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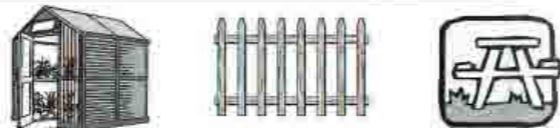
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Guairé 2003

Editorial

IT IS ALL OF NINE YEARS SINCE THE LAST ISSUE of *Guairé* appeared. Gort has changed dramatically in that time: new housing estates, shops, a new mart, another hotel, a new golf course, playing pitches, a fire station, a community school, an advanced factory and the refurbishing of the town hall, now a heritage centre; all are indications that the *Celtic Tiger* left its mark on our town.

The arrival of non-nationals to work in the town and surrounding areas has added a multi-cultural dimension to our way of life.

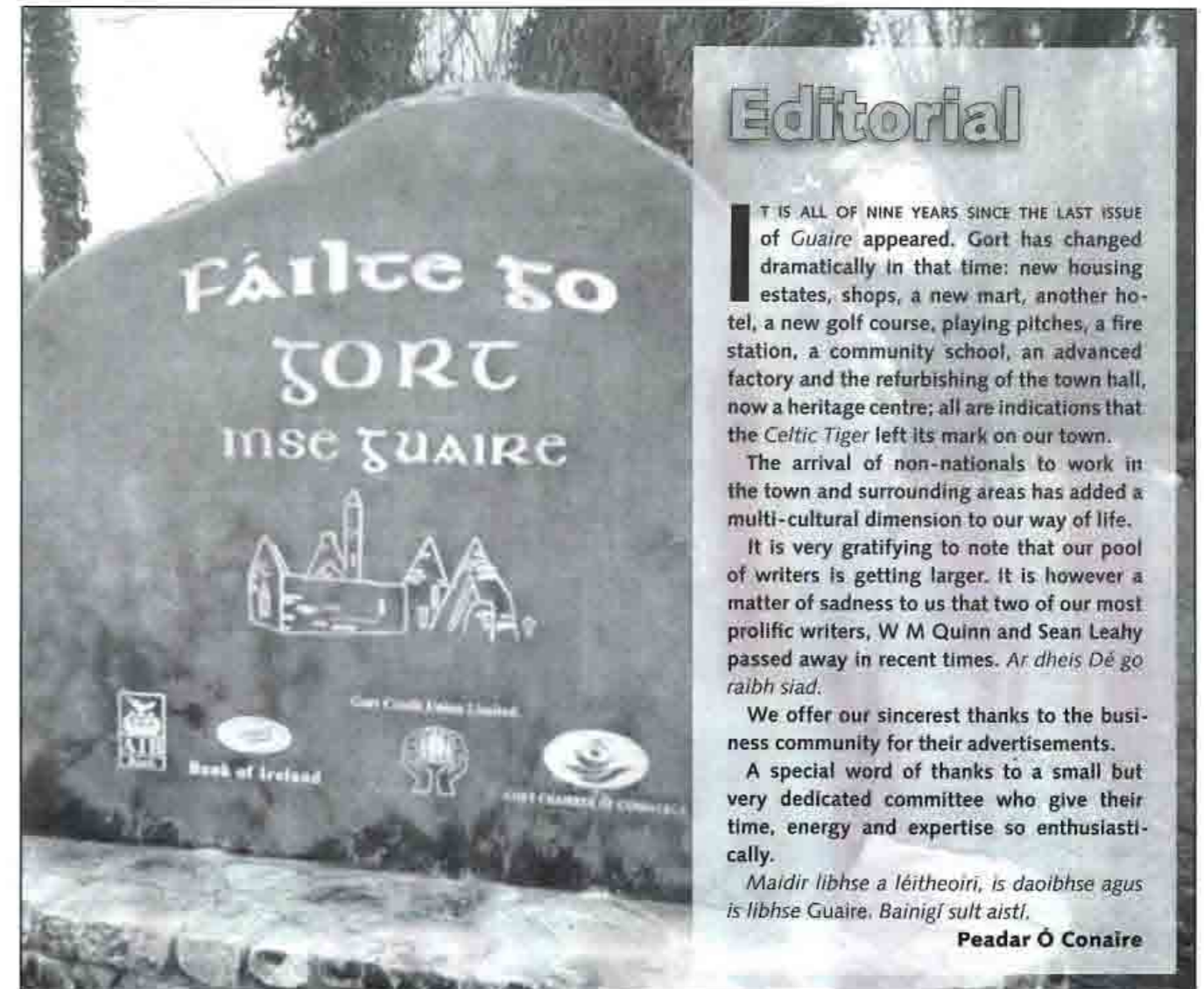
It is very gratifying to note that our pool of writers is getting larger. It is however a matter of sadness to us that two of our most prolific writers, W M Quinn and Sean Leahy passed away in recent times. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh siad.*

We offer our sincerest thanks to the business community for their advertisements.

A special word of thanks to a small but very dedicated committee who give their time, energy and expertise so enthusiastically.

Maidir libhse a léitheoirí, is daoibhse agus is libhse Guairé. Bainigf sult aisti.

Peadar Ó Conaire



Editor Peadar Ó Conaire
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Manhattan vs Gort!

by Peggy Casey



THEY SAY YOU SHOULD NEVER compare but then its hard not to when you look at Gort and Manhattan seven years ago, while still living and working in New York I bought a cottage in Gort. Why Gort? For no reason other than the house was there and the price was right.

Coming home three or four times a year, I had a wonderful time renovating and making it into my dream cottage. Initially I had the help of Tony who did major carpentry work, knocked partitions, pulled down ceilings and lined the roof and so on. When Tony's good work was done I had the help of Martin, a free spirit all-round plumber/renovator who could turn his hand to anything. I would pick him up from his caravan every morning with his bucket of tools and whatever other helper Martin might need as well as odd dog: they might be dog sitting that day. We Kango-hammered into cement blocks to open up and expose the original old open fireplace/inglenook complete with little stone seat, installed a super coal- and turf-burning stove which heats the water and all the radiators and adds a lovely warm welcome as you come in the open door.

After September 11th 2001 I decided to come back to Ireland and live permanently in my cottage. I had no idea how I would settle in or fit into Gort after living and working in Manhattan for over twenty years. I had an interesting multi-faceted job which I loved and enjoyed. I particularly enjoyed the benefits like travelling by private plane with my boss to her various cattle farms and houses during the summer, travelling up and down by helicopter to the office at the summer estate in upstate New York, as well as the driver and car (my boss hated anything that smelled of pretentiousness like a limo) at my disposal for little 'personal' shopping trips around the fabulous fifth avenue stores. Talk about living vicariously.

Since I bought my house I did get a great kick out of hitching a ride on the private plane a few times from New York and being dropped off at Shannon and being picked up again on its way back from Israel.

At one stage my boss wanted to see Gort and my little cottage. She and her husband got off at Shannon, saw my cottage, loved it and took off again for Israel and again picked me up on the way back. Quite hard to take ordinary flying after that.

Giving up and leaving Manhattan, which to me is the most exciting city in the world, was a jolt. Leaving friends of over twenty years was tough but leaving luxuries was no hardship.

How did Gort measure up or compare? There is no comparison, there just isn't. I believe people make life worthwhile. And I have discovered great new friends and wonderful neighbours. My neighbours are of the kind I've never known or experienced before: kind, nurturing and unbelievably caring. It's a part of life that I thought had vanished into a bygone age or something you'd read about.

I love our morning cuppas in front of a blazing fire, sharing the chat, lots of laughs and the *craic* and, particularly these last months, the good as well as the sad times. I am so happy my door is (literally) open most of the day, although sometimes I have to put a little footstool in place to keep out my neighbour's mallard ducks. I love them too and of course if I didn't feed them, they wouldn't come back. Cute ducks, those guys. They somehow belong.

And I got to know the men cycling their bikes to Gort and returning later in the day pushing their bikes with their messages and a lot of the times struggling against the Irish weather. One of those stalwart bikers has since passed away. I'll miss his respectful "God bless the work".

Where in New York do I get a shop that pulls up outside my door every week? I have yet to ask Liam for something that he doesn't have (Dean & Deluca, are you listening?). Where would I enjoy the outstanding talent of Kevin and all the superb actors in the drama group? I'll never hear 'vol-au-vents' again without seeing and smiling to myself at Kevin and Niall's comedic expressions in *The Lonesome West*, all as good if not better than any theatre I've seen on Broadway.

I think I've come a long way since I came to Gort seven years ago and have become less independent. The garden and surrounds was a huge area to be tackled. There were a lot of overgrown out-of-control bushes—you could hardly see the house from the road, it was all so overgrown. One morning very early I was out on the road armed with a breadknife, determined to make inroads, breadknifing my way through one of the trunks. A neighbour of mine was passing on his tractor, stopped and said, "Good morning and do you need help?" He had the gentle good grace not to comment on my weapon of choice. Out of that little encounter, I got help by way of a tractor or whatever to uproot and clear all the old dead shrubbery and my neighbour's son was a fantastic help to me and built my lovely stone wall.

Cooile Park and its surrounds is magical, has its own serene natural habitat and there are so many wonderful historic places where time seems to stand still. There is a very good quality of life here—low key, laid back.

The weather? Well, like all of us, I was weaned on wet weather, so take any good day as a bonus. I always referred to New York as 'my town'. Now I can also say Gort is 'my town'.

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From Aran rocks to Burren stones

by Peadar Ó Conaire

THE STORY OF EARLY CHRISTIAN Ireland is a story of tension and conflict. We know from St Patrick's account of his work and travels that his life was more at risk from hostile people than from the many wild animals that roamed the densely forested country at that time. His diplomacy was often called on to save his life and the lives of his disciples.

Peaceful coexistence between paganism and Christianity was hard to achieve and compromise became the order of the day. Some pagan chieftains reluctantly accepted Christianity and only a 'watered down' version was passed on to them, thus ancient pagan traditions, feast days and places of worship were 'christened' but effectively not changed. The early teachers of the Christian faith had to be pragmatic and take a long term view.

Nowhere in Ireland is the assimilation of the two traditions more obvious than in the Aran Islands. In each of the three islands are found ancient forts which are traditionally attributed to the Firbolgs. History furnishes us with no account of the final extinction of these bold warriors. The only certainty is that St Enda changed these pagan isles into islands of Christian believers. Side by side with the pagan ruins of sea kings are the churches and cells of himself and his followers.

Enda, the patron saint of Aran, founded his first monastery, probably at the beginning of the sixth century at Killeany in Inishmore. The name Cill Éinne means literally the church of Enda. The fame of Enda's monastery spread throughout Ireland and beyond. It attracted such illustrious religious men as St Brendan the navigator, St Kieran, St Columcille, St Finnian, St Kevin, St

Jarlath and St Colman Mac Duagh. No wonder Aran was widely known as Ara na Naomh (Áran of the Saints).

St Colman obviously stayed on the island for some considerable time as he built two churches there, *Teampall Mór Mhic Duagh* and *Teampall Beag Mhic Duagh*. Both are close to each other and form part of a cluster of churches at Kilmurvey, commonly known as the Seven Churches.

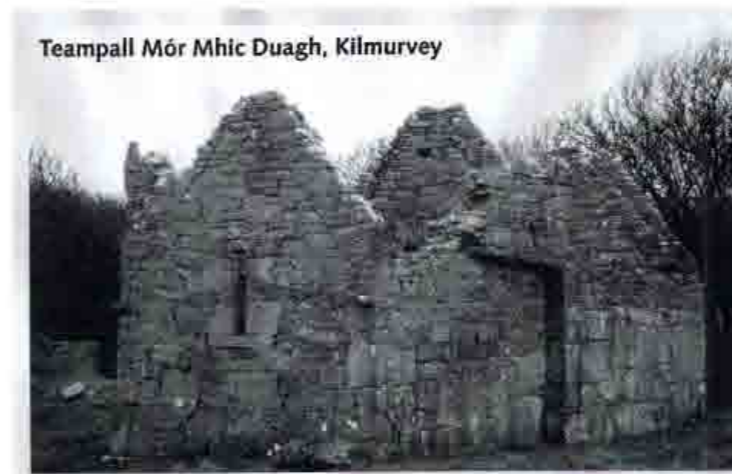
The cluster of churches at Kilmurvey was situated within an ancient fort, the *Dun of Muirbheach Mil* and was utilised by Colman and his followers as a monastic enclosure, within which

pins. It is suggested by some archaeologists and historians that these pins did not belong to Danish invaders but to ancient warriors who used them to fasten their mantels. The monks certainly never used such articles. It would seem therefore that St Colman's monks simply took possession of the deserted ancient stronghold with its cells and then built their churches within its walls.

Teampall Mór Mhic Duagh is close to Kilmurvey House, once the home of the O'Flahertys and their successors the Johnstons. The O'Flahertys were probably a branch of the O'Flahertys of Aughanure near Oughterard. They

were not known for their benevolence ('from the fury of the O'Flahertys may the good Lord deliver us' was the catch cry among their subjects) and one James O'Flaherty, who died circa 1881, drew the ire of the local people due to his intemperate ways. He is roundly condemned in Máirtín Ó Direáin's poem, *Ó Mórna*.

Behind Kilmurvey house is Tobar Mac



Teampall Mór Mhic Duagh, Kilmurvey

Duagh, a holy well that used to be visited on the 29th October, the feast day of St Colman.

Colman departed from Aranmore in the closing years of the sixth century. It is safe to assume that his monastic settlement on the island was well established at that stage and was left in the trusted custody of his faithful followers. The monastery flourished for at least 700 years; carbon dating of mortar from the chancel places it in the thirteenth century. St Colman left the stones of Aran for the stones of the Burren where he lived as a hermit for some time before he founded the great monastery of Kilmacduagh about the year AD 620.

Gort memories

by Mary Brennan-O'Donovan

WHEN MY MOTHER BECAME the local librarian in the mid-fifties I was given the responsibility of looking after my younger brother and sister in her absence. In order to fill the hours between 3:00 pm and 5:30 pm—these were pre-television days—we went for walks. Excepting the winter months and inclement weather we were sure to be found on one of the following roads: Cloughnacava, Cannahown, Fairy Hill, Bolands Lane, Gallaghers Lane or the Punch Bowl on the way to or from the river. Where we went depended on the time of year, the weather, the time at our disposal and whether we were joined by other friends or not.

The winter months restricted our walking to the town. The station was always an interesting place to visit. There

was always a buzz of activity and an air of expectancy while people and walkers awaited the arrival of the twenty-to-five train. Otherwise, apart from the pre-Christmas season when decorated windows caught and held our attention, the possibilities of adding variety or interest to our walks was limited. We would call to the church to say a prayer and warm cold hands near lighted candles. If the weather was reasonable we would continue down Bolands Lane (sometimes calling into Mick Ward) coming out on Crowe Street and up through the town. If not Bolands Lane then it would probably be around Garrabeg and back by Church Street and the Church Walk.

The lengthening days and better weather of spring enticed us into the countryside and that is where we spent our evenings throughout the summer

and into autumn. St Patricks day would usually be the signal to head up Fairy Hill in search of shamrock. This hill was well-named for it was not difficult to imagine fairies inhabiting this place. Another world seemed to mingle with ours on this hill. An undisturbed area with a fairy fort, wild flowers and hawthorn trees it seemed to suggest the presence of non-human beings. Crossing a few fields we would come out on the Cloughnacava road and, turning either right or left, make our way back. The twenty-to-five train told us it was time to go home. Before crossing the tracks we would go into the nun's field to drink the water from the well. How cool and refreshing it was. Then ravenous with hunger we hurried home for supper.

The walk around Cloughnacava was always popular. It wasn't a long walk,

which left us time to play. The hilly and winding road with a scattering of houses provided many opportunities for an afternoon of fun and adventure. Coming off the Ennis Road we walked up the hill. On reaching the top of the hill small children were taken out of go-cars and plonked on the grass margin while we older children climbed into the go-cars and rode down the hill. Resuming our walk we continued on past a few houses. We were always watchful passing Mulcairs as their dogs seemed fierce and ran out on the road as we passed. Turning left at Donnelan's house the road took us to the Town Park. This would be our next stop. Perhaps we found the size of the park intimidating but we did not go far into the field, preferring to play at the gate. From this point there is a good view across the fields towards the town. The grassy margins and ditches were a mass of wild flowers and in late summer the blackberry bushes were laden with berries. These we picked as we walked along. As we approached the Loughrea road there is a small stream where we stopped and bathed tired feet. Once a younger brother taking a step to many backwards whilst looking up at an aeroplane fell into the water, causing great consternation. Apart from being thoroughly wet he suffered no ill effects. Coming out onto the Loughrea road we turned left and headed back into town.

The walk around Cannahown was long so there fewer stops were made and there was less time for play. We walked out the Ennis Road for a mile before turning right and up Cannahown. We would stop at the railway bridge, leaning over it hoping to see a train coming down the tracks. If we were unencumbered by prams or go-cars we

would cross a nearby field and go on the tracks. This made the walk more enjoyable as it was more fun to jump from sleeper to sleeper than walk on the road. We walked back towards town until we reached the lane by which we came to the river and went home that way. We were not unduly frightened by approaching trains as we heard or saw them long before they reached us which gave us time to take refuge in the grass margin. If we didn't go into the tracks we came out on the Tubber Road, turned right back to town passing the GAA field on the way.

Some walks were beyond our capabilities because of their length. One such walk would take you out the Loughrea road turning left at Fahy's Cross through Ballyaneen before joining the Galway Road at Kiltartan, then left back to town passing the entrance to Coole Park. An even longer walk would be to Thoor Ballylee by the Loughrea Road and coming back by the Galway Road. We often did this trip on bicycles, stopping off at a then derelict tower. In September we would venture up the Punch Bowl in search of hazel nuts. The vast excavation (after which it was named) beside the river filled us with awe. We loved to run down the sides of the bowl into its base and up the other side. This is a tranquil place with a timeless quality that seemed to stretch back to the ice-age. Hazel nuts grew in abundance here and we returned home with scratched legs from climbing trees



Mary Brennan as a young girl with baby Rita Kelly

and bulging pockets. This walk continues for some miles rejoining the main road at Lough Cutra. We would not attempt this however returning home the way we came. The walk around Gallagher's Lane was rarely attempted. This walk can be recommended for its view of the Burren landscape. Turn left at the end of Crowe Street, Gallagher's Lane brings you out on the road which takes you back into town.

I have recalled walks which I enjoyed as a child. Coole Park (off the Galway Road) was not among them. This is not only a walkers' paradise but is also a haven of peace and tranquility. I hope the reader of this piece will be encouraged to abandon the armchair in front of the television and experience the joy of walking in the beautiful countryside which surrounds the town of Gort.



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Gort Community School —a reflection

by Sr Maura Crowe

"NO BOTHER TO YOU", SAID Gerry O'Donoghue as I made my way up George's Street on September 4th 1995. It was to be my first day at Gort Community School.

Closing St Joseph's had been a sad experience.

"I'm not so sure about that, Gerry", I replied. Gerry's children were full of bounce and vitality as they prepared for their first day back at the Convent Primary School after the long summer holidays. Their presence reminded me that our new community school venture would benefit not only the present cohort of students but also the students of generations to come.

Gerry's 'no bother to you' became my thought for that historic September day in 1995. Our conversation echoed the sentiments of a great philosopher, Patangeli, who lived circa BC 300.

*"When you are inspired by some great purpose,
Some extraordinary project,
All of your thoughts break their bonds,
Your mind transcends limitations,
Your consciousness expands in every direction,
And you find yourself in a new and great and wonderful world."*

"No bother to you", I thought to myself as I quickened my step, made my way past a silent St Colman's Vocational School, crossed the newly-tarmac-adamed basketball courts, climbed the steps and before entering the impressive building turned around to take in the view. Lights were extinguished in Our Lady's College. My eyes met the high stonewalls that had once surrounded the workhouse hospital where the Sisters of Mercy had served from 1874-1922. The sisters had been part of many changes

since their coming to Gort in 1857. They had been generously supported in their efforts to provide education for girls by the people of Gort, south Galway and north Clare long before the celtic tiger's



Monument erected recently to commemorate deceased staff members and students

roar (or purr) had been heard of.

Now, as we approached the twenty-first century, it was felt that pooling resources, skills and expertise was the best way forward in providing education for the future...*ni neart go cur le chéile*. With this end in view an agreement had been reached on Friday, March 10th 1989, between the representatives of the VEC, the diocesan college and the sisters of mercy that "a community school with full comprehensibility be established in Gort as from August 1st 1989" Today,

September 4th 1995, this agreement had come to fulfilment.

So I left the steps and entered the beautiful state-of-the-art building. I got a cheerful greeting from the secretarial staff, complimented the caretakers and the cleaning staff on the order and organisation that was so much in evidence and, finally, made it to the staff room.

The atmosphere there was buoyant. There was an air of 'chivalry' in the room, that chivalry which the late playwright, John B. Keane, described as "a readiness to die for a cherished principle" and "that noble gesture which leaves self behind and puts others first". There was, of course, a fear of the unknown too.

Our first meeting as a community school staff had taken place in St Josephs Secondary School in May 1995 when it was my privilege to introduce our new leadership team, Mr Denis Corry, principal and Mr Stan Mac Eoin, deputy principal. On that day we were also made aware of the key roles to be played by year heads and tutors, the chaplain, career guidance and counselling personnel and all members of staff.

Today, September 4th, we would have a real staff meeting in room twenty-two. We discussed, debated and dialogued on our

deepest concerns and hopes for Gort Community School. Decisions were taken and committed to. It was all very exciting. Further words from our friend Patangeli came flooding into my mind: *"When you are inspired by some great purpose,
Dormant faculties come alive,
And you discover yourself to be,
A greater person by far, than you ever,
Thought yourself to be."*

At approximately 1:00 pm we took a short break and enjoyed delicious veg-

etable soup and freshly-filled rolls from our canteen, which would prove so important for students in the days ahead.

In the ensuing weeks our mission statement, school aims and objectives, code of good behaviour, pastoral care policy and our school crest were all completed and agreed on.

Our principal and deputy principal were very enthusiastic about the possibilities that were ours as we launched into this new educational venture. They encouraged us to take ownership of our mission statement, affirmed us and promised us every support as they strove to build on goodwill and create a climate of optimism, enthusiasm, harmony and high morale.

"Whatever you can do or dream to do, begin it! Boldness has genius, magic and power in it. Begin it now!" (Goethe)

The school would aim to provide a comprehensive system of post-primary and continuing education open to all the community, combining instruction in academic, artistic and practical subjects.

Gort Community School would recognize the importance of partnership between the school and the general community in fulfilling its role. Indeed the board of management, principal and staff, parents' council and students' council have been very active and effective in furthering the aims of the school since its inception.

Each student is seen as an individual whose talents should be realised to the full. The school strives to help students achieve excellence in accordance with their skills and talents by providing an environment that is conducive to learning, supervised study after school, a wide range of subjects at junior certificate level and the introduction of transitional year programmes such as LCVP and LCA at leaving certificate cycle in order to maximise student opportunity.

Timetabling is expertly handled even though it gets more intricate each year as the school tries to accommodate the needs of the students while faced with many constraints outside its control.

The nuts and bolts of the school day are the same for all schools. The attitudes, values and spirit of the whole

school community derive from the chosen core beliefs of the school. Our mission statement declares our school to be "a Christian community which endeavours to be a happy and caring place striving to develop the academic, aesthetic, spiritual, physical and moral potential of each student"

In the twenty-first century, as in all centuries, human beings have basic hopes, dreams and aspirations which find their ultimate fulfilment in God. Our school is devoted to excellence in every way and is truly committed to the good of the person, the common good, respect for others, the value of work and the care of the poor and the underprivi-



Gort Community School entrance

leged. It is hoped that the graduate of Gort Community School will be a person of integrity, committed to his/her faith, and imbued with the values of upright living, which lead to happiness and fulfilment in life.

Our school crest incorporates three symbols: the round tower, the cross and the cog resting on the book, which represent the three schools that made up Gort Community School and the general historical, educational and religious heritage of our catchment area. In 2002 a memorial was unveiled in memory of all those who have died since the school opened and all those who have ever studied or served in any of the three former schools.

Gort Community School has been in operation for eight years. Our building

has been extended and now includes an up-to-date library and first-class computer facilities. Sports pitches have been developed and are constantly in use. A hard-working sports co-ordinator has put in place a weekly lotto to help defray the expenses for our new dressing rooms. Adult education is well established, study is pursued with energy and determination by a majority of our students, punctuated by lighter moments spent in concert work, tours abroad, sports, debates, speech and drama and so on.

The struggle goes on to strike the correct balance between extra-curricular activities and academic studies. We try

to focus clearly and be flexible. If something is not working we aim to change it or correct it.

There is a constant effort made to be faithful to the school's philosophy as expressed in the mission statement and school policy documents. We are always aware of the gap between our vision and our current reality. This is healthy because it is the realisation that this gap is there that gives us energy and creativity and a passion for possibility.

*"If I could wish for something,
I would wish for neither wealth nor power,
But for the passion for possibility,
I would wish only for an eye which eternally young, eternally burns with
The passion for possibility."* (Kierkegaard)



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Gort Golf Club 1993-2003

by Niall Finnegan

THE LAST TEN YEARS AT GORT GOLF Club have been the most exciting in its history. The club, founded in 1924, has finally found its permanent home, having previously followed the 'small ball' at Rockfield and Loughtyshaugnessy, the club took the bold step of investing in 127 acres at Castlequarter.

The members then employed the internationally-recognised course designer and Ryder cup hero Christy O'Connor, junior, to design a golf course. The result, opened in 1996, is testament to Christy's unique eye for turning the land into one of the most talked-about designs in the country, while at the same time mingling the holes into the Burren landscape and natural beauty of the area.

There is simply no other course like it. Des Smyth, another Ryder cup star, compared the course on opening day to Sun City in South Africa. However, of the thousands of visitors who have played at Gort Golf Club, most have said this is being kind to the latter.

The male membership is now the second biggest in Connacht and the ladies' club is making equally impressive strides.

It is to the great credit of the ladies' club that they brought the first green pennant (all-Ireland title) to Gort in 2000, having beaten Clontarf in a thrilling final of the Ulster Bank four-ball competition, a day never to be forgotten.

The men contested their first all-Ireland final in the Pierce Purcell competition of 2001. They were, however, narrowly beaten by Kanturk, having put up a great display. Indeed, since moving to Castlequarter, the success rate of the club has improved dramatically, winning the Cecil Ewing shield in 1999 and 2002, the Connacht shield in 2001, the Jack O'Sullivan trophy in 1997 and the Connacht title in Pierce Purcell in 2000.

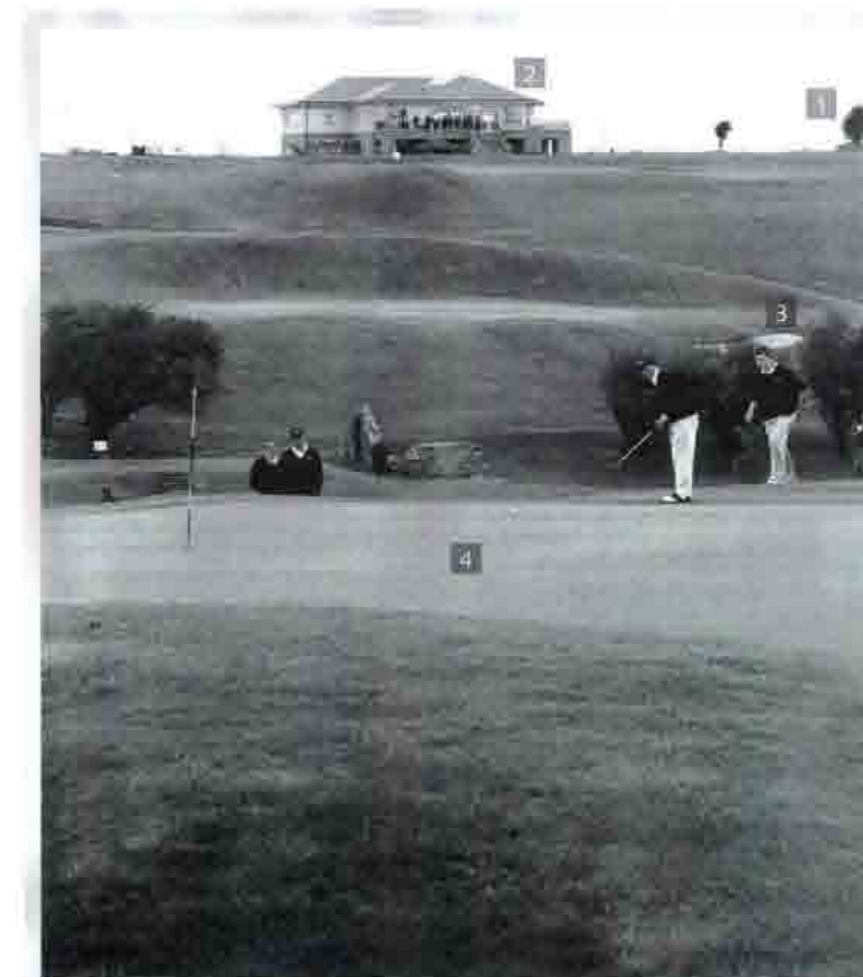
The club has put a lot of effort into junior golf in the last few years and

hopes this will improve the standard of senior golf in the club in the near future.

Gort Golf Club has now over 1,200 members, making it by far the largest sporting organisation and one of the largest business concerns in south Galway. There is a possibility that membership may become limited in the next few years. However, the club is still actively looking for members, especially from the local area, so now is the time to apply for membership.



1 site of eighteenth green
2 site of clubhouse
3 site of ninth green
4 site of first green



Lady Gregory 1852-1932

by Sheila O'Donnellan

"AT THE MIDNIGHT HOUR between the fourteenth and fifteenth of March 1852 the planet Jupiter, so astrologers say, being in mid-heaven, a little girl was born at Roxborough, that is in Connaught." This little girl was Augusta Persse, the twelfth child of the very large Persse family, protestant land-owners of Roxborough House in County Galway. Roxborough House, where they lived, was the usual big house, a white-gabled eighteenth century building set in the green fields and woodlands of rural Ireland. Roxborough estate was self supporting and self-sufficient. The lifestyle of the landed gentry of this period was one of hunting, shooting, fishing, travelling abroad, house parties—a continuous round of socialising and entertaining.

One of the influences that led Augusta away from the accepted social life of the 'big house' was her proud old nurse, Mary Sheridan. She would often tell the children tales and legends of her Ireland, the hidden Ireland, that the children of the 'big house' knew nothing at all about; her interest was aroused and Augusta would often spend her pennies on nationalist leaflets on her visits to nearby Loughrea town.

Augusta grew to be a quiet, reserved and shy young woman, mainly because of her mother's attitude to her, for she always made her uncomfortably aware that Augusta, unlike her sisters, was plain and unattractive.

Augusta married her Galway neighbour, Sir William Gregory of Coole Park, a widower, an influential member of the British colonial service and a retired governor of Ceylon, a day that she remembered as one of the happiest days of her life, though there was a great difference in their ages, for William was sixty-three years old and Augusta only twenty-eight.

They honeymooned abroad and then back to Coole, where they received a warm welcome from their neighbours and friends. Now began a new and exciting life for Augusta, the shy young woman, who had become the mistress of Coole Park in County Galway and the Gregory's London home at Hyde Park Corner. After her husband's death in eighteen-ninety-two, the pattern of her life changed greatly for, apart from the loneliness and sadness of widowhood, financially she was left with only a modest income. All her life she worked



Ann Gregory (de Winton) with Michael Yeats in Coole

and saved to preserve Coole Park for her only child, Robert. Through her friendship with William Butler Yeats and Edward Martyn, she became involved in the Irish literary revival.

Lady Gregory was one of the leading lights in the Irish cultural and literary revival during the turbulent years of the emerging Irish state. She played a central role in the development of a National Theatre, being co-founder with W B Yeats and Edward Martyn of the Irish Literary Theatre Society, which led to the establishment of the Abbey Theatre in 1904. Through her hospitality at Coole Park and encouragement on such famous authors as W B Yeats, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, John Millington Synge, George Moore and Edward Martyn. The house at Coole

is long gone but in the garden their initials that they carved on the copper beech 'autograph tree,' bear witness to visits by her many artists and literary friends. Lady Gregory was a dramatist, writer, folklorist, poet, co-founder of the Kiltartan branch of the Gaelic League with Father Fahy and Douglas Hyde, a member of the Irish Agricultural Co-operative movement and she campaigned for the restoration to Ireland of Sir Hugh Lane's valuable art collection.

Mancini's portrait of Augusta Gregory, "greatest since Rembrandt," according to John Synge, "a great ebullient portrait certainly but where is the brush that could show anything of all that pride and that humility? And I am in despair that time may bring approved patterns of women or of men but not that self-same excellence again."

Robert, Augusta's only son, was educated in England and studied art in London. Here he met and fell in love with a fellow student, Margaret Graham Parry, a Welsh girl, very clever and very pretty. Even though Lady Gregory was delighted when Robert became engaged, she knew that life for her would change and there was always an uneasy relationship between Margaret and herself. Margaret and Robert were married in London in 1907 and their friend, Augustus John, the artist, was best man. They both had great potential as artists, but when the first world war broke out in 1914 Robert, now the father of three children, with a full and interesting life, became very restless and anxious to join the forces, which he did in 1915, first the Connaght Rangers and then the Royal Flying Corps. His mother worried about him all the time and, in 1918, the dreaded telegram arrived, Robert had been killed in action while flying with the Royal Air corps over Italy.

Augusta's son, Robert and his wife, Margaret, had three children, Richard, Anne and Catherine. They were reared mainly by their grandmother in Coole,

as Robert and Margaret had lived most of their married time in London and Paris.

One of her granddaughters, Anne, has written a lovely account of the happy days spend in Coole with their grandmother, a wonderful grandmother and *Me and Nu*, her story, shows us her grandmother's kindness, gentleness, understanding and humanity. There are many interesting tales of the famous people who came to visit.

W B Yeats, who always seemed to be in deep thought and never spoke very much during the meals but kept handing up his cup to be re-filled by their grandmother without a 'please' or a 'thank you', much to the annoyance of the granddaughters, who were reprimanded very severely if they dared forget their manners.

But GBS was Catherine's and Anne's favourite playmate. He used to play 'hunt the thimble' with them. He was very good at the game and always won—which puzzled them completely—so they decided to watch him through their fingers. To their horror they discovered he was cheating, this was unthinkable: a grown up cheating, so dishonest! How could they play with him again? They discussed their problem with their Grandmother.

She told them GBS wasn't cheating. He thought they'd seen him looking and that it was a joke and that he was making the game more amusing.

Later, their Grandmother persuaded them to forgive him and they sent him a gift of his favourite apples from the garden. GBS wrote a poem *Two Ladies of Galway* on the back of five postcards, thanking them.

Anne ends her story saying: "Grandma never pooh-poohed any of our stories like other grown-ups did and sometimes we felt that though she knew they were true. She realised that they may not have been absolutely accurate. And I suppose, looking back, that this was a large part of the joy of living at Coole



Opening night, autumn gathering 1995. Catherine and Ann, granddaughters of Lady Gregory, cut the brack. Also in the picture from left are Lelia Doolan, Mary McDonagh, Gary Hynes, Sheila O'Donnellan, Mona O'Donnell and Lois Tobin

Park with Grandma. Knowing that whatever we said or did, however silly other people thought we were, Grandma not only understood everything we meant to do or say, she also very often made us feel even cleverer than we had thought we were ourselves."

In 1928, when Lady Gregory was no longer able to maintain Coole because of financial problems, it was sold to the Irish state. She was given the right to live out the rest of her life there and she was happy in the belief that the Irish Government would maintain the estate for the benefit of the people of Ireland.

Lady Gregory died in 1932. She is buried in the new cemetery in Galway beside her sister, Arabella Waitman.

Sad to say that a few years after Lady Gregory's death, Coole House was sold, demolished and its stones and rubble used for other buildings.

*Here, traveller, scholar, poet, take your stand,
When all those rooms and passages are gone,
When nettles wave upon a shapeless mound,
And saplings root among the broken stones,
And dedicate, eyes bent upon the ground,
Back turned upon the brightness of the sun,
And all the sensuality of the shade,
A moment's memory to that laurelled head.*

South Galway has an unique history and environment. The important literary

homes of W B Yeats' Thoor Ballylee, Edward Martyn's Tulira Castle and Lady Gregory's Coole House are all close to one another and, within that triangle, is the important archival centre of the Kiltartan/Gregory Museum. Lady Gregory anticipated the loss of Coole saying, "I have lived there and loved it these forty years and, through the guests who have stayed there, it counts for much in the awakening of the spiritual and intellectual side of our country. If there is trouble

now and it is dismantled and left to ruin, that will be the whole country's loss".

The objective of the autumn gatherings, which have been organised annually since 1995, is to recognise the pivotal role of Lady Gregory at the centre of the Irish literary revival and to highlight the unique contribution of this Galway woman to the life of twentieth century Ireland.

Our original aim remains intact, to highlight the life and work of Lady Gregory and her associates, to encourage appreciation of her enormous contribution to arts and culture in Ireland, and to examine the continuing influence in today's society of her ideas and her initiatives.

Now in the twenty-first century the time is ripe to build on these developments by adding a multi-purpose performance space to the facilities at Coole Park.

The autumn gathering believe that the suggested development would enhance the important and sensitive work that Duchas has already done in establishing Coole Park as a focal point in the Galway and Clare region.

During Lady Gregory's time, Coole, with its history and tradition became a haven of rest and tranquillity. Here in this 'workshop of genius', many writers and artists found inspiration and encouragement. Today there is a new opportunity to recreate and revitalise Coole Park as a vibrant, pulsating and cultural centre of international importance.

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ICA through the years

by Eileen Forde

THE IRISH COUNTRYWOMEN'S Association is an organisation which was started in 1910. Membership in on the increase all the time. There are very few organisations that can say they are in existence for nearly a hundred years and still going. The ICA is open to all ladies from eighteen years upwards.

Many years ago some Gort ladies met regularly to discuss new crafts, baking and needlework. From there they decided to establish an ICA guild in Gort. The year was 1948 and Gort became the second guild to be established in Galway.

They met once a month in various houses. Sometime later they purchased a house in Boland's Lane and set it up as their meeting place. As the guild grew

in membership they decided to buy the adjoining house and so it became the ICA hall, which is still their meeting place. In the early years many fund raising events took place there. Whist drives were a regular occurrence and dances to the strains of the Ballyhugh Blues were enjoyed there. Most of all it was and still is a place to go to learn crafts both traditional and modern.

Down through the years members have joined and some have moved on but each one learned new skills and shared the skills they had.

The ICA both national and regional have members in training in the ICA Reach programme at An Grianán. It offers opportunities for women to develop new skills. It is believed that modules in leadership, personal development,

health and safety will be included in the Reach programme.

The Gort guild has many classes on-going at all times. New members are always welcome. If you have an interest in any craft please ask any member about it.

The Gort ICA guild have raised funds for various charities, including Romanian orphanages and cancer research.

Our hall needs to be renovated. On consultation with the heritage town committee, we will maintain the facade and work with the organisation on the renovation. Little did those ladies who started the Gort guild in 1948 think that it would still be going strong fifty-five years down the line.

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Shown above is Patrick McGann, Newtown, Gort, student of the year (agri-business) Agricultural College, Mountbellew, 2001; gmit national certificate in business studies (agri-business), student of the year 2002. Congrats Patrick!



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Gort and district Lions Club

by Paddy O'Grady

FOR A CLUB WHICH WAS FOUNDED just over ten years ago, the achievements of Gort and District Lions Club are impressive and the club members are justifiably proud of them. The club has had a positive impact on the community and has played its part too in the activities of Lions Clubs International.

With its motto *we serve*, what began as the idea of one man, Melvin Jones, has grown to over 45,000 clubs in 185 countries with almost one-and-a-half million members. It is the world's largest and most active service club organisation. When the Gort and District Club was formed in May 1992, the members were enthusiastic and this has continued since then with new members which has enabled the club to sustain growth.

With almost eleven years now gone by since the charter night in Glynn's Hotel on May 1st 1992, it may be worth recalling some of the main achievements and events: €10,160 raised for Galway Hospice; cow sent to Uganda

through Bothar; €80,000 raised for Gort Heritage Centre project (race day); victims of the 1995 flooding given assistance through distribution of €16,500 and six dehumidifiers €8,900 presented to Sr Imelda Walsh (Galway) for a Romanian orphanage; €5,100 raised in the local golf club for the refurbishment of the home of an accident victim; three beds and wheelchair for invalids donated to the local district nurse; €1,500 donated to Gort heritage committee; €1,500 to Gort community school towards sports facilities; €3,000 raised to date in a guide dog for the blind training project; €650 each donated to Br Colman Clabby and Br Stephen Allen for their work on the missions; charity fund to benefit from €1,000 raised in 100 mile cycle by John Nilan and €500 donated annually to an eye camp in India.

Many of the non-fund-raising activities are undertaken on an annual and more frequent basis and these would include: Mosney/Trabolgan holidays for

five people each year; mock interviews for Gort community school students; 'no name club' hosts and hostesses; visits to patients in the retirement homes in Gort, Ardrahan and Cloughballymore; a table quiz organised for teams from fourteen local primary schools; open meetings on drug awareness; party from Belarus entertained; participation in Lions Club youth awards; peace poster projects; seven-a-side football and hurling tournaments for the local primary schools; diabetes screening; collection of used spectacles for sight—300 pairs sent to Africa to date—banquet in Dunguaire Castle, fund-raiser and Christmas dinner party, occasional outings and membership recruitment.

Mr Frank Downes, Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind, receiving a cheque for €2,300 raised by Gort and District Lions Club. Left to right: Tony Hannon, president, Gort and District Lions Club, Mr Frank Downes and Sadie McInerney, Gort and District Lions Club.



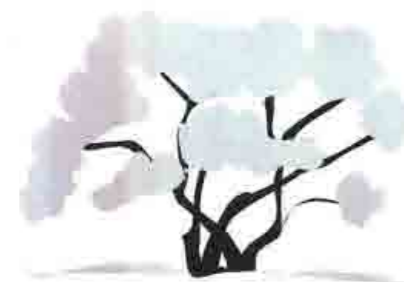
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What is there for young people in Gort?

by anonymous male Gortonian

WHAT IS THERE FOR YOUNG people in Gort? Not a lot, so in fairness this article will be short. Maybe I'm pessimistic but it seems to me there is just about enough to get by on.

They say that the best things in life are free. Well then, you've been lied to. Like the wise people of Abba (Sweden's greatest export until Henrik Larsson) once said "Money, money, money...it's so funny...in a rich man's world". They were right. Unfortunately everything costs money these days so jobs are important for making a few bob. Let's face it, parents take to handing out

money like a duck takes to quick drying cement.

So what to do with your hard earned pay (or the money you managed to extort from your parents)? Well you could always rent out a video, stay at home and stuff your face or go out to a no name disco if one is on. Discos are often good craic despite their connection with '70s dance music, flares and very dodgy afros. You could always back a horse and cross your fingers or have a game of soccer or basketball up at the community centre. If you really want to blow your money fast you could always go to Galway on a shopping spree.

Gort isn't a bad place, it is home after all. I haven't even scratched the surface here so look for yourself and you might find other, better stuff. I hate sounding like one of those tourist brochures promoting places so I'll end this before it gets ugly.



Teenage social life in Gort

by Sarah Nestor

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF TEENAGERS IN Gort has improved over the last number of years. After countless hours of monotonous schoolwork week in, week out, the students of Gort community school and the surrounding area enjoy a well-deserved break during night events organised by the Gort no name club.

The club consists of hosts and hostesses, the majority of whom are students at Gort community school who are supervised by adults. The discos are always well-attended and are made quite interesting through a variety of season themes. The club is strongly anti-alcohol, a relief for parents and guardians.

Youth club discos are also quite popular, especially for younger teenagers, usually between twelve and fifteen years. These events also provide a medium for relaxation and enjoyment for students.



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Gort Active Retirement Association

by Rena Regan

THE ACTIVE RETIREMENT MOVEMENT IS for active men and women who are retired and over fifty-five years who wish to engage in educational, cultural, sporting and social activities of their own choice and so make retirement a meaningful and enjoyable phase of life.

Active in our title means that a member should be reasonably fit and mobile physically and not dependent on others. Our association encourages members to do things rather than have things done for them.

The movement is entirely voluntary. It is based on a philosophy of self-help which is jealously guarded. Members organise things themselves for themselves. We draw first on the intellectual or manual skills and talents of our own members.

We held our first meeting on Wednesday 17th January, 2001 and continue to meet on Wednesdays fortnightly at the Social Services Centre in Queen Street. Membership presently

stands at twenty-six, covering Kinvara, Ardahan, Labane and Gort.

Members are drawn from all walks of society and each brings his/her own unique skill and talent. Now, two years on, we are well and truly established. New members with fresh ideas are always welcome.

We have been successful in obtaining various grants for our special projects, in total we have received funding to the tune of €3,134 which has enabled us to purchase bowling equipment, complete a computer training course and participate in yoga classes.

We have attended lots of shows and concerts and art galleries, made some nice trips to Connemara and Clare, Clonmacnoise and Templemore garda siochána training school.

We completed an art project in conjunction with the Galway Art Centre, the theme being 'my locality/environment', we told our story by way of drawing, sketching, painting, writing and photographs. Our work went on exhibition at

the Galway Art Centre last March and in Clifden Library last August. It will be exhibited in the Gort library this year.

In October 2002, the west celebrated a festival week of active retirement and each group participated. The Gort members held an evening of poetry, music, song and dance together with a display of our artwork and a short sketch titled *A Hospital Scene*, concluding with tea and sandwiches. Members from Ballinasloe, Galway and Loughrea attended. The show was held in the social services centre.

In December 2002 we practised our Christmas carols and entertained the residents of the nursing homes in Gort and Labane and brought gifts of sweets.

We have been invited by Renmore Active Retirement to entertain them with our music and song so we are busy rehearsing at the moment so you can see we are busy. A lot done but very much more to do and we are having fun.

Gort social services

by Sr John

GORT SOCIAL SERVICES IS a voluntary organisation which was established in 1960s. Its purpose is to respond to local needs. It does this through the various services it provides such as meals-on-wheels, laundry, fuel, food hampers and assistance-in-kind. It organises an annual outing and party for senior citizens as well as an annual

outing for the patients from St Brigid's Hospital in Ballinasloe.

The Social Services Centre in Queen Street, Gort was opened in 1982 and this has greatly facilitated the work of the organisation.

Although the health board provides grant aid, the continuation of the services is very dependent on local funding which has been obtained over the

years from the knitting club, thrift shop, church gate collections and the many generous donations of local people. There are and have been many members who have given of their time and talents to the work of this organisation over the years. The eight parishes of south Galway united in the late 1970s and the organisation is officially called Gort and South Galway Social Services Council.

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"Like my shades?"
—an old Filipino woman

Asian memories— the Philippines

by Irial P Conroy

MANILA IS NOT THE MOST hospitable of cities but its citizens make up for it. A Filipino friend was getting married and we stayed with her family in the week coming up to the ceremony. I had heard about Filipino hospitality but it surpassed my preconceptions—our hosts insisted on vacating the best rooms in the house in favour of the guests. Whenever we sat our hosts jumped up and positioned a fan beside us. The wedding itself was an interesting affair. I had to wear a traditional Filipino *barrong* (a stiff white shirt made from pineapple fibres) and, during the couple's first dance, all the guests crowded round and pinned money on to the bride's dress and the bar receipts for the night would probably have been the same as those for the first twenty minutes of an Irish wedding.

Manila has many problems including poverty, crime, pollution and poor infrastructure but the one that affected me directly was traffic. Think of the frustration of jolting along in the worst traffic-jam you've ever experienced. Well that's what you're faced with almost everytime you head somewhere in Manila. Interestingly, Filipinos treat traffic-jams like the Irish treat rain—even though Manila is clogged by incessant traffic everyday they seem not to expect it and consequently give out about it every time they sit in the car. The authorities have tried many ways of combating the traffic problem. One solution was to allow cars with even registration numbers to be on the road only on every second day (alternating with cars of odd registration). However anyone with the money bought two cars (one even registration, one odd) and now there are more cars than ever on the roads.

The Mayon volcano

For Christmas we went to a town called Legaspi (on south-eastern tip of Luzon, the main island in the Philippines). Legaspi is most famous for the Mayon

volcano which broods nearby. When we got there we headed to the local tourist information office and got the following information from the grinning tourist officer:

"The Mayon volcano erupts periodically, like big sneeze! It erupted on June 22nd. Ash went eighteen kilometres in the air"—arms wildly gesticulating—"then it erupted three months later on September 22nd. So it's due three months after that, so that's, let me see, December 22nd. What date is it today? The 21st."

"He-he-he-he, so due tomorrow!"

Thankfully it didn't erupt the following day but has erupted since, requiring 40,000 people to be evacuated.

My favourite part of the Philippines would have to be Mountain Province (in the north of Luzon). Sagada was our first stop. This town is renowned for the nearby caves and also for its unusual burial traditions. Some coffins are left stacked in caves while others are hung in a nearby valley on rock faces. In the nearby Bontoc we visited the local 'Hiltribes Museum'. That had interesting photos taken by the first American governor to arrive in the region in 1909, showing the local tribe going off head-hunting. Another photo showed the locals enjoying a tug-of-war which the Americans introduced as a safer alternative to head-hunting.

We hiked into the simple village of Batad which had no electricity or telephone service but was surrounded by spectacular rice terraces, carved into the mountainsides two to three thousand years ago and still used for growing crops today.

Delicacies

Some of the Filipino delicacies caught my attention: the 'craze' at the time I was there was fried one-day old chicks, another popular snack was *balut* (duck egg containing partially formed duck embryo) and in the mountain province *aso* (dog) is a delicacy. I learned that ani-

mal rights groups from abroad had pressured the Philippine government into banning the sale of dog meat for human consumption a few years previously but the local people in the mountain province had taken the government to court claiming this was impinging on their culture. They won their case. I saw a menu one day which stated that 'our bread is guaranteed worm-free'. Reassuring? Humourously a dish of chickens feet is nicknamed *adidas*.

The US colonised the Philippines from the start of the twentieth century to the end of world war two and have left some interesting legacies. One is the Filipinos' good grasp of English and their custom of shouting "Hey, Joe" at any foreigner, classing you as American. Another is the ubiquitous *jeepney*, the true Filipino local transport. The recipe for a jeepney is, take one ex-us army jeep, put two benches in the back with enough space for about twelve people, paint it every colour of the rainbow, add tassels, badges, horns, lights, a tape deck with a selection of Filipino rock music, a chrome horse (or better still a whole herd of them) and any other decorations you think of. Then stuff twenty-four passengers on those benches for twelve and drive like crazy.



Jeepney on Palawan 'highway'

Kiltartan old church and cemetery

by Sr M de Lourdes Fahy

A FEW YEARS AGO A STUDY GROUP of volunteers began the task of cleaning up the cemetery and ruins of the old Kiltartan church. They did a trojan job in clearing away bushes, briars and all types of rubbish which had accumulated over the centuries. The work is still in progress as each Saturday afternoon sees dedicated workers carrying out the restoration in accordance with best practice.

The group sought expert advice from the county council, GMIT and other heritage bodies. This ensures that no permanent damage is done to a sacred and fragile site. One member said "we are uncovering history every Saturday because we are discovering slabs we never knew existed." The participants are very enthusiastic about the project and hope to have it completed this summer. They do need extra help and everybody's assistance, no matter how small, would be greatly appreciated.

History

As far as we know there are no historical references to the medieval church of Kiltartan but according to the historian Mons Jerome Fahey, it was dedicated to St Attracta. In the early eighteenth century a small straw-thatched chapel was built on the opposite side of the road. It remained until 1842 when it was replaced by the present chapel. During penal times people attended mass at Poll an Aifrinn at Lisatunna. In 1704 all priests in Ireland were required to give their names and places of abode to the clerks of the peace. They were forbidden to have any assistants. All who neglected to be registered were to be imprisoned or exiled. Fr James Hynes was the registered parish priest for Kiltartan. He was ordained in Athleague in 1673 and dwelt in Ballylee in 1704.

Architecture

The old church is sixty-five feet long and twenty-five feet wide. It is a highly significant site and shows evidence of at least three phases of construction. The

curved parts of the wall surrounding the cemetery suggest an early Christian date. As part of the public works during the great famine, Garret Egan and Andrew Kelly got the contract for building a wall around the cemetery, at a cost of £20.

Dominic Delaney, consultant archaeologist, states that the building incorporates substantial remains of a neo-Norman church. Huge stones or cyclopean masonry are to be found in the lower parts of the west gable, facing the road. The windows or lancets of the side walls date from late twelfth or early thirteenth century and belong to the transitional phase. The medieval phase is represented by the eastward extension in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century. The most prominent feature of this phase is the east window, which was situated in the sanctuary.

In the north wall is a stone altar with a pointed arch of ornamentally cut stones. According to the late Micko Mulkere, the stone altar was known as the *tomb of Christ altar*, where the blessed sacrament was hidden away from holy Thursday evening to Saturday or Easter Sunday. A slab of stone was usually removed and the blessed sacrament was placed underneath, representing our lord's burial in the tomb.

Quite recently, a broken headstone was discovered inside the old church. It was erected over the grave of Fr Andrew O'Flynn, PP, who died in 1823. He was the last parish priest of Kiltartan to be buried in the parish. Kilmacduagh and Kiltartan parishes were united in 1854 to form the parish of Gort.

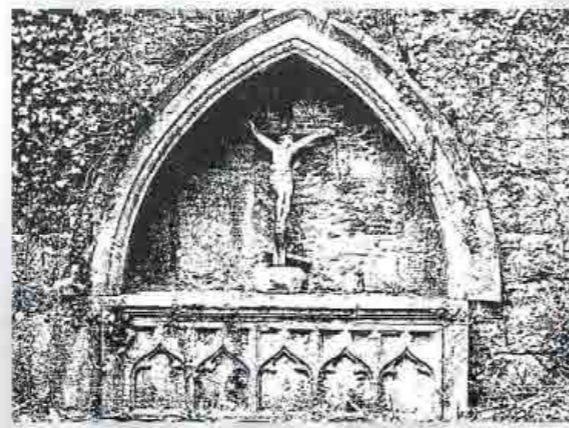
Gravestones

A detailed ground plan of the site will be made by a professional group. This will record the loca-

tion of all gravestones. A register will then be made of all gravestone inscriptions. This will ensure that the site is fully recorded for posterity. It is envisaged that the results could be displayed on a plaque at the entrance to the graveyard. The Kiltartan Gregory Museum will also have copies of the list of inscriptions.

The earliest inscriptions so far revealed date from the 1760s but there are several uninscribed slabs which go back to a much earlier date. There are a few interesting coffin-shaped slabs. Others bear the trade marks of the person, such as a hammer and saw on one gravestone and a sword on another. Many surnames are no longer to be found in the parish, for instance Blaquiery, Crawford, Grealy, Macklin, McCabe, Faircloth, Mooney, Lopdell, Kemmy. There are no parochial records of deaths until the twentieth century. State records commence in 1864. To find out more about the faithful who departed this life before that date is both a fascinating and highly rewarding quest.

All going well, mass will be celebrated in the old church on August 11th, feast of St Attracta. It will be a memorable day, a day to show our respect for the dead. Why not inform as many former parishioners as possible. It's as good a reason as any for a reunion of old friends. See you there.



Canopied tomb in north wall of Kiltartan old church

Poetry corner

War Lovers

by Frank Lally

Before me some old photographs,
From history's pages' paragraphs,
Of arrogance and vanity,
Unrecognised insanity.

Who cares, they sneer, how many die,
The maimed in blood rivers lie,
The bully often draws respect,
The decent ridicule, neglect.

When we have tramped our corpse-paved roads,
They'll lift their voices, pen new odes,
And raise up images so cast,
To even time itself outlast.

To a Lark's Song

by Mai Counihan

Are you not proud of that rich voice,
Which cascades through the air,
From birth of Spring to Autumn's death,
With thoughtlessness so rare?

You soar into the sunny sky,
On wings so light and frail,
That one can hardly see the bird,
Whose voice floods hill and dale.

You trill new love songs to your mate,
Who guards your cradle small,
You lead sweet nature's orchestra,
In euphony for all.

The melody may fade, like to,
A lute in expert hand,
Then bursts in diapason full,
All nature to command.

All birds with voices and without,
The greedy cuckoo too,
Still seek in tuneful eloquence,
The source of notes so true.

What potent thoughts can you conceive,
So wondrous is your theme?
Such mingled joy and sorrow is,
Each fond musician's dream.

Bite

by Anthony Coppinger

There is a demon among us,
There is an overtone,
Until the last, until the
Breakdown,
There is an etching,
Concealed.

There is a spell until the end,
A long walk that took years,
of footsteps. At the end.

There is a comfort,
There is a place to rest,
With Lady Luck there is,
a written word that's,
best left unsaid.

Bringing in the Timber

by Gerardine Killeen

Geese whoop overhead,
A tidy, natural threesome.
I could cry from oneness
With the smell of wet grass,
With the flight above me,
All the sounds of country living
And the quilted caress of sleep
That doesn't have to tumble
Over itself and collide with traffic
To get its share.

All the wonderful dampness
Choruses up, unspoiled,
From out of every puddle,
And down from every branch,
Wooing the twittering birds
And the simpering leaves,
Into my singular sense
Of goodness, niceness,
But all this
Is borrowed now.

Like a lost bequest,
Or a swiftly frittered fortune
My worth is glimpsed
In the distancing geese,
In the rain and in the earth,
Which nursed, and nurses yet,
A better child
Than had the wits before,
To tend the fire
As other than a chore.

Dun Aenghus

by TOC

Aenghus enigmatic, this you truly are,
Was it coming or a going,
You lit upon this pile,
A wild crag o'er the heaving,
Seas on this barren Aran Isle,
And built a fort of massive walls,
Half circle to the sea,
A puzzle for the ages,
To figure what it be.
Was it a place defensive,
Protection from some horde,
Or maybe here you worshipped,
A long forgotten Lord?

Or was this circle-half one time,
A part of circle full,
That o'er the ages heaving waves,
Still cleaving at your feet,
Have gnawed away and eaten,
Their hunger ne'er replete,
The answers we will never know;
While this I ponder now and,
Wonder what you make of us,
On your green sward this day,
A noisy tourist Babel,
That answers seek in vain,
And like the throngs before us,
Will puzzled leave again.

The Wild Swan Theatre Company

by Austin McInerney

THE WILD SWAN THEATRE company's history stretches back to the 1940s and '50s with many of Gort's former well-known faces performing many of the favourite plays and pantomimes of the time. Records show that the main venue was the Gort Town Hall now renamed the Gort Heritage Centre.

Time passed with a fading out of talent and interest. Over time, a number of locals realised that the town needed a strong drama group due to Gort's well-renowned literary past and its need to show this. So in the late eighties the re-emergence of the re-formed Gort mini-theatre group heralded a new era, opening a channel for performances of plays by various artists including local playwrights such as Lady Gregory and William B Yeats.

No better time to remember one of our great backers and supporters, the sadly-missed Dean Christy Walsh, who was fervent in support of the group and in backing their use of the hall. He often made seating and other props for our shows. With his history in drama behind him he was to be one of our great pedestals to start from.

Practically all performances were centred on the town hall. Any member of the old or new theatre groups would testify that not only the acoustics, size and location of the hall were excellent but the simple character of the venue was the envy of many.

The mini-theatre group, as we were known up until 2001, truly came into its own with a new, still-highly lauded performance of *Dancing at Lughnasa*, shown over four nights in the hall.

A routine was to be established thereafter of a spring show comprising of a two- or three-act play in the town hall together with a selection of two one-act plays to be performed throughout the year, not only in the hall but also Coole Park, Thoor Ballylee, Kiltartan Museum, the Lady Gregory Hotel, Glynn's Hotel, and The Taibhearc and in, subsequent years, by invite in Belfast and London.

All rehearsals and meetings would centre almost exclusively in what was undoubtedly our little corner of the world—the first floor of the town hall. The facilities were completely outdated. Before refurbishment the toilet facilities were unisex, changing was in a meeting room and off-stage was practically outside.

Regardless, the concrete spirit of the group carried on with successful spring

performances of *Communication Cord* and *Sive* to full attendances. One-act shows of such plays as *Hyacinth Halvey*, *Workhouse Ward*, *The Gaolgate*, *The Jackdaw*, *The Rising of the Moon*, *Spreading the News*, *The Coole Apples* and many more were carried out over the years in the hall and the other venues mentioned. The new award-winning plays commemorating the life of Lady Gregory such as *Lady Gregory's Ingredients* and *The Claddagh Ring* were also shown.

For two years the troupe had to move home to Beagh Community Centre as the Gort Town Hall was being refurbished into the new heritage centre. Although we missed our little hall, the expanded space both in front of and behind the scenes opened new doors for us. The crowds were bigger and our minds and imagination duly expanded.

Moll and Lend me a Tenor were huge successes, beyond our wildest dreams. Never had we performed to this size audiences and, if we can boast, we were just getting better and better.

Our hardcore group could number up to twenty at any given time. Our back room group is the best around without doubt, limited not in talent but only in the budget given. Our support group of more actors and actresses could number fifteen or more. We are a group of size, talent and many capabilities.

2001 was the year of our return to the new heritage centre with a five-night performance of *Big Maggie*. For the first time seating was pre-booked and, for the first time, an extra night had to be added. According to official numbers the hall could have been filled one-and-a-half times more.

The show was a success, the casting was a success, the choice of play was a success, the set was a success, the back-room team were a success and the hallmark of all this was teamwork. Everyone has an opinion that is listened to and respected. The spirit amongst our tight-knit team is hard to explain but should be experienced. To survive a rehearsal in Gort Town Hall is a challenge indeed. Laughter is our backbone.

As the group grew it was decided to seek a change in name as we did not see ourselves as a mini-theatre anymore. After much deliberation the title The Wild Swan Theatre Company was born. We now had a name synonymous with theatre and our own locality—*The Wild Swans of Coole*. The 'wild' part wasn't lost on us either.

Next in line was the hilarious *Say Cheese* by Ken Ludwig. Again a sell-out, again a success. Experience talent forever shining, new talent blooded.

The group now had decisions to make. In order to keep the large numbers active it was agreed a second 'big show'

would be added to the calendar. The potential for increased earnings was not forgotten either. The need for our own lighting, chairs and supplies hugely important but very expensive. The group are self-funding and proudly so.

So in late 2002 part of *The Beauty Queen of Leenane* trilogy came to town in the name of *The Lonesome West*. Four nights, sold out. A controversial play, not for the young or faint-hearted but, for the group and many more, a satisfying outing.

The future of the Wild Swan Theatre company is assured. The interest and commitment is too bright to extinguish. The love of performing a myriad of styles is well known. The feeling of being at home in Gort Heritage Centre is irreversible.

Other thoughts in our heads include running a number of different plays concurrently with different casts, travelling to other venues throughout the country, entering festivals and much much more.

The Wild Swan Theatre is a group that is now highly recognised within the acting fraternity. We are proud of our hall, we are also spoilt in the number of venues locally available to us. Those venues including such as the home of William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory at Coole Park. Certainly Gort, as a heritage town, is a location that should have a strong drama group with useable facilities.

The Wild Swan Theatre, a self-funding and selfless group who perform regularly free of charge, deserve the best also.

As a facility the heritage centre must be cared for, the facilities must be made amenable to the public and the history, character and style of the property must be maintained. Even now money needs to be spent on the property again as mother nature is trying to get a front row seat for free.

On behalf of the Wild Swans, we thank all our patrons over the years. We enjoy entertaining. We apologise to those who have failed to get seating but we always stress that early booking is essential.



Niall Finnegan being made up by Peggy Casey for his role of Valene in *The Lonesome West*

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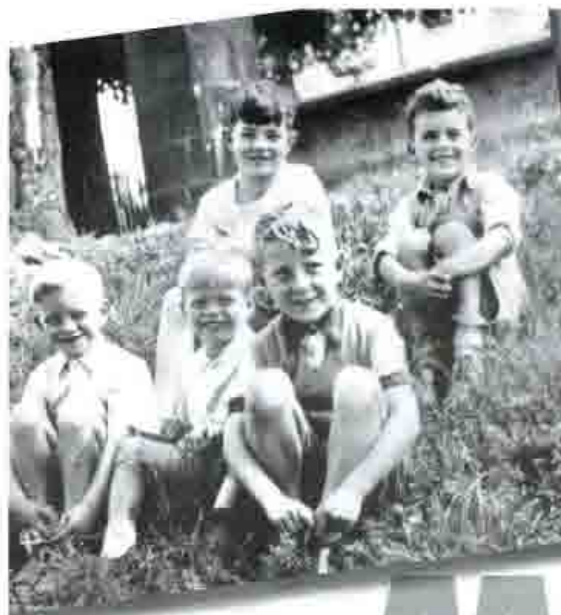
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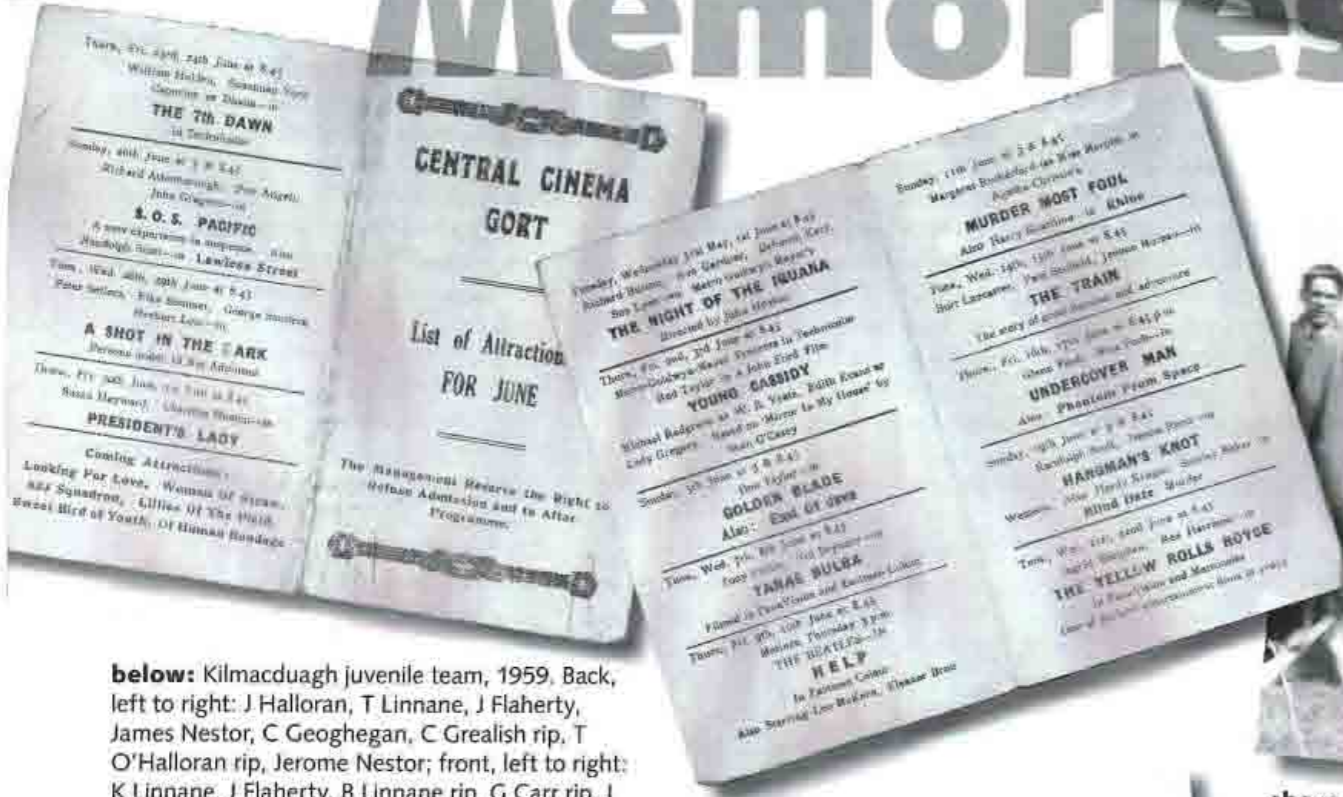
left: ground outside old vocational school in Georges Street, Gort in the 1950s. Back, left to right: Sean Gallagher and Sean Brennan; front, left to right: John McCarthy, Mattie McCarthy and Gussie Kelly
right: captain's prize 1963 at Gort Golf Club. Tom Lambert, captain, Eddie Treston, winner, Evelyn Gilmartyn, winner and Lily Spelman, lady captain



above: Gort billiards team at the Town Hall, Gort, 1963-64. Left to right: Noel Mullins, Paddy Piggott, Gerry Burke, Tom Lambert, Christy Fennessy, Micky Roughan and Fr Leo Morahan
right: heat of the Mary from Dungloe in the Classic ballroom. Left to right: Bernie Joyce, ? Hawkins (Flagmount), Ann Sullivan, Margaret Reilly, actor Tom Hickey, Ann Broderick, ? Fahy, Geraldine Dempsey, ? Linnane (Kinvara) and Breda Gillane
above right: cutting a dash are Pudney Piggott and Tomás O'Quigley at a dress dance in the Great Southern Hotel circa fifty years ago



Memories



below: Kilmacduagh juvenile team, 1959. Back, left to right: J Halloran, T Linnane, J Flaherty, James Nestor, C Geoghegan, C Grealish rip, T O'Halloran rip, Jerome Nestor; front, left to right: K Linnane, J Flaherty, B Linnane rip, G Carr rip, J Linnane, M Spelman, M O'Connor and T Cummins



above: Gort junior hurling team 1950s. Back, left to right: Ronnie Burke, Paddy Lally, Josie Larkin, Bernie Flaherty, Michael John Grealish, Thomas Howard, Tom Nolan, Patrick Connolly, Paddy Mullins, Joe Pete Hehir, Billy McNeill, Eddie Fennessy, Sean Ruane and Petie Howard. Front, left to right: Pdraig McNeill, Gerry Cahill, Val Burke (Beagh), Evan Heenan, Joseph Murray, Sean Burke, Bernie Burke, Pdraig Cahill. Photograph by Paddy Flaherty

right: the late Canon George Quinn took this photograph of Gort boys' school pupils after a ten-mile sponsored walk in June 1973. Were you there?



made of this

Gort property review

by Austin McInerney,

IAVI AVIA, director ERA Joseph J. McInerney (Auctioneers) Ltd

ONLY THOSE LIVING IN GORT FOR at least the last thirty years can appreciate the incredible changes in the layout of the town, the increased population numbers, the new national and international diversity of the population, the facilities available and, of course, the advantages and the disadvantages that all this brings.

My geography teacher taught me that Gort was built all those hundreds of years ago at the point between the two mountain ranges where the land was good and flat and where the river was easiest crossed.

Today Gort's benefits and reasons for expansion have a slightly more commercial tone. Distance-wise, the town is just thirty minutes from Galway city and

its surrounding business parks; twenty minutes from Ennis, fifty minutes from Shannon international airport and we're just over one hour from Limerick and Athlone.

For heritage amenities we only have to look at Coole Park, Kilmacduagh, Thoor Ballylee and of course the atlantic ocean free of charge just nine miles away. Gort itself has a wealth of modern necessities including a good community centre with a state-of-the-art gym; sports fields for hurling, soccer, football, rugby, camogie, track and field; banks, credit union, building societies, excellent primary, post primary and secondary schools and a long list of retail, commercial businesses for all types of customers.

This is a long list of advantages that the town offers for not just those living

here always but those that have moved here in recent years and those planning to move here in the future.

Gort now also offers a magnificent opportunity for people based in the city to move out. Imagine a young couple, early thirties, living in a three bedroomed semi-detached in Knocknacarra. Residential jungle land, few facilities, traffic jams, ages to work and ages back, drive everywhere for everything. House is worth £250,000 or thereabouts in today's market. If they move to Gort they could get a quality four- or five-bedroom detached home either in or around the town within a short walk of all facilities and an almost equal length of time to work. Even if they bought a three-bedroom semi in Gort for £145,000 they could have up

to £100,000 savings—in their early thirties. Not bad.

Over the past five years just over 200 new homes have been built in Gort varying between detached, semi-detached and apartments. At the time of writing planning exists for over a hundred more and 150 in the pipeline. There are still approximately sixty acres due for residential zoning, allowing for a possible 800 more units. The buyers have come from many different sectors, locals moving out of home but staying close, as mentioned the Galway/Ennis buyers upgrading or simply buying within their price range, the investors who rent to those who can't or don't want to buy and finally the retiring market, those people from out in the country who have ceased driving and want to put the feet up with facilities such as the church, post office and pubs within walking distance.

The residential investment market grew significantly in Gort in recent years. One might wonder why. We have no new industry or third level education facilities.

One reason is of course the increased house prices and the difficulty in securing mortgage approval, the other is the foreign market, be they British, Brazilian, Russian, Latvian, Romanian, African or wherever. The input into Gort's commercial and residential economy by

these non-nationals has been immense and surely welcome.

Problems lie ahead that must be addressed immediately and should have been dealt with years ago. Water pressure and supply, sewerage extension and rezoning are just some.

Every new house brings a new family. Every new family will bring new children to the schools, new hurlers and footballers, new golf club members. New homes will bring new business, new investment to the town. The bigger we get the more we get.

play sport. It all adds up, the multiplier effect.

One of Gort's main advantages is its vibrant and well-populated catchment area which comprises local farmers and their families and new families that have bought sites and built.

To finish with some statistics. On average in Gort, homes that were built five years ago have increased in value across the board by 55% to 100%. In Boland's Court, a home that cost £90,000 is now worth £155,000. In the Maples, the first-ever homes built there have



River Walk estate

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doubled in value at least. In the last year prices have increased by 7%-10%. However in River Walk, the new homes that are just finishing have increased by about 25% in value. These figures can vary from estate to estate, even from house to house, depending on location, view and finish.

As ever, a healthy residential market—which we have—feeds a healthy commercial market with rents per square foot rising steadily. However, there can be too much emphasis on achieving high rents and not focusing on the quality of the tenant and the purpose they require it for.

For those living in Gort, trust me, compared to many towns we have it great. For those thinking of living in Gort; you're moving in the right direction.



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Reflexology explained

by Mary Flaherty-Shiels

REFLEXOLOGY IS AN ANCIENT healing art based on the principle that the body will, given the opportunity, heal itself and bring about a state of natural balance in order to function to its full capacity. Reflexology practitioners follow the hypotheses that all structures and organs in the body are mirrored on the feet and hands and by using specific touching techniques to stimulate the reflex points, can help the body to regain a balanced state.

In reflexology, the term *reflex* can be termed more of a reflection or mirror image of what is happening in the areas of the body represented on the soles and tops of the feet.

Reflexologists use the theory that there are ten zones or energy lines running up and down the body following a line from each toe and each finger to the

top of the head. Blockages of energy occur along these zones caused by disorder or disease in the organs and structures and reflexologists aim to release these blockages by using the pressure techniques already mentioned. The therapist will treat the client in a fully holistic manner, taking into consideration the physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of their lives when seeking the cause of their problems and not just working on the physical symptoms that they exhibit.

Reflexology is an ideal health strategy for prevention of ill health and should not be viewed as a last resort. Regular monthly treatments are an excellent way to maintain properly balanced systems and can help prevent the occurrence of disease.

Once illness has taken hold, reflexology can be used in its fullest sense as

a 'complementary' adjunct to medical treatment with the co-operation of the client's doctor or consultant. It is heartening indeed that so many consultants, particularly in the field of oncology, are now recognising the benefits of the anxiety relieving and calming effects of this valuable therapy.

Reflexology teaches that a vital energy or life force, such as that acknowledged in oriental medicine, flows through all organs and tissues of the body. Reflexologists are trained in the pressure and massage techniques designed to disperse these energy blockages which often manifest themselves as crystalline deposits in the feet and hands. Circulation of both blood and lymphatic systems is stimulated so that accumulating toxins may be excreted and cases of stress, tension and fatigue relieved.

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The Orchard centre in Queen Street, which was destroyed by fire in February 2003. The smaller picture shows the centre, which was a day centre for forty-nine adults, one week before the fire.



Pictured above receiving the winners' trophies at Gort's recent *Reach for the Stars* competition at the Lady Gregory Hotel are parish curates Fr Barry and Fr Peter who, on the night, along with family members, gave a rousing impersonation of the Saw Doctors.

The competition, a *We, the people of Gort* production, was a huge success, with sixteen local acts showing off their talents for music, comedy and impersonation. As with all *We, the people of Gort* events, the proceeds went to local charities. Principals among the many hard working organisers of the event were Martin Aherne (pictured presenting the trophies) who hosted the evening and P J Downey.



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From London to Paris (Plaster of Paris)

by Kieran Finnegan

AFTER SPENDING TEN YEARS IN London my family and I decided to head for 'the green, green grass of home'.

While in England I met lots of tradesmen on different sites and in particular I became good friends with someone in the plaster moulding business. I was fascinated to see how a room could be transformed just by having cornice fitted. I visited his workshop to see what exactly was involved in making cornice and saw that a lot of skill, care and patience is required. This is what I wanted to do in Ireland.

After some research while home on holidays I saw that there was an opening for me in the Gort area to set up our own business, *Finnegan Plaster Mouldings*.

We moved home and set up a workshop at my home place in Kilmacduagh. Every piece of moulding is made at the workshop. Rubber or fibre-glass is used to make the original moulds. These are filled with plaster of paris—which is imported from France—and covered with scrim (canvas) and two timber latts—both imported from England—to strengthen the length of cornice. Here's the tricky bit, however. All this work, including making sure the plaster is settled into every crevice of the mould, must be completed in a few minutes otherwise its ruined. The reason it needs to be made so quickly is because the plaster sets in a matter of minutes. You need plenty of practice to get skilled at the work or you lose the entire piece.

There are a variety of sizes and designs of cornices to choose from, depending on peoples own individual preference and ceiling height. We also supply and fit coving, ceiling roses, panel, arches and so on.

Our big break came when we were given the job of supplying and fitting The Lady Gregory Hotel with cornice. Little did I think when I was going to school there that one day I would be

back again fitting out the assembly hall with cornice, where I spent many a happy day doing exams. It is now the main function room in the hotel. This was a great advertisement for us for future work. After that we supplied and fitted all the plaster mouldings at the Quality Clarinbridge Court Hotel.

Our customer base is very varied from the private houses which are our bread and butter and which are just as important to us as the housing developments and hotels. One of our ongoing projects at the moment is a new village which is being built just outside Portlaoise.

Behind every business there is a good woman and this is Evelyn, my wife, who looks after the secretarial end of things.

We use our own new house at Kiltiernan, as our showhouse.

Prospective clients are very welcome to come in and give a look around at the various cornices we have fitted. It makes it much easier for them to see what they would like rather than just being shown a small sample. There are also very simple ideas that make a room look that extra bit special.

For people building new houses, the best time to fit the coving/cornice is as soon as the plastering is finished. Quite often we find that people have painted their houses and then decide to have plaster mouldings fitted. Even though it can be done, it is much easier to do it after the plastering.

For information or queries Kieran can be contacted at home on 091 796 881 or 086 823 1583.



Dano's sawmill, Kiltartan

by Dick Burke

JOHN DONOHUE, POPULARLY KNOWN as Dano, set up a saw milling business in Kiltartan in 1952. This was the second such business in the area as Paddy Cahill was already operating a sawmill since 1917. Donohue's mill was beside Kiltartan old national school, which now houses the Gregory Museum.

The mill was powered by a stationary system steam engine of forty horsepower and was fuelled with the waste wood from the mill. It took a day-and-a-half to tow this engine behind a truck from Limerick. Because of its weight, its iron wheels and wheel bearing had to be greased every five miles along the road.

Softwoods such as spruce, fir and larch were supplied for building purposes around south Galway. Hardwoods such as beech, oak, elm and ash were mostly sold to Galway city workshops for the manufacture of furniture and coffins. The logs were cut on a rack bench having a six foot diameter blade fitted with inserted teeth. These teeth were uniform in shape and could be easily replaced if damaged but were greedy making a cut ¼" wide (six mm).

When sawing large diameter logs it was necessary after making the first cut to 'about turn' the log and finish the full depth of the cut by passing it through the saw a second time. Sean Donoghue, nephew of Dano, says he well remembers this slow and laborious task. Cahill's overcame this problem later by fixing a second saw blade above and just forward of the main blade to make deep cuts in one pass. A smaller saw bench with 2½" blade was used to resaw the timber down to the sizes required for the various orders. Later a fourcutter was installed to produce floorboards. Killeen Body Builders used larch flooring in lorry and trailer bodies. The steam engine was replaced in 1955 by a forty horsepower three-phase electric motor and sold for £70 but shortly afterwards resold for £2,000.

Among men who worked in the mill at Kiltartan were Tommy Murphy, rip, Noel Kelly, Mikey Purcell, Joe Corley rip, Jackie Glynn, Paddy Joe Lyons, John Hynes rip, Colie Shaughnessy, lorry driver and Sean Donoghue, a nephew of Dano. Paddy Joe Lyons was reputed to be the best timekeeper of all; he walked three-and-a-half miles daily to and from work. People along his route would say that you could set the clock by him, he was so punctual. Colie Shaughnessy brought a regular number of lorry loads of logs per week to Clondalkin Paper Mills in west Dublin.

Dano also set up an enterprise in Gort at Lowery's Lane for the manufacture of various floor and yard brush heads. This involved installing a number of machines and designing special jigs and arranging them to form a production line along which the timber passed to be processed. There was a minimum of seven men employed, each operating a machine that did a particular operation. Each formed block was finally sawn into two to produce two brush heads. Two holes were bored into each head to provide a second position for the handle if the first hole became worn. The heads were stacked in a drying room heated by a wood-burning stove. Varian Brushes took the entire production, which amounted to approximately 1,200 heads per week. The produce was delivered by Donoghue's lorry to their brush factory in Dublin.

Some of the men who worked in Lowery's Lane were Bartley Connelly rip, Tiny Connelly rip, Vinney and Mathew McNevin rip, Terry McCarthy, Dodo Scanlan rip, Christy and Joe Egan, Josie Burke and Martin Egan.

Dano's health failed causing his death in 1961. The business

was continued for another six years by his wife Nora who also had a very successful Grocery business at the Square. She took a personal interest in all aspects of the milling business and would be found pointing stakes at Kiltartan on Thursday afternoons while all shops in Gort closed for their half day. There was a steady order for oak stakes from a firm in Dingle, County Kerry. Nora organized the older boys in her family to bag and sell firewood blocks and kindle wood waste from the mills to customers in Gort on Saturdays.

Eventually because of scarcity of logs and other factors she decided to close the timber production business in 1967 bringing to an end a very successful venture which she and her husband started as a young couple. She continued her grocery business for many more years.

With thanks for assistance from John Donoghue, son of Dano and Sean and Thomas Donoghue, nephews of Dano.



John Donoghue

Fran McCann

self-portrait

I WAS BORN IN BELFAST IN 1945, the middle child in a family of eleven, a working-class family where every one of us sketched, coloured, drew and painted so much so that I took it for granted that every child did this naturally.

On going to school at the age of five, I found out how wrong I was and ended up being chastised for presenting work that was assumed to be someone else's. I have to admit that put me off art for years.

After school, I worked on the buildings, blocklaying, scaffolding erection, whatever offered and eventually ended up in Darwin, Australia. I picked up the art bug again and, in time, over the years I studied when I had the chance, and, being a natural observer, things came easily to me.

My great art teacher was John Luke, whose classes I attended twice a week for three years after work. My first exhibition was in Darwin in 1970 and I've had a good few since. Life has been good.

In 1998/1999 I got teaching work in Loughrea and Galway and, out of this, the Gort School of Art was born in 1999. Overall the classes

number about seventy persons and the talent is varied. I try to encourage and help according to the individual abilities, as opposed to pushing people. I think that each class should be a relaxing therapy where people's thoughts and feelings flow on to the canvas.

Some of my students have had their own exhibitions and many of them have produced work of very high standard.

There are other art classes in the Gort area, all of which are thriving, so one could say that the state of art in Gort and south Galway is really on the up and long may it continue.

At the moment I am commissioned to paint twenty to thirty murals for a chain of Irish pubs in America, so 2003 will be a busy year for me.





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Gort Show comes of age

by Pádraig Giblin

GORT AND DISTRICT SHOW Company celebrated its twenty-first show on 17th August 2002 at Gort Community Centre and on the grounds of the adjoining community school. There was renewed interest in the show as the event had not been held in 2001 due to foot and mouth restrictions.

After bad weather during the previous months and indeed on show morning the day cleared up at noon to give a warm and sunny afternoon and this helped to draw one of the largest attendances in the history of the event.

The annual show started in 1981 with just fifty-one classes in home/garden produce, flowers, handicrafts and a special section confined to national school children. Over the years classes in photography, cats, dogs, sheep, horses, ponies and poultry were added which together with a confined post primary section means that there are now over 180 classes entered in and judged each year.

The show queen promotion had given the 2002 show a higher profile than in previous years. Rena Comyn, Tubber, representing Dicey Reilly's, had been

chosen as queen of Gort Show by an independent jury at a very enjoyable and well attended function held in the Lady Gregory Hotel on the previous Sunday evening.

There had also been an exhibition of photographs and newspaper cuttings of the show over the past twenty-one years on display in Gort Credit Union (main sponsors) during the last few weeks of July/early August and this also helped to raise the awareness of the show locally.

The other finalists for the queen of Gort Show were Aoife McGarry,



The Gort Show queen finalists 2002
 Back row, left to right: Aoife McGarry, Julie Walsh, Fionnuala Keating, Rena Comyn, Aine Clancy, Deborah Walsh, Anne McNamara, Patrice Carey; front row, left to right: Alyson McGrath, Philomena Lee, David O'Reilly, chairman of Gort Show, Artie Kenny, chairman of Gort Credit Union, Sarah O'Grady. Missing from the photography are Nessagh Quinn and Fidelma Killeen



David O'Reilly, chairman, making a presentation to Rena Comyn, queen of Gort Show. On the left is Nessagh Quinn and on the right is Alyson McGrath, two of the finalists

Peterswell representing Finns' Furniture Store; Sarah O'Grady, Tubber, Storm Movies and Phones; Patrice Carey, Lough Cutra, Super Valu; Deborah Walsh, Fiddane, Gillanes, The Square; Fionnuala Keating, Coole, The Lady Gregory Hotel; Alyson McGrath, Rinneen, The Blackthorn; Anne McNamara, Kilanena, Harte's Bar; Julie Walsh, Tarmon, Tommy O'Donnell's; Nessagh Quinn, Gort, Florrie Tynan's; Aine Clancy, Tubber, O'Grady's Bar and Restaurant; Philomena Lee, Rakerin, Treasures and Fidelma Killeen, Gort, Casey's Bar.

Following the adjudication David O'Reilly, chairman of the show company, expressed his satisfaction at the way the queen promotion had caught the imagination locally and thanked the finalists and the businesses for promoting them. The show queen will now go forward to the Galway finals of the Rose of Tralee in 2003. In fact Rena Comyn is the first to qualify for this year's Galway finals.

The show queen was brought by limousine, sponsored by Sullivan's Hotel, to officially open the show and Rena had a very busy afternoon presenting prizes in

the various sections including the ever popular bonnie baby competition.

A senior and junior sheaf throwing competition was held with competitors from Galway, Clare, Offaly, Limerick and Mayo.

The annual show gives local businesses, voluntary organisations and individuals an opportunity to display, promote and sell their goods, services etc by way of trade stands and craft displays. While this aspect of the 2002 show was most successful, the members of the show company intend to develop it further in future.

The display of vintage cars, tractors and static machinery drew a lot of attention. Members of the Western Veteran and Vintage Motor Club and other local vintage car and tractor owners took their vehicles for a short rally down the town and back led by an open top Volkswagen Beetle containing the show queen.

There was plenty of entertainment for children with a bouncing castle, super-slide and novelty events. The members of God ICA guild provided a top quality catering service, as usual.

The 2003 show will be held on Sunday 10th August. The members of the show company invite more people to become involved in planning and organising this year's event. So please come along and attend the meetings which will be publicised in the parish newsletter and in the local papers.

The officers and committee of Gort and District Show Company Ltd are Canon M Kelly, parish priest, president; Brendan Murphy, Michael Roughan, Lowry Murray and Peggy Barry, vice-presidents; Denis Corry, honorary vice-president; David O'Reilly, chairperson; Mary Leonard, indoor chairperson; Greg London, horse section chairperson; Patty Carroll, organising secretary; Kathleen Curley, assistant secretary; Fiona Curley, horse section secretary; Ann Walsh, treasurer and Pádraig Giblin, PRO. The executive committee consists of the officers plus Tom Browne, David Curley, Josephine Helly, Tim Moloney, Kitty, McGrath, Ann O'Reilly, Ian Cahill, Vincent Costello, PJ Downey, Eileen Glynn and Tom Baker.

Gort mart—a short history

by Paddy O'Grady

ONE OF THE BIGGEST changes in Gort since *Guaire* was last published has been the re-location of Gort Co-operative Livestock Mart from the town centre to Ballybawn. The huge changes that have taken place in farming over the past forty years could hardly be better reflected than in the transition from the old £20,000 (cost in 1962) to the magnificent new €1.5 million mart premises.

Nowadays in the property world, the importance of location is much emphasised. So much so that the people in that business sometimes make a slogan from the word, saying, "location, location, location".

In the heart of Gort for thirty-six years was the old mart. The location was considered to be the best available back in 1961—it had the then advantage of being located beside the railway station. The site of about four acres for its first home was purchased from the late Robert Lahiffe for £2,200.

The official opening was performed by the then president of the National Farmers' Association Richard Deasy in July 28th 1962 and a reception was held in Glynn's Hotel. Richard E Taylor of Adrahan was chairman; Martin McGrath was vice-chairman and Martin Brennan was secretary. There is just one link between the management committee of 1962 and that of the present day: John C Kelly (Ballindereen). Martin O'Donnell (Athenry) was manager from the start until his retirement in 1984.

The first cattle sale was held on Monday, September 17th 1962 and the records show that ten-hundredweight bullocks realised around £40 then. The traditional street fairs continued in Gort until 1967 when they finally disappeared. So too did the opposition

from local livestock dealers and some of the town's business interests in the early years when the mart struggled to become established.

The mart went on to serve the region of south Galway and north Clare well for over three decades but, by 1993, it had become evident that more modern

The first sale was held on Friday, July 17th 1998, when the committee and many of the shareholders celebrated the culmination of their work and financial contributions. The official opening, by Minister for Agriculture Joe Walsh on Monday, February 8th 1999, was a gala occasion.



Four men who worked in the old mart
Left to right: Patrick Cahill, Larry Nolan, Jack Lynskey and Josie Curley

facilities would be needed to cater for the future needs of the farmers. Lack of parking spaces for vehicles and traffic congestion had also assumed greater importance in a town centre location.

The management committee decided that re-location was the best option and purchased a site of twenty acres at Ballybawn. Planning permission was sought and an application was made for FEOGA grant aid. This was a slow process and took over two years. The building contract was signed with Michael Lynch & Co Contractors, Ennis in November 1997 and work commenced shortly afterwards. Funding came from the FEOGA grant of £525,000, the sale of the old mart premises realised £410,000, additional share capital raised of £95,000 and the balance was made up through a bank loan.

It was another day of celebration for the hundreds of shareholders who attended the event. The minister congratulated the committee on its "foresight and confidence in building the most modern mart premises in the country."

Four years on, sales at the mart have continued to be very successful, with the weanling sale on Thursday nights one of the top such sales in the country. The mart was hit on the double in 2001 with the illness and much lamented death of the then manager Patsy Kerrins and the closure of the auction sales for almost four months due to the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak. On a personal note, this writer would like to take this opportunity to thank all who assisted him with the responsibility he accepted in the operation of the mart from March 2001 to August 2002.

The closure of Lambert's pub—the end of an era

anonymous

LIKE ALL TOWNS IN IRELAND, Gort has its fair share of public houses and, while the number of licenced premises at present is quite adequate to cater for the needs of the people, they were far more numerous in days gone by. A feature of the pub trade in Gort is the surprising number of businesses that have changed hands over the years and also the many that have closed.

Over the years Keane's, Coen's, Water's, Carr's in the Square, Spelman's of Crowe Street, Coen's and Glynn's Hotel in Bridge Street, Kelly's and Cusack's of Georges Street and Fahy's in Church Street have all closed while most of the others have changed ownership. Of the many pubs in the town only four are at present run by members of the family that owned them fifty years ago.

The most recent addition to the above list of closures is Lambert's of Georges Street. Lambert's had been run by Tom for the past fifty years and, prior to that, by his father and mother. The business was established in the early years of the last century by John Lambert, Tom's father. He was an avid GAA man and was much involved with local and county hurling teams. He played a considerable role in the preparation of the 1923 Galway all-Ireland winning team, a team trained by Gort man Jack Berry and which included Gort men Bernie Gibbs, Ned Gilmartin and Jim Morris. He had always a great admiration for the skills of Kerry footballers and the craft of Kilkenny hurlers. Indeed, a regular visitor to Lamberts in its early days was John Joe Sheehy, one of Kerry's greatest-ever footballers.

Tom himself had more than a passing interest in sport all his life. With Tadgh Kelly and Cyril Piggott he played on one of the greatest half back lines ever to represent Gort. He played golf to a handicap of six (ask Christy junior how good he was) and was twice captain of the golf club and also president. He was

arguably the best billiard player ever in Gort and played badminton to a very high standard.

No wonder then that Lambert's has always been a meeting place for those interested in sport. A poster hanging in the bar proclaims the pub as being 'the official headquarters of golfers, bowlers, fishermen and all other fibbers'. But there were no fibbers—only self deluding experts; experts on every sport particularly hurling, horse racing, rugby and soccer. Other less important topics such as politics, education and religion also got an occasional airing but only when the important happenings in the sporting world had been fully exhausted, and all the time, with a watchful eye and attentive ear, Tom ensured that debate never became too heated and that nothing was said or suggested that would spoil the night for anyone.

Lambert's had an atmosphere of its own. Some regarded it as more of a club than a public house, but whatever its appeal it attracted patrons from all corners of the parish and further a field. It was frequented by saints and sinners, priests and politicians, rich and poor. Occasionally debate and

discussion were put aside and other forms of entertainment were on offer. Card games during winter, poetry competitions during festival times with offerings from Willie Quinn, Mark Scully, Larry Roche, Sean Leahy and Jack Shaughnessy, all now sadly gone and, of course, musical evenings usually brought to a close with an apt rendering of *The Boys of Barr an Sraide* or Tom's own favourite *The West's Awake*.

But time inevitably takes its toll and many of the characters who helped make Lambert's what it was have gone, people like JJ Larry, Garret and Dick, Bob, Vincent and Albert, Tom 'Watt' and Jimmy Joe, Christy and Jimmy and Johnny, men from whom we learned that the locality thrived on all fronts before we arrived on the scene and that possibly their generation had a certain edge on ours.

And so 'the office', as one customer called it, is now closed and all that Tom's former customers can do now is to wish him a long and happy retirement and to suggest to him that, like many a retired boxer, a successful return is always possible.



Tom enjoys a chat with two of his customers, Seán Devlin and Vincent Moloney

The revival of the St Patrick's day parade

by Marion Fahey

THE ST PATRICK'S DAY PARADE was revived in Gort in March 2000 after a lapse of twenty-five years. It was the brainchild of Francis Linnane who initially wanted to host a threshing display in the town in honour of the millennium. He is the first and current newly-elected president of the parade committee. Francis rallied round other members of the vintage club and the idea gained momentum. They, together with a number of people who attended a public meeting, formed an organising committee.

This committee, under the guidance of Padraic Giblin (chairman), Anne Linnane (secretary) and Carmel Adams (treasurer) with Marion Fahey and Mike Finn (PROS) set about organising the first St Patrick's day parade in Gort in over a quarter of a century.

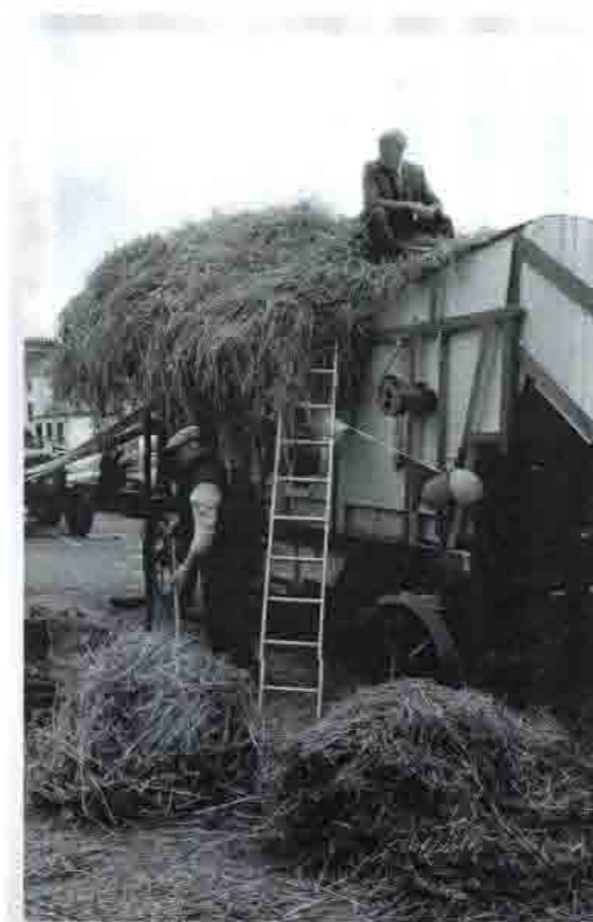
From the outset, it was obvious from the help, support and enthusiasm of the people in the town that the revival of the parade was very desirable. Local businesses helped with sponsorship, and on the seventeenth of March there was a large display of vintage cars, tractors, floats from businesses, clubs and walking groups. Individuals and the local schools were also represented. There was face painting and sweets for the children, music and dancing for the adults and Francis did his threshing in the Square. A very enjoyable day was had by all.

With one successful parade under their belts the parade was now firmly established in the calendar of events in the town so plans were put in place for the next year.

We decided it would be appropriate to elect a grand marshal to lead our parade. A fundraising competition was launched. Each public house/business being invited to nominate their grand marshal. Michael Roughan (senior) won the title to be the first grand marshal to lead a parade in Gort.



Grand marshal for 2002 Séan Whyte and his wife Rosaleen



Threshing display in the Square during St Patrick's day parade

However, this was March 2001 and the foot and mouth crisis was at its height in the country and most public sporting and musical events were postponed or cancelled at that time to help keep the crisis at bay. There were no parades held in honour of St Patrick anywhere in Ireland on March 17th 2001. It is ironic that parades were held elsewhere throughout the world on that date but not in St Patrick's homeland.

However the local committee worked on in Gort and, eventually, the parade was staged on Sunday May 20th 2001. We made history as Gort was the only venue outside Dublin to hold a parade that year.

The grand marshal, Michael Roughan, led the parade in a horse-drawn carriage, followed by the Tulla Pipe Band, the FCA, fire brigade and a huge number of floats, vintage and walking

groups. Live music was provided in the Square and the kinder weather conditions, along with the lifting of the foot and mouth restrictions, ensured a carnival atmosphere prevailed in the town that day. People came from far and near to enjoy the floats and the atmosphere and the parade was a good barometer to indicate the relief felt by the town and the rural hinterland that the foot and mouth crisis had passed. The whole town was decked out in green, white and gold and nobody seemed to notice that this was May 20th, not March 17th.

The help from the local gardai with traffic restrictions and also the large number of local people who act as stewards ensured the safety of all concerned.

For two years running Rory O'Connors bar, Georges Street have nominated the

successful grand marshal with Sean Whyte emerging successful in 2002. They have played a huge part in funding the parade through sponsorship raised, and the grand marshal competition has proved to be very successful. Mike Finn also served as chairman for two years running.

Business people and the people of Gort and district are very supportive of the parade.

The introduction of the 'best dressed window,' which is sponsored by the Gort Credit Union, ensures everyone makes a good effort to decorate their premises and this adds to the enjoyment of the day.

This is an event which is eagerly awaited by young and old each year and we hope the parade will continue for many years to come. It is a credit to the hard-working committee, the stewards, the marshals, the participants and the spectators who give so willingly and so freely of their time to make this such a successful event on this scale.

An average of fifty groups now participate in our parade, making it one of the largest St Patrick's day parades for a town of our size. It is a great opportunity for businesses and clubs to promote their goods and services. It is a chance for the community to come together and work together and lastly it is always a great day out for all concerned.

Dochas linn Naomh Pádraig.



People and places remembered

by Fr Colm Cooke

JOHAN MONTAGUE IN HIS POEM *Like Dolmens Round My Childhood...* recalls the old people who were his neighbors when growing up in County Tyrone. Growing up in Crowe Street I, too, had my childhood dolmens.

Jim Kempsey lived in a thatched house with a wonderful plot. I can still see him repairing the walls in Lallys fields on the road to Kinincha. He had a great four poster canopy bed and, when his thatched roof fell in, he was brought to the county home in Loughrea. I felt very sad for him and his cat. I was about five years old.

Patsy Martin lived in the old Revenue Barracks (now part of the car park for Sullivan's Hotel). There were two other houses in ruins and an old shed owned by the county council had a horse-

drawn fire engine. We played there time and time again. Mrs Buckley brought Patsy his dinner every day. Occasionally they fell out over the menu.

Nonie Fox was an elderly spinster who divided her day between the church and her house. She suffered from St Vitus' Dance, a nervous disorder with uncontrollable movements of her body and face. I was scared of her for that reason. From time to time she came to our house so that my father could fold *The Connaught Tribune* and send it to her brother in New York. Probably his periodic remittance kept her going. I don't know that there were old age pensions at the time.

My grand Uncle Mickey Coyne (Sharp) lived where Bryan Honan now lives. He was the last of a family of shoemakers. I recall him as a bit of a dandy,

with the pocket watch, a fob chain, his two-toned shoes, very well trimmed with purple handkerchief in his breast pocket on his Saturday trip across to Spelman's pub.

We loved going to Spelman's grocery, especially if Mr Spelman (Nuala's father) was there. Whatever message we were to get, big or small, he would give us sweets from the big jar. He'd offer the jar to you, being polite you took one, then he'd put his hand in and give you a fist full. Spelman's yard became a hive of activity when the malting barley was harvested. Horse and carts and lorries brought in the newly threshed corn as Spelmans had the Guinness agency. Many locals were employed for the season. Bartley Connolly was a great man to handle the heavy jute bags of corn. When in fifth and sixth class I often

helped after school by taking in various barley samples to Nuala or Jack to check the moisture content. Before the threshing, boxes of provisions and bottled stout were sent out to the different farmers; I often helped to pack them.

During the summer we made tents from old barley sacks on the bank of the river near the swimming hole. There were some dangerous drains in the bog and one summer a cow had to be rescued from drowning. I think it belonged



Hynes' Mill, where we played as children

My Aunt Mai lived next door to us and my sister and brothers adored her husband, John O'Connor. He was a wonderful carpenter and did work in local banks and churches, Dromoland Castle and Ballylee Tower. He was special to us because of his storytelling and he and my aunt were always good for a penny or two which were spent immediately in Gillanes shop, which was kept by Annie and Mai.

As young children we kept to our own side of the town. We did not go above the water bridge at the convent. Was this an unconscious recognition that the other side of the bridge had originally belonged to Beagh parish? Our roving areas were Kinincha and the old Military Barracks (then unroofed). Once on the island, you climbed over the great big wall and dropped down to the weir at Hynes Mill. One crossed the weir on a very narrow iron girder. We made a raft of old railway sleepers which in our imagination rivaled an ocean liner. Playmates at that time were Richard and Alan Coll. Their father Mick was a detective. He was said to be related to the County Limerick family that had reared young Eamon de Valera. Later the Colls transferred to Valencia Island.

to the Leeches of Kinvarra. Most of the men in the street helped. There were a variety of plants, a wild orchid that we called *crow's toe*, which is now protected, wild woodbine (honeysuckle) and flaggers (wild iris) on the river bank. In springtime Lally's fields in Kinincha (from Justin Sadler's to Mim Moloney's) were teeming with young lambs and Paddy Lally always welcomed any of us who wanted to go with him. One could help putting feed out on troughs for the ewes and there was always an orphan section where the lambs who were rejected had to be bottle fed.

From Sylvers (now Maloneys) you could take a right and walk down to the river passing Carty's house (now gone) which had lines of daffodils outside. Then you came to the river with Star Hoban's house to the left. There was a spring well by the river and a foot bridge which led across to an old mill. A path led through the fields to Barnagaoithe, which brought you onto the Loughrea road at Faheys cross.

Once I learned to cycle a wider world opened up, Coole, Ballynamantan and Kilmacduagh where Shawe-Taylor's tomb had a special attraction for all youngsters. One put stones up against

the mausoleum, peered in through the narrow window and saw the encrusted lead coffin. The white 'blobs' from the ceiling were his mortal sins, according to the tradition. I think it was David Curley who first showed me the tomb. On a recent visit to Kilmacduagh I saw youngsters having a look into the tomb. Another macabre attraction was the Burke tomb in the old cemetery Kilbeacanty, where there was a skull with teeth.

The *Connaught Tribune* was eagerly awaited on Thursday especially for the local news. Willy Quinn edited, wrote and published the *South Galway Star* (In America we would call him a renaissance man, one who turned his hands to many things). I remember at a fancy dress my Aunt Mai O'Connor decked me out in, what I thought was a ridiculous outfit, as Uncle Pat's corner, a column which frequently had a subscript to be decoded. I doubt if I was ever so embarrassed in my life. If I remember correctly, Marion and John Nelly won the competition with music, music, music. I had forgotten all of this until a few years ago, when Eileen Kilroy showed me an old photograph of that competition. I hope that there is no other copy around.

My own family were *Irish Press* people, but we bought the *Independent* during the Galway races. My mother and aunt poured over Curley Wee to find tips for the races. The first horse I can recall backing and winning was Kathleen the Second. The races were the height of the season and I especially remember the Duffy sisters (Mai Counihan, Breege Piggot and Kitty Devereux) being driven off by Johnny Counihan. His running commentary was frequently colorful.

Paddy Kavanagh in his poem *Epic* wonders which is themore important: the fight between his County Cavan neighbours over 'half a rood of rock' or the emerging crisis in the 1930s over Germany.

*"I inclined,
To lose my faith in Ballyrush and Gortin.
Till Homer's ghost came whispering to my mind.
He said: I made the Iliad from such,
A local row. Gods make their own importance."*

I tend to agree with Kavanagh.

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A long way from there to here

by Gerardine Killeen

AMONG THE CHANGES TO TAKE place in Gort in the years since last *Guairé* was published is the growth in the number of international residents living and working in and around the town. There have always been a small number of British and Europeans but the economic growth in recent years has brought a significant international influx, adding Chinese, Lithuanians and Russians to the nationalities in our area. But perhaps most extraordinary of all our visitors are the Brazilians.

Why would Brazilians leave behind the sunshine and samba for a small town in Ireland? What is it like for them here? These were the questions I started to ask myself when the Brazilian flag was added to the sea of green during last summer's world cup. They are among the questions I put to Regina Rezende a couple of months ago, having decided to end my ignorance and find out more about the Brazilians in our community.

I started my fact-finding mission with Regina by asking her about herself. I already knew that she works at Duffy Meats and that she is one of about eighty Brazilians working there. She filled in the rest by telling me that since she has good English, she became a translator at Duffy's (they employ a translator because most Brazilians have little English). Her uncle was among the original group of Brazilians to come to Gort in 2000. It was through her uncle that Regina herself came to Gort in April 2001 and she subsequently met her current boyfriend, Francislis, who also works at Duffy's. Regina comes from Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, where she was a dentist. The vast majority of Gort's Brazilian population, however, come from the much smaller city of Anapolis, which is about 100km from Brasilia. I was intrigued at her leaving her profession even for a while but she seems reconciled to it as a necessary step for her. I was equally intrigued by how city dwellers—Anapolis

has five times the population of Galway, while Brasilia's population is about two million—were finding small town life. Regina says town size hasn't played as big a part in adapting to life here as the weather has, particularly the lack of sunshine. In fact, besides the natural homesickness inherent in living and working in another country, the prime drawback of living here is our weather for the majority of our south American visitors.

And visitors they are. Brazilians obtain working visas dependent on job availability, so they view being here as temporary. They came as economic migrants (initially through an agent in Anapolis) to earn money in order to secure their futures back home, not unlike thousands of Irish have done down the years. In most cases, including Regina's, the aim is to put enough money together to be able to buy a house in Brazil. Here, where the weekly industrial wage exceeds that earnable in a month in Brazil, it's possible with hard saving to make the price of a house (30,000 real) in a few years because the rate of exchange between the Brazilian currency (the real) and the euro is nearly four-to-one.

As a former emigrant myself I could readily identify with the fact that homesickness is the worst part of being here for Regina and her compatriots, the more so because of the language barrier and cultural differences. I could see why some have brought their wives and children here to be with them and why they are so regularly to be seen at public phones, calling home. I mean, in any large city in the world, you'll find Guinness, an Irish bar, a whiff of home no matter how contrived but, for the Brazilians in Ireland, there is no such easy access to reminders of Brazil.

So I was keen to hear about their sources of news from home and found that the only papers and magazines in Portuguese are those sent from home, which must be a trial for anyone waiting

Regina Rezende and her boyfriend Francislis



on sports results. I was curious about what differences there are between Irish and Brazilian fashions and it came as no great surprise to hear that our clothing is less colourful than they are used to. How was our food? Well, rice and beans, the staples of Brazilian diet, are not quite the same here (and can't we potato connoisseurs sympathise with that?) but Regina's personal favourite is our lamb which she particularly enjoys.

So what of entertainment? So much about Brazilian socialising is in the open air and that means our climate has had a major impact. Generally, like so many Gortonians, they go out for a beer and, since disco is the same the world over, nightclubbing is popular. They regularly get together in each others homes to share news, often inviting Brazilians from around the country (Ennis, Loughrea, Cork, Kilbeggin) to parties and celebrations. There is also the occasional mass in Portuguese, arranged by Louise Duffy, which is a welcome touch of home. I was going to ask what they thought of our tv but didn't when I remembered the language issue and found myself imagining how much television I would watch if I was working in Brazil.

Regina was patient with even my cheekiest questions and I am really grateful to her for talking to me. The conversation was an eye-opener in many ways but, above all, it reinforced the fact that all cultures are the same in one respect: no matter where we come from, there is no place like home.

Basketball in Gort

by Pat Bourke

THE FOUNDERS OF THE GORT basketball club, Canon Christy Walsh rip and Tom Muldoon rip, would be very proud of the little club they established back in the early sixties. Never in the history of Gort basketball has the game flourished in the area as it has in recent times.

Gort Community School compete in both the boys' and girls' school leagues at B level, the second highest grade played. It has long been the ambition of the team manager, Gerry Riordan, and the coaches, Frankie O'Dwyer, Fr Barry Horan and myself, to win an all-Ireland title. Gradually the players are making moves in that direction. Last year the second year girls' team were beaten in the all-Ireland final while the under-19 boys and under-16 girls won all-Ireland bronze medals.

This year the under-19 boys retained their western region title by defeating Calasanctius College, Oranmore. Captained by Kieran Diviney, the team worked very hard to qualify for the all-Ireland final but unfortunately this was not their year. The under-19 girls were beaten by three points by Presentation College, Athenry in a replay of the western regional final despite the best efforts of Siobhan Hennelly, Celine Walsh, Lorna Ruane, Caitriona O'Donnell and the team.

At this stage of the season the first and second year boys' teams have already qualified for their regional finals, while the girls' competition will commence shortly. I'm hopeful that the second year girls' team will do very well this season, even if I do seem to get it wrong a lot these days.

On the club front, six under-age boys and girls teams, the under-11s, under-13s and under-15s, compete in the Galway leagues. Thanks to the help and co-operation of Paul O'Halloran in the community centre and the work of Frankie O'Dwyer and his team, approximately 150 young people play basketball every week. Our senior men's team compete in the Galway league and cup competitions, while our senior women's team competes in the Galway cup.

I recently attended an under-11 boys' game in the Community Centre between Gort and Oranmore. Two parents from Gort were in attendance, fifteen from Oranmore. In the interests of our young stars of the future it is necessary to restructure the club to support them and develop their skills so that they will be able to compete at the highest level.

With that in mind, a meeting for parents and anyone else interested will be held in the near future. The more people who are willing to get involved, the greater the opportunities, so please come along when the time comes.



Gort basketball team
Back, left to right: Colin Burke, John Killeen, Sean Burke, Pat Burke and Conor Burke
Front, left to right: Raymond Piggot, John Burke, John O'Donnell and Bryan Brennan

Athletics

by Dan Casey

SOUTH GALWAY ATHLETIC CLUB was one of the most vibrant and most successful clubs in the county in its day with its athletes competing at County, Regional, All-Ireland and even at International level. But alas the club is now going through a lean period because there is no one prepared to get involved in keeping the club going, which is a great pity. Anyone who has been involved in the club over the years would admit to having got great satisfaction from involving the youth in the various athletic activities and watching their steady progress through the different age groups. There were many many happy memories for all who were involved.

There were many pleasurable trips to places like Claremorris, Roscommon, Lanesboro, Manorhamilton, Dublin, Tullamore, Dangan, Carlow, Cork and Waterford and returning to Gort laden

with spoils. On some of those trips we joined up with other clubs on the same bus, competed against one another on the track and celebrated together on the way home with a mineral and a bag of chips!

There were the training sessions over in 'the field' in the evenings and all you would hear in the distance was 'on your marks, set, go'. Athletes came from all over south Galway to this famous venue to train for forthcoming competitions. But it wasn't always serious stuff. When limbs got tired the young folk indulged in other games until energy levels were once again renewed. It was very rewarding to see the athletes achieve full fitness and being able to compete competitively in their particular athletic events.

Then there was the annual south Galway sports which was one of the main sporting events in the south Galway area when all of twenty primary

schools came together in St Colmans Park to do battle for the Buck Rogers cup. It was a great occasion with the young athletes giving of their best and the large crowds cheering them on and even if they didn't win there was always the consolation prize of a bag of crisps which was better than any trophy. The presentation of trophies and the cup to the winning school was always a joyous occasion with much celebration.

The annual end-of-year dance was always an event to look forward to when the athletes and their parents came together to celebrate the successes of the year past with good music, lots of food, prizes galore and plenty of chat, nights which were enjoyed by all.

There were so many people, too numerous to mention who gave so much time to the club down through the years and got so much satisfaction in return. The many athletes who passed through the club over the years since it was founded in 1975 were always a credit to the club no matter where they travelled to and even if they didn't win medals they made lots of friends and were the better for the experience.

South Galway Athletic Club has had much to offer to the youth of the area down through the years, there is no reason why this could not still be the case. The talent is there in abundance, all that is needed is a few people who would give some of their time and make it the successful club it once was.



All-Ireland gold medal winners representing South Galway AC in 1994
Left to right: Darren Fahy, Evan Kilroy, Karl Casey, Robert Kilroy and Brian Mullins

Gerry P Fahey—a tribute

GERRY P FAHEY WAS A VERY passionate student, both as an academic and as an athlete. His performances had to be perfect. He had a dedicated respect for his peers and an equal regard for the well-being of his colleagues and opponents alike.

He was exemplary in his performance and the only occasions his opponents felt the hurt was when his performances ground them to defeat.

He was on victorious winning county championship club (Gort) teams in 1971 (under-15) 1972 (under-16) and 1974 (minor) at which stage he hit the county limelight when selected on the county minor hurling and football panels.

He also won a Connaught colleges' medal with Our Lady's, Gort in 1974.

He won a freshers' medal with UCG in 1975-76 and a Fitzibbon cup medal with UCG in 1977 when he played alongside Niall McInerney, Joe Connolly, Conor Hayes and Pat Fluery (Offaly).

In his under-21 era he played for Galway and was recognised as the outstanding player when being presented with the Liam Shields trophy (County Galway).

He played in the Gort half-back line with Pearse Piggott and Sylvie Linnane when they lost narrowly to Kinvara in the county senior semi-final. Castlegar won the championship that year.

In January 1980 he played in a game against Limerick in senior hurling and received a serious injury in respect of which he was hospitalised. He tried to make a return but the injury had taken its toll.

He did not forget his roots and was involved with county management in Limerick until his untimely death.

One of his former managers, Frank Lally, described him as 'a real athlete who was a gifted reader of the game.'

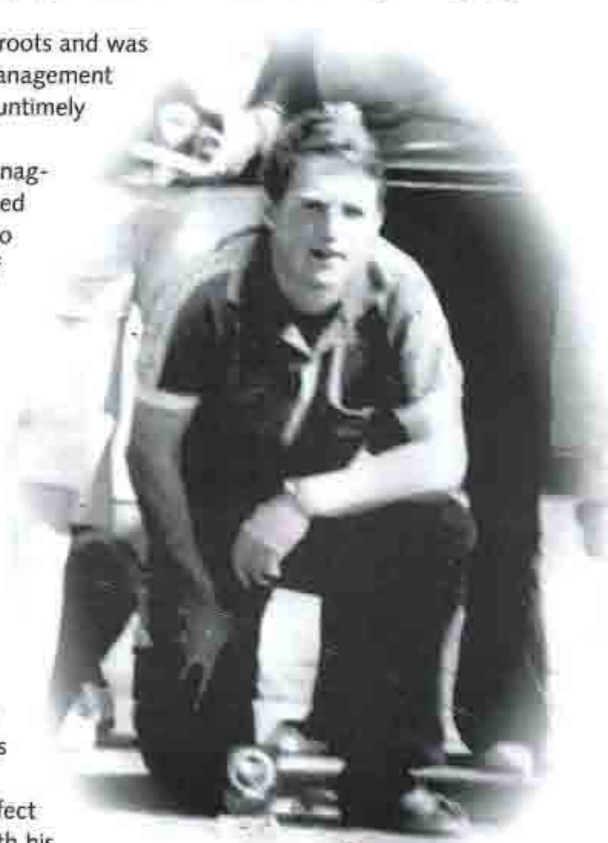
His gaelic football exploits won him a number of South Galway junior football medals with Gort.

Other managers found him to be a great motivator who could raise the spirits and bring success when others felt all was lost. He had a cunning and deceptive style which left his opponents behind.

May he find perfect peace and happiness with his maker

Ar deis Dé go raibh a anam dílis.

We extend our deepest sympathy to his wife Liz, his children Brian, Eibhlin, Shane and Deirdre, his brother Dr Roderick Fahey, Portumna and his sister Dr Darina Fahey, Galway city.



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St Colmans Gaelic Football Club

by Liam Nolan

ST COLMANS GAELIC FOOTBALL Club (Gort-Beagh-Kilbeacanty) was founded in January 1995. It was decided to enter a junior A team in the Galway west board league and championship. A huge interest was generated throughout the area and a squad assembled in early February in preparation for the club's first ever league campaign. On April 9th 1995 the team travelled to Lettermore to play our very first league match. The opposition was provided by Na Piarasigh (Rosmuc) and despite losing on a 2-4 to 1-13 scoreline, it was a significant day for the newly-formed club.

A strong panel was assembled over the following seasons under the guidance of team manager Pat Crowe. The 1997 championship campaign proved to be a breakthrough year for St Colmans,

an historic first title was captured when we defeated Bearna in a well attended junior C west board final in Claregalway in the summer of that year. This sparked off great celebrations in south Galway and even greater joy was to follow when a highly fancied Cortoon Shamrocks side were defeated in the county final. It was through great dedication and the huge effort of trainer/player John Connors that helped us to our first major win.

1998 was also to prove a most rewarding year for St Colmans. Allied to Galway's recapture of the all-Ireland football final and the subsequent visit of the Sam Maguire cup to Gort was our victory over Carna-Cashel in the junior B west board cup final.

Tom McNicholas from Ballygar was now at the helm and despite the best efforts of all concerned the side went

down narrowly to Loughrea in the county semi-final.

In recent years, it has been at under-age level that the club has enjoyed most success. Under-12 county titles were captured in 1999 and 2001. These achievements were largely due to the hard work and guidance of coach Kevin Roche. Further reward was to follow in the shape of an under-14 county title in 2001 and a league crown last year.

St Colmans wishes to thank all who have contributed to our club and a special note of gratitude to our main sponsors Sean and Ann Marie Kelly of Kilroy's bar, Gort, who have been most accommodating and helpful over the years.

New members are welcome to join our club and information can be obtained from the Gort-on-line website.

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Special olympics

by Dan Casey

AS A RESULT OF THE LAUNCH OF THE World Special Olympics host town programme for Galway at the Great Southern Hotel a group of people got together in The Lady Gregory Hotel in September 2001 and decided to make application on behalf of Gort to act as a host town to a visiting team for the forthcoming World Special Olympics to be held in Ireland in June 2003. The following officers were elected at the meeting: chairperson, Michael Cunningham; secretary, Maura Leonard; treasurer, Tom Naughton; PRO, Dan Casey and vice-chairman, Mike Finn.

A delegation travelled to the RDS, Dublin in October where it was announced that Gort was to be one of the 160 successful host towns and were to host a team from Yugoslavia.

At a follow up meeting held in The Lady Gregory Hotel Kitty Tierney,

regional representative for Special Olympics, outlined the various tasks which had to be undertaken in order to make the host town programme a success. The following committee was elected at that meeting to carry out the various roles: volunteer/entertainment co-ordinators, Tom Baker and Colie Roche; accommodation/medical co-ordinators, Jimmy Regan and Colman Counihan; transport co-ordinator, Eamon Broderick; fundraising/sports co-ordinators, Mike Finn and Mossy Clabby; torch run co-ordinator, Dan Casey and education/exhibition co-ordinators, Jane Regan and Marion Fahy.

It was also decided to hold a number of fundraising events during 2002 to cover expenses incurred by the visiting team during their four days stay in Gort prior to travelling on to Dublin to compete in the games. It will be the responsibilities of the host town to provide

sports facilities, accommodation, transport, security, medical attention and entertainment during their stay.

A number of fundraising events took place during the year. Bank of Ireland undertook to collect old coins from the public which were forwarded to the Special Olympics. A church gate collection was held at all churches throughout south Galway. A very successful golf classic was also held at Gort Golf Club. Generous donations were also received from Gort Boxing Club, Gort parade committee, Killeeneen NS and Lough Cutra Est. Gort host town committee would like to thank each and everyone who contributed in any way towards the host fund, it is very much appreciated.

Information packs on Special Olympics have been forwarded to all schools in Gort and surrounding areas and members of the host town committee will also be calling to schools in the near future with a view to organising an art competition which will have a Special Olympics theme. Paintings will be displayed locally.

The committee have now been informed that the Special Olympics torch run will be passing through Gort and will be stopping off at The Square on Tuesday 17th June where they will be welcomed. There will be guest speakers and entertainment will also be provided. Local schools, clubs organisations and as many people as possible are encouraged to participate in the torch run ceremony and make it a day to remember.



Special Olympics athletes representing Orchard Centre, Gort at the national finals in 2002. Left to right: Joe Daly, Helen O'Reilly, Frankie Hynes, Philomena Linnane, Marty Fitzgerald, Michael McGuane, Pat O'Boyle and Patrick Becker.

History of St Colmans Park

by Brian Brennan

ON 28th JULY 1947 A public meeting was held in the Town Hall for the purpose of the purchase and development of ten acres of land at Ballyhugh, Gort. The invitation extended to the people of Gort. From this meeting a committee was set up and it was identified as the St Colmans Park Purchasing and Development Committee, Gort. The officers elected were the parish priest of Gort, Rt Rev Monsignor Joseph Dean Cassidy, president; Thomas Lambert, Georges' Street, Gort, chairman and J P Morrissey, manager, National Bank, Gort, treasurer, C I Foley, J C Murphy, A J O'Flynn, P Broderick, G Keane, J Kelly, D O'Brien, P G Heenan, J Spelman, J Keane and J Gallagher made up the committee.

The committee decided to borrow £2,000 from the people of Gort in units of £5-00 and 500 copies of the minutes of the event were handed out. £1,360 was collected from individuals and companies and this could be redeemed with 2.5% simple interest. It was proposed, when funds became available, to pay back all subscriptions.

The transfer of the property took place by indenture dated 30th April 1948 and registered with the above named as trustees in registry of deeds on 9th October 1952. Robert Lahiffe was also included in the list of trustees, bringing the total to sixteen.

There was a field committee and Gort and South Galway Agricultural Show

Society at the end of May 1950. The show society and the field committee, many of the members of which were on both committees, met but concrete proposals regarding the building of a stand in the park were not agreed upon. This stand was to serve as show committee rooms for show days.

The show society considered leasing the park but in the end purchased adjacent lands.

On 29th March 1952 the show society in conjunction with the park committee arranged for the holding of the first Guaire cup tournament on the following Easter Sunday.

At this time also the local GAA club agreed to pay an annual rent of £10-00 for the playing pitch, later reduced to £9-00 per annum.

Many of the trustees passed to their eternal reward in the intervening years and the only surviving trustee, Thomas Lambert, Georges' Street initiated a public meeting of the people of Gort on 25th April 2001. It was agreed to get counsel's advice regarding governing regulations and conditions.

In consequence of advice obtained Mr Lambert appointed six additional trustees and an inaugural meeting took place on 15th October 2001 and the following were elected: Thomas Lambert, president; Brian Brennan, chairman; Gerry Sheehan, secretary; Sean Mullins, honorary treasurer and Colman Keane, Gerry O'Donoghue and Noel Nestor, executive members.

The legal obligations of the trustees are enshrined in indenture dated 30th April 1948 and registered with the registry of deeds dated 9th October 1952.

Amongst the trustees obligations in relation to the park are (a) "to hold the same unto and to the use of the trustees



County athletic championships 1983, held at St Colmans Park. Colin Casey winning the sprint from his brother David.

their heirs and assigns as joint tenants in fee simple, in trust for the residents of the town of Gort upon trust;" (b) "to hold the here ditaments here in before conveyed as a sports ground for the conducting and promoting of athletic sports games and other matches etc;" (c) "the trustees, in addition of the powers specifically conferred upon them, shall have power to control and manage St Colman's Park and all such administrative powers as may be necessary for properly carrying out the objects of the Trust declared by these presents;" (d) "the trustees shall have the sole authority for the interpretation of the rules and the decision of the trustees, shall be final and binding etc."

The current trustees embarked upon the payment of outstanding debt, the activation of public liability insurance to protect their operating interests as trustees.

Plans are in place to redress some urgent needs and the policy of the committee now is the imposition on all participating sporting activity the obligation to possess and produce evidence of their own injury and public liability insurance indemnifying the trustees.

Committees will be set up shortly incorporating representation from all sporting organisations with an interest in the facilities of the park.

Their terms of reference will be set out by the trustees for the advancement of the aims of the trust.



James O'Connor, auctioneer and valuer, conducting an auction at St Colmans Park in 1937. Photograph by Kevin Moloney

Hurling in Gort

by Paddy Cooke

THE PRESENT GORT HURLING CLUB was founded at the turn of the twentieth century shortly after the diocesan reorganisation, which brought into existence the present parish of Gort by amalgamating Kilmacduagh, Kiltartan and portion of Gort town and surrounds, which then were included in the parish of Beagh. This brought the number of clubs in the new parish to three, the others being Kilmacduagh and Kiltartan. Gort adopted colours of blue and white, while Kiltartan had a red strip with white cuffs and Kilmacduagh wore blue with gold cuffs and collars.

The club has been in continuous existence since then and is the oldest sporting club in the parish. That is however not to say that the game of hurling was not played in Gort prior to the early 1900s. Seamus J King, in his *History of Hurling* quotes an extract from the eighteenth-century newspaper *Pue's Occurrences* describing a match played in Gort on 16th October 1759 between two teams representing Galway and Clare for a purse of one hundred guineas.

John Gormally of Gort, who was secretary of Galway county board in the early part of the twentieth century, recorded also that "The men of Gort went on horseback to play the men of Offaly in Athlone on 15th August 1854. The team comprised of twenty-one players and Gort won by two goals to one goal" Likewise, the late Athair Padraic Ó Laoi, in his annals of the GAA in Galway volume one, makes repeated references to teams and individuals from Gort, Kilmacduagh and Kiltartan participating in championships, tournaments and athletic contests held in the county from the 1880s onwards.

Michael Cusack, a founder member of the GAA in 1884, had been a teacher in Lough Cutra School for some years beforehand. In 1885 shortly after the establishment of the GAA Cusack invited Dan Burke of Georges Street (grandfather of Gerard Burke, presently trad-

ing in Georges Street) who was then Gort captain to select a team from south Galway to play north Tipperary. The team which was drawn from Kilmacduagh, Kilbeacanty, Peterswell, Kiltartan, included Edward (Ned) Treston from Crowe Street, Thomas Keehan, The Square and Michael McCarthy, Georges Street. Indeed, prior to the game, which was played on 16th February 1886 in the fifteen acres in the Phoenix Park Dublin, there was a discussion between the captains of both teams as to the size of the sliothar as the sliothars used by both teams varied in size and weight. Arising from this, Ned Treston, who was a saddler by trade, made a sliothar at a saddlery near Dublin Castle and this was used during the game. This sliothar became the prototype for the modern one used universally nowadays. For the record north Tipperary won by one goal to no score.

As the association strengthened through the 1890 to the 1900s, so also did the fortunes of Gort Hurling Club and 1914 saw the club winning the senior county title for the first time. Beaten in the 1915 final by Craughwell, Gort regained the title again in 1916.

Members of those teams included Jim and Joe Stanford, Pat, Michael and John Hayes, Jack and Josie 'Crab' Fahey, Eddie and Matt Nestor, Matt Halvey, B 'Babby' and S Stack, Pat Cooke, Tom Mack, Pat Roche, Jim Morris, Josie Kelly, D Reynolds, B Gibbs. P J Cooney, John Quinn, John Spelman, Martin Farrell and Colman Quinn. Many of these also played with Galway county senior team.

The political upheavals from 1916 onwards pushed hurling into the background and it was not until the 1923 senior hurling all-Ireland final that the club again came to the forefront when club members Jimmy Morris, Ned Gilmartin and Bernie Gibbs were on Galway's first all-Ireland winning team. The Galway team were also trained by Jack Berry of Gort.

At local level, the establishment of the south board in 1913, saw teams from Gort, Kilmacduagh and Kiltartan compete at different levels in both south board and county championships with varying degrees of success. Indeed, there are many stories concerning the legion of matches by these teams with south board teams from Ardahan, Kilbeacanty, Beagh, Ballindereen, Kinvara, Clarinbridge, Kilchreest and Craughwell, which were fought with fierce intensity 'for the honour of the parish' and which occasionally demanded a visit to either Doctors Marlborough or Fallon. Kilmacduagh in the 1920s had a formidable team and won five South junior titles between 1919 and 1927 and beat Gort in the senior south final of 1930. Gort recorded south senior title victories in 1914, 1916, 1919, 1920 1922 1923, 1929 and 1931 and also won south junior titles in 1924 and 1926. Kiltartan won the south senior title in 1913 but success eluded them until 1935 when, they annexed the south junior title and again did so in 1936.

Despite much effort and enthusiasm, honours at county level were slow in coming, but 1934 saw a welcome senior county title coming again to Gort. Members of that team included Mick Keating, Paddy Rock, Mattie Brennan, Martin Hayes, Jack Hardiman, Pete Howard, Stephen Carty, Paddy Icklam, Colie Cooney, Jack Deely, Paddy and Mick Linnane, Gerry Heenan, Joe Glynn, Tom Vaughan Michael Cahill, Patrick O'Connor, Johnny Gillane and Tom Staunton

In 1939 Galway won the all-Ireland junior title for the first time and Gort were represented on this team by Wally O'Connor of Crowe St and Brendan Moloney George's St.

The 1930s, '40s and '50s saw some wonderful hurlers play for Gort but all too often economic circumstances forced many to emigrate. This affected teams at all levels so honours at club level were

Hurling in Gort

sparse for the effort put in. Despite this however, players of outstanding quality continued to emerge. Josie Gallagher, regarded by many countrywide as one of the greatest hurlers never to win an all-Ireland, together with brother Stephen, Tadgh Kelly, Cyril Piggott, Tom Lambert, Algie and Willie O'Connor, Bobby Dooley, Jack McNeill, Tomas 'Putsch' Howard, Paddy 'Pud' Piggott, Micko and Jerome O'Shaughnessy, Vincent Moloney, Kevin Burke, Joe Pete Hehir (current club president), Joe Cooney, Jack O'Connor, Joe Keane, Dick O'Connor and many others continued ploughing Gort's cause and while garnishing south senior titles in 1942 and 1943 were unsuccessful at county level. Gort did reach a county senior final in 1948 but went down to Castlegar.

In 1947, an all-Galway team representing Connaught won the Railway cup for the first time beating Munster in the final on the score 2-5 to 1-1. Josie and Stephen Gallagher together with Tadgh Kelly were on the winning team.

In the 1950/51 National League final Galway, having defeated Wexford in the home final, travelled to New York and beat a New York team in the final proper on the score of 2-11 to 2-8 to win the title for the first time. Gort had Josie Gallagher and Tadgh Kelly on the Galway team while Stephen Gallagher (Josie's brother) who had emigrated to the us in 1949 was on the New York team.

The 1950s saw new developments, a major one of which was the establishment of Our Ladys College in Gort in 1956 under the presidency of Fr Christopher Burke, who was an enthusiastic hurling follower and coach. Another was the introduction of the one club per parish rule, which meant that the clubs in the parish became integrated by the early 1960s. About this time also the colours green and gold were adopted as club colours.

Gort club won the senior south board championships in 1951, 1953, 1956,

1958, 1959 and 1961 and went on to win the 1958 intermediate county title and 1964 county junior and south board titles. Stalwarts in those teams included Josie Gallagher, Tadgh Kelly, Paddy Fahy, Ronnie Burke, Gerry and Padraic Cahill, Tom Crehan, Cyril Piggott, Cyril Glynn, Tommy Walsh, James Murray, Sean Cooke, Eric O'Shaughnessy, Paddy Kelly, Tom Nolan, Paddy Killeen, Flan Considine, Con Randles, Paddy Mullins, Evan Heenan, John Commins and Joe Gillane.

Gort won the juvenile south board championships in 1953 with the minor team also taking the south board title, thus starting a seven year run which saw the club win the south minor title each year up to 1959. Success at county level followed in 1957 when Gort minors won the county championship for the first time and again won in 1958 and 1959 becoming the first club to win the county championship for three in a row. Noel Mullins was captain in 1957, Sean Devlin in 1958 and Joe Stanford in 1959; other team members included Hubert Courtney, John Quinn, Gerry Burke, Ray Canning, Paddy Quinn, Paddy Cooke, Jack Hayes, Gerry Loughnane, P J Gillespie, Pat Coen, Billy McNeill, Marty McGrath, Lal Forde, Michael Regan, Tom Diskin, Brian Gilmartin, John Forde, Liam Gillane, Joe Cunniffe, Murty Kelly, Martin Roche, Anthony Gillespie, Christy Glynn, Brian Neilan and Gus Kelly. Sean Devlin also captained the Galway minor team in 1958 in the final against Limerick.

With the successes at minor, intermediate and junior county level, the 1960s looked promising but unfortunately, having reaching the senior county semi final in 1962 and going under to Turloughmore and despite many spirited displays, success eluded Gort at all levels on the county stage apart from the 1964 junior title already referred to. At county level Sean Devlin, James Murray, Gerry Cahill represented the club with Devlin winning a Munster intermediate medal

in 1962 during Galway's sojourn in that province.

The 1970s opened as the '60s had closed, being so near and yet so far, with defeats at county senior semi final stages by Killimordaly in 1970 and Turloughmore in 1972. 1973 saw a change of luck with the club again taking the south board senior title after a lapse of twelve years. This was followed in 1974 when the minors won the county and south board titles and, with the emergence of younger players such as G P Fahy, Sylvie Linnane, John Nolan and Kevin Fahy, Gort reached the final stages of the county senior league in 1977/78 and 1978/79 and lost out to Kinvara in the senior county semi final of 1979.

The dissolution of the south board and reorganisation of county structures in the mid 1970s meant a refocusing at county and club level. The growing impetus and success at county level from the mid-'70s onwards saw club players again coming to the fore. The senior all-Ireland triumph in 1980 saw Sylvie Linnane win the first of his three senior all-Ireland medals. Gerry P Fahy had been a regular on the Galway senior team in the '78/'79 league campaign, but had sustained a serious injury, which cut short his career, while Gerry Linnane had featured on the under-21 team and Pearse Piggott, Derek Fahy, Frank Shaw and Colie Roche played with the minors.

At club level the early 1980s proved to be one of the most successful eras. 1980 saw the club win the county under-21 championship for the first time, beating Meelick/Eyrecourt at Tynagh. This gave a tremendous boost to club confidence at all levels and set the stage for 1981 when the club, captained by Sylvie Linnane, went on to beat Kiltormer in the county final and win the senior county title for the fourth time, thus closing a forty-seven year gap since the last senior title. To add to supporters' joy, the under-21 team went on to retain the title, which they had won the previous year,

Hurling in Gort

again in 1981. In March 1982 the senior team beat Toureen in the Connacht final and went on to beat St Gabriels London in Ballinasloe, in the all-Ireland quarter-final, before going down to James Stephens of Kilkenny in the all-Ireland club semi-final on April 25th on a score of 1-13 to 1-8.

The exertions in the all-Ireland championships showed in the displays of 1982 and the senior team exited the county championship at the semi-final stage. However the team, captained by Joe Harte, regrouped and regained the county title in 1983, beating Castlegar in the county final for a fifth senior county title on a scoreline of 2-12 to 3-6. Further success followed when in September the club's side won the all-Ireland seven-a-side tournament at Glenalbyn grounds Dublin on the eve of the senior all-Ireland.

In November Gort gained their second Connacht title by defeating Toureen on a score of 3-13 to 1-5. After a short break for training over the Christmas, Gort met the Cork and Munster champions Midleton in the all-Ireland semi-final at Limerick on April 14th 1984 and, giving a tremendous display, beat the Corkmen by four points on a scoreline of 1-1 to 2-4. The final was fixed for the following day in Birr, where Ballyhale Shamrocks of Kilkenny were the opposition. A hard and tensely-fought game ended in a draw on 1-10 to each team. The replay in Thurles on June 3rd proved a major disappointment, as the Kilkenny team were victorious by 1-10 to 0-7.

The successes at both senior and under-21 levels during the period 1980/84 brought together probably the strongest combination of players ever to represent Gort and included Sylvie, Gerry and Martin Linnane, Matt Murphy, John Nolan, Tony and Christy Monaghan, Michael and Brian Brennan, Joe Harte, John John Commins, Michael Cahill, Joe Regan, Kevin Fahy, John Crehan, Gerry and John Lally, Colie Rock, Patsy

Hehir, Pearse and Gabriel Piggott, Pat Neilan, Frank Shaw, Martin and Des Kerins, Gerry P and Derek Fahy, Dermot Duffy, Kevin Nolan, Colie Roche, Patrick and Michael Helebert, Michael Mulcair, Gabriel Cloonan and Michael Mullins.

Gort's resurgence in the late 1970s to early '80s coincided with Galway's rise and players from the club featured prominently on many county teams both at that time and later in the decade. John John Commins won all-Ireland honours at minor level in 1983, under-21 in 1986 and senior in 1987 and 1988. Sylvie Linnane added senior all-Ireland medals in 1987 and '88, thus becoming one of a handful of Galway players to hold three senior medals. Michael Flaherty and Michael Helebert won medals with the under-21 all-Ireland winning team of 1986. Pearse Piggott holds an all-Ireland senior medal. Others to represent the county included Kevin Fahy, Gerry Lally and Gerry Linnane. The club also had members on the Railway cup, national League and Oireachtas winning teams of that era.

Despite the disappointment of losing the 1983/84 all-Ireland club final and the retirement of some of that team, Gort continued in the top ranks in the county but unfortunately no further success came their way, even though the senior team came out of the groups to the quarter- and semi-final qualifying stages for several years up to the '90s.

The early 1990s saw a new generation of players with county success coming at under-14 level in 1991. The under-14s also qualified for the county final in 1993 but were unsuccessful. Success came at minor level in 1992 with the club also taking a junior B title in 1998. The senior teams of the decade had mixed fortunes, qualifying to the quarter-final stages on several occasions but not progressing beyond that, while on one or two occasions avoiding relegation. However the current crop of young players have been consistent over the past two seasons and with

Ollie Fahy, Peter Cummin, Niall Linnane and Andy Coen, all of whom have inter-county experience to the fore, hopes are that success at senior level may not be too far distant.

Over the years, from the time when there were three separate teams in the parish, various locations had been used as pitches. Ballynamanton House lawn was Kiltartan's pitch, whereas Kilmacduagh trained in Kerins field. Gort had a variety of locations including Carty's field on the Ennis Road, Hardiman's field on the Loughrea Road, Rindifin where the present St Colman's Terrace is situated, Barry's field beside the river, Lahiffe's field where Topform is presently situated and St Colman's Park which has been home to the club since the 1940s and which is still used to a lesser degree since the club purchased the old golf club twenty-seven acre grounds and premises at Ballybane in 1995. Currently these grounds are being developed and have been laid out into a regulation full-sized enclosed pitch, an adult practice pitch and a smaller under-age and camogie pitch. A stand with seated accommodation for 1,000 persons, four dressing rooms/showers, a medical room and room for referee and officials, together with ladies' and gents' toilets are being developed alongside the enclosed pitch. Car parking spaces for up to 350 cars are also being set down, while the dressing rooms/showers in the club premises have been extended. Funding from the National Lottery has been received, which together with a FAs scheme and the club weekly lotto have been the mainstay of the development so far.

While new and better facilities are necessary and very welcome for both players and spectators alike, success on the playing field is the life blood of any club. With that in mind, 2003 brings a new and yet recurring challenge, namely the winning of a county championship. Hopefully we will not have to wait too long for that.