists of three



Peter Conroy, in the classroom with Sr. John. Image credit: David O'Reilly.

small independent areas, Buttercup, Bell haven and Parkview where activities such as cooking, computers, supported employment, personal development skills, health and fitness, arts and crafts and contract work take place. The centre also provides a space for music and meetings. If someone needs expertise in social work, physiotherapy or psychology they are also facilitated in the centre. Last year Galway Arts Council funded a project completed by the group in Butter-

a number of outreach projects: The Dolmen Centre in Kinvara has recently moved to a new house overlooking the bay. A variety of programmes are held there with VEC tutors. Some of the group are completing FETAC general learning modules, while others are learning all about computers. Other activities include woodwork and arts and the group also have a stall at the local market every Friday where they sell craft items made in the services. One of the

opment, communications, health and leisure.

In 2011 two students from the Orchard Services were chosen to partake in the "Going to College Project" which is an inclusive education initiative to support civic engagement of persons with an intellectual disability. This is a two year programme. Elizabeth McCormack and Brian Cavanagh were successful in getting on this programme, Elizabeth is studying Marketing and Brian is studying Engineering.

Last February the East Sector Services, made up of services in Athenry, Ballinasloe and Gort held a 'Valentines Ball' in the Loughrea Hotel. This was a black tie event where everyone got to dress up and put on their glad rags! There was all the fun of getting ready, especially for the girls, there were photographs, good food and wonderful music and dancing. There was huge excitement about the event with the only question at the end of the night being 'when is the next one?' Congratulations to Sharon Murray, Peggy Kearney and Anne Marie Jordan on winning prizes in the Inclusion Ireland 50th anniversary poetry competition. The girls went to Dublin where they were presented with their awards by President Michael D Higgins in the National Library.

Four people who use the Orchard services are currently being trained in interviewing skills which will enable them to sit on interview panels when the services are recruiting care assistants in the future. This is a very progressive step by the Brothers of Charity services and the group from Gort are delighted to be part of it. There are a number of outings on the calendar over the coming months, including Westlife and Daniel O' Donnell concerts. Groups just recently returned from a visit to the Chocolate Factory in Dublin and Dublin Zoo, while some others went to explore IKEA. There are regular trips to hurling and football games and cinema and shopping trips. However it would always be nice to have more volunteers, so if you would be interested in giving up some of your time and experiencing the benefits of making a difference in someone's life please contact Geraldine on 091 631 530

Passing the Social Services Centre, for-

cup and Bell haven. The project saw the group complete a beautiful oil painting depicting emigration in the South Galway area. The Galway Arts Council also funded a group who worked very hard to create artwork which was used to brighten up the windows of empty shop units in Gort town.

The third unit in the Centre, 'Parkview' are kept busy with contract work from Connaught Waste and Recycling and Lisk. The group also have weekly days out and take part in other activities like walking, bowling and baking.

The local library is situated close by, so the services often use the facility there, recently launching the arts project for the coming year there. There is also liaison with the local family resource centre, with one of the men who use the services working there as a volunteer on a regular basis.

The Orchard Centre also co-ordinates

highlights for the Dolmen group was the production of a photographic guide to Kinvara, full of very impressive photos taken by members themselves. The booklet was also funded by Galway Arts

**"THERE THE WEARY BE
AT REST" A REMINDER
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GRAVEYARD.**

Office and was very well received by Fáilte Ireland.

'Apple Tree' is a specific education training programme referred to as Rehabilitative Training. This provides accredited training in a range of modules including numeracy, literacy, personal devel-



Past and present staff at Gort Library L to R: Margaret Bourke; Bernadette Rebolini; Tommy Minogue, former Care-taker, Eileen Brennan, Eileen O'Connor. Image credit: David O'Reilly

merly Kilduff's house, I thought of Sister John who has been synonymous with charitable work in Gort for many years. She was at her desk in the Convent Primary school where she has been Principal for the past sixteen years. Straight-talking and oozing with enthusiasm for her work as Secretary of Gort and South Galway Social Services she gave me an outline of services undertaken at the centre which was built by Pat Ryder in 1980. There is a meal and laundry service every day. Monday - Friday the centre is used by Home Help and Meals on Wheels. It is partly funded by the HSE, the subvention being supplemented by local fund-raising and donations. A person is employed for cooking and to help with laundry and carry-out services. Sister John is very grateful to the people who have helped her carry out this important work over the years and also acknowledges the unstinting support given to her by her own Community of Mercy Sisters.

Turning to educational matters I asked her what it was like to be Principal in these challenging times. "Hard work" was the unequivocal answer! Every day poses new challenges but you have to stay focussed, ensure that the child is placed firmly in the centre of the teaching process and endeavour to give each pupil the best of the old and the new in terms of literacy and numeracy. She sees herself as a facilitator/enabler, always there for staff members in a supporting role. Time and time again she stresses that education must be child-centred –the specific and unique needs of each child must be the focus of good teaching.

She is very unhappy with government cutbacks (15% over two years) but takes the pragmatic view that she has to get on with it, despite the shortcomings of the system. She is very happy that Resource Services will be maintained in her school for the coming year.

Sister John came to Gort as a boarder and later joined the teaching staff of the primary school. She is full of praise for the loyal staff of the school and for the Sisters who served as Principals since

she joined the staff – Sisters Philomena, Carmel, Peter and Enda. She values greatly the co-operation and support of parents and nothing pleases her more than when a past-pupil tells her that she has found her niche in life. Sister John, long may you prosper as an educator and continued success to your ministry in the service of the needy.

I left the Convent School and made my way to my final port of call – the Gallery Café. I sat down by the window with a cup of gorgeous coffee looking out at the busy street corner. The proprietor, Sarah Harty joined me. Sarah studied Art

from Kilcolgan and Connemara.

Why should people come to her café? I asked Sarah. "To meet local people, eat great food, drink wonderful coffee and fine wine and listen to talented musicians" she answered. Can't argue with that! How does she cope with the demands of a busy restaurant? –I asked. Pausing for a bit she answered "having the restaurant for the last seven years has been loads of fun and loads of stress! It is open seven days a week 10am until 10 pm. It feels like having a monster baby constantly needing



The Gallery Café team, L to r: Sarah Harty; Scarlete Lorene; Emma Waites; Arlete Moura; Padraig Keane. Image credit: David O'Reilly

and Design and worked in London as an Interior Designer. She moved to Gort in 2003 and set up a small art school for children. In 2005 she opened the Gallery Café in the Square, combining all her interests - art, interior design, food, wine, and music in sociable surroundings. She chose Gort to do this because she loved the unusual colourful mix of people living in the town and the surrounding countryside.

The customers in the café are "local farmers, yuppies, the Brazilian community, professionals and yummy-mummies" Sarah tells me. Food in the café is all locally sourced, seasonal, wild and simple. The food available in the café has been developed a lot in the last seven years- from pizza and salads to rib eye steaks and fish. At the moment the menu is based on wild herbs foraged on the seashore and fields and fresh fish

feeding and attention. I'm trying to balance it and not to take it all too seriously, and that is not easy." Was she conscious of the fact that she operates in a portion of Glynn's Hotel - a landmark in Gort for decades – I wanted to know. Being under the roof of old Glynn's Hotel was an "honour" she told me. "It's a beautiful building with great history and a lot of nostalgia. I have tried to capture a glimpse of this in the dining room with antiques and 1940's wallpaper". Plans for the future? "I want to be the Queen of Gort and have loads of fun" she quipped.

Driving home to Coole I was thinking of how privileged I was to have spent some time in the company of such wonderful people, courteous, accommodating, hard-working and above all extremely positive. Long may they all prosper in our town.



GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

Mike O'Connor

Mike O'Connor (Crowe Street, Gort) Lecturer in Food and Beverage Operations Management at the Dublin Institute of Technology, Cathal Brugha Street had the honour of assisting at the State Dinner in Dublin Castle offered by the former President of Ireland Mary McAleese & Dr. Martin McAleese in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness, The Duke of Edinburgh on the historic evening of Wednesday 18th May 2011, where the Queen opened her address by greeting her host, President Mary McAleese, and guests with a line as Gaeilge before speaking about the historical importance of such a state visit.

"Together, we have much to celebrate. The ties between our people, the shared values and the economic, business and cultural links that make us so much more than just neighbours – that make us firm friends and equal partners." Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II (2011)

The event featured a menu devised and created by Michelin star chef Ross Lewis of Chapter One restau-

rant, Dublin and the company With Taste Catering had overall responsibility for the hugely successful service of the banquet which offered a menu that contained ingredients from the 32 counties; notable items were Burren smoked salmon, Rib of Slaney Valley Beef, and Meath strawberries. The wines on the night were Château de Fieuzal 2005, Graves Pessac-Léognan and Château Lynch-Bages 1998, Pauillac, which both have strong Irish connections. In the days leading up to the historic event, Mike O'Connor gave an intensive training course to all the company's restaurant service personnel who were on duty on the historic night, furthermore, Mike was in charge of service at the top table where the Queen and her party were seated at the historic occasion.

Addressing the Queen and other guests, President Mary McAleese said the visit was a culmination of the success of the peace process and "it is an acknowledgment that while we cannot change the past, we have chosen to change the future".



GORT'S FAMILY FUN DAY

Only those living out the countryside with a big site, perhaps a farm, can fully appreciate the joys of simply getting the kids outside and running amok if by any chance the sun shines. But you will also understand the complications of boredom.... kids always want something new to look forward to. Now take the inevitable and natural feeling and apply to kids living in housing estates in the town. Small gardens and wary parents worrying about letting them out in the public areas with traffic, older kids, unsupervised. What to do, that can be afforded in these tough times. This all simply explains the popularity of Gort's Free Entry Family Fun Day, a now permanent date on the must-do calendar.

A myriad of events this year brought

the wow factor big time. The main sponsor John Sullivan of Sullivan's Royal Hotel called in old favours and brought out the cheque book, and together with the volunteers and a variety of other groups provided a fun-packed day in Canon Quinn Park.

Zorbing, merry-go-round, massive bouncy castle & assault course, live music, old carnival games, face-painting and lots more...absolutely free! The yummy Centre Bar-be-que provided burgers and hot dogs (all meat sponsored by our local butchers and burger buns by Lidl) at low cost while families were encouraged to bring their own picnic.

The Scouts set up camps. The ICA put the kettle on. The Art Box gave classes. The local Fire Service brought all

their tenders and jeep for show, and plenty got to soak someone in the highly popular dunking machine. Put all this together and mix in a bit of sun which is guaranteed each year as the chief organiser, local parish priest Fr. Tommy has a wee word to the Boss. The low cost nature of the day is down to a big concert, 2 years ago run by the organisers which was designed to provide a sinking fund and investment capital for the day; so that instead of renting equipment, it would be owned once and for all.

Any monies made go directly back into next years event to make it better again. So when you hear of the next Family Fun Day in Gort's Canon Quinn Park, don't miss it.

THE BUS

by Angela Donohue



Galway Bus. Image courtesy of Mike Muldoon

In the sixties, when cars were less plentiful, we were indeed very fortunate to have been well connected to the outside world with a good Bus service that linked Galway with Limerick on a daily basis. There were two services daily, a morning and an evening, except on Sundays when only the latter was provided. The morning bus arrived in The Square, Gort, at a quarter to ten, on the dot, and stopped outside our house. Lally's Hotel, next door, was the official bus depot of course, but the bus couldn't stop outside their house as it was far too near a dangerous corner. All the passengers would disembark and scatter in all directions to attend to their business. It was mostly women with shopping bags

that had messages to do and during school term several students attending the local Girls Secondary School and Boys College in the town. All those waiting to travel in the Ennis/Limerick direction would board.

The Bus did not just carry passengers; it provided a valuable courier service as well, upon which many local business people depended for the urgent delivery of goods. The driver would help the conductor, Mickey Robinson to bring the parcels that were stored in the "boot" of the bus into Lally's. There were all kinds of supplies like spare car parts such as exhaust pipes etc. and veterinary products, live baby chickens, cartons of shoes, bundles of maga-

zines and comics to name but a few.

Lally's shop was spacious with Grocery to the left and Bar to the right of the entrance. On the back wall facing you as you entered was a big black and white picture of Daniel O Connell, the Irish Liberator, standing there with his ever-so state-like look. Underneath this picture was a red garden seat on which the parcels from the bus were left. The driver would return to the bus while Mickey would attend to the paperwork before returning on board for his forward journey.

When we had school holidays we would be sitting outside on the footpath waiting for the bus to arrive. We

would be more than willing to give Mickey a helping hand to carry the parcels in to Lally's. In return we would beg him to give us a spin in the bus up as far as Georges Street, which he often did. He was such a lovely man, with his ticket machine hanging from a shiny leather shoulder strap. He would let us off above at The Tech and we would run back home. Once, he got permission to bring us as far as Crusheen as a treat where we waited until the bus collected us on its return journey. I will always remember it, as it was a lovely sunny day and we sat on the side of the road waiting for the bus looking at the sign for Spancill Hill which no doubt prompted us to sing a few lines from the famous song.

The return journey usually meant that the Bus arrived back in Gort at around 11.30 by which time business had been attended to, the messages were done and the passengers that were dropped off earlier were ready for their return trip home. Any cargo from the Limerick side would be deposited before the Bus headed back to Galway making as many stops as necessary ensuring that each passenger was dropped off as near as possible to their front door.

It arrived back again at six o'clock in the evening. This was a whole different experience altogether. There were few, if any, Shoppers arriving at this time of day. It was mostly people returning after a day trip to the city. People might have gone to visit someone in hospital, or they might have gone in to do that extra special bit of shopping for that extra special occasion. Or they might have gone in to avail of certain services that were very limited in Gort at the time, if available at all, like that of a Dentist or Optician. The only such services available were a monthly visit by an Optician called Mona Mc Garry who attended in Coen's Chemist (She later went on to become the Official Optician for the Irish Olympic team). And a dentist called Nolan who attended in a room in Miss Kilduff's house on Church Road near the back entrance to the convent.

Another major reason for a trip on the bus to Galway was to buy the latest No.1 in the charts as no shop in Gort sold records at the time.

The evening newspapers, "The Press" and "The Herald" arrived on the six-o'clock bus. The only vendor of the evening paper at the time was, as far as I can remember, Finnegan's. Tom, Junie or John would be there waiting to collect them after which they provided a delivery service around the town. Thursday was a particularly busy evening as the Connacht Tribune arrived. This generated a great buzz around The Square on what was normally a quiet afternoon as Thursday was half-day in the shops at the time. Not only would the various newsagents be waiting to collect the local weekly but several locals waiting to purchase it as well. Some of the most sought after pieces of information would be "who is playing in The Classic on Sunday Night", or "anything exciting in the Gort and South Galway News column" and the report on the match if Gort had played.

The final leg of the daily service was the return journey to Galway arriving in Gort at 7.30. The students, who had to avail of the after school study facility would board after their long day. Other than that there wouldn't be too many customers for the bus as most shops closed at six o'clock except on Saturdays when they remained open until 9.00. All I can remember about Sundays is that there was definitely a bus from Galway in the evening at a later than normal time. We used to walk down to Mrs. Mc Donald's in Kiltartan, for a visit on a nice summer's Sunday afternoon and sometimes we used to get the bus home. Of course we had to be on our best behaviour but that was obviously not always the case. Once we started laughing at Maggo Mulcair's hat and earned ourselves a few clatters across the ear on our return home with the promise that we would never ever again be allowed on the bus. Until the next time!

Like everything else it is not what it

used to be. The demand for such a local service dwindled with the growth in popularity of the motorcar. The current service, which has more than one provider, is far superior to that of the sixties. I think there is a bus, or luxury coach, every hour and some of them go all the way to Cork. With the increase in the standard of living over the decades and the concomitant increase in the desire to travel, together with the introduction of the free travel pass, there is a greater demand than ever for a good public transport service. However it is for very different reasons. No hope of the driver letting someone off at Lisatunna or picking them up at Loughtashaughnessy! There are no exhaust pipes or bundles of newspapers to be off-loaded and the friendly personal service of the depot has been replaced with a draughty perspex shelter in the middle of The Square.

But I will always remember the days when the bus was a source of excitement for us, and the vibe its arrival generated in The Square. The local business people came from all directions to collect their wares. The countrywomen arrived to collect their chickens and loaded them on to the carriers of their bicycles. It brought valuable customers from outlying areas into our town. Many relied on it for an education. It was a social outlet for those who travelled on it regularly. One could extract a lot of information from the comings and the goings of the Bus!

And so, as we embrace the new modern Ireland with all its sophisticated technological advancements we have to be prepared to release many of the traditional personalised services that we once knew.

TRIBUTE TO HUBERT COURTNEY 1939 – 2012

by Mary F. Long Moore

In the 2010 issue of the *Guaire*, I had the privilege of assisting Hubert Courtney to write his article; "End of an Era". It is now with great sadness that I write this short tribute to a life-long friend. Hubert was diagnosed with cancer in 1994 and with treatment and the sheer love of life he fought it successfully until June the 9th 2012. Hubert died peacefully in the Bon Secours Hospital Cork. As a friend and a nurse it was an honour to be with him during his last hospital stay.

Hubert was born, reared and educated in Gort. He spent his primary school days in the Convent, the boys national school and then onto the technical school. On leaving school he worked for a while in Gort railway station. He immigrated to London in the late 50's where he worked in Paddington station. It was while working here that he was notified he had successfully secured a place in the Garda training college in the Phoenix Park. He returned home and joined the November class of Garda recruits in 1960.

Hubert's first station following "passing out" was Mac Curtain street. He served here for many years with colleagues, one of them being a Sergeant Joe Moore, who in future years was to become my father in law, (A small world indeed).

In the early 70's Hubert was transferred to Dennehy's Cross Station.

This station closed a few years later and moved to Bishopstown where he worked till he retired in 1995.

Hubert's love of his native home George Street, Gort, his love of hurling and Irish music and of course in later years golf, helped him through some of the most difficult phases of his illness. Hubert was a popular member of Macroom Golf Club in County Cork. He loved participating in competitions as a representative of this club. It was with the same pride that he followed hurling and his allegiance to Galway and Gort never faltered. He was extremely proud of his medals which he won for his home town in the mid 50's. He was on the Gort minor team of 1957, which was one of the teams of the "three in a row".

Last year, Hubert invited my husband Oliver and I to Galway's Pearse Stadium to see Gort participate in the County Final. He was filled with excitement and emotion when his team, Gort beat Clarinbridge. The happiness he experienced on that day will remain with me forever. The pride he had for his home team and the traditional homecoming of the County Final champions to the sound of music, revelry and the rows of lit bonfires brought his thoughts back to his younger days in Gort. He met people on that trip to Galway and Gort, that, without knowing it, he would never meet again. We left Gort the next day with Hubert elated



Hubert Courtney

at the Gort win and the great night we had in Johnny Kelly's pub.

Hubert was a very popular Garda, always approachable and kind. He was a great conversationalist and many Corkonians became familiar with Gort from the stories he told. When he first came to Cork he was known as "Baby Face" due to his very young and boyish appearance. He was very well known to the people of Cork as he used to do traffic duty on Bridge Street and the Colosseum cinema corner. It was at this time that his friendship with my family, the Longs, began.

On June 12th 2012 Hubert's funeral cortege passed through many areas of his "beat". It paused outside Bishopstown's station where he faithfully served. He was laid to rest in St. Finbarr's Cemetery in Cork. Hubert is survived by his wife Betty, his sister Anna Marie, his four children, 8 grandchildren, relatives and a large circle of colleagues and friends. Hubert's passing has left a void in the lives of many.

May he rest in peace.



2012 LAW ENFORCEMENT COURAGE AWARD

Bernie Flaherty

Bernie Flaherty was born on January 26, 1968 in Bronx County, New York. At the age of four, Bernie and his family moved to Gort to care for his grandmother. Bernie received the education that would prepare him for life at Our Lady's College. After his schooling was completed at 18, he showed a glimpse of the fortitude that he would display later in life, when he moved back to America on his own.

Bernie settled in the Riverdale section of the Bronx, and was employed at several jobs before finding his calling and a career path with the New York City Department of Correction. In July

1998, he entered the New York City Correction Academy and upon graduating entered the ranks of New York City's Boldest. This accomplishment is something Bernie takes great pride in and is grateful for, as it affords him the job security he desired as well as the ability to serve the public. During his career, he has been the proud member of the following commands: the George Motchan Detention Centre, the North Infirmary Command, the Otis Banton Correctional Centre and the Manhattan Detention Complex.

In 2010, Bernie was diagnosed with cancer. With characteristic understatement he states it was a trying period in his life. He was on medical leave for just under a year, but he was determined to return to work and his regular routine. His medical leave was spent receiving treatment and building his

strength so he could realise his goal of continuing his career. Bernie's wish came to fruition and he has thankfully enjoyed good health since. He credits his family, friends, co-workers and physician for this accomplishment, and states that he has had a tremendous support group wherever he went.

Bernie is very grateful for being chosen as this year's Courage Award recipient, and would like to thank the Three Strohm Sisters Foundation for recognising him. However, he would like to point out that "he is just a guy that played the cards he was dealt and got on with business". Bernie would also like to thank his family who traveled from Ireland to share the occasion with him, as well as his friends and co-workers who came from the tri-state area to support him.

GORT & DISTRICT DARTS LEAGUE - 201/2012

This years finals were held on Saturday March 24th. in the Lady Gregory Hotel for the second year, having been there last year to celebrate our 10th. anniversary. It was our first time holding the finals on a Saturday night, and it proved a huge success with a large crowd in attendance. The division 1 finalists were Linnane's and Mc Carthy's A, with Linnane's winning on a score of 8 - 6 both teams having fin-

ished 1st. and 2nd. respectively in the league. O'Donnell's A and Dacey's are relegated to Division 2.

In division 2 we had the meeting of Hennelly's B and Walsh's A. This was also an excellent contest with Walsh's A proving too strong in the end winning 8 - 3. Walsh's A and Hennelly's B are promoted to Division 1 for next year.

This year the league gave in excess of

by Gerry Tuohy, Secretary

€2,500 to Cancer charities; €800 from door to Cancer Care West. €450 from Mc Carthy's (that was there second place prize money) going to Shave or Dye. €1000 from Linnane's (there first place prize money) going to the Gort Cancer Support Group. €260 collected on night for Shave or Dye which was hosted by Gruaig Deas Hairdresser's Market Hall.

THE COUNTY FINAL

- AN 'EX PAT'S'

PERSPECTIVE

by Tom Fahy

I live in Dublin but am a fairly frequent visitor to Gort. The Galway County Final is of interest to all followers of hurling mainly because of the success of Galway clubs in the All Ireland Series. When Gort are involved, all "ex pats" from the parish sit up and take notice.

I live within walking distance of the clubhouse of Ballyboden St Enda's, Dublin County Champions for the past 5 years. But, I expect if a survey was taken in nearby Rathfarnham village and people asked who Ballyboden St Enda's were, more than a few answers would guess they were some right wing prayer group. There is no such confusion in Gort about their hurlers.

My own particular memory of the lead up to the match was being told by a surgeon on the Monday before the game that I was to be admitted to hospital for surgery on Sunday November 6th, the day of the match. When I explained my dilemma, he smiled and postponed surgery for a week. The surgeon involved was Gerry McEntee, the former great Meath footballer.

On the way down, the day before the match, the mind wanders. It is won-

derful to see the results of the extraordinary amount of work done by club officials to develop the pitches and facilities at Gort GAA grounds. The dedication of so many people in coaching, training and raising finance to allow the club function at such a high level cannot be overstated. The level of fitness of the team now, backed up by such capable management, is light years ahead of a bygone era.

I am old enough to remember training in the old hurling field, where on occasion you shared the dressing room with an odd inquisitive bull-ock. Physios and gyms were unheard of. A hamstring was a piece of twine that the butcher Frank Finnegan tied around the leg of a pig after removing the bone. The closest thing to a sports psychologist that we had was a few words of encouragement from Joe Pete Hehir. Medical backup consisted of a visit to Dr Marlborough to get stitched on the way home from the match. A photograph of the Gort team that won the County Junior Championship in 1964 shows that the club had 15 jerseys while the subs had a different kit. One of these subs, PJ Baldwin wore a jersey not unlike that of the Kiltartan team of the 1930-1940 era, that his



Gort Hurling Fans Johnny Moran and Declan McCarthy celebrating in Johnny Kelly's Pub.

father Pat wore with such great distinction. At that time, the club officials were every bit as dedicated as they are at present.

Coming from Galway on the Saturday before the match, nobody could be in any doubt that a big day lies ahead, Clarinbridge was a sea of maroon, the biggest flag of all in the church grounds. The subsequent result suggests Fr Tommy has greater influence than his Clarinbridge counterpart! At Kiltartan, the colour changes with messages of support everywhere. In Gort the only subject for discussion was tomorrow's game.

The day of the match and local supporters are joined by former parishioners from all over the country to mention just a few, Billy Keane from Wexford, from Dublin Gerry Fahy, P J Downey and Vincent Walsh. An honorary Gort man for the day was Denis Nagle, a nephew of the legendary Joe Pete Hehir. A son of Denis plays on the Ballyboden team. The most remarkable of all Gort supporters are Oliver and Mary Moore, natives of Cork city and friends of the late Hubert Courtney who travel from Wicklow to most Gort matches.

As people flood into Pearse Stadi-

um one sees familiar faces from the past. Two things that stand out on the match programme are the connection of so many players with hurlers of the past and the size of the panel. In the early 1960's Gort were one of the best teams in the county, yet I don't recall such a thing as a squad existed. In fact there were days that if anyone turned up on match day with a pair of boots they were guaranteed a place on the subs bench.

And the game is on! Gort get off to a flyer! From the throw in it was clear that this team were up for it. For the first 20 minutes what impressed me most was the industry of Paul Killilea, Sylvie Og Linnane doing a good impression of his father and and a Mark MacMahon clearance/Ollie Fahy point. Gort lead 8 points to 2.

After a Clarenbridge wide a man behind me suggesting in very undiplomatic language that an urgent visit to Specsavers was needed by the umpire but Clarinbridge were not All-Ire-

land champions for nothing and they came right back into the match, Gort lead at half time 9 points to 6. All around the match is being analysed. It sometimes must be difficult for a parent to hear somebody behind you being very critical of the performance of your son, especially if this 'hurler on the ditch' in their own playing days were about as useful as a lighthouse in a bog!

My concern at half time was that the lead did not reflect their superiority. This concern increased, along with the blood pressure, as Clarinbridge gradually got on top, drawing level, and then going ahead. The last 10 minutes was nail biting stuff, but this Gort team were made of stern stuff and after a couple of well taken frees were deservedly ahead at the final whistle 17 points to 1 - 12.

The joy and relief of players, mentors, family, friends and supporters was something else. Years of heart-break were forgotten. Married men embraced their neighbours wives!

A sporting and eloquent acceptance speech by Captain Andy Coen was a fitting end to a high quality match. Gort were graceful winners and Clarinbridge, gracious in defeat.

On the way home, bonfires guided the route home and the team marched triumphantly into the Square in Gort led by the pipe band. The acknowledgement on the platform of each individual player, Manager Matt Murphy and his back-room team and main sponsor Supermacs was a fitting tribute to an outstanding group. To say that Gort was alive on that Sunday night is an understatement, however, some of the more mature supporters retired to the more serene atmosphere of Johnny Kelly's pub where local, national and international issues were discussed and even a rendition of 'The Dog From Ballyaneen' was greeted with polite applause. Same again soon please.

HURLERS ON THE DITCH

It is only late in life that I have come to realize that hurling is (in my opinion) the best game in the world. Childhood memories of a bloody hurling battle in Kinvara had tainted my view of the sport.

Not long ago I visited Kenny Park in Athenry to watch the Gort Minors play. I was told by their mentors that they were "a great bunch of lads". It was an exciting match with Gort

narrowly defeating Liam Mellows by 4 points but the real entertainment for me was the "MAMMIES".

One mother who I always thought was quiet and ladylike was roaring like a bull. I thought another mammy would have to be restrained from going onto the pitch to do some changes to the team. These ladies were surely inspirational to the young men on the pitch. They encouraged not

only their own sons but each and every other young player. They were an enthusiastic, feisty and dedicated bunch of women.

May God continue to bless the Irish Mammies.

Renee Brennan



Back Row (L-R) Brendan Quinn, Darragh Linnane, Kris Finnegan, Jason Grealish, Albert Mullins, Mark McMahon, Greg Lally, Brian Regan, Keith Killilea, Paul Killilea, Michael Mullins, Aidan Harte, Sean Forde, Martin Nestor, Robert Kerins, Michael Finn, Conor Helebert, Brian Quinn. Front Row (L-R) Gavin Lally, Wayne Walsh, Enda Linnane, Martin Moran, Michael Cummins, Ollie Fahy with his son Oisín in his arms, Peter Cummins with Conor Cummins in his arms, Andy Coen (Captain) with Cillian Grealish in his arms, Gerard O'Donoghue, Richie Cummins, Gerard Quinn, Sylvie O'G Linnane, Noel Quinn, Tadhg Linnane. Children pictured seated in front (L-R) Paddy Commins, Ben O'Donovan, Ivan McGrath, Barry Dermot Murphy, Lucy Cummins.

GORT GAA CLUB

by Jerry Sheehan

Gort's senior hurlers failed in their endeavors to earn a quarter-final spot in the 2010 championship purely on a scoring averages' basis. If the team had added four more points to their four game tally of 5 goals and 56 points, they would be in the shake-up for combat in the knock-out stages of the 2010 championship. However, fate dictated otherwise.

Their 2011 season commenced with League wins over Tommy Larkins and Athenry and draws against Mullagh and Padraig Pearses. Their first round championship challenge with Craughwell saw them coming up short on April 23rd (1-11 to 0-15). Although they lost by a point, it

served as a marker which they were often reminded of for the remainder of the championship. Two weeks later, they had an eight point victory over Loughrea (3-16 to 2-11). The long summer break took hold and the senior championship resumed on September 18th. With neighbouring challengers, Beagh, next on the firing line, there was much speculation as regards the possible outcome. However, when the day arrived, the lions were hidden in the long grass. The game ended in double scores in favour of Gort (2-16 to 0-11). These victories earned Gort a quarter-final tilt with Loughrea. In this game, the Gort team held the upper hand in a hard-fought encounter and Gort

had five points to spare in the end (2-10 to 1-08).

St. Thomas's headed Gort by two points in their 2010 championship meeting. The 23rd October 2011 was the date set for Gort's opportunity to avenge that defeat in the County semi-final. It could have gone either way, but this was to be Gort's turn and they had four points to spare in the end (1-11 to 0-10) and they were on their way to a second County final appearance in four years. Opposing them in the final was none other than Clarinbridge, the 2110 County and All Ireland Club Champions who were tipped by many pundits to win back-to-back cham-



pionships. The bookies held them as firm favourites, as did many of the neutral pundits. Clarinbridge seemed to have everything going for them. People did not realise that there was fervent and sincere determination in the eyes of Gort captain, Andy Coen. Even Fr. Tommy saw that confidence in special terms when he was seen in the hours before the final with a document which read "Gort 2-11 to Clarinbridge 1-13". You would need the exact score to reap the maximum benefits

of a long-odds wager.

The county final action was not as simple as that. Gort took the field on 6th November with fire in their eyes. For the first 30 minutes or so, they were stronger and superior in most sectors of the field. They were worth much more than their half-time lead. Some enforced errors gave Clarinbridge a window of opportunity to get back into the game and although 'The Bridge' tried hard, Gort held out for

a two point victory (0-17 to 1-12). It was a sweet victory when it bridged that 28 year gap following the club's last senior victory in 1983.

Gort Captain, Andy Coen, when accepting the County Cup, gave a victory speech which was reminiscent of prominent political leaders' deliveries. It would be unbecoming to adulterate on such an exemplary oration which can be found on GAA pages on the web. Manager, Matt



Gort GAA Junior C Panel. Back Row L to R. Padraic Maher, Brendan Nestor, Tom Linnane, Niall O'Grady, Carl Manton, Shane Burke, John Connors, Paul Connolly, Peter Howley, John John Commins, Liam Forde(Player/Manager), John Stanford, Gerard Nestor, Aidan o'Grady (selector). Front Row L to R. Niall Linnane (Selector), Trevor Ryan, Ronnie Giblin, David Cummins, Brian Coppinger, Francis O'Connor, Pat Loughnane, Team Mascot Paddy Commins, Christopher Flaherty (Captain), Brendan Cummins, Ciaran Greaney, Colm Walsh. Missing from photo- Enda Walsh.

Murphy and his assistants, John Cummins and Conor O'Donovan deserved just reward for their perseverance, patience and determination.

Gort faced Leinster Champions, Coolderry (Offaly) in the All Ireland Club semi-final in Limerick in February 2012. It is a day we will remember for not all of the right reasons. The occasion got to a number of our players. Some were too hyped up and did not get sufficiently involved in the action. There were courageous performances from three or four of our players. If three or four more players had hit form on the day, matters could have been different. But the championship clock does not stand still or turn back. We learn from our mistakes and move on. All in all, this Gort team, panel and mentors should be proud of their achievements. We thank them sincerely for their dedication and effort. There are many clubs which would like to be in their shoes.

When Liam Forde agreed to take over the unenvied position as the 2011 Junior 'C' Manager, he set the mindset of his charges from mere participation to a more prospective syllabus. Liam had stronger aspirations and an unequalled confidence to do better. He had managerial support from senior captain, Andy Coen, Aidan O'Grady, Niall Linnane and Brian Coppinger to give him a helping hand along the way.

That road commenced on 14th June when his charges recorded a four point winning margin over Clarinbridge (3-11 to 3-07). This was followed, a week later, when suffering a one point defeat at the hands of Mullagh (2-11 to 0-18). From there on in, and with Liam leading

by example through his regular scoring exploits, he led his team to victory over Tommy Larkins (4-13 to 0-09), Ballinderreen (3-18 to 0-12), Kilnadeema/Leitrim (2-15 to 2-10). The next big challenge was a quarter-final meeting with Meelick-Eyrecourt and, although forced into extra time, Gort came out winners on a score of 4-17 to 5-12. On the 9th October, Ahascragh/Foghanagh was the opposition in the semi-final. In this game, Gort held out steadfastly to record an eleven point victory (2-11 to 0-06). It was neck-and-neck in the final in Ballinderreen on 15th October before Gort edged ahead to the winning post with two points to spare over Athenry (1-12 to 1-10). Thus concluded another chapter in Gort's history – a first ever win at this level. It was history-making too for John John Cummins. He won his last adult county championship medal with Gort in 1983. Twenty-eight years later, he pockets his next adult county championship medal. During the intervening years, he won All Ireland medals at minor, under 21 and senior level with his county.

This Junior C panel has been promoted to the B grade for 2012 and it continues along this route with the confidence to retain its status into 2013 under the watchful eye of (D.J.) Brian Coppinger.

During 2011, the Gort Intermediate team had three victories and a draw in the league and championship. However, these victories did not merit any advantage beyond the group stages. Suffice to say that its status for 2012 remains in intermediate grade and the indications for 2012 are that it will retain that status for 2013. This is a great achievement in itself when allowing for the extra players taken from the panel to support the senior

team in times of stress. One has also to bear in mind that the economic downturn has taken some players to Australia and to London GAA circles.

The early start does not help the preparations at Under 21 grade and we have been caught in the early knock-out stages for the past two years. It is not easy to convince college students to train in wet and wintery conditions during the months of January and February. John Cummins did his best but with injuries to contend with, a full contingent of players was never available to him.

In 2011, the Gort minor team reached to quarter-final only to be heavily defeated by eventual winners, Tynagh/Abbey/Duniry. However, missing that day were some of our stronger players due to injury. One could not fault Manager Paul Killilea, or his assistants, Brian Regan, Brian Murray, Adrian McGrath or Keith Killilea for their efforts. Gort Minors have qualified for the quarter-finals of the 2012 championship.

Again, in 2011, our Under 16s lost to Liam Mellows in a semi-final replay. They did not qualify for the play-off stages of the championship. Liam Mellows were again to the fore when defeating a Gort Under 13 team in the semi-final of the championship.

Eoin Marren, Tom Moran, Colie Roche, Michael Cummins, Mike Finn and a few others are putting a lot of time and energy into underage coaching.

TRIBUTE TO CATHAL FORDE

Cathal comes from a family which is steeped in a strong tradition of hurling in Galway. His involvement in the game of

iománaíocht, along with his three brothers, Seán, Niall and Liam, was always exemplary through total dedication and commanding sportsmanship. These standards were influenced and personified through the highest exemplification set by his uncles Ollie, Lal and Christy and the fearless participatory endeavours of his own father John. This tradition is clearly evident through the involvement in sport of his many cousins who also grace the playing fields with outstanding acclaim. Cathal was a strong influence in the Club's County Under 12 championship wins in 1995 and 1996. He was a strong central defender in Gort's winning of the Galway County and Connacht Community Games Titles in 1997. He, along with his fellow teammates, was the recipient of a County Senior Hurling championship runners-up medal in 2008. This probably was his most recent involvement with Gort's playing exploits before travelling to London to pursue his life's ambitions. His departure was naturally influenced by the emerging economic downturn. In London, he served his adopted club well and led it to county championship victory in 2011. Cathal was a great servant of Gort Hurling Club.



Enda O'Donohue

He was always very highly respected within and throughout the Club. It was only very recently that he paid a visit to the Club grounds to witness how his old Gort friends were performing on the field of play. He was here to play his final respects to his late grandmother. He will be deeply missed by all who grew up with him and all those who knew him, both here and in his adopted city. May he rest in peace and in the arms of Jesus

TRIBUTE TO ENDA O'DONOHUE, CAHERGLISSANE, GORT

Enda was a hurler of note during his school-going years and he featured prominently in Tiermeevan NS teams in these earlier years. He also played prominently in second level college teams. His dedication was rewarded when he featured prominently with Gort's Under 16(A) Hurling County Championship winning team in 2004. He was a strong and fearless wing back, often showing potential for greater success. He played with Gort Minor teams in 2005 and 2006. However, other sports and other circumstances robbed subsequent Gort teams of his unyielding talents. He had successful outings with Kinvara soccer club and Ardahan Gun Club where his skillful talents reached national acclaim. He took up employment in Australia in recent years. Sadly, in March this year, Enda was involved in a road traffic accident and tragically lost a brave battle for life. Enda will be deeply missed by his many friends in south Galway and the many friends he made in his short life in Australia. We extend deepest sympathy to his family and friends. May the lights of Heaven always shine upon him.



Cathal Forde

ST COLMAN'S CAMOGIE CLUB

- BUILDING ON SUCCESS

by Pauline Della Chiesa PRO
St Colman's Camogie Club

2012 got off to an auspicious start when our girls marched alongside the Gort Senior Hurling team to lead off the town's St Patrick's Day Parade. The girls were honoured in recognition of their huge achievement in 2011 when they had become the only Galway club to achieve success in the Feile na nGael Competition hosted by Galway. Our u14 girls defeated St Joseph's Madden, Co Armagh in a closely contested Division 4 final 2-02 to 0-06 to lift the Coiste Co. an Chlair Shield. On their way to the final the team had victories over Drumree, Co. Meath, Burt, Co. Donegal and Kilconieron (group stages) and Ahascragh/Caltra in the semi-final. Interestingly St Colmans had also won Feile na nGael on the previous occasion that Galway hosted the competition in 1993.

2011 brought further success at underage level when our u12 team defeated Carnmore to win the B1 county title having claimed the u12C title in 2010. At a presentation ceremony held in December at The Lady Gregory Hotel, our underage players were presented with their medals by Galway Senior Camogie players, Susan Earner and Martina Conroy.

2012 has also been an exciting year and we are delighted to once again field a team at Junior level. Well done to our Junior team who reached the County League Shield final where they lost

out to Na Brideoga from Mayo 2-6 to 2-3. Our junior girls got off to a winning start in their first championship match against Liam Mellows but with injuries to key players, Clarinbridge proved far too strong in their second match. Trained by Fintan Mc Namara, our junior girls have put in a huge effort this year and we applaud their commitment and wish them success in the future.

The highlight of the year for our u12 panel has undoubtedly been their participation in the inaugural 'Camán To Croke' event held in Croke Park on Saturday May 5th. Clubs were asked to write in less than 100 words why their team should win a trip to play in Croke Park. Easter holidays were spent writing poetry, special thanks to my aunty Ann! We were delighted when we were selected as one of 48 clubs nationwide to take part. The girls participated in a Go Games blitz on the hallowed Croke Park pitch playing against teams from Cork, Wexford and Dublin. They also visited the Croke park Museum. It was a fantastic experience for the St Colman's girls to sample the incredible experience of playing in such an iconic venue. Thanks to all parents and mentors who travelled to Croke Park and helped make it such a memorable day.

Despite the fact that silverware has eluded us so far this year our underage teams have put in some excellent perfor-

mances. Our u16 squad have reached the county C semi-final where they will play Ballinderreen with wins against Kiltormer, Kinvara and Shamrocks and a loss to Mountbellew in group stages. U14's defeated Cois Fharráige in the Co B Quarter final only to lose out to Ardrahan in the Semi-final. Our u12s lost out at group stages to county winners Kiltullagh/Killimordaly and finalists Liam Mellows but had impressive wins over Kinvara and Kilconieron. U12s have also participated in 2 cluster blitzes. U8s and U10s have also participated in Go Games blitzes and have more blitzes to look forward to in September. Early September will also see our u13s in competition and we wish all players success in their ventures. Congratulations to Nicole Grealish, Lisa Della Chiesa and Edel Nolan, members of the Galway u13 panel, who recently won the Connaught title.

August 17th-18th sees St Colmans hosting Bredagh Camogie Club, Co Down. Bredagh's u12 team will be hosted by our u12 girls and will participate in a blitz day involving 8 clubs in Gort on Saturday, August 18th. We look forward to hosting our Northern visitors.

In her outgoing speech as president of The Camogie Association, Joan O' Flynn, who had visited our club in 2010, acknowledged St Colman's Gort on having a dedicated Camogie facility,



one of only 10 nationally. We are thankful to Gort GAA Club for this “more inclusive sporting culture” highlighted by Joan O’ Flynn. We have recently received a grant from Camogie Association’s Capital Funding Scheme which we must now match to further develop our camogie facilities. Provision of a ball stop net at the railway end of the camo-

gie pitch, goal post nets and an outdoor Shelter are our priorities. Various fundraising activities are being planned and as ever we are thankful to our local community for their wholehearted support.

In conclusion I would like to acknowledge our very hard working committee, team managers, trainers and mentors.

We thank our sponsors ‘The Lady Gregory Hotel’ and ‘Linnanes’ and our local GAA Clubs ; Gort, Kilbecanty, Beagh and Tubber for all their support. Most of all we thank all our players, whose passion on the pitch ensures our club will flourish into the future.



AN POST RÁS HITS GORT

by Michael O'Grady



The riders in the sprint finish.



Noelle Piggott, Gort Postmistress and Ms An Post, Orla Ruan with Primin Lang, Switzerland's Allas Jakroo Team.

History was repeated on the 21st May 2012 when An Post Rás Cycle Race wheeled into Gort for the second time. The first time it came to Gort it was known as Rás Tailtean. On that occasion, the 30th June 1969 the riders had covered 97 miles from Ballina to Gort. The following day 1st July, they left for Tralee.

The Race was started that morning by the late Jimmy Murray of Rindfin. (Father of John) a noted cyclist having won Munster, Connacht and Irish Titles including the W.H.K Redmond Trophy in Ennis in 1913. But for a prior commitment his son John was to have been the starter on this occasion.

In early October 2011 a meeting took place with Seamus Domegan and other Ras Officers to discuss the possibility of having a stage finish in Gort. The meeting was attended by Paddy Grealish Chairman of Gort Chamber of Commerce, Gerry Finnerty PRO Gort Chamber of Commerce and Michael O'Grady The Lady Gregory Hotel. Following a long discussion, it was decided on a Stage finish despite many tasks to be provided - a financial contribution of €1500, accommodation for 350-400 people, a designated race HQ, select

a Miss An Post Ras, provide anti doping test control centre, floral bouquets for presentation to winning riders, and stewards for race finish and start the following morning.

The financial contribution of €1500 was provided by Gort Chamber of Commerce. The Lady Gregory Hotel was selected as designated headquarters where accommodation was provided for 200 officials and cyclists. Ms Orla Ruane of The Lady Gregory Hotel was selected as Ms An Post Rás.

On the morning of the race a general clean-up of the town took place by many stewards and volunteers. At 11am An Post trucks rolled in to town with three 45ft trailers, one for the stage platform and the others full of barriers for crowd control. By 1pm the stage was ready with barriers in place ready for the 160 riders who had left Kilkenny at 11am that morning, covering a distance of 158 km. By 2.30pm the first motor cyclists escort arrived to announce that the riders were on their way.

At this stage a large crowd had assembled to greet the riders. At 2.33pm a bunch of seven riders arrived for a sprint finish which was won by Primin Lang of

Switzerland's Allas Jakroo Team in a time of 3.33.47 with Britain's Pale Appleby second and James Moss (Node 4 Giordana Racing) third. This group finished 28 seconds ahead of the next riders at an average speed of 45km per hour. By 2.57pm the last of the riders had completed the stage 22 minutes behind the race leader.

A presentation took place on stage of eight floral bouquets by Ms An Post, Orla Ruane assisted by Noelle Piggott, Gort Postmistress. Afterwards the race officers were highly complimentary of the stewarding and stage finish with its long straight downhill finish and large run off after the finish line which made for a great sprint finish with safety for riders.

On Tuesday morning 22nd May, 160 riders assembled at The Lady Gregory Hotel for registration and assemble for parade to the ceremonial start location. The race was started by Mr Gerry Kyne Postman Gort Post Office. The race was neutralised until after it passed the new roundabout at the bottom of the town when riders headed for Westport. The officials thanked the local committee for all its work and promised to be back again in the near future.

SOUTH GALWAY ATHLETICS CLUB

UP AND RUNNING ONCE AGAIN

by Michelle Fitzmaurice and Margaret Walsh.

South Galway Athletics Club, originally founded in 1975, was one of the most vibrant and successful clubs in Galway from its inception to the early-2000s. Members of the club competed at county, regional, all Ireland and international levels. However, interest in the club waned during the pre-celtic tiger years and it remained inactive for nearly 10 years. Luckily, the club was revived in April 2011 when Margaret Walsh and Siobhan Kelleher came together to restore the strong athletics tradition present in the area at both adult and juvenile grades.

Margaret Walsh hosted an informal 'Meet & Train' training group in Beagh during 2010. She also organised a local 10KM Road Race, and from these events she developed the idea of forming a club locally, not realising that an old club had existed less than 10 years before. The Galway athletics county board introduced Margaret to Siobhan Kelleher and together they reformed the South Galway Athletics Club. The club was invited back into the Galway athletic community formally in May 2011. A highly successful re-launch night was organised the next month at the Lady Gregory Hotel, with nearly 100 people attending. The club were honoured by the presence of Prof. Ciarán O'Catháin, Director of Athlone IT, who has since become president of Athletics Ireland. The club's president is Dan Casey, a direct link with the South Galway AC of yesteryear.

The royal blue colours of the original club were selected as the revitalised club's colours, and the current members wear these colours with pride at races throughout the county and country. The vision of the club is to develop and promote an athletics club in the general area of South Galway. The club has two autonomous sections, a senior/Fit4Life and a juvenile section, and both fall under the aegis of the South Galway AC banner. The ju-



(L-R) Margaret Walsh (Club Chairperson) Evelyn Linnane, Kieran Mulcair, Sharon Prendergast, Karen Molloy, Margaret Mummery, Jennifer Mongan, Orla Linnane, Alan Kenny, Bernard Harte, Mags Kenny, Donal Walsh, Keith Horan, Marie Linnane, Declan Belton, Ger Deely, Frank Power, Dan Casey (Club President), Olive Jordan. Front row -(L-R) Concepta Keane, Geraldine Fahey, Olive Harte, Sharon Lee, Martina Neilan, Annette Mulcair, Valerie Brady. Photo courtesy of Iain Shaw.

venile section trains athletes from the age of 8 to 18 with the aim of developing all athletic disciplines. Juvenile training takes place in Ballinderreen. The juvenile club has already taken part in the Galway and Connacht underage track and field championships, with a number of medals won.

The Senior/Fit4Life section provides training and support to runners and joggers, with access to a network of like-minded people to train with and motivate each other. Training takes place on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings, but members also meet up for ad-hoc sessions, usually centred around the town of Gort or Coole Park. The club has 120 registered members, and has also actively contributed to the county board.

The Fit4Life programme was designed by Athletics Ireland, "to give people the opportunity to get fit and enjoy walking/running in a structured environment." The club has trained Fit4Life leaders who lead the training nights, the focus being on improving fitness in a fun, sociable way. The good news is that no previous experience is required. All ability levels are catered for and participants exercise with others of a similar fitness level. The club hosted t road

aces: the Kilcolgan Castle Four Mile Road Race in 2011 and 2012, and the Gorgeous Gort Four Mile Road Race in February 2012. Over 150 participants took part in each race which were highly praised within the running communities of Galway and Clare and look set to be part of the running calendar for many years to come. The club also hosted an injury prevention workshop in May, which was attended by over 50 people, and at which 6 different experts spoke.

For further information on the club, log onto www.southgalwayac.com, check us out on Facebook under 'SouthGalway AthleticsClub' or send an e-mail to southgalwayac@gmail.com. Alternatively, you can contact Margaret Walsh (senior/Fit4Life) at 087-9917961 and Clare Dalton (juvenile) at 086-8575957. Margaret Walsh is the adult section chairperson and Frank Power is chairperson of the juvenile section.

GARDA 7 A SIDE NATIONAL SCHOOL HURLING COMPETITION



the Killeeneen Team Front Row (L-R) : Sam McArdle, Thomas Long, Aaron Martyn, Hugh Lane, and Daniel Gardiner. Middle Row: Cian O'Brien, Patrick Noonan, Christopher Brennan, Mark Kennedy, and T.J. Brennan. Back Row (L-R): Garda Tom Kavanagh, Sergeant John Cunningham, Éadaoin O'Callaghan (Teacher) D/Garda Martin Glynn, Inspector Conor Madden, Loughrea, Garda John Keating, Garda Denis Callagy & Patrick Dolan Principal.

Aaron Martyn receiving the Garda Cup from Inspector Conor Madden

Gardaí attached to Gort Garda District have been running a Garda 7 A Side Gaelic Football National Schools competition since 2003 and decided to run a hurling competition this year is what would be regarded as a strong hurling area. Sixteen National Schools from South and East Galway participated in this event with a total of 30 games being played. The tournament is based on 4 groups with 4 teams in each group.

The medals were presented by Galway

Senior Hurlers, Iarla Tannion and Jonathan Glynn with the winning plaques presented to the Cup winners by Inspector Conor Madden, Loughrea. Garda Stephen Joyce and Garda Ciaran O'Malley presented medals to some of the participants. Refreshments were served by local Gardaí to all children, parents, teachers and supporters, a total of 180 children took part in this competition.

The other National School teams that participated in this competition were;

Gortanumera, Ballynanagh, Doorus, Scoil Eoin Gort, Tiernevin, Kiltartan, Lough Cutra, Brackloon, & Gaelscoil Na Bhfilí, Gort.

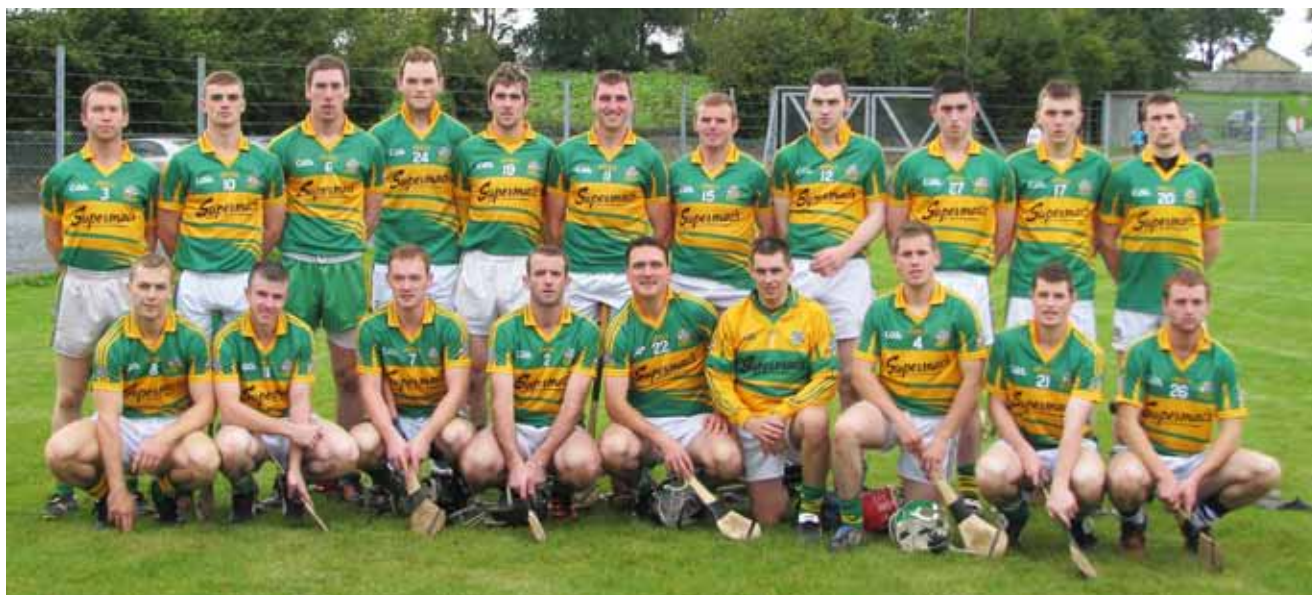
Special thanks to Gerry Sheehan, Brian Brennan, Tom Lambert, Adrian Niland, Garda Martin Glynn, Garda Tom Kavanagh, Garda John Keating, Jonathan Glynn, Gerry Carr and Garda Philip Gleeson for refereeing and coordinating the games and to Garda Paul McWalter and Sargent Pat Fahy for the catering.

The Gardaí are very grateful to Gort GAA Club for making their facilities available for this competition. This event was co-ordinated by Garda Denis Callagy and Sergeant John Cunningham, and sponsored by St. Raphael's Garda Credit Union, Dublin

THE WINNERS OF THE FOUR COMPETITIONS WERE

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Cup (A); | Killeeneen N.S. | Runner Up; | Ballyglass N.S |
| Plate (B); | Tynagh | Runner Up; | Labane. |
| C Trophy | Kilbeacanty | Runner Up; | Killeeneen 2 |
| D Trophy; | Craughwell | Runner Up; | Peterswell |

GUAIRE CUP CELEBRATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY



2012 Guaire Cup Champions – Gort

Front Row: L-R: Martin Nestor, Sean Forde, Sylvie Og Linnane, Andy Coen, Ollie Fahy, Peter Cummins, Michael Cummins, Niall Forde, Brian Quinn. Back Row: L-R: Mark McMahon, Greg Lally, Brian Regan, Michael Mullins, Keith Killilea, Paul Killilea, Gerry Quinn, Albert Mullins, Robert Kearns, Conor Helebert, Wayne Walsh.

Gort defeated Newmarket-on-Fergus 2-17 to 1-14 in the final of the Guaire Cup held at Gort GAA Hurling Grounds. The well attended match was refereed by Alan Kelly, Ragoon, Newcastle. Chairman of Gort GAA Club, Martin Kearns presented the Guaire Cup to the Gort Captain, Andy Coen. The organising committee would like to thank everyone who helped to make this year's tournament such a success, with special thanks our tournament sponsor Pat Hegarty of Cosyhome Heating Oil.

2012 is the 60th anniversary of the Guaire Cup – a Senior Hurling Club Competition between Clare and Galway teams which was founded in Gort in 1952. The teams competing in this year's Cup included Gort, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Clooney Quin and Castlegar.

Three of the teams participating this year took part in the inaugural tournament in 1952; Newmarket-on-Fergus, Gort, Castlegar. The 2012 semi-finals saw Gort and Castlegar drawn at 14points at the end of the 2nd half, with Gort taking a win in extra time with a final score of 20pts to 15pts. Newmarket-on-Fergus defeated Clooney/Quinn 1-17 to 8pts in the other semi-final. Recent winners include Feakle 1987. Castlegar 2004, Gort 2005, 2011 and Sixmilebridge, 2006.

In 1952, the St Colman's Park Committee, Gort organised the first Guaire Cup. They included: Tim Conside, Jimmy Murray, Ned Roche, Patrick O'Connor, J.J. Coen, P O'Shaughnessy, John Kelly, Martin Brennan.

Brian Brennan, Guaire Cup organiser said; "60 years on, we salute the

founders of the Guaire Cup for their great effort and foresight."

Teams compete for the handcrafted silver Guaire Cup made in Dublin by Alwright and Marshall. Crafted from sterling silver with exceptional celtic design and an Irish inscription which translates as "The people of Gort presented this cup for hurling in County Clare and County Galway. It is to be competed for in St Colman's Park, Gort each year between the two teams in County Clare and the two teams in County Galway who provide best in county competitions."

COOLE F.C.

Coole F.C is a relatively new under-age soccer club in Gort. It was founded in 2009 with 2 under age teams, U 13's & U 14's. In the last number of years it has quickly expanded to 6 teams, which range from U 10's to U 16's, with approximately 100 players registered with the club and ten coaches. Coole FC also has a senior team in the Clare League, and in its first season won the division 3 title and got promoted. Last year in division 2 they finished mid table, and this year hope to get promoted to build on their success and challenge for promotion to division one.

All our age groups play in the Clare League which runs from April through to September each year and every group is guaranteed at least 12 games in each division. We believe that taking part is just as important as winning and strive to develop each child's ability, skills and personality and make Coole FC a fun club to be a part of. Every team member gets game time regardless of their abilities.

The majority of our training takes place on the astroturf in the Community Centre, and we would like to acknowledge the support of James Lee and all the staff of the centre. Our home pitch is St Colman's Park, however, Coole FC would eventually like to have our own home soccer pitch and are actively looking for funding and appropriate land to achieve this.

Last season our U 12's team won their league and brought the trophy home to Gort, which was a very proud moment for the lads, coaches and their parents. It was a great achievement for such a new club. Players chosen for the Clare emerging talent programme include: Arek Mamala, Ethan Cunniffe, Enda Fahy, Jordan Nolan, Peter Ziga, Jake Ross, Enda Egan & Ivan Neilan, and we hope to have many more young players follow in their footsteps in the future.



Back Row L-R: Kiera Byrne, John Aldridge, Peter Monaghan, Jordan Nolan, Jake Ross, Colie Kearney, Niall Kearney, Jason O'Donoghue, Ray Houghton, Sean O'Neil. Front Row L-R: Cian Joyce, Gabriel Isikias, Nathan Crawford, Colman Ryan, Enda Egan, Jakob Koopras, Wesley Luiz.



2011 U12 League Champions. Back Row L-R: Stephen Cunniffe, Manager, Martin McGrath, Samuel Thistlethwaite, Conal Finn, Peter Ziga, Enda Kelly, Jack O'Connor, Andrew Hogan, Alan Naughton, Jake Ross, Dave Cahill Manager. Front Row L-R: Dylan Curtin, Jimmy McDonald, Jason O'Donoghue, Ethan Cunniffe (Capt), Jordan Nolan, Enda Egan, Matthew Kiernan, Ivan Neilan, Enda Fahy (missing from photo).

We have been honoured to have the FAI visit our club on two occasions. The FAI Chief Executive Officer John Delany and Irish Soccer Legends Packie Bonner, Ray Houghton and John Aldridge were among those who visited our club much to the delight of the young lads, their parents and coaches. It was lovely day and the lads really enjoyed a kick about with the legends.

Like any other young club funding is always a challenge. We have our annual church gate collection, and last year had a bag pack in Minihane's Supervalu, which cover some of the cost of the running of the club throughout the season. We try to keep cost to a minimum and many thanks to all those who support us including our sponsors: Linnane's Bar, Coole Properties, Be Mo-

bile, Discount Carpets - John McGrath.

Our coaches give up their time each week for Coole FC and have a great rapport with all of the youth. Sean O'Neill (Treasurer & Coach) , Barry McCarry (Chairman & Coach), Stephen Cunniffe (secretary & Coach), Kieran Brehony (Coach), Denise Nolan (Coach), Kieran Reynolds (Coach), Howard McCarty (Coach), Gerry Martin (Coach) & Greg Lally (Coach), Dave Cahill (Coach) and Colm Grealish (Coach). All of our mach reports, photos & information are on our Facebook page www.facebook.com/coolefc New members are always welcome and anyone interested in coaching is welcome to contact us via our Facebook page or by calling 085 1442879.



Pictured at the I.C.A. Afternoon Tea Party.
Front row (L-R) Mary Mahon, Nora Gorman, Cathy Curlette, Nora Hayes, Maisie Murphy.
Back row (L-R) Bridget Monaghan, Sarah Fahy, Teresa Nestor, Nell Giblin, Anne Burke, Sally Williams.



Karine Ryan, Nell Giblin, Sheila Walsh, Teresa Nestor preparing for the I.C.A. Afternoon Tea Party

Gort I.C.A. guild now in its 64th year continues to go from strength to strength at the heart of the community. In 2010 the I.C.A. celebrated its centenary and the Gort guild was 62 years old. This milestone in the association's history was marked - a walk in Coole Park, lunch in the guild hall at the Galway Federation, and a Harvest Festival Mass, St. Colman's Church, Gort.

A lot of work went into the planning and preparation of the Harvest Mass. Four banners were made for the church, these highlighted the skills of the guild members - knitting and crochet, painting, machine embroidery, appliqué work and hand embroidery. These banners are now in the sacristy and are regularly used to decorate the church for special events. The work on the floral decorations in the church involved Trish Beakey, Mary Fahy, Marie Dolan and the No Name Club working with the guild members. The Deanery Choir added greatly to the celebration. A DVD of the festival was produced and a clip from this is featured on Youtube. In 2011 the Harvest festival was again organised this

GORT I.C.A GUILD AT 64 YEARS

By Anne Burke

time in association with the feast of St. Colman on the 29th October. The Harvest Festival was much appreciated by all the parishioners and once again the church looked beautiful.

The work of the guild is very varied. Classes in various crafts are ongoing; machine sewing, knitting, crochet, painting on glass while demonstrations and courses on mosaic making, weaving and interior design are also held from time to time. Each year the guild undertakes a tour to explore the cultural and historic heritage of the country. In June of this year the guild spent a weekend in An Grianán – the I.C.A. headquarters in Co. Louth, and took a heritage course that involved a visit to Beaulieu House, a very moving visit to the home of the poet Francis Ledwidge who was killed during the first world war, and a tour of the site of the battle of the Boyne and its heritage site.

Coffee mornings are a regular feature of the year and the guild has seen a great increase in their popularity with a lot of regulars turning up every month and bringing their friends along. 2011 saw the guild organise an Afternoon Tea Party which gave attendees a chance to wear their best hats. The best china, table linen and silver were brought out for the occasion, and a great afternoon of delicious food and chat was had by all.

In December each year the guild prepares for the annual Christmas Sale. This is very popular with the whole community who can stock up on Christmas goodies. Last year an exquisite doll's wardrobe of clothes was made by the members for the raffle.

The guild continues its close association with the No Name Club cookery demonstrations, movie nights and involvement with their fashion Show in aid of Croí. Members of the guild travelled to Kilkenny to join in the national No Name Club celebrations. During the year guest speakers are organised for the monthly meetings on topics of interest to the members, as well as talks each month on health and beauty, these add greatly to the meetings. Social outings are an essential part of the life of the guild with visits to the cinema and the theatre either locally, in Galway, Ennis or Dublin.

The guild continues its close involvement with the wider community and helps out where necessary - participation in the Family fun Day in Canon Quinn Park, new tabernacle curtains were made for the church, and the camógie team banner was repaired. The hall is in great demand not just for the guilds activities, but also by other community groups for meetings and activities. In order to pay for the upkeep and ongoing maintenance of the hall, fund-raising activities are necessary. The annual Christmas sale and other events during the year help to cover heating, lighting and general maintenance costs. The guild is very grateful for the support of the community. As the guild heads towards its 64th birthday it continues to be a vibrant part of the community, and is always happy to have new members join to ensure that it continues far into the future. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of every month at 8.00pm and new members are always welcome.

CAMINO: WAY, TRAIL, PATH.

by Josephine Ward

I'm in my bed, bottom bunk, no sheets or blankets provided, just a pillow, so I'm encased in my own sleeping-bag liner (.35k), weight is important. I've done all my little housekeeping; essentials washed and dried, clothes ready for the morning and everything in order in my backpack as I may be getting dressed in the dark and don't wish to leave stuff behind.

There's a pattern now to our evenings; arrive at a hostel, hope for vacancies, present passport and pilgrim passport at reception, pay charge, ranging from 5 to 10 euro for the night (although some older hostels are free), remove boots and store on a rack with all the other well-worn dusty footwear already there. Then we are shown to our quarters, and being two older women we hope for bottom bunks, as ladders are seldom provided, and we hope for at least a few other women there, as there seems to be a majority of men on this trip. To claim a bunk you lay out your sleeping-bag or liner. Ann and I take turns to shower as it's easier to manage the wet floors without having your valuables with you. As it's still early enough we relax as we won't get a peregrino meal until at least 7.30, and that's early by Spanish standards. We're always hungry! If a local church is open we'll try to attend Mass as that's where we often meet some of our fellow pilgrims, all nationalities and ages, and not necessarily Catholics. We've quite a few acquaintances now and usually eat with a group.

It's warm but it's only 9.30 and already everyone is asleep, some snoring loudly. I would like to read but I daren't put

my light on because I'm already suffering from mosquito bites after another warm misguided nights reading in the dark. I've kept a short journal, starting on the first day crossing the Pyrenees from St. Jean in France.

Mon. 19th Sept. One week done! Long walk today, about 28k, did 7 extra because the day was cool which made it easy – so in Torres del Rio tonight, albergue ok, lots of beds but few showers and toilets, 14 in room. Just had a shower and sun out now but nowhere to sit outside. Passed through fields with corn cut today, with v. large bales of straw remaining in v. high stacks. Some old ones from last year were being spread apparently as compost. Interspaced with the cornfields were vineyards, and some wonderful vegetable patches, tomatoes, peppers, chillies and cabbages on amazing tall stalks. No animals to be seen except hungry dogs, gave one some bread. On the road today, in Irachi, we came across a wine fountain. The wine flows freely from a tap, red wine, mild and refreshing. No one took too much!

20th Sept. Early start today, on the road at 7.30, poor breakfast, day not too long though, abt 20k. In albergue in Logrono early, but it's full at 3. Busy city, and seems not impressed by Peregrinos! Passed through Viana, a lovely town, with Caesare Borgia buried in front of the local church. Hostel here is quite basic, no breakfast, crowded with 20 in a room. Long trek tomorrow, 29k. Town buzzing, just realised it's the Rioja festival, lasts 1 week, streets thronged with all age

groups. There are performers, balloons, music, breakdancing, puppets and everyone drinking. Strong police presence.

21st Sept. Streets being hosed heavily this a.m., really polluted, bars open all night. Travelled to Najera today; the last 4k very tedious as passing through industrial area, hot and dusty. Town nice, we figured by now that all albergues are in the old quarters of cities, near churches, so we look for spires. We passed through 2 towns that have bull-running, other than Pamplona. Viana has a ring in the town centre leading to narrow streets that can be cut off with gates. Very dark start today @7am, no breakfast so Navarette first stop; not easy to find café open before 10 but guided to one by a Frenchman with a lovely voice. I bet he's a writer! Saw 4 very neat clergy. Curiously we followed them to a church which had a brilliant interior like a museum, displaying old vestments and handmade songbooks. The altar was 70ft tall with a carved gilded background and statue of Virgin and Child holding prominent position, dressed in real heavily embroidered garments. Best of all though, was an old painting of Christ on the cross wearing a long white petticoat down below His knees, lace hem even! I'd love to know the story behind that. My theory; the artist painted Christ almost naked, but was asked to cover Him, and used a ridiculous form of dress as a protest.

The whole idea for this trip was hatched about one year before take-off. My sister, Ann, had the original plan, and was so determined that she had all the research done before I heard of it. I was taken with

the idea of a 500 mile trek through northern Spain, but it did mean a fair bit of practice walking to get fit as we would also be carrying all our belongings on the journey. My first purchase was a solid pair of boots as the biggest problem most people encounter is blisters. They were well broken in over the summer, between Coole Park and Connemara and I still love them. Next was a smallish rucksack; it's important not to carry too much weight, so few clothes, 2 to 3 changes, spare sandals, poncho, sunhat, toiletries, towel and sleeping-bag or liner and don't forget plasters! Everything had to weigh less than 10% body-weight, but that had to include at least 2 litres of water, and when travelling through the Meseta, enough food for up to 15 miles. The Meseta was the toughest part of the whole trip, roughly from Burgos to Leon.

26th Sept. Room for 2! Hontanas tonight, did 28k again, long dusty hot road through the Meseta – amazing landscape, no shelter, white clay and stones in some areas but a few k later maybe black clay. Crops harvested, 2,900 ft up, we were on a level with many windmills, all totally still as no breeze at all. Left Burgos at 7.45am, just getting bright, but cool! Shared cheese and biscuits with a young German pilgrim, who told us he suffered from a broken back some years ago and had no feeling from the waist down – he's now doing the Camino, all 500 miles. Tonight met some friends again, Marcus who is Austrian, helped me put in new laces. Saw a wonderful flock of sheep again, long drooping ears – came right up to us – being brought to pasture up higher, but very little to be seen.

27th Sept. In Boadilla del Camino in large albergue, overcrowded and in a top bunk with no ladder and no protection so I can't see myself sleeping much. After much laughing Ann and I decided we'll stay dressed; great meal, though, at a long table and lots of chat, German Canadian one side and French on the other. Did 30k today – only seems impossible after 1p.m. when the sun is high and really hot. The hills in the distance had golden orange bases, then a layer of white rock and darkish on top with dried scrub. We've be-

come used to the dried up river beds and hardly notice them now.

1st Oct. Keeping nicely on track – in Mansilla de Las Mulas, 25k altogether. Walking on old Roman road, rocky with no shelter. Watched combine harvester at work on ripe sunflowers and loading seed into large lorry, enjoyed cooling spray from sprinklers in large field of vines. More 'hobbit houses', bodegas; wine stores in Religos, except this time people seemed to live in some of them, some had television aerials on top; vast difference with the wealthier houses in this village. Religos also had quite a few adobe houses, some plastered on the outside, most not. Went to a funeral mass out of curiosity, very like funerals at home. Wonderful international company for dinner tonight!

2nd Oct. In Leon tonight and just back from visit to Leon Cathedral. A Brilliant building, and not a bit like all the old Spanish churches we've seen; Gothic structure, wonderful windows with brilliant colours, similar to what you'd expect from Harry Clarke. Trek this a.m. was easy, but we seemed forever to be entering Leon;

old city walled, and most of interest inside those walls. Staying in a regular little hotel tonight, our Sunday treat, and we're looking forward to a real breakfast! Great day to be in Leon as local festival is underway. We've watched local traditional dancers, parades with music and jester, all with traditional costume; and markets in all the narrow streets selling wares and foodstuffs. We sampled some food; really good, but we're conscious not to shop as we've 200 miles yet to go. Would love another day here.

4th Oct. In a small hotel again tonight, in Astorga, as needing a little TLC with sore leg; tendonitis is the verdict of the lovely girl in the pharmacy in Hospital (town), who says "you should rest, but you won't, will you?" She recommended tablets and gel. Glad to leave albergue after last night; frozen in front of big draughty window. I'm missing stuff as left in the dark; nice day's walk, though, 30k; morning good but afternoon difficult with stony dirt road and little shelter. Little things cheered us up; we discovered bullfrogs calling in the drain beside us, and later an edible chestnut tree, loaded with nuts; tried some, de-





Yellow arrows show the way.

and we lapse into a companionable silence; it's then that you go into your head and talk to God about all you care for, and the adventure turns into a pilgrimage. You also realise that the local Spanish people are very tolerant of these dusty foreigners, often walking through vineyards, and actual farmyards, right by the door. They always greet you "Dias" or "Buen Camino", with a smile.

6th Oct. I sent my bag ahead this morning to help me over the mountain pass on the way here; leg still very swollen and red, so nervous about pushing it. Wonderful days walking with lots to see as we went very high into the mountains; saw cows with bells again. Very high up we came across "La Cruz de Ferro", quite famous I believe in Spain as a tour bus arrived while we were there.

Many peregrinos carry a stone or some other symbol of their failings and leave it at the cross, a penitential gesture. It includes all religions and none, and was to be honest a scene of great joy. The pile of stones was amazing. We had lunch today in Acebo, the tiniest village imaginable, and kept alive by peregrinos; houses made of stone, narrow cobbled streets with rickety overhanging balconies and many half doors.

8th Oct. In O'Cebreiro in Galicia, very different landscape, buildings and people than we've seen so far. It could be Kerry with stone houses, some thatched, and mountains and valleys very striking. We're heading towards 4000ft up and it's very cold now at night. As we had no breakfast this morning we were lucky to find a little café open in a tiny village in the mountains; we were invited to go hunting with some men drinking shots at 10 am. However curious we may have been, we worried for their safety when we saw bottles of wine in all the pockets! Climb here not too bad as a lovely breeze in the afternoon made the sun more comfortable.

At a Spanish wedding ceremony tonight at 6; we needed Mass anyway. Bride was in traditional dress, beautiful old lace, with musicians playing Spanish instruments and in traditional dress outside the church. At the exchange of vows a falcon was released in the church, its owner dressed in a medieval leather costume. Two christenings were also included in the ceremony.

I sent on my bag separately today because of long distance, 30.9k, steep climb, and sore leg but had a bit of a scare when, arriving, found the place closed. Had to go searching and found another hostel had taken it in with its own. Think I'll carry it from now on!

11th Oct. We didn't start walking until 8, as mornings are really getting darker. It turned into a really hot day, though – temperatures higher than normal – still raining in Ireland and I'd say the farmers here need rain pretty badly. Many people joined the Camino today @ Sarria, about 110k from Santiago, some looking very glamorous with no backpacks, so we now look very scruffy! We're in Portomarin tonight in an albergue that's very clean but with 130 beds in one large room. It's only half full though; and must be a nightmare in summer with crowds. One advantage in a big modern hostel; we managed to find a printer to get our Ryanair passes for Madrid.

12th Oct. We got a little room for 2 on the top floor of an old albergue in Palas del Rei tonight; the young man in charge told us it would close at the end of October. The walk here was uneventful except for horses and riders doing the Camino. I'm sure it was common enough in the past but they really are very dirty on city streets. While having lunch today we watched the Columbus Day parades in Madrid; we recognised the street down from the Prado. We're still walking through little villages that smell strongly of cows, and around 9 am we hear the milking machines as we pass. For a few days now we wondered about strange buildings on pillars; shaped like a house, with a roof; 4-5ft wide and 10 – 12ft long. The sides were made from either slatted timber or bricks with holes. A peregrino told us in poor English that

licious and easy to crack because of the heat; gave some water to Ruth (Danish, 70) who forgot hers this morning.

5th Oct. Out late this morning; passing the Cathedral around 9 and it opened – beautiful, not as impressive as Leon but more beautiful stonework, pillars sweeping upwards in pink and cream sandstone. Across the road was Gaudi's Palacio Episcopal, very recognisable as his style, but resembling a horror gothic castle. It's now a museum but not open 'till 10. Great hot chocolate last night, Astorga is famous for its chocolate. Got to Rabanal before 3 but all the albergues were full already, so we had to check into a guest house, a Casa Rurale; days are so different its impossible to plan! Attended vespers tonight in the old monastery, with chant from the Benedictine monks, it was wonderful.

Soon the landscape changes and the walk gets more interesting and not so hot in the mountains after Astorga. We chat in the mornings but that fades in the afternoons with the effects of heat and fatigue,

they were for drying corn, similar to stores in his own country, Croatia.... Just a few days left!

15th Oct. In Santiago tonight, and after the initial "what now" it feels really good to be here. I don't know what we expected, but after settling into a big hostel/hotel, we went to the Cathedral and sat quietly, tired but happy, and thought of everyone that matters to us. When in the pilgrim passport office we met a lot of our new friends and said our goodbyes with regret. At dinner we met the tall Frenchman that I thought was a writer; he wasn't, but knows Ireland well and had walked from Strasbourg, 90 days in all! A friend advised us on the place to stay – I hope we meet him tomorrow to thank him and say goodbye. It's a big old building that was once a seminary, but is now a hotel with the top floor reserved for pilgrims at hostel rates, but with all the hotel facilities; just another example of the respect shown to pilgrims on the entire route. One young Spanish man impressed us today; last night he was bathing really damaged feet and later he was in a bunk beside mine with both feet heavily bandaged. We met again in front of the Cathedral, where, still shod in bandages he greeted me with a big smile and thumbs-up!

Next day we got to appreciate the Cathedral, starting with the crypt under the altar to pray at the casket of St. James, and later to attend the High Mass, celebrated by about 30 priests, many nationalities, and the building was packed to the doors. At Benediction after Mass we experienced the Botafumeiro – an immense incense-burner, which is operated by 8 priests using an elaborate pulley system. Some claim it was originally used to fumigate the church full of scruffy pilgrims! After 2 days in Santiago it was time to fly to Madrid for a few days to get back to normal life, do a little shopping (cold in Ireland) and to connect for our return home.

While there is no historical evidence to support the theory that St. James preached in Galicia, it is still widely believed that he came to Finisterre (c. 40 AD) as it was then a centre of Druidic ritual. Having met with limited success, he re-

turned to Jerusalem and was beheaded c. 42 AD. Following his martyrdom, his disciples brought his body back to Spain to be buried in what is now known as Santiago de Compostela. Because it's believed that he helped drive the Moors out he became the Patron Saint of Spain, and the first written record of pilgrimage to Santiago happened in 950 AD. It grew in popularity in the middle ages and is believed to have influenced the development of the major cities on the route from the Pyrenees.

Recent surveys show that Spain, once deeply religious, now has less than 20% population practising Catholicism. But the strange thing is that with the fall in religious practice, the numbers travelling the Camino de Santiago have risen tenfold in the past decade, where the spirit of Christianity is alive and well, and fully experienced by 2 happy Irishwomen.



The Cathedral of St James

GORT CANCER SUPPORT OPENS NEW CENTRE

Sadie McInerney and Anne Quinn, Founders of Gort Cancer Support at the official opening of their new facility.



For the past five years, local volunteers of Gort Cancer Support have worked tirelessly to provide a support service for people who have been affected by cancer in the Gort and surrounding areas. In June this culminated in the opening of our new centre in Garrabeg. We wish to not only continue meeting the needs of people who have been diagnosed with cancer as well as their loved ones and carers, but to expand and bring on board new programmes, services and events over the coming year.

Our information and listening service, be it face to face or via the phone, remains a key aspect of our service. If we are unable to help you with your specific request, we can certainly point you in the right direction. Our holistic practitioners offer a range of services including stress management, counselling, reflexology, art and Reiki. We have an incredibly dedicated team of drivers who can take the person diagnosed with cancer to the hospital for appointments. We now have a library where it is possible to borrow a book be it relating to cancer, positive living generally,

sport, humour and so on. This along with the leaflets from the Irish Cancer Society and the Marie Keating Foundation are great resources for anyone living with a cancer diagnosis, or for anyone concerned about their health and wellbeing. We also organise seminars and workshops on a regular basis. Our support and activities group, the Butterfly Group, meet on the first Thursday of each month at 10:30 am. If you yourself have been diagnosed with cancer why not pop in and find out more at our next get together? On the last Thursday of each month we are opening our doors to the public by hosting a coffee morning. This provides the opportunity for you to enjoy light refreshments and take a look around the centre.

It is important to share feelings and talk about worries and concerns in a confidential, safe, relaxing and nurturing environment. Talking about our worries and concerns especially relating to a cancer diagnosis can be very difficult. It is not long ago since Irish people were afraid to say the word cancer instead euphemistically calling it the 'Big C'. There is an old

Moorish proverb that states 'he who fears something gives it power over him' (or her). If you feel you would like to share your fears and concerns Gort Cancer Support is here for you. Our centre is located in Garrabeg – the road opposite Supervalu. You can make an appointment, phone for support or simply drop-in for a chat or to utilise the free and confidential services offered at centre. Some services such as driving service, counselling and complementary therapies need to be booked. Our telephone number is 086 172 4500 or 091 648606.

As always we are extremely grateful to everyone who has supported us in any way in the past, as well as to our dedicated team of volunteers. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the kindness and generosity of Jean and Pat Collins who live abroad but who have close ties with the town of Gort. Their input has supported us to achieve our goal of having our own beautiful premises that will benefit those who need to use our services into the future.

This reminds me but I don't know anymore why I decided to come here on that particular night. I remember it was a Wednesday and there was rainwater pouring into the grates under the footpaths like a river of piss roaring in the drain of God's urinal. The moment I stepped inside, my glasses steamed in the pub heat and I felt damp and relieved, like a sick animal who just wanted to get out of the elements even if it meant meeting the waiting butchers who would tear it to pieces. I removed my coat, dropped my suitcase and sat away from them at the end of the bar under low lit lamps that hung from the ceiling. I ordered a Guinness and a few minutes later I asked for a whiskey to go along with it. I had no idea which whiskey to order and Rory suggested a Powers. I took his word for it and as you can see, it looks like he knew before I did what it was that suited me. Rory was a large man then, like he was blown up with a pump shoved down his throat which had left his belly and cheeks hard and swollen. Next to him sat Jimmy, a man that looked like that writer who everyone thinks looks like everyone's grandfather. You know the one? Well, he almost looked like him but only if that grandfather writer had been left standing in a windy field and hadn't washed or changed in decades. I could smell him from the corner stool where I sat listening and watching them spit into each other's ears, filling each other's heads with nonsense but of course back then I thought it must be wisdom and I wanted it.

I went home that first night and stood at my bedroom door looking at my wife sleeping turned into the wall as she always was in those days. Above her head on the dresser, I saw the picture that held the two of us smiling at a camera from a distant past. I stumbled taking off my socks and eased into bed and faced the door and my head swam away from the picture and my wife as I couldn't bear to look at either anymore.

I found myself the following mid-week back in here and even after only one previous visit, it felt like coming home. This time I got more looks and

VICIOUS CIRCLE

by Patrick McLoughlin

the two lad's eyes brightened almost like there were tears there and that was when I got invited into their cosy meandering little world. I brought my stool over and there the three of us sat with me in the middle gratefully being spat at from both sides and neither of them seemed that interested in talking to each other anymore. I had become a centrepiece that the two men could focus their thoughts on. Mid-week drinks became nightly rituals and for a few years, I managed to hold on to my suitcase which I dropped on the floor every night and often forgot about when leaving. I also began to forget about what time I had to get up to go to work until sometime within that decade I just abandoned that part of my life for good.

When Jimmy croaked, we shivered in the cold graveyard air under a blue sky bruised by heavy clouds that spat rain in the harsh daylight. Rory and I left before the rosary and celebrated him properly in here drowning in drinks, swallowing his share as well as ours. We reckoned that Jimmy never smelt as good as when he was laid out in the funeral parlour. We weren't wanted there, that was clear, but you know, in time, people realised who his real family was and we've always known. We did more for him than anyone else. We propped him up and kept him going. He was already half a ghost before he went and completely invisible to his family.

We spent the next decade downing pints in some kind of furious rush to catch up with Jimmy. It was all we could do to forget and remember him at the same time. It's been tough though. It's like someone let all the air out of Rory. He doesn't say as much

anymore. I think he's sick. I think we are all sick. My head isn't what it used to be but I can still hold down a good drink. Rory has had enough at six or seven. We don't really listen to each other anymore. Jimmy's stool was standing there empty for years and one day, out of nothing, Rory said that he was going to sit on it. He's been getting thinner since I think but he sees it as his place in the scheme of things. I hopped on to Rory's stool. It seemed like the fitting thing to do. 'The next stop after this is the hole in the ground,' he says.

The next stop for me after here is home but of course home isn't what it used to be. When she left she took the bed and the pictures. I fall onto a mattress in a state of numbed bliss and wake afraid of everything and that's the truth. There is nothing left in the house to remind me and I don't know any more if that's hard to bear or if memories would be something that I couldn't bear thinking about.

It's a shocking night tonight. I feel for all those trying to make their way home from work or whatever they are doing with themselves out there. I wouldn't be anywhere else. Here comes someone now looking like a rat out of the sewers who has decided he's had enough sorry graft for one night. Well, there's a free stool here. If he's looking for conversation, he's come to the right place. God knows, I need somebody to talk to. Rory's like a ghost these days. Three is company. Two is a bore. No. It looks like he prefers his own company tonight. I think I'll suggest a Powers to warm him up. This reminds me but I don't know anymore why I decided to come here on that particular night. I remember it was a Wednesday and there was rainwater...



JENNY WREN - A CHILDHOOD MEMORY

by Mossey Clabby

Little boys finding a wrens nest. Illustration: Josephine Ward

Growing up in Gort in the forties 'Mullins' up the road from our house was a truly magical place. Magical I say because for me, a nine year old boy, it had everything; a big farmhouse, with a huge open-fire kitchen, a dairy, an orchard, a farm with cows, cattle, sheep, hens, and pigs, greyhounds, a hearse, and wonder of wonders a carpentry shop run by the diminutive Mick Kerins. Mick was a great tradesman who made coffins, horse carts, cartwheels, tables, doors etc. Now and then he'd make for us spinning tops out of bits of waste wood, which were great toys in those days, and could keep one exercised for hours as one whipped them up and down the empty roads; - cars and traffic were scarce then.

Noel Mullins and I did various jobs about the farm for Mrs. Mullins, fetching the cows, walking the greyhounds, pulping food for the pigs and sheep etc; it was all good fun. Now and then there'd be something new to see, a new calf, new lambs, a litter of bonhams, or greyhound pups.

This day however it was a wren's nest. I can't remember which of us discovered it, but I do know that Noel immediately took over all instructions as regards the rules of engagement. The nest itself was situated in the side panel of an old maroon-coloured abandoned car, which lay in a corner of the farmyard under some palm fir trees. A perfectly rounded ball of

green moss it was, with a circular hole in its middle through which Mam and Dad wren entered and egressed. In fact it was seeing the wren fly out of the hole that alerted us to what it was in the first place. Noel said that if we went too close, and or touched the eggs in the nest the wrens would abandon it, and so we observed from a distance. With a narrow pencil-sliver of wood we gently pushed downwards on the nest door hole, when the wren had exited, and lo and behold we could see the eggs!

We only did that once in case we'd damage the nest, but every chance we got we'd observe from a distance and watch the parents fly in and out. Looking back it seems like we spent hours there over some weeks; crouching still and silent watching the wrens fly in and out. Boredom hadn't been invented yet.

Then one day miracle of miracles we came to find some broken egg-shells on the ground under the nest. Noel said that meant the birds had been hatched. On our next visit we could actually hear their 'cheep-cheep' call. As we watched a parent wren arrived at the door of the nest with a worm in its mouth. Simultaneously a baby head popped out and opened a mouth (which seemed bigger than its head) into which the parent dropped the worm and flew away. This activity continued non-stop, as all the while the chicks screeched in their insatiable

hunger. It was totally fascinating to watch and listen, and so we did over several days.

One day after about two weeks, I came to visit the nest on my own. Strangely there was no flurry of activity, and stranger still there was no noise from the nest. For ten minutes I kept a silent vigil, then I decided to investigate further.

With palm upturned I gently pushed down on the opening with the middle finger of my left hand. To my amazement a young wren hopped out on my palm, chirped once, and flew away. He or she was followed by probably four or five more in quick succession; I was so excited I lost count! The last one however lingered slightly longer on my 'palm tarmac', cheekily cocked its head from side to side, left a 'donation' on my hand, and with a sharp "cheep- cheep" as if to say 'don't be so nosey', flew away. I stood looking at my 'gift' and laughed.

Later when I told Noel about it he said that that was a sign of good luck; - I've had a lot of good luck in my life!



A night at The Classic Ballroom, Gort
(L-R): Paddy Reynolds, Micky Hayes, Pat
McGrath, Sean Mulkerins, Sean O'Donnell.

THE CLASSIC BALLROOM

by Sheila Walsh

The ballroom once stood at the edge of our town
People came in hundreds for miles all around.
Traveling in buses for the weekly dance
To try their luck there was always a chance
You met your husband or future wife and
That was the start of the rest of your life.
All the showbands of Ireland played in that hall
Big Tom, Larry, Margo and all.

The dance was held every Sunday night
Hail, rain or snow it was our delight.
From all over Galway and County Clare
For everyone a certain magic was there.
In the cloakroom there was Angie and May.
We would hand in our coats without delay.
Then out we would come and line up in rows
With a nod or a wink we would take to the floor.

Now those times and place seems a long time ago
And some people we met we won't meet anymore.
Gone is the Classic and familiar front door
And no more dancing around that great floor.
But we have special memories we are proud to share
With family and friends who did not go there.
We owe it so much for the pleasure we got
A lifetime of memories of the Classic in Gort.

LEGS

by Patrick McLoughlin

You saw them first. Two large grey crows
Hopping and pecking the eyes of the dead
Cow laid flat out beyond the hedgerows.

You needn't look when we get there you said.
We came with blue ropes and you made a knot
For the hind legs. Her tongue lolled in her head,

Her calf's face covered in afterbirth and snot.
You drove through wet fields cursing bad luck.
Home with one new-born and one ready to rot.

You dropped her at the yard for the death truck
To hoist her by one leg. Clamped by a thick chain;
A swollen lump plastered in its own muck

Dripping liquid. The hung corpse leaving a stain.
That's all we can do for her you said.
Standing there watching in the pissing rain.

We took the new-born calf to the shed;
Cleaned and fed her. I still thought of grey crows
Pecking the eyes of the dying and the dead,

When that world was yours outside of these windows
And I put your thin legs under the bed-clothes.

AN APRIL WALK IN COOLE

by Mary Moran

Step forward on the carpet moss,
See the light seep through bright Spring-leafed foliage,
Soft and new, vibrant green, so plentiful left and right,
An April day in Coole delight.

Hear the birds chorousing in turn,
Smell the warm moisture in the air,
Feel the rebirth in Mother Nature's growth, coming to life,
The Winter minuses only a memory now,
We have survived.
There is a "busyness" about,
In man and beast alike, rising energies, rising sap,
Tasks of great importance to complete.
Still time to walk the carpet moss, and see the flowers grow near the rocks,
To make some memories of this time,
In my thoughts, forever mine.

HIS ROYAL MAJESTY OF TWO ISLANDS

by T Coppinger

Peace of mind you cannot have
Unless one is an island:
You are building on a rock,
You are self
And not self important
And you will always be loved.
Forget the sand,
Build on rock... because
Peace of mind needs strength.
Your place in life will always be safe
For now, live your life to the needs
Of those who matter.
Roots in soil and a little water
Don't leaf around on beaches
Sand sculptures, shell and
Reclining shoreline shekel

Sorry that's all I can say
I'm drunk now
And I was drunk yesterday
Peace no, but priceless cocktails...
On that island
And the company of girls
And please... my last friend
Forgive me!
And tell me if you can
How can you win a battle?
With yourself
Is to out smart the other?
The rightful thing to do!

PUT

By T. Coppinger

Here...
Take my shirt and divide it out
Until you each have a piece
To cover yourselves
Take my sweat and keep it as a souvenir,
Mix it with a tonic
Here are my shoes, wear them to walk your hardest
mile.
Take my eyes so you can see the danger
Of the hanging fruit,
On the forbidden hanging tree:
Here have my right-hand so you can
Shake the hands of your enemies.
Here is the remaining light of my goodness,
Don't want you to be part of the night
Don't want to see you lost to the dark.
Take my depth so you can cross the deepest sea.
Take my breath
So you can walk under the waves
That try to knock you down.
Take my words and make them your own
Give them a home
Put them in a poem.

GORT GOLF CLUB AWARDS HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP



Pictured at the Presentation are: (L-R) John Murray, President 2011, Kieran Mulkerins, Captain 2011, Thomas O Quigley and Tom Lambert.

Long-time members of Gort Golf Club, Thomas O Quigley and Tom Lambert were awarded Honorary Life Membership in recognition of their contribution to the club. The formal presentation was made on Friday 10th June 2011 at Gort Golf Club.

Tom Lambert is a native of Gort and managed the family public house in Georges Street. He was a keen hurler and excelled at billiards and badminton. Tom served in the roles of Captain (1957, 1972) and President (1982) of the Gort Golf Club.

Thomas O Quigley is a native of Listowel, Co. Kerry and served as an officer in the Club while living in Glenbrack, Ballybawn and Castlequarter. He was a barber by trade and also served as President of Gort Rugby

Club. Thomas served in the roles of Captain (1958) and President (1986, 2002) of the Club Golf Club and were members of the team which won the Connacht Shield.

Past Honorary Life Members of Gort Golf Club include; Christy O'Connor Jnr, Frank Cooney, Kieran Fallon.



Tom Lambert



Thomas O Quigley

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