

Quaire 2008



Thirty years a-growing

€8

Gort and District Lions Club

BY PADDY O'GRADY

Gort and District Lions Club has continued with its good work since the last issue of *Guaire* and plans to keep up the momentum in the year ahead. Since we are often asked, "What is your club doing?" we plan to raise our public awareness to the level it deserves.

The club is part of the network of Ireland's one-hundred-and-twenty-five Lions clubs and of the world's greatest service organisation. There is a great unity of purpose and the members stand together in their dedication to improve their community and make a difference to the lives of others. The club's many acts of service over the sixteen years

of its existence, both large and small, have all added up to something very significant and valuable.

This year's service input has covered many aspects of local life, including raising major funding of € for the Gort Cancer Support Group. This was achieved at a gala evening in the Lady Gregory Hotel in April and it was styled the Joe McInerney memorial ball in honour of the memory of the club's founder member and first president. A group headed by Peter Minahane and also comprised of Anne Quinn, John Hansberry, Mary Keary and Peggy Mahon were the organisers. The emerald ball held last year was a huge success as a fundraiser when over €60,000 was raised for Downs Syndrome Ireland.

The club members are always conscious of their role as 'knights of the blind' in the campaign to contain and eliminate the leading causes of



Pictured at the presentation of a cheque for €32,000 to Sadie McInerney, chairperson of Gort Cancer Support Group is Peter Minihane, Lion Club secretary. Also in the picture are Mary Fennessy and Anne Quinn, GCSG.

avoidable blindness, including cataract, the greatest cause worldwide.

Lions Clubs international campaign, SightFirst, has got lots of support from the club over the years and was commended with a top five club merit award for its endeavours.

2007/2008 club president Graham Surman participated in the Dublin City Marathon in both 2006 and 2007 to raise funds for SightFirst and the annual teddy bear sale also made a big contribution to the project. The Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind charity is an annual beneficiary of funds and Sadie McInerney is continuing with her quest for used spectacles for sending to the needy in Africa.

Some other fund raising activities included a breakfast morning held in the Lady Gregory Hotel with the Gort Guild ICA building fund the beneficiary and a Coole Park walk on St Stephens day. Participation

continued in the Gort St Patricks day parade, a table quiz for primary schools was held and the annual peace poster competition was successfully organised.

There was much sadness among the club membership last Christmas week with the death of dedicated member and first president Joe McInerney. He had played a huge part in the success that the club has enjoyed since 1992 and fitting tributes were paid to him at the time of his lamented death.

Gort and District Lions Club does not stand still and complacent. The membership is innovative and creative and hopes thereby to give a more efficient and effective service.

Club president for 2008/2009 is Saide McInerney and Peter Minahane is secretary. Teresa Deane is treasurer and in the position of vice-president is John Hansberry.

Snippets from a travel blog

BY IRIAL P. CONTROY, A GORTONIAN IN SOUTH AMERICA



Inca Kola (Cuzco, Peru)

and needed several stitches.

Litoral is not literal

We booked a bus trip from Cuzco, Peru to Copacabana, Bolivia with the bus company *Litoral*. If anyone offers you a ticket with this company be aware that the literal translation to their brochure is as follows:

1) 'bus will depart at 10.00' means bus will

depart whenever the bus driver finishes talking to his buddies (possibly around 10.50);

2) 'luxury bus with reclining seats' means this bus was luxurious back in the '70s; now it would take a combination of McGyver and The Incredible Hulk to get the seats to recline;

3) 'As they are a Bolivian bus company there will be no problems crossing the border' means they will dump you off the main bus onto a crammed minibus about half-an-hour before the border; they will try to get you to use their currency exchange office; they will dump you at the border and get you to pay your own way from there to Copacabana;

4) 'The bus will arrive in Copacabana at 6:00 am' means you will arrive in Copacabana around 11:00, tired and not happy with the trip.

Porridge in the desert

It was a long haul from Cuba to Peru but first impressions were good: very well setup for backpackers. We stayed in an actual oasis in Huacachina (outside Ica); it's surrounded by gargantuan sand dunes. We didn't expect to see porridge on the breakfast menu but it turned out to be the tastiest I ever had.

We took a dune buggy trip followed by sand-boarding. The driver drove like he was sitting on a cactus: he had a disconcerting habit of clearing his glasses of sand just as he was about to go over the brow of a large dune. It was better than any roller coaster I've ever been on. At one point I had to help him with running repairs. I had to stick my finger in the fuel tank while he fixed the fuel line; thankfully it worked and we were on our way again quickly enough.

The actual boarding was excellent: we started on dunes about fifty metres high and progressed to ones about 200-300 metres high. You really pick up speed—too much speed in the case of a Japanese girl in our group—she went farther than anyone else and the group at the base of the dune couldn't get out of her way in time. She caught a guy's sand-board just above her eye

More 'George of the Jungle' than 'Tarzan'

We flew from La Paz to Rurrenabaque with TAM (Bolivian Military Airlines); come back Ryanair, all is forgiven. Most people were heading to the pampas not the jungle (partly due to the reports of manic mozzies in the jungle in the rainy season). We said we'd chance it and booked a three-day jungle tour with IncaLand Tours. Rurrenabaque is on the River Beni which is a tributary of the Amazon and has excellent rainforest, Madidi National Park being the main draw.

The two of us comprised the full tour-group. Our departure was inauspicious; the 'cocinera' (cook) was about an hour late, then shortly into our boat trip the motor-blade got stuck in a fishing net and it took about thirty minutes to extricate. But it turned out to be a fantastic trip.

From the Rio Beni we turned onto the Rio Tuichi and after about five hours in the boat we got to the camp. From there we were to take guided treks in various directions and for various lengths, led by our calm, knowledgeable and humorous guide Rene.

The recommended top to wear in the jungle is a white collar shirt;



Hostel Santa Ana rules (Rurrenabaque, Bolivia)

the reason is to ward off mozzies. It's ironic that the first time since I graduated that I've worn a white-shirt for three days happened to be in the Amazon rainforest...

Trekking in the jungle is a slow-burner: you don't spot large animals every few minutes but over the course of a day you see a lot. The sounds are amazing. Plants that you'd expect to go to your shin at home go to your head here and trees are fifty-plus, not ten, foot high. The foliage has a meaner edge to it: more thorns, more ways to stick to you.

We saw lots of medicinal trees. I bit too much of the leaf which is a



Guazu Falls (Brazil)

By Bolivian standards these guys are very expensive but they have the best bikes and gear; we were happy to fork out the extra in order to get reliable brakes.

It's a sixty kilometre bike-ride, less than five kilometres uphill and then all the rest is gravity-assisted (a 3,500 metre drop). We got on the bikes at La Cumbre (4,670 metres), surrounded by snow-covered mountains

regular intervals; these tend to help focus the mind on watching every bump. We had a few macabre stops to peer over the edge at the remains of buses far below.

We had two guides and a support van, that is, until we

came to a mudslide that had happened that morning, which meant the van had to retreat. We took our time on the worst parts and eased off the brakes on the better sections and let gravity usher us along. You cycle under waterfalls and through streams and as you descend you get into rainforest and the temperature gauge jumps up. By the time you get to Yolosa (just over 1,000 metres) it's blazing hot and you feel you've earned your 'I survived the Death Road' t-shirt.

Water falling

A drop of water falls over the edge of a glass and makes an indiscernible



The world's most dangerous road (Bolivia)

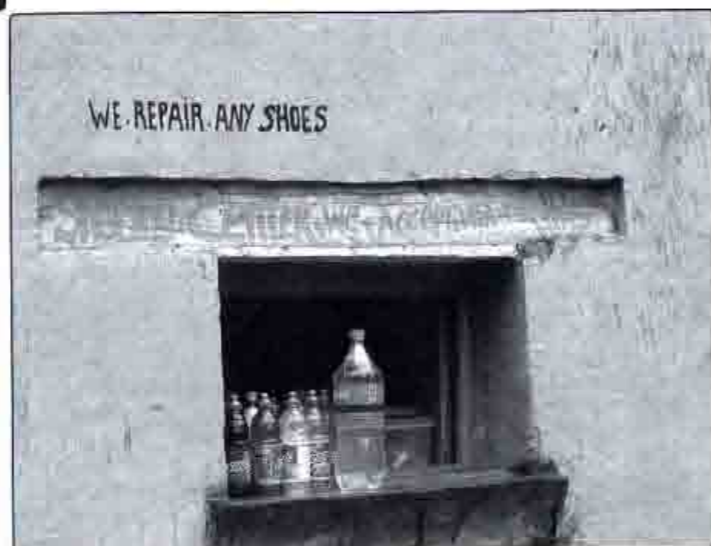
natural anaesthetic and my tongue was numb for an hour. Then we learned about 'walking trees': these grow roots in different directions from a base high above the ground. New roots may sprout in new directions and old ones may die - so in effect the tree can move location.

El Camino de la Muerte

It sounds more appealing in Spanish: in English the nickname translates as Death Road. It is a 'road' from La Paz (Bolivia) to Coroico which has seen more than its fair share of accidents. Basically it's a narrow, un-paved track through the mountains with lots of sheer drops. Mud-slides are frequent and add to the obstacles.

Going down this road on a mountain-bike is a 'must-do' if you are in La Paz. We did it yesterday with a company called Downhill Madness.

and freezing cold. The first section is downhill on tarmac so you gather speed easily. Then the 'new road' and the 'old road' diverge and we started our descent of the infamous gravel road. The views are amazing but the guide recommended we stop before admiring them—keeping your eyes on the road is crucial! There are crosses at



We take Visa, Mastercard etc

plop. Big deal. Well, with enough drops and a big enough height it can be quite spectacular. That is the case at Iguazu Falls (where Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay meet).



Perito Moreno Glacier (Patagonia, Argentina)



Galway pub penguins (Ushuaia, Argentina)

Argentinian buses

Their reputation is incredible and they live up to it.

We had a 'few' glasses of wine in Puerto Iguazu and then crawled onto an eighteen-hour Via Bariloche bus bound for Buenos Aires. It was luxurious: just eight massive seats in the lower deck. Refreshments served regularly. Dinner started with a salad course, then quality hot meal, dessert, coffee and biscuits, followed by champagne or whiskey! After the bone-shakers we were used to in Bolivia, this was pure luxury.

Bs As

'Bs As' seems to be the abbreviation used for Buenos Aires. It was hard

suit him.

Another oversized icecube: Moreno Glacier (Patagonia, Argentina)

They claim that it is 'very active' and it lives up to this. We saw or heard pieces breaking off approximately every ten minutes. Scores of tourists maintain a vigil here with cam-

eras at the ready trying to capture a big piece breaking off. You always think as soon as you turn away the big event will happen.

The standard tour we took includes a one hour boat ride up to the face of the glacier and five hours for viewing the glacier from land (probably about three hours too long in my opinion).

The bus driver/guide had dished out the same information zillions of times and wasn't very animated; that is, until she pointed out a US\$1,000 a night hotel facing the glacier. In a reverent tone she announced that Diego Maradona had spent a night there and that she had seen him on the balcony. From her tone you would think the glacier should have split in half to honour his presence!

King crabs at the end of the world

Ushuaia is the southern-most city in Argentina and the self-styled 'fin del mundo' (end of the world). It is the drop-off point for trips to the Antarctic for those with deep pockets.

The local speciality is king crab. I'm not big into seafood but had to try one of these impressive beasts. The waiter managed to get him out of the tank without losing a limb and within a few minutes he was on our table. We were given two large pairs of scissors and a brief tutorial on how to attack and away we went: very tasty. Of course the 'end of the world' has an Irish pub.



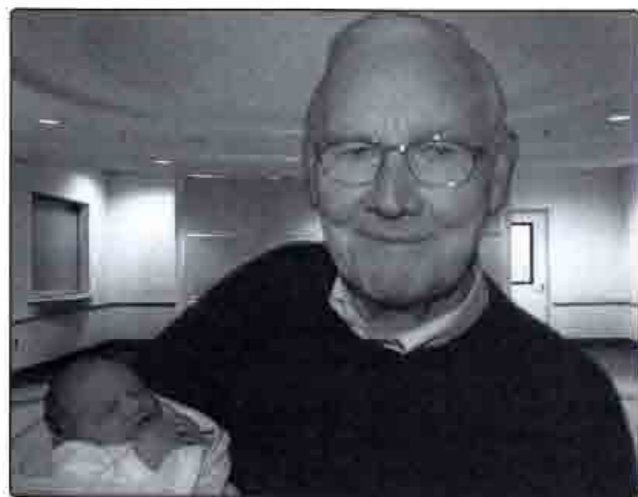
End of the road (Tierra del Fuego, Argentina)

Josie McInerney 1930-2007

BY AUSTIN MCINERNEY

If every man's memory is his private literature then the late Joseph McInerney held an undoubted library of knowledge. His hand written records live on, his invaluable thoughts, stories and tales passed on to friends and family but his irreplaceable experience is lost for ever. In writing this article about my late father I am conscious of all the families who have lost loved ones, we all have been cheated, we all grieve.

In the current downturn of the economy everyone suddenly realises the importance of property.



Negative equity, overly expensive mortgages, empty new homes, people under pressure. These phenomena are new to most but Josie if alive today would have been part of it all many times before.

Having worked with him for over seventeen years I was always party to his near constant references to 'the way it was'. Having set up business in 1962 Joe and Sadie moved soon after to Church Street and thus started nearly forty-seven years of the auctioneering business including council rate collecting, Irish Nationwide Building Society agency and commissioner for oaths.

As a child running in and out of the office I was aware of the constant stream of visitors to the then rather humble counter office which is now our office hallway. These people came to pay their rates, then a responsibility of home owners and farmers as well. One of my favorite jobs was when Josie handed me a large pile of envelopes, full of rate demand notes to deliver around the town; I must have been so popular.

But back then rates were a fact of life. Josie regularly spoke about widows who would put a lamb aside marked out to pay for the rates.

Rarely were rates unpaid, rarely were they much delayed. But that was then and in this very essence summed up so much about my father. Peoples' attitudes to money in the 1960s and '70s were fundamentally different to that of today. He had huge respect for those who fought their way out of

hard times and made a success of themselves and their families.

His memory was remarkable about sales, clients' names, dates, sale figures and the very details of the individual properties. His love of his trade was undoubted but I did notice a slight apprehension towards the modern era in the last few years. It bothered his wise old head to see so many young tradesmen in new cars and vans, so many foreign workers renting so many houses. It was obvious to him and to many others that a property market downturn could leave the town and its people in a tricky position of over-reliance.

In his personal life the devotion my father had for my mother was unflinching never failed to back her up and never let her down. They celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary in July 2007, fifty years of hugely successful mixed foursomes in golf, deadly partnerships at the card table, a well built-up business and somewhere in between time to raise six children who will always be in their debt.

Josie had a consummate love of hurling, football and of course golf. His ability to name the winning all-Ireland teams in order in both hurling and football for the last fifty years always amazed me, offering a little comment on each game as he went along. He won a county medal with Ardahan in 1949; he played full forward in the 1956 final which was drawn against Turloughmore which was subsequently and controversially awarded to Turloughmore without a replay. After moving to Gort, he played for Gort, on a free transfer I presume.

He served as captain and president of Gort Golf Club, a club he was deeply associated with since its very inception. He was also very proud of being one of the founding members of Gort Lions Club.

My father had many friends but he had an invisible inner circle of trusted confidants, people he trusted and respected above all others. Uppermost in this select group were his brothers Tomo and Miko, his last words to my Uncle Tomo before his own untimely death were 'you never let me down'.

Family of course was most important but in particular his grandkids, ranging from twenty-five-years-old to just one year, he adored them all, constantly keeping up to date with their progress and it is one of the most poignant memories of his last

week as he said a tearful goodbye to them one at a time.

For Mary, Gerard, Anne, Jarlath, Enda and myself we will always remember the passion he had for us to succeed.

Josie McInerney was a quiet, modest man, drank little, gave up cigarettes in 1969 and surely a damning indictment of smoking came in the hospital when one of the doctors said that his past smoking wouldn't help his condition, thirty-eight years later.

The office is a strange place now, his handwriting everywhere, clients that keep recalling past tales and stories, the respect they had for him reminds us of what we have lost. At the time of writing, the grass letting season is coming to a close, a part of the job he loved, meeting farmers he would otherwise rarely see, recounting tales, old matches replayed particularly with the Ballinderreen lads.

Walking and caring for his dog, chipping and putting on the practice green, a quick bite in Moran's of the Weir, a brandy and port in the local, these were his regular events, but keep Sunday afternoon aside, close the curtains and without fail Sadie and Josie would be sitting back in their own world watching the Sunday game and golf, at the same time, on two tvs.

Many people have past memories that involve my father, whether it was selling or buying, getting a valuation, lodging savings or simply advice. It is these types of memories that will keep us all alive for ever in someone's mind.

I have been to many funerals and will be at many more, I have witnessed other people suffering a loss of a near relative, have been somewhat detached from their pain. My father lived a full life, he was seventy-seven, old but not near old enough for us.

On behalf of the McInerney family I would like to sincerely thank all those who sympathised with us and to pass on our condolences to all those who have suffered a loss in their own home.

Long, happy lives

Mary Quinn of Killeen, Gort, born Mary Dolan on the 24th of July 1905 to Mary Conlon of Glandree, Tulla, County Clare and James Dolan of Killeen, Gort, was one of eight children, six brothers—Patrick, William, John, James, Michael and Christy—and one sister, Roseanne. She is the half-twin of the late Michael. Of the eight in the family, James Dolan of Lakefield, Gort and Mary are the only two surviving family members. James will be 102 on his next birthday.

Mary married John Quinn of

fought for the British army against the Turks in the Dardanelles.

She remembers the first cars on the roads in Gort, belonging to Lord Gort in Lough Cutra and the Perses in Shanaglish.

She recalls Lady Gregory and William Butler Yeats going to banquets in Lough Cutra Castle.

She remembers the first all-Ireland hurling final that Galway won in 1923. How all the people from ten miles around Gort came to see the Liam McCarthy cup, which was brought to the town by members of the victorious team, as Gort

had three players on the panel, Ned Gilmartin, her local pharmacist, Jimmy Morrissey, her local postman and Bernie Gibbs from Georges Street.

She attributes her long life to be-



Ballybane, Gort in July 1932. Together they had seven children: four boys, Martin, John, Patrick and James and three girls, Maura, Rose and Josephine. She has twenty-four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

From her memory she recalls the days of the Black and Tans with their army jeeps on the roads. She recalls the day of the Ballyturn ambush; she was in Gort with her mother, shopping. The Black and Tans came into the town of Gort and burned fifteen houses in Georges Street to the ground in revenge.

She recalls the 1914-1918 world war and she knew five locals who

ing very active and to plain, home-grown food—her own corn, vegetables and fruit from her orchard and honey from her bees, her own speciality. She enjoyed her birthday, which began with mass and a party afterwards with family and friends in Rosemount nursing home where she resides. Mary Quinn is now the oldest person living in south Galway.

Gort Cancer Support, one year on

Gort Cancer Support

Despite the significant scientific advances in cancer diagnosis and treatment, the number of cases is expected to increase further in the coming years. Moreover, it is clear that the government strategy on health favours a shift in emphasis from hospital to community based care.

With this in mind, Gort Cancer Support was established in June 2007 by members of Gort And District Lions Club, in particular Sadie McInerney and Anne Quinn. Its goal is to assist and support anyone going through a cancer experience as well

for a chat, for information or for the chance to share their feelings with trained volunteers. More formal sessions of short-term counselling can also be booked.

Information and education

Gort Cancer Support strives to provide up-to-date information and educational materials on cancer issues. By accessing information and educational resources, the individual and their family can increase their sense of control and empowerment as well as reduce feelings of isolation. We have also held seminars on issues such as skin cancer prevention.

service, to chemotherapy and radiotherapy sessions or to hospital or other appointments relating to their diagnosis.

Financial assistance

Most people find it difficult to discuss their financial situation but it is well recognised that having a significant illness presents an added monetary burden at a time when it is least needed. We understand these unique difficulties and are therefore in a position to offer small amounts of financial assistance to those who are experiencing particular financial difficulties, relating to their illness.

Strategic plan

Gort Cancer Support has further plans to develop our service into the future. Our most challenging aspiration is to have our own building. We believe that this is a vital aspect of the strategic vision of the unit.

Thanks

We would like to thank everyone who has supported Gort Cancer Support in any way since we opened in June 2007.

Contact details

We are located in the VEC building on the Ennis Road (site of the old tech), Gort. The centre is open on Monday evenings from 6:30 pm to 9:30 pm and Thursday mornings from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. Our telephone is carried by a volunteer on a rota basis, 365 days of the year. The telephone number is 086 172 4500.

All services are confidential. Furthermore, as our services are provided free of charge and supported through fundraising, we are totally reliant on the generosity of the public to fund these services. If you would like to assist in any way, as a volunteer, fundraiser or donor, please telephone or call to the centre.

BY MARY FENNESSY



Pictured at the opening of the Gort Cancer Support centre in June 2007

Left to right: Sadie McInerney, of Gort & District Lions Club & Gort Cancer support, Eleanor Barrows, director of Tuam Cancer Care, and Anne Quinn, of Gort & District Lions Club & Gort Cancer Support.

as their loved ones, from the time of diagnosis through treatment and at any time thereafter. Our services are as follows:

Emotional support

The centre provides a drop-in service in a safe, positive, caring and confidential environment where anyone affected by cancer can call in

Complementary therapies

Those who wish to may also avail of complementary therapies, once approved by their medical team. We currently offer reflexology, art therapy and counselling at the centre.

Drivers

A team of drivers is available to transport anyone, who requires this

Finn Krewer, our own 'Bill Gates'

BY SHARON CONNOLLY

Ireland's answer to Bill Gates may be living in our midst in the form of Finn Krewer, a seventeen year old from Poulataggle, Tubber, Co. Clare. Finn is exceptionally talented when it comes to computers. He spends a great deal of his spare time taking computers apart, rebuilding and fixing them. He has also taught himself three programming languages, something normally only accomplished by students after four years of third level education.



Finn first came to the attention of his teachers in Gort Community School when he represented the school along with Michael Sell, Robin Flake and James Mahon in the BT Young Scientist competition in 2007. Their project, the electromagnetic glove, was highly commended by the judges. While there, they learned about a Microsoft-run competition called the 'imagine cup', the premier students' worldwide programming competition, the olympics of the computing world; second level schools were permitted, for the first time, to enter this competition in 2007. As it is usually entered by third level computer or programming students it makes their achievements all the more impressive. One aspect of this competition was the Hoshimi programming challenge. Finn, with assistance from Michael Sell, entered this part of the competition and beat five third level college teams to represent Ireland at the world stages of the event. Unfortunately, they didn't make it to the finals in Korea but reaching the level they did was a huge achievement for two Second level students.

Finn represented the school again in the BT Young Scientist competition in 2008 along with nine other students, all involved in very different projects. His project was the design and programming of a virtual chemistry laboratory. Again,

while at the young scientist competition, Finn found out about another competition being held in Tipperary. He accomplished a tremendous achievement on March 13th 2008 when he competed against and beat five third level college teams in the XNA Game Design and Programming Challenge which was being held in the Tipperary Institute in Thurles. Competitors were required to design and program their own version of the iconic space invaders game. The competition was organised to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the launch of the game. Finn found himself as the only second level student in the competition. He defended his entry before a panel of judges, all experts in the field of computing, coming from Microsoft Ireland, Microsoft UK, major global gaming companies and lecturers in computing from several colleges across Ireland. Finn's prize included an X Box 360 and a work placement with one of the major game development companies in America.

Finn is generous with his time and talents. Another competition, called RoboCode, was being run in Thurles on the same day that Finn won the XNA challenge. Four junior students from Gort Community School, in two separate teams, entered this competition under the mentorship of Finn. One of these teams came second in the competition, being

beaten by a team of leaving certificate students. Finn gave a good deal of his time to these four students to prepare them for this competition.

His achievements have attracted a lot of interest from the media; Finn took it all in his stride. Comfortable giving interviews to print journalists and doing photo shoots, he was very professional during filming for RTÉ's *Pobal* which was aired in April 2008.

In April 2008 Finn was invited to present his game at the Irish Microsoft Technology Conference in Dublin. This was a tremendous honour for him and while there he had the opportunity to meet with very influential people in the world of computing including, most notably, the head engineer with Google in Ireland. The contacts that he made during that time will, no doubt, be of benefit to him in the future.

The students and staff of Gort Community School are justifiably proud of Finn and, in recognition of his successes in the field of computing, Finn was presented with a special achievement award by the school in May 2008. In addition, at the end of his leaving certificate year in the school, he was honoured with the title of student of the year.

Finn, at all times, represented his school to an exceptional standard, be it in competition, presenting at the conference or dealing with the media. He was and is at all times respectful and grateful for everything the school has done for him.

Finn continues with his study of computers when he enrolls in NUIG in September 2008. Even though he has passed through Gort Community School he hopes to continue tutoring interested students in the art of programming by running a regular programming club in the school. Perhaps he will inspire another 'Bill Gates' in the area.

Artists' views



Josephine Ward

I cannot say when my art life began, as I always seemed to draw, as did my brothers and sisters. Older readers might remember a programme on Radio Éireann called *Drawing and Painting* with Marion King; my family regularly entered our little efforts and were delighted and encouraged as our names were mentioned. Creativity was part and parcel of our lives, and we grew up thinking all families were the same.

Of course, as a teenager I wanted to attend art college but, as for many of my generation, art wasn't considered a worthwhile degree and I studied for a degree in commerce instead. In those days it was such a privilege to attend college at all that you didn't argue.

However, the gods smiled on me, and when I started teaching in my old Alma Mater in Roscommon I was asked to set up an art department and be responsible for all the classes. No art was taught there before that. It was some challenge, but being young and optimistic I jumped into the role and thoroughly enjoyed it. Somehow that led to an active art life in Roscommon, which included among other things, drawings for a local parish magazine; a good grounding for becoming involved with *Guire* in its beginnings in Gort in October '78.

Gort has often inspired my creativity, from making banners for Gort

autumn festival and other functions, the longest being forty-five feet, to designing posters for local events.

In late 1981, I was given the privilege of designing and painting backdrops for Gort and District Musical Society, which was just established. I

found the whole experience totally liberating. The backdrops measured twenty-four by twelve feet and were painted on the floor. I never knew how they'd look 'till they were hung. I learned a lot over the years I was involved; how to measure distance as a farmer does with strides and painting late one weekend night I learned that you didn't always need the correct colour paint, as expert lighting could transform any scene.

I always admired the Italian old masters who worked very large and here was I, allowed to indulge my fantasies on a grand scale and that it was actually wanted. It's hard to describe the joy of working big, like a

child given a wall and a box of crayons. Of course, there were stresses too—deadlines and on one occasion a change of direction where an entire scene, backdrop and side tabs, needed to be repainted. Some wonderful scenes spring to mind from those pantomimes: Renee as a witch emerging from the background scene, Mickey's emotional egg laying, the dancing cage, and of course the imaginative slapstick of Niall and Kevin.

My involvement with the Wild Swan group now is minimal in comparison but the fun in rehearsals is just as good, even with serious drama.

Finally, I must mention all the great people I met while giving art classes in the various parishes, Ballyturn, Labane, Peterswell and in Gort itself. In an atmosphere of great craic I often felt I learned as much as I taught.

Recently I returned to study for an art degree, as being self-taught I wanted to prove my maturity to myself; I did. I still paint and I still have an awful lot to do.



Longing for blobs and paint splashes – Mary O'Halloran

"It's nice...but...what is it?" "Well, it's not about realism." "Right...but...is it a boat? A face?"

Sometimes, when the point of art escapes its viewer, it can make you question the reason to paint at all. After all, art doesn't seem on the surface to be very important. It doesn't feed people or house the elderly. It



doesn't keep law and order or organise governments. Part of the life of an artist can be the constant validation of purpose in a world of material values. In times of hardship, art is the last in a long line of priorities.

This was the world I was born into. Everyone worked, because they had to—it was the only way to survive. In rural Ireland in the sixties, there simply wasn't room for things like art and culture.

And yet I remember the constant longing to paint, to dream. I remember the careful colouring with hard crayons from Santa Claus and I remember the movement of the paintbrush across a blank space, when I finally got to paint at boarding school. There was that wonder of creating something from nothing.

Today, the process remains as seductive: the feel of a pencil on paper; the scraping of a pen; ink running into a pool of water and bursting into pigment; the smell of oil paint, turpentine; the softness of a brush laden with paint. This part of art is a form of play, of journeying back to the child within.

Then, there is that need of expression that burns within us since the first Neolithic man painted on dark cave-walls. It makes us paint still. We need to create as we need to dream, to pull us out of bland ex-

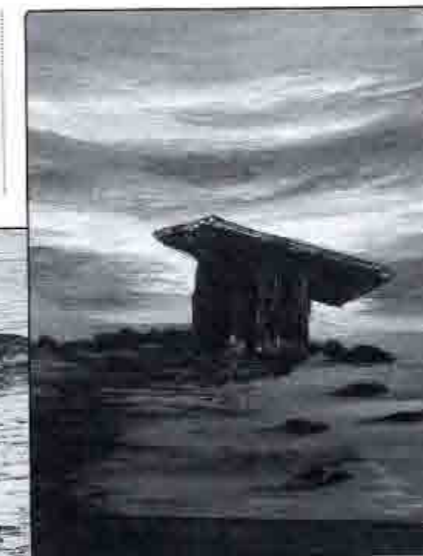
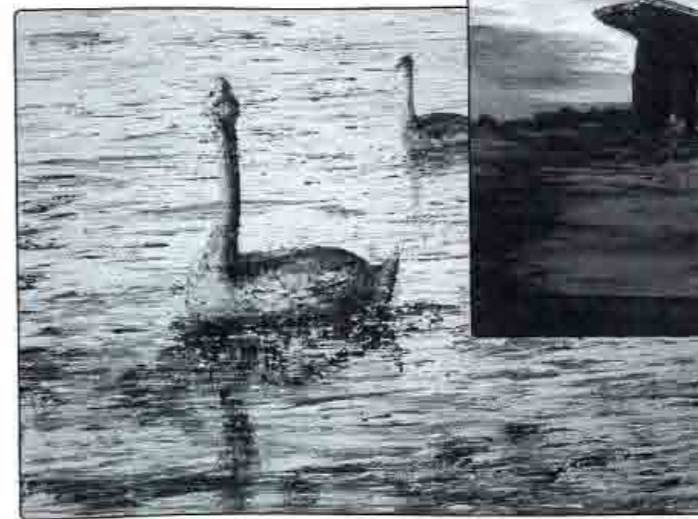
istence, to reach out and touch the world around us.

Inspiration comes from many places; things stumbled upon; personal experience; a photograph in a newspaper; a poem; a word; a moment. Once a subject is found, the work begins on paper, in scrapbooks. I work with pencils, pen, collage. Images and marks are worked in a series of layers, one image juxtaposed against another until the finish comes through and the image is ready. Oil paintings are slower. Still there is the layering but it is less immediate. Building up, rubbing out, letting the image rest and the fresh eye to re-evaluate. It is not unusual to return to a work many times, constantly balancing composition, balance, space.

In the end, art is above all, a way of seeing; a kind of spiritual food. Some days, it comes quickly and in a flurry of inspiration, other days it's a slow labour, a difficult discipline. But in the end, it is a deeply satisfying world to live in—this world of paint.

Sharon Kelly

Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Sharon Kelly has drawn and painted all her life. As an only child growing up in Newcastle, she occupied herself for many hours sketching



Two paintings from local artist Sharon Kelly

with pencils, leaving the Sacred Heart comprehensive school in Fenham with an A-level art. She left Newcastle for Leeds to commence her registered nurse training. Art stopped for a while and it was not until suffering a major illness and now a married woman living with a young family in Birmingham and after a chance meeting with artist Pat Moss that Sharon began painting again. Now living with her family in the old school, Kilmacduagh, Sharon is an active member of the Galway Art Club and has taken part in many exhibitions using acrylics, oils and stained sculptures. She currently gives lessons in her home where she welcomes visitors to view her work and that of fellow artists.

The mill, Gort

BY JOHN HYNES



and be used as an important educational resource, demonstrating the milling process from start to finish, its importance to the local economy and the

The very first edition of *Guire* in October 1978 contained an article entitled Hynes' Old Water Mill, Gort by the late Willie Quinn. The attached photograph of the mill accompanied the article. Willie was not only a man with a great interest in Gort's history and heritage but also Gort's only professional photographer at that time. Willie saw the mill as an important part of Gort's heritage, a 'grand link with our simple past' but, by 1978, 'silent and still as the waters that churn idly by'.

Sadly, as we know, the mill was demolished in 1985. According to newspaper coverage at the time, local conservationists were upset at the 'wanton destruction' of the mill, which had been demolished without any advance notice. A spokesman for the then owners, the Gort Livestock Mart, claimed that the building was in a dangerous condition. Having grown up in Flower Vale and spent my childhood around the mill, I was shocked when I was told by a friend that it was no more. I am quite sure that, if there had been a will to save the mill, it could have been preserved for posterity. It could have been turned into a tourist attraction

life of the town and surrounding area. But there were obviously other agendas then. People make their decisions for their own reasons and we have to accept that and move on. There is less likelihood that it would happen these days and for that we can be grateful.

The grinding of flour began in the mill in the early years of the nineteenth century, when John Mangan, a member of an Ennis milling family, came to Gort and took over a tuck mill from the Lahiffe family, which he converted into a grain mill. The Mangans remained in Gort until around 1880. They were a very interesting family and a fascinating article on the family by John Flatley appeared in the *Connacht Tribune* on the sixth of August 1982. It appears that the family were very religious and had a private oratory in their house. John Mangan is also reputed to have been one of the main people involved in bringing the sisters of mercy to Gort in the mid-nineteenth century. John Mangan died in 1864 and is buried in Shanaglish. The Mangan clan have spread far and wide but Gort is an important part of their history and one of their number, Aedine

Mangan, who resides in Dublin, has done a lot of work on the Gort connection. She has donated a number of family photographs for Flower Vale, which was the name given by John Mangan to the land around the mill. Surprisingly, these photographs are in the Galway county library rather than the Gort library.

Some time after the Mangans left in 1880, my grandfather Martin Hynes took over the mill and it stayed in our family until 1980. The Hyneses had also been a milling family, with mills in Oranmore and Cloon. The mill which my grandfather took over in Flower vale was one of the finest examples of a grain mill in the whole country. It had all a mill required, including a large kiln where the grain could be dried. The operation of the mill itself involved a complex system of gears, pullies, locks and hoists. The two most important pieces of equipment were the outside wooden water wheel and the dressed grinding stones (called querns) inside. There were four querns on the first floor, each driven by a shaft from the ground floor. The stones were of French burr, quarried in the Paris basin. The grain was hoisted to the top floor and fed into the centre of the stones to be ground. It could be 'roughed' or 'fined' as required. In my father's words, the mill made the finest of brown flour and I can still remember the taste of the bread. I was born in 1947 and can remember the yard being full of horses and carts during the 1950s when the mill was still fully operational. But demand gradually reduced to the point where, in the early 1960s, the only customers were people who couldn't do without the taste of the 'real' flour, bringing small *caiscíns* of grain to be milled, on the back of their bikes.

Another interesting aspect of the mill was that it was used to supply part of the town with electricity. This was well before my time but I can remember the old equipment involved which was still there in my day. In a letter to the *Connacht Tribune* on the 12th April 1985 to complain about the demolition

of the mill, Richard Coen, who was brought up in Gort, recalled watching film stars—he specifically mentioned Errol Flynn, who will be familiar to the older generation—in the cinema in Barrack Street, with power supplied by the mill.

My sister Josephine Curtin, Kinvara, and I are the last to have

grown up in Flower Vale and have great memories of the mill as a working mill. It was an integral part of our family's history. Its demise was a personal loss to our family as well as a major loss to the town and the area. We will not see its like again.

Gort and District Show

For more information on the Gort Show, please visit our web site at www.gortshow.com

Gort proudly presented its twenty-seventh annual district show on Sunday the 10th August 2008. The show is held each year in the Gort Community Centre and Gort Community School grounds and has become the town's biggest all-day event, with thousands enjoying a family day out with something to offer everyone's taste.

This year's show had over 220 individual classes, featuring home and garden produce, flowers, handicrafts, art, photography, poultry, horses, ponies, donkeys, cats and dogs.

And, with the ever-growing interest in photography, this year the show was proud to present the Minahane's SuperValu photographic competition, open to amateurs, semi-professionals and professionals and

was run alongside our hugely successful amateur section, with superb prizes.

This year's show was opened by Ian Stone, chairman, along with the Gort Rose Natasha Schembri, Kilkenny.

The show offers over €10,000 in prize money, including €2,000 in special prizes. New to this year's show was the display by the local fire brigade, featuring their rescue skills from people trapped inside vehicles and was widely talked about.

The beautiful bonny baby competition was a class apart; they were gorgeous.

A wide choice of food was available from upstairs at the show, which this year we were delighted was run by the local Ambiance restaurant in Gort.



Above: Ian Stone (chairman) and Natasha Schembri-Kilkenny (show queen) at the opening of Gort Show 2008



Left: pictured at a presentation to Gort Show Back row, left to right: Pádraic Giblin (vice-president), Peter Minahane (SuperValu), Ian Stone (chairman), Seamus Killeen (committee member) and Pat O'Donnell (dog show chairman) Front row, left to right: Mary Forde-Flaherty (PRO Gort Show), Fiona O'Driscoll (Minahane's SuperValu, main sponsors) and Fidelma Larkin (secretary)

Scoot!

BY GERARDINE KILLEEN

Since my teens, I had wanted a scooter. In fairness, there was a time when the desire for a scooter was replaced by the desire for a 'proper' motorcycle but I put that down to thrilling pilion rides with speed merchant pals when I was in UCG (NUIG for younger readers). But the scooter was always there, waiting its turn.

I don't know why the scooter idea took hold of me. I think it had something to do with seeing Audrey Hepburn behind Gregory Peck—both great favourites of mine—in the movie *Roman Holiday*. The romance of it, the utter cuteness of it, just got hold of me and so a slow burning infatuation was born.

I never made a big deal of the scooter thing but, being back in London full-time for the last two years with the oppressively crowded tubes and buses, the scooter seemed quite the practical solution to the problem (trauma?) of getting about and I started to discuss it with friends. They thought I was having a mid-life crisis. They might be right.

Scooters were appearing everywhere. I'd be stuck on a crowded bus, mashed into the armpit next to me (so often a stranger to soap and water) and I'd see the squadrons of scooters whizzing by. The slow burn became a blaze.

I made a careful study. By June, I could tell you the details of nearly everything on the road, down to the service interval. I understood the difference between two and four stroke engines, the implications of wheel size, the importance of oil grade, the periods of warranty by make and model and a whole lot more I won't bore you with. All this to make the informed choice because yes, finally, I was going to scoot.

I was determined not to look foolish so I had a lesson. No chucking, stuttering or stalling for me when I

rode away from the showroom in my shiny new buzzcat. I also wanted to be safe on the road but that was secondary. Anyone who ever saw Norman Wisdom in a nurse's uniform, trying to walk on high heels, will know how awkward I was that first hour.

I improved quickly though and, with the confidence of new-found skill, I went to buy. I knew what I wanted. I ought to after all the homework. I was going back to my roots: Audrey and Gregory and the classic scooter experience. I was having a Vespa. An LXV 125 cc to be exact. Cream body, caramel coloured leather seat, bags of chrome—a pure drop of joy to a longstanding *inamorata* like myself. I had seen her in the catalogue. When I saw her in the showroom, the blaze became an inferno. I named her Lola.

When the time came to pick her up and finally hit the streets, I was as excited as a kid on Christmas morning. Lola and I took off down the road like we had been together for years. I immediately felt at home on her. It was wonderful with the breeze whistling past my helmet and the sensation that the flesh was being pulled back on my face, I looked down to see what speed I was doing. The speedometer read thirty miles an hour. It felt like mach one.

But London is full of challenges for scooters and their riders. Firstly (Lord have mercy) the road surface. For all Lola has a great suspension, nothing quite prepares you for how an uneven surface will rattle the teeth in your head. It's not the big potholes. You can see those and dodge them. It's the shallow pitting you get where the surface has cracked on the pimpling where holes were filled that catches you. And, since half the streets in London have roadworks at the moment, there's a patchwork quilt of tar wherever you

go, so I often have the sensation of being on a toboggan. It can be quite the white knuckle ride.

Nothing can prepare you for running the gauntlet of those big red London buses and the folk who drive them. They gobble up the space on corners and at junctions. If I don't keep my wits about me, they will gobble up Lola too. And they pull out whenever they like, regardless of what is coming. A bit like the London taxis, who show a great want of manners when it comes to other road users in general and to the two-wheeled users in particular. I don't know what we do to offend them but there must be something because why else would they take every opportunity they can to cut us up? I manage the twin perils of bus and taxi by taking my time and keeping as far away from both as I can. This means sometimes zigzagging through the back streets but a tactical retreat is better than taking on a bus.

My first time around Hyde Park Corner was interesting. Five lanes of traffic rolling around the Victory monument from six different roads will focus the mind in a car but on a scooter it really is time to grab a firm hold of your miraculous medal. I held my place and my nerve throughout and passed around smoothly. I did wonder what the noise was along the way and only realised on coming off that it was me yelling, a bit like someone on a rollercoaster. Happily, a helmet hides your blushes.

I regularly have the situation where the chaps (invariably) on 'real' bikes pull up beside me at lights or in queues and rev their engines. I have to laugh out loud at that. Don't they know I'm not competing? I'm simply living the romance, a dream as old as *Guire*. Here's to both!

Gallagher's pool on the River Beagh

BY KEVIN GILTINAN



A view looking north-east back up the river over a fertile little rapid to the road side entrance to the river

When they arrived

About 10,000 years ago, the climate in Ireland warmed again from the most recent glacial period that we have experienced and the juniper spread and the birch appeared in large numbers for the first time. Pine, elm and other forest trees also appeared and Ireland began a long-term process of forestation. Other plants and animals crossed the land bridges as well. Red deer, wild boar, possibly bears, red squirrels, pine martens, wolves, foxes, stoats and eagles and other birds of prey took up residence. Fish and game birds were present in abundance.

When we arrived

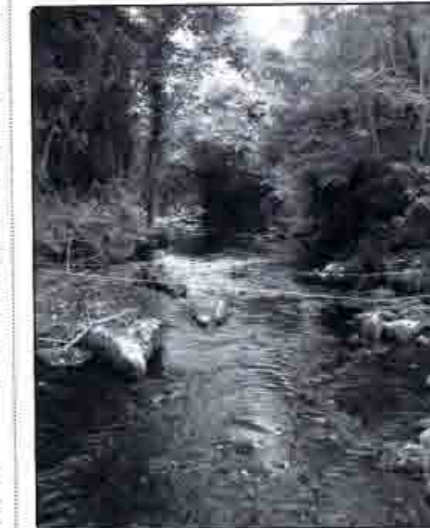
My partner and I first arrived in Gort in 2001, some 12,000 years after the guys above, thank God, because oil wasn't invented then. I had accepted a job in Galway city and little did I think that the small local river of Beagh was about to provide me with so much pleasure in a pastime of fly fishing. This was an activity I hadn't enjoyed for many years and had reminded me of the long past memories of fly fishing in the river Bandon in the late 1970s and '80s.

Learning lesson

I can recall when the family relocated from the centre of Dublin city

to a small west Cork village in the 1970s, I found myself amongst strangers and clans. As a young teenager, this transition was a difficult time, sometimes being bored out of my mind in a country village which apparently had little to offer and nothing to do. I took to exploring the grand old manor houses of the area, now all in ruins. Four miles away was the town of Bandon,

where it was said that even the pigs were protestant. So the vestiges of English opulence were all around



A view looking south-west down the river to some more difficult fishing spots; not recommended to be done alone

to be viewed and, fortunately, some estates languished along the banks of the river Bandon.

A chance meeting

I had discovered the movement of trout and salmon in the river and planned to return later that day, having assembled a rudimentary fishing

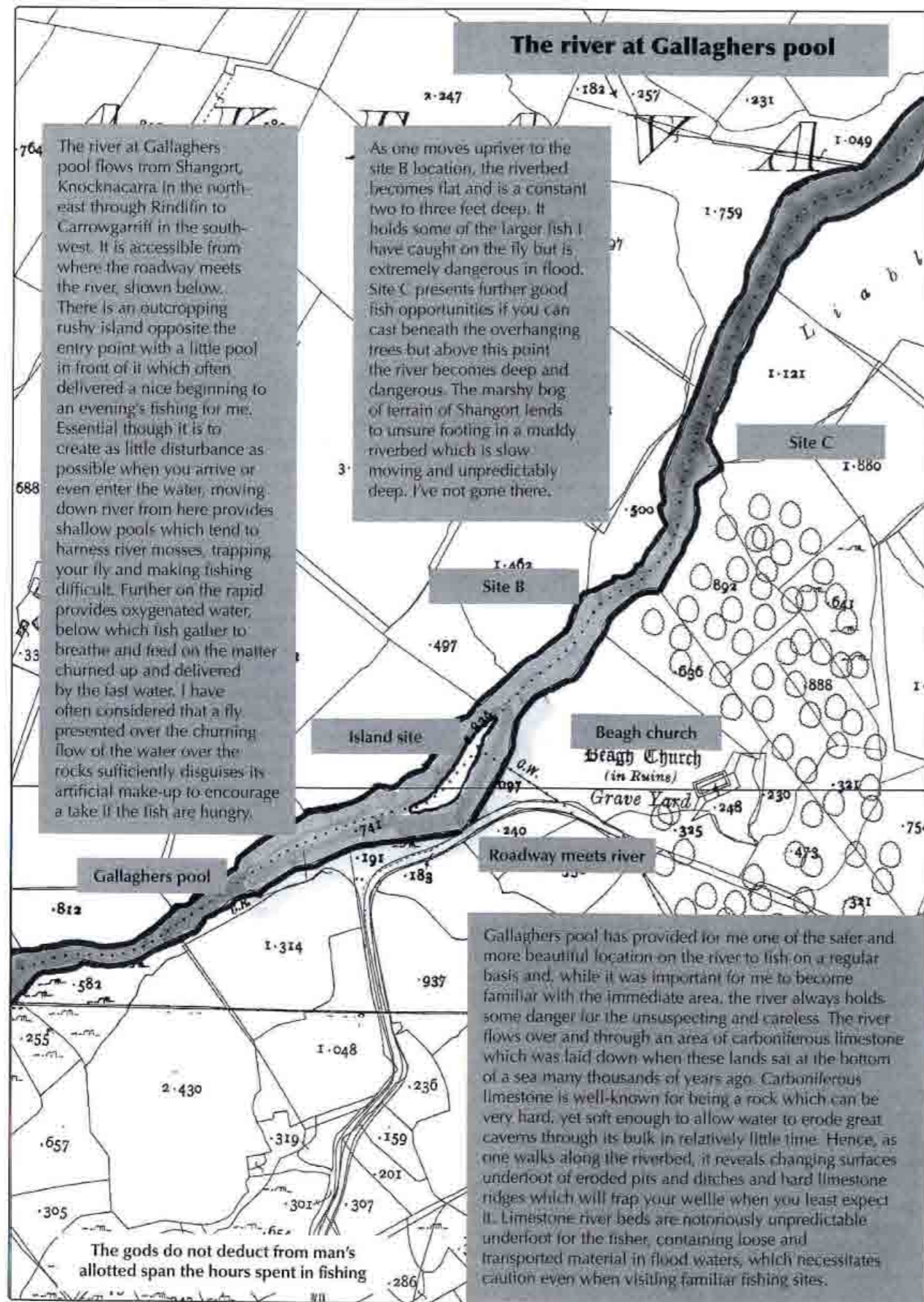
rod from a tree branch, a roll of line, one of mother's safety pins, bent to form the hook and an unsuspecting worm that hadn't realised its flies were undone when it was unceremoniously speared as bait for the event. There I remained for hours without as much as a nibble and, to top it all, a man calling himself 'the bailiff' enquired of my catch for the day. Embarrassingly, I replied simply 'none'.

Of course, I was much too much the city boy to realise that he was being facetious and he knew the only thing I would have caught that day was a cold if I had stayed any longer. He did make one simple request though, that, with the permission of my parents, I should return to the exact same spot the following day and he would teach me to fly fish. Charlie McNamara, a gentleman for whom I still hold much affection and fond memories, arrived the following day as he had promised and provided me with fishing tackle and tuition and, in doing so, introduced me to one of life's finer pastimes, the art of fly fishing.

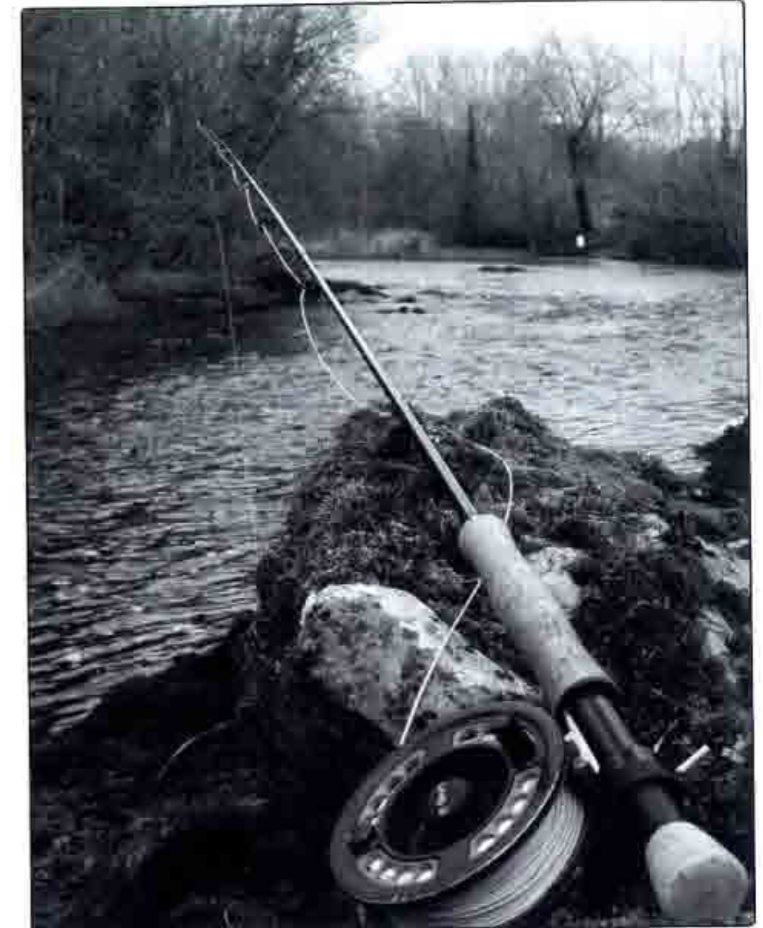
Seasons and flies

Fly fishing for trout begins in March and April when the first fly, usually large dark olives followed by medium olives and iron blue duns appear. The fish are most active during mid-day. The month of May sees a flourish of fly hatches, including mayfly in some rivers but also sedge of various species, olives, black gnats, hawthorn flies and many more. The hatches start early and continue into the evening. This pattern is sustained into June when evening fishing can be superb during hatches of blue-winged olive, a widespread Irish fly found on most rivers in Ireland.

And so I joined the Kilbeacanty and District Angling Club and re-engaged the beautiful pursuit of fishing.



The limestone outcrop at Gallaghers pool provides a wonderful picnic spot to rest, listen and watch fly hatch and fish activity while somebody else is eating your sandwiches out of sight behind you!



And as I chanced upon the river bank
A din arose, unknown to me before
A sip, a splash, a ripple, moving sharp
Excitement and anticipation of some more.

And, having chanced upon a rising fish
I knew that time would ne'er provide
Enough to languish by a bank and tie and cast
For silver flashing darts to search the fly.



Kilbeacanty and District Angling Club
Left to right: Mick Cahill RIP, Mary Duffy, Paddy Grealish, Josie Gallagher RIP, Johnny Moran, Michael Duffy, Jimmy Curley, Olive Duffy and Cathal Duffy in front

Sr Peg Hynes (1933-2002) — advocate of the poor

BY PATRICK HYNES



The Irish diaspora have put down roots and settled in many places. From this diaspora come many individuals who are innately proud of their Irish heritage and roots. Among those was an Irish-American nun call Sr Peg Hynes who had Gort roots. Sr Peg was an amazing, dignified, dynamic lady who had many elements to her life including those of athlete, accomplished scholar, religious sister, teacher, director of a charity, sister and family member, Irish dancer, advocate and friend to many.

Her parents were Tom Hynes and Nellie Burke who emigrated from here in 1920 to Philadelphia. Tom was from Lisbrien and Nellie was from Keanspound. Tom and Nellie met and married in Philadelphia and had five daughters, the second eldest of whom was Peg.

Peg, born in Philadelphia on June 7th 1933, was a star student in Hallahan high school, the first Catholic high school for girls in the United States, earning honours and was an accomplished basketball and softball player. In addition to her high school diploma she was awarded the scholar/athletic award for the class of 1951 and was president of the athletic association. She entered the sisters of St Joseph in 1954, studied to be a teacher and received a BA in history from Chestnut Hill College, Pennsylvania and a masters in religious studies from Boston College. For over thirty years she taught in schools in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Washington DC as teacher or principal. In 1986 Peg decided to change career and went to work as managing director of the Heart of Camden charity in Camden,

New Jersey, one of the poorest cities in the United States.

Since 1984 Heart of Camden has renovated and sold homes to families with low incomes who have purchased them from the charity, which holds the mortgages, charges no interest and makes no profit. Peg worked as the director, overseeing all the development and day-to-day running of the charity. Peg had much involvement as a mentor, motivator, leader and of course worker. She would never expect someone to do something she was not willing to do herself. She was very involved in advocacy work and in 1996 she spoke before the New Jersey assembly where she stated that, "We are attempting to make ours a stable neighbourhood by making home ownership available to families who would never qualify for a conventional mortgage. We have a dream, not a dream merely to renovate houses but to renovate humanity."

Some of her other tasks included at Christmas co-ordinating the delivery of 1,000 food baskets to the needy in Camden and she was instrumental in the toy sale. She once explained that families were charged a nominal amount for the toys because to pay even a little gives people "the dignity of choice and the dignity of purchase." She helped the poor without making them feel like charity cases. A community resource centre was opened in 1995 and named the Hynes Educational Resource Centre in honour of Peg. This invaluable community resource is still going strong and provides adult education programmes and a meeting venue for community groups in Camden.

Peg was literally the heart of Camden for many years. Fr Michael Doyle once described how for her working in Camden, "the hoops are higher and more jagged...it's a

night game without lights but she is a star." She challenged governors and bureaucrats in order to try to improve the lives of the community in Camden.

She received numerous awards including a memoriam from the city of Camden following her death and also an induction in 2003 into the Delaware Irish hall of fame posthumously. In 1997 she was grand marshal of Philadelphia's St Patricks day parade. She also received the Habitat award from the United Nations and was inducted into the Hallahan high school hall of fame in 2000. Currently there is a scholarship fund dedicated to her memory, supporting a student each year in Sacred Heart School in Camden.

Peg was hugely proud of her Irish roots, family and in particular Gort. She visited two of her first cousins, Denis Hynes, RIP, Ballyhugh and John Murray, Rindifin and was always glad to make that connection with the Irish side of her family. She never lost touch with her Irishness, was an accomplished dancer and loved anything Irish including poetry, song and dance. Peg enjoyed a family gathering in Finnerty's pub in Tubber in 1993 where there was an Irish night on. She danced all night. She loved the peace and tranquillity of Coole Park and her jaunts to Kinvara and Dun Guaire castle where she learned of the historic Hynes connection there.

Sr Peg died tragically in a car accident on December 21st 2002 in Cherry Hill New Jersey. The driver of the other car, who was high on crack cocaine, was charged with manslaughter.

Peg loved to dance and in later years suffered with arthritis in her knee. However she had a motto: "I hurt to dance, I hurt not to dance. So I dance." That was the spirit that we all saw in Peg.

Memories of Gort

BY MIKE DOLAN



Mike Dolan in 1940

Although I was born in England, my parents were born and raised in Ireland and I always felt that I was truly Irish. This has occasionally caused minor problems with my wife Diana when Ireland plays England at rugby. I am afraid I can't bring myself to watch the television if Ireland are hanging on to a couple of points' lead with five minutes remaining. My nerves were, no doubt, badly shaken by the trauma of seeing Ireland lose twice in the dying seconds at Twickenham in the 1960s.

My parents emigrated to England in about 1923. My mother, Emma, was twenty-five at the time and had lived in Gort all her life She had just

married my father Tom Dolan, who had been in the RIC and came from Black Lion in Cavan. Her father, my grandfather, was James Treston, who had been the head teacher at Kiltartan school, which is now a heritage centre. I believe he also privately taught Lady Gregory's son Robert when the Gregorys lived at Coole House.

My grandfather James Treston, who had retired from teaching in about 1927, was an interesting character. He was strong, stubborn, stood no

nonsense and was also kind generous, funny and an excellent mimic. With the benefit of hindsight, he and my mother had strikingly similar personalities. Surprisingly for an Irishman he loved cricket and whenever he came over to England for a holiday, my mother would take him to the Oval test match. In 1934 he wrote a letter to that greatest of all Australian batsmen, Don Bradman, who had become seriously ill during the tour of England. He always treasured the letter Bradman wrote in reply.

Like so many people in those days, he lived through some tough times. His father Richard died at the age of thirty-five in 1869, when James was about eight years old. His wife

Kathleen Treston (née Crowe) died when she was only thirty. They had four children: my mother Emma, her sister Kathleen and her two brothers Richard and Edward. Edward, who was known as Epsie, died in infancy when my mother was only nine years old.

A few days after the beginning of the second world war in September 1939, there were rumours of gas attacks and an imminent German invasion of England. My parents took my three sisters Cathleen, Joan, Pat and I back to Ireland to stay with my grandfather, my aunt Kathleen and my uncle Dick at Rindifin House. The house was located on the way out of Gort near the Punch Bowl on the Ennis Road. My father Tom returned to England a few days later, as he had to earn a living and he remained at our home in Harrow, which is a suburb of north London.

Having travelled by train from Euston to Holyhead, we sailed to Dublin on the *Leinster*, which at that time was fairly new. I can remember it was said at the time, that we were being shadowed by a German submarine during the crossing. This probably wasn't true but it certainly added to the excitement. The crossing was very rough and I was very sick. Sixty-eight years later I am still a rotten sailor.

At six years old I was the youngest member of the family and, despite my tender years, I have vivid and possibly rose-coloured memories of the time we spent in Rindifin. I really loved living in Ireland; the only downside of the time we spent there was the absence of my father, though he came over to see us for a few days at Christmas in 1939 and 1940.

After a few days in Rindifin, along with my sisters I was sent to the Sisters of Mercy convent school. For the first few weeks I didn't do much

work and had a great time socially. I think I took a few liberties and generally got away with murder. In the first instance, the teachers were fairly easy going and may have been a little sorry for me, as I had been dragged away from home in England with only a couple of days' notice. This situation didn't last long because my grandfather found out that I was being a pain and had a quiet word with one of the teachers.

Suddenly, everything changed and I will never forget the shock I got the first time I received a couple of probably deserved strokes of the cane. You have to remember that this was 1940, not 2008.

In fact, I didn't do too badly at the convent as, according to my sisters, I learned to speak Irish quite well in addition to developing a strong Irish accent. I lost the accent very quickly after returning to England in 1941 and unfortunately, I can no longer remember a word of Irish.

My sisters and I used to spend school lunch times with Maria Devlin's grandfather Ned (Edward) and his wife Delia (née Spellman) at what was then the saddlery in Crowe Street. At these times we also regularly saw my mother's cousins Eddie, Richard, Kevin and Birdie Treston and Birdie's husband Tommy McGovern. I believe Eddie and Birdie were both fine golfers.

Weather-wise the summer of 1940 was, I believe, one of the best ever. Certainly, I can remember a lot of hot sunny days following my uncle Dick Treston and his lovely collie dog



Mike Dolan and Sr de Lourdes

Judy around the farm. I can also remember Dick painting a small iron gate at the front of the house. The house has long since been demolished but in 2008 the gate was still there, almost obscured by weeds but several coats down I was still able to see the blue paint he had used in 1940. I also have a vague memory of feeling fairly miserable standing in the town square one very wet market day during what must have been the winter of 1940/41.

During the time we were in Gort, my three sisters became friendly with the daughters of the Coen family. I was a bit too young to remember for sure how many Coen girls there were but it might have been three. For the record, my sisters Joan and Pat, who are now in their eighties, are both pretty fit but my eldest sister Cathleen died in 1988 in South Africa where she had lived for many years.

Apart from living in Gort for a time in the early 1940s, I have visited Ireland on holiday many times, particularly the last twelve years. Three years ago, through my cousin Maria Devlin and her husband Sean, we became interested in the Treston family tree. The line has been traced by others back to an Edward Treston, born around 1800. According to a book written about the Treston family, he was either a lighthouse keeper, an officer in the French army



James and Kathleen Treston

or in the customs and excise and was born in either Mayo, France or Cornwall. Or possibly a combination of the lot. Anyway, plenty to go on with for the time being.

I found the visit to the old Kiltartan school where my grandfather taught very moving. Diana and I met Sr de Lourdes there in 2006 where she showed us the old registers written in my grandfather's hand almost a hundred years earlier. There's a stone plaque outside the entrance showing his name as the school's original teacher.

It has been great meeting Maria and Sean Devlin again this year and also renewing contact with cousins Richard Treston and Jim and John Madden and their wives, all of whom have been very generous with their time and hospitality.

In June this year, when we were in Gort, Martin O'Connor suggested that a few words from me about the town and the Treston family in the 1940s might be of interest. It has turned out to be more than a few words but hopefully my ramblings might have stirred a few memories.

Mercy convent, Gort: the sesquicentennial

BY SR DE LOURDES FAHY

"Historic", "memorable", "unforgettable". These were some of the terms used to describe what happened in Gort on the 4th of November 2007. It was the celebration of the coming of the Sisters of Mercy to the town on the 5th of November 1857. Town and country showed their appreciation of the contribution made by the sisters during those one hundred and fifty years. The story of the early years is recorded in the book *Near Quiet Waters* which was launched on the day. The close bonds forged between the sisters and the people are as strong as ever, thank God.

Months of preparation ensured everything progressed smoothly. The success of the day was largely due to the organising committee, which consisted of Canon Michael Kelly, pp, Fr Frankie Lee, cc, Marian Diviney, Monica McGrath, Rosemary Lahiffe, Colman Keane and Mossy Clabby.

They hosted a lunch in the Lady Gregory Hotel for the sisters, Bishop Drennan and Bishop Casey, the clergy who had served in the parish, the convent staff and great-grandnieces and great-grandnephews of Mother Aloysius Doyle, who had come with four companions from St Leo's, Carlow, to establish the Gort convent in 1857. Among the invited guests were Sr Elizabeth and Sr Francis from the Carlow convent. The Doyle family from Co. Kildare presented a marble plaque which was later placed beside Mother Aloysius's headstone. After a short visit to the convent and cemetery, it was time for mass at four o'clock.

What a celebration in the packed church. Some of the oldest citizens of the area remarked that they had never experienced a mass like that before. Most of the credit must go to Fr Frankie Lee and Mrs Rosemary Lahiffe, whose husband Robin is

a great-great-grandnephew of James Lahiffe from whom the sisters at first rented the convent. No words can adequately describe the music and the choir. The organist, Ian Lahiffe, and the choir were ably supported by members of St Patrick's Brass Band, Galway.

Past and present staff and students and members of the Doyle family were involved in the readings, prayers of the faithful and presentation of the gifts. The gifts were truly symbolic: a picture of the venerable Catherine McAuley, foundress of the sisters of mercy, a photo of Mother Aloysius, the mercy constitutions, a school globe and roll book, a candle, flowers and a plant whose branches represented the branch houses established by the sisters.

A special feature was the procession and preparation of the altar with cloths, candles, flowers and missal by past students of the convent primary school.

In his homily, Bishop Drennan remarked that wise people go back to water their memories, back to places and people that brought lasting changes to their lives. He emphasised the main attributes of mercy: it understands, it sets free, it enables and it brings hope and joy. He reminded us that for the past one-hundred-and-fifty years the sisters of mercy have been going back to the Lord each day in prayer to water the memories. He stressed the need for forgiveness and quoted Nelson Mandela who, after his release from prison said, "If I can't forgive, then I'm still in prison"

Sr Maura thanked everyone who helped to make such a memorable occasion. Her eloquent words received a standing ovation.



Srs Angelus, Phil, Catherine, Enda, Paschal, John, Maura, Mary and de Lourdes

Back at the hotel, the band played, cameras clicked and people renewed acquaintances with old friends from Galway, Clare and further afield. The organising committee presented the sisters with an exquisitely carved limestone commemorative plaque which now on the front wall of the convent. They also gave a generous money gift to which the people had kindly subscribed.

Sr Angela Forde, who represented the provincial leadership team and Sr Teresa Delaney, the provincial archivist, launched *Near Quiet Waters*, the history of the early years of the convent. Copies of the book can be obtained at the convent and from News and Views, Bridge Street, Gort. The sesquicentenary cake was then cut by Sr John and refreshments were served during the signing of copies of the book.

Many of us can recall nostalgically the events of the centenary held in 1957. Sadly, none of the present community will be alive in 2057. Will there be a mercy community in Gort? The answer depends on you and on us. This year has been officially declared the year of vocations, during which each one of us is asked to make a special effort to pray and to encourage young people to consider a life spent in the service of God as a priest or a religious brother or sister. The people of Gort, south Galway and north Clare can rise to the challenge again. May God reward you all with His blessing.

The son of a Gort man

BY CIARÁN O'FLAHERTY

My father is a Gort man through and through, Hawkhill to be exact. Like many of his neighbours and good friends, he took the boat to England in the fifties for work and was never fortunate enough to be able to return to his beloved Gort full-time again. He settled in Dublin in the early sixties but you knew by the head of him he was a Galway man: red burnt hair, a great big laugh and when he'd tell you a story he'd be adding to it the whole time. 'Gaillimh abú', he'd say, telling us about incidents as a child heading with his father to Ennis to sell cabbages or being one of the first people in the door on opening night of Howley's dance hall or playing hurling for what was the Kilmacduagh team at the time.

For us, his children, growing up a jackeen in a culchie household in Dublin was a very strange upbringing indeed. We would hear these words so often they were like water to a duck after a while. Sometimes it was said as a joke and sometimes as an insult. Outside playing on the street you'd hear us say 'howya' or 'jeaney mack' and inside the house we'd hear 'stoppin' and 'stickin' with all the esses exaggerated. Dad had the thickest east Galway accent you could hear for miles in our part of Dublin. Our accents got so muddled as children as a result, that you'd be asked in school, "Are you a culchie?" and for our own safety we'd say, "Nah, I just have a cold." We knew in some way we were different, special even. We knew for example that the Galway flag was maroon and white when everyone else thought it was the colour of wine and white. "Obviously not from Galway", we'd say.

So when you closed the front door of our house in south county Dublin, you magically entered east Galway.

No joking. The sacred heart picture took centre stage in the kitchen with the red bulb that never went out. I don't remember ever changing it during the twenty years I lived at home. The holy water font was so big you could feed two ponies and a donkey from it at the same time and, most memorably, the arrival of the *Connaught Tribune* of a Saturday morning. We got it a day or two late as it had to travel the whole way up through Athlone, Kinnegad, Leixlip, Lucan and all those towns and villages we had to pass through as children on the road between Galway and Dublin. Daddy had it ordered in the local newsagent and there it would be on the kitchen table.

Every photograph, town note, article and advertisement was scanned, then read and re-read in search of news and in the fear that he might have missed something. Some weeks there would be little or no news and he'd throw the paper on the table in disgust. "There's nothing in that auld rag but pictures of hunt balls and debs", he'd say. But a week is a long time and the love affair with his *Tribune* would continue the following week with the latest edition.

Life in the 'Galway house', as the neighbours called us, carried on as normal until every so often some of the cousins would come up. With my mother hailing from near Craughwell, most townlands and villages in east Galway would have had a representative at one time or another. Athenry, Kiltulla, Monivea, Kilmacduagh, Peterswell, Loughrea, Kinvara, Gort, Manninard, Labane, Boston, Tubber and Ardrahan. We had the place covered. They'd be up for Croke Park, the horse show, shopping, concerts, you name it and we loved it. Lydon's bread and O'Connor's cakes and buns, gorgeous, even though they were mushed to within an inch of their

lives, having either been down on the seat of a train or having rolled their way vigorously around in the back of a car on their way up to the big smoke.

Christmas time would see *The Blazers* or *Guaire* magazines coming with about fifty stamps on the envelope to make sure we got them. One year an uncle brought up a live goose in a box. We wanted to keep it as a pet but my father killed it with a bread knife before we could get acquainted. Slit its throat with our only bread knife. We were stunned. The RSPCA would be at the door in an instant if it was nowadays. It put us off cutting bread for a good while. Well, at least until we got hungry and had washed it anyhow. We thought this was normal carry-on to be killing poultry in the suburbs but it wasn't.

Dublin really was only a mirage, a background to our existence as a country people in the city. The defining moment for me was when Galway won the all-Ireland hurling final in 1980. We saw grown men cry, we really did. We rushed into the Ashling Hotel beside Heuston Station after the win to see these giants of men in the flesh, the actual team. The house shook for weeks after that and then it happened. I witnessed it with my very own eyes and I couldn't believe it. The sacred heart picture was taken down from pride of place in the kitchen and, in its place, went up the autographed picture of that famous team with a white frame around them with each of the squad's signatures. We were stunned yet again. The sacred heart had been relegated to another wall and the Galway team reigned. Jesus, we must really be from Galway.

A lot of things have changed since then and a lot of times have passed. When we'd visit Gort during our youth it was a magical place to us.

What with being cuchies at home and jackeens on holiday, we were confused little mongrels, slightly exotic creatures. As young children, Gort would offer sweets, club orange, crisps and some little toy if we were good. We used to park up in the square and spend ages going from shop to shop with our parents, dad stopping to talk to so-and-so. The day Supermacs opened we thought we had gone to heaven. Chips and ice cream in the one shop? It was too much for us to take in.

As adults, our mother would warn us when we went out drinking with the cousins in Gort. If we met a girl we liked, we were to ask her surname first, in case we were related to her. There were about seven surnames that were a no-go, even if we could not prove a connection. They must have thought we were right boyos from Dublin. I ended marrying a girl from Moycullen, just to be sure to be sure.

Throughout all the changes over the years, my father never let go of this place that he held so close to his heart. He'd ring his brother and sister to keep up with all his news

and would be chatting to his childhood friends outside Tierneven mass when he's be down, like he'd never left the place at all. When we, his family, were all grown up, we'd be after him to move down and back to his beloved Galway but nothing ever came of it.

Dad passed away suddenly aged seventy-two in August 2007 and his final resting place is in Labane. So, in some small way, we did finally get him home. The plot we were given can be seen from the road as you head on into Galway. I imagine in my own mind that he planned that, so that he could see all that was going on, just like him reading the *Connaught Tribune*, for the fear of God that he'd miss something.

So when you are stuck in a line of traffic trying to get through Gort or,

worse still, trying to get out onto the main road from the square and no-one will budge for you, or trying to make eye contact with the bar man in Linnane's trying to get served a pint or feeling sorry for yourself in Quinn's pharmacy looking for some medicine to make you better, just think of all those neighbours, friends and relatives who can't be in Gort on a day-to-day basis and dream of their beloved Galway. They may have left Gort all those years ago but Gort never left them.



Michael Flaherty and Nano Furey (Manninard, Craughwell), Ciarán's parents, in London 1959/60

Major award for Gort student

Sinéad Loughrey, from Drumguaine, Shanaglish, was recently presented with the prestigious *Gaisce* gold medal by the president, Mary McAleese. Sinéad worked for the award while a student at Gort Community School.

To win the gold medal, Sinéad had to learn a skill, undertake a physical task and do community work. For her new skill, she learned horse-riding. The physical task was swimming and for her community work she helped the dog warden in Ennis.

Sinéad is very appreciative for all the help and encouragement she got from her teacher Carmel Neylon, her family, friends and neighbours. She is currently studying psychiatric nursing at Athlone IT.

Congratulations Sinéad.



Sinéad Loughrey, being presented with the *Gaisce* gold award by president Mary McAleese at Dublin castle.



Aine lally outlines some of her work in developing countries.

I often wonder how all this started for me: the need or desire to work in developing or third world countries. I trained as a nurse in Drogheda with the Medical Missionaries of Mary and worked with African nurses who went back to their own countries to work, once qualified. Really since then it has been a big part of my life and it has been so rewarding.

From Belarus to Bolivia, Rwanda to Guatemala, the experiences I have had working as a nurse with people I have met in these places are something I feel worth sharing. Also this allows me to tell how donations that I received over the years have been and still are being used. When you're in a country far from home surrounded at times by abject poverty, working alongside people so affected by this, it is difficult to take it all on board and, at times I have to admit, easier to try and forget about it. Doing voluntary/humanitarian work is really rewarding but sometimes I think we may get a little caught up in how good it makes us feel or even appear. Because of this and also having seen how resources and money are sometimes mismanaged. I felt strongly when I went to work in South America in 2005; I wanted to do something that would make a lasting difference.

Initially I spent a few months working as a nurse in a shanty town, Villa el Salvador, in Lima, Peru with two nuns from Tuam. Sr Gemma Cunningham and Sr Mary Walsh had worked among the Peruvian people for more than twenty-five

Helping people to help themselves

years and really, as far as I could see, did it right. Nearly half a million people live in this shanty town, the largest in South America. They taught me much about living and working in condi-

tions where you see suffering, pain, violence and injustice. Sometimes it's easier to give handouts to the needy. It may make us feel good but it's not the right way. To enable some one to be independent and strive for a better life is not always easy or even possible but ultimately it is the best way.

I then went to work in Bolivia and the poverty and the terrible divide between rich and poor really got to me. It is the poorest country in South America and approximately 800,000 children are in involved in some sort of child labour.

I first worked as a nurse in a home/hospital for mostly orphaned or abandoned children. I had to learn Spanish and gave English classes which really helped get to know local people. After a year I came home to work, to inform people about Bolivia, give talks in schools and set up a bank account. Since 1997 I have been involved in humanitarian work and the generosity of people has just been amazing.

'The Bolivia fund' is set up in AIB, Gort and to date has received approximately €30,000. It supports a soup kitchen which, for €250 a month, feeds eighty to one hundred people a day and pays wages for two cooks and a social worker. A small donation of ten to twenty cents/meal per person is asked but of course not everyone can pay this. The average monthly wage is forty to seventy euro. Of course some of the children who work on the streets, on a good day make two euro and they are encouraged to pay a little something towards their meals.

A small shelter for young boys is also supported by the fund; they migrate from the country into town to work but sometimes end up sleeping rough as they know no one and at times don't even speak Spanish but their village dialect. The shelter is a safe place to sleep, eat and also they are helped to study or sometimes learn a trade. This is funded for approx €200 to 250 a month.

In addition I got to know of a small local organisation called PASCAR which is run by a Bolivian priest



Taking a break from shining shoes all day, very proudly wearing the Galway jersey

and, since 1999, they have with the help of outside funding been involved in housing projects. The Bolivian government is also slowly starting to help with funding. I went to visit some very rural communities. In one called Yaire, forty-five families were living in terrible conditions.

I was impressed with how PASCAR worked. A team goes to a village, staying for a period of time, teaching the people how to build a house and doing basic teaching on health and hygiene. €12,000 from the



A woman from the village outside her home, who lost four of her nine children from causes possibly related to living in such terrible conditions. The foundation for her new house was just beside this one.

fund was used to buy and pay for transporting the materials to build the forty-five houses. The best part

of all was the people built every bit themselves and the whole village got involved; neighbour helped neighbour. As some one once said, "teach a man to fish and he'll have food for life". So, they got to learn a trade in the process of building their houses.

In addition, some of the funds were used to supply the local school, also built by the villagers with school books and some basic necessities. I contacted the Irish ambassador to Bolivia as well as some other Irish aid organisations to look for more funding and was delighted when \$20,000 was donated towards a clean water scheme for the village. The project itself was completed in nine months and I went to visit the village when it was half way

through. It was just brilliant to see. I remember having to give a speech at a village meeting and explaining to them how people from Ireland just wanted to help in some way to improve their lives. I was lucky that I could be there to see it all. I hope for this work to continue as long as possible, basically as long as people continue to give. I plan to return to Bolivia in the new year to review how things are going with the soup kitchen and shelter. While I am there I hope to visit a village which has fifty-six families and hopefully fund another housing project there.

When I was leaving the village that day, it was quite emotional and people were so happy and grateful for their new homes and one woman hugged me and crying said, "Please don't forget about us".

The Gort-Rouillon Twinning Project



Gort people visit Rouillon in October 2007

is just fifty-eight minutes away by TGV train.

The Chamber of Commerce dvd/video "Gort, a great place to work, visit and, above all, a great place to live"

their visits to Gort, they are hosted by families in and around the town and likewise, when the Gort families visit Rouillon, they are hosted by families there.

It is a wonderful experience for the Gort people to live the 'French way of life' and for the French people to taste the 'Irish way of life'.

Interest in the twinning project is growing steadily. Many friendships have been formed between the people of Rouillon and Gort and now the younger members of both the Irish and French families are planning visits with each other.

The members of the twinning project are always delighted when new families join. Anyone who is interested in becoming involved, please feel free at any time to contact Martina Earley (086 375 0388), Olivia O'Grady (086 809 6121) or Nora Connolly (087 907 4815).

The Gort-Rouillon Twinning Project began in the summer of 2004 when Christophe Bigot of Rouillon in Brittany, France, made contact with Gort Chamber of Commerce with a view to twinning with the town of Gort.

Rouillon is a relatively new town with a population of 2,300. It is ideally located at the crossroads of Normandy, Brittany and the Loire valley and just five kilometres from the ancient city of Le Mans of the twenty-four-hour car rally fame. Paris

was a wonderful way of introducing the area to the people of Rouillon. The twinning committee was subsequently set up in Gort, consisting of eight members initially. The first twinning visit took place in February 2005, when committee members from Gort visited Rouillon.

Since then, a total of five twinning visits have taken place between the two towns and, just recently, during the weekend of 13th to 16th September 2008, twenty-eight of our friends from France visited Gort. On



Canon Michael Kelly, Fr Tommy Marrinan and Fr Frankie Lee, pictured after Cannon Kelly's recent celebratory mass



Official opening of the new entrance to St Colmans Park
Left to right: Noel Nestor (trustee), Colman Keane (trustee), Gerry Sheehan (trustee), Tom Lambert (trustee, president), Gerry Donoghue (trustee) and Brian Brennan (trustee)



Galway minor hurling squad members Richard and Michael Cummins, Kilmacduagh
Richard was the star of Galway's victory over Cork in the semi-finals, scoring one goal and five points; we look forward to seeing more of the Cummins brothers in club and county colours



Champions, 2008
St Steven Keane, David Quinn, Eamon Molloy, Gavin Duffy, Joe Flaherty, Leonard...



Gort under-14 B county champions 2008 and Brendan Linnane trophy winners 2008
Back row, left to right: Coley Roche (manager), Pat Monahan (selector), Conor Nolan, Ross Burke, Barry Monahan, Eoin Carr, Darren Grealish, Dara Roche (captain), Michael Mullins, Davin Nestor, Jason Hearney, Ronan Burke, Simon Piggot and John Cummins (selector)
Middle row, left to right: Iago Dionizio, Gary Corless, Stephen McCarthy, Dara Monahan, Gavin Chill, Leonardo Gomes, Darren O'Donoghue, Calvin Finn, Shane Moran, Joseph Flaherty and Dylan Diskin
Front row, left to right: Aiden Helabert, Sean Burke, Ciaran Mulchair, David Quinn, Jack Cummins, Cameron Fennessy, Eamon Quinn and Cathal Broderick

photo: David O'Reilly



Coole voices on tour
Pictured at a concert in Rouillon, France, May 2008

picture parade



Georges Street octogenarians
left to right: Tomás O'Quigley, Maisie Gallagher and Tom Lambert



Right: in July 2008, an enthusiastic

A scattering of our Irishness abroad

BY ANGELA DONOHUE

When we were children growing up in Gort, my mother would ask, "Where were ye?" and our reply would be, "Abroad". "Abroad where?" was obviously her next question. "Abroad in the yard" was our next reply. So, when nothing other than a sense of adventure



Table mountain, February 1987

prompted Paddy and myself to spend a few years 'abroad' after we got married, we had hoped to travel a bit further than our backyard. South Africa was suggested by an ex-colleague of mine and seemed like a very good idea. My husband secured a position with a South African company and, on the first of September 1980, we arrived in Pretoria. As guests of the company, we were accommodated in a residential hotel for the first month. Directly across the road from the hotel was the Sacred Heart cathedral, on Bosman Street, Pretoria. Next door to the cathedral was the Loreto convent. It was only a matter of days before we had met the parish priest, Monsignor Magennis, originally from Belfast and most of the sisters from the convent, the majority of whom were Irish. A distinct advantage for all Irish immigrants abroad in those days was the inevitability

of meeting Irish religious, no matter where in the world. That helped greatly in the homesickness healing and settling-in process. This was to be our initiation ceremony in South Africa where we were to spend the next thirteen years.

Within a week, Sister Joan had asked me if I wouldn't mind helping out with the Central Deanery council. Well, why not, not that I had ever heard of a deanery council. Somehow I knew I was about to find out and, for the rest of the duration, I was the secretary of the Central Deanery Pastoral Council. The basic function of the deaneries, as in every Catholic di-

ocese, is to liaise with all the parish councils in the deanery and bring any matters that needed attention to diocesan level. It was all quite informal and we used to have quarterly meetings with Archbishop George Daniels at different venues within the diocese. If I had far to travel at night and felt a bit nervous about it, I had no problem getting a lift from his lordship.

One of the principal duties of the deaneries was to organise events aimed at bringing the communities from the black and white parishes closer together. There were three black township parishes in our deanery. We organised Corpus Christi festivals together, choir competitions and various fund-raising activities, which were always very successful. Visiting black townships was not encouraged in those days for obvious reasons but, when the chairman of the Atteridgeville par-

ish council, Sammy Motsepe, died suddenly, the members of the deanery were invited to attend his wake. Due to the volatile political climate at the time I felt a bit apprehensive but went along anyway. When we arrived at the house of the deceased, we were made very welcome by the people outside and led into the house. It was a beautifully furnished two-storey house. Sammy was a highly educated man and held the position of chief public relations officer at Medunsa, the black medical university of South Africa. As we were led to the room where we expected to see Sammy laid out, I was quite taken aback to see his wife sitting up in the bed. She had a rosary beads woven through her fingers and was quietly sobbing. We all knelt around the bed and recited the rosary, after which we conveyed our condolences and departed. This was a whole new experience for me but is their tradition; the deceased is considered to be alright, he has gone to join his ancestors and it is his wife who has now to be cared for. Therefore she must spend a minimum of five days in bed where all the friends and relations of the family visit her and present her with gifts of food and clothes and any other necessities. It is the bereaved that has to be cared for, not the deceased.

Our first Easter Sunday was spent at the Christian Brothers college, where a commemoration of the 1916 rising was celebrated after an open-air mass; the tricolour was raised and the proclamation read. This was followed by a game of Gaelic football and a barbecue. With Brother Greg on the accordion and Brother Tom on the fiddle, we were treated to a great feast of Irish music and song for the afternoon. This annual event was a great social gathering for all the Irish clans in

the Pretoria/Johannesburg area. In those pre-internet days, it was easy to keep up-to-date with GAA events at home in Ireland because, within days of a big match, particularly the all-Ireland final, the brothers were guaranteed to have received a video of the match. This would be passed around from home to home, where we would gather in groups to watch and enjoy it. However, there were times we forgot about the GAA when the brothers in Johannesburg would put together an Irish cricket team and their counterparts in Pretoria would do likewise. The venue would alternate between the cities from year to year, always using the college's facilities, of course.

In order to add greater cohesion to the Irish community in Pretoria, the Irish Association of Pretoria was set up in 1987. Its principal aim was to keep Irish cultural traditions alive within the community. It was a vibrant association with a membership in excess of one hundred paid-up members when I was treasurer. Membership was not just for the Irish; it was open to anybody who was interested in its aims. Many South Africans who were educated by the religious held a certain affinity with the Irish. The committee was responsible for organising various events on a bi-monthly basis. There were no shortage of venues thanks to the generosity of the priests and nuns who offered their church and school assembly halls graciously. The task of searching for suitable material for the various functions was not too difficult as there was no shortage of Irish literati abroad; after all, they were Ireland's greatest export at the time. Dr Cecelia Zeiss, of Irish extraction, had completed her thesis on Sean O'Casey's works and she chose this topic to be the subject of our first get-together. Professor Maxwell-Mahon, whose mother was from Co. Cavan, was professor of English at Pretoria University; later he gave a talk on famous Irish authors. We organised an evening of 'Irish' ballet, choreographed to Phil Coulter's *Tranquillity*. In 1988, a very special evening was hosted to

commemorate the Dublin millennium, complete with an exhibition of everything Dublin that we could scavenge. For our Christmas event in 1990, we had a Bunratty banquet, complete with all the costumes and decor fresh from a production of

Boer war. Many Irish who fought in the war remained on in South Africa and married into Afrikaaner families. As a result, Afrikaans-speaking people with names such as Jakobus O'Callaghan and Jaretjie Murphy, both of whom I worked with, are not



Paddy O'Beirn (radio presenter), Paddy Ryan (honorary Irish consul) and his wife at a Bunratty banquet evening in 1990 in Pretoria

Camelot at the State Theatre, Pretoria, where I worked and had easy access to any sets, props or costumes as required. Another memorable event was an evening of Thomas Moore's melodies. Pearl Mulqueen, who was lead singer in Bunratty for years, was our soloist, accompanied by her husband Neville on the piano. One of South Africa's leading actors, Patrick Maynhardt, was brought on board to play the part of Captain Boyle in a stage production of O'Casey's *Juno and the Peacock*. It was a memorable experience for all involved and well received by our audience. We were honoured to have many distinguished guests attending our function, including, amongst others, the Irish honorary consul Paddy Ryan and Paddy O'Beirn, who hosted a daily radio programme on South Africa's national airwaves.

The Irish in general were well respected and accepted by the South African community, particularly the Afrikaaner, who had not forgotten the support of the Irish during the

unusual in the South Africa of today. Irish cultural and sporting events enjoyed good coverage on the national broadcaster. On our national day the various parades from all over the world would receive coverage on the main news bulletins. Irish music was very popular, with Joe Dolan, The Fureys, Foster & Allen and Chris de Burgh, amongst others, enjoying several number ones. They all toured South Africa and we enjoyed many a good night at their sold-out concerts. Rugby is almost a religion in South Africa. John Robbie, who toured with the Lions in 1980, settled there and went on to become one of the most influential broadcasters, hosting a daily radio programme with extreme liberal views, which no doubt played a very important role in dismantling the apartheid regime.

And so, we Irish celebrated our Irishness abroad and hopefully made some small contribution towards helping and enhancing the lives of those whom we touched and were so privileged to have shared.

Gort ICA - a new era

BY CATHY CURLETTE



Nell Giblin, president, Cathy Curlette and Fr Michael Kelly, pp, at the opening of the new hall

2008 was an exciting year for the Gort ICA guild. It was the sixtieth anniversary of the guild's foundation and it was with great pride that this event coincided with the grand opening of the new hall on Bolands Lane. This venture reflected very much the vision and spirit of the original founders of the Gort guild whose courage in acquiring funding for the purchase and refurbishment of the premises on Bolands Lane was nothing short of extraordinary. With that same energy and enthusiasm, the present members tackled the building project: doors needed to be knocked on, forms needed to be filled and every avenue explored in order to realise the dream of a new hall that would do Gort proud into the future. This

was the culmination of many years of hard work by the guild and due in no small measure to the generosity and support of the people of Gort.

Saturday the fourteenth of June this year saw a large and very representative crowd gathered on Bolands Lane in Gort for the official opening of the hall. The opening ceremony was performed by the president of the guild, Mrs Nell



left to right: Eileen Lally, Ita Clandillon, Sr Catherine, Mai Counihan, Breege Piggott and Maisie Gallagher, some of the founder members

Giblin and the building was blessed by Canon Michael Kelly, pp. The president of the Galway federation of the ICA, Mrs Carmel Garret, was present, as were representatives of the neighbouring guilds. Among the large attendance were some of the founding members of the guild, Mrs Ita Clandillon, Mrs Breege Piggott, Mrs Mai Counihan and Mrs Maisie Gallagher as well as many former guild members. To celebrate the sixtieth anniversary, a book to commemorate this milestone was launched during the ceremonies.

The hall is now a centre for all kinds of community-based projects and activities as well as the regular activities of the guild. Monday night is craft night in the hall and anyone interested in taking up a craft as a hobby is more than welcome to Josephine Helly's classes from eight until ten. Wednesday is beginners' bridge night and the intricacies of the game are being unravelled by Cathy Curlette. During the past year two cookery demonstration courses were organised by members of the guild to raise funds to help reduce the debt. These proved to be great social nights with fun, food and chat and a new series of courses is being organised for this year in response to popular demand.

The guild has also started holding social coffee mornings on the last Sunday of every month and, once again, these are becoming great community occasions, with many people looking forward to them each month.



Gaelscoil na bhFilí

The establishment of a Gaelscoil for Gort and the surrounding areas has been the result of hard work and selfless efforts of the founding committee, Fiona Folan and Geraldine Cunningham, headed up by founding member Mr James Fahy, whose wish it was to establish an all-Irish school to commemorate his father Peadar 'the poet' Fahy who, with all the other poetic connections with south Galway—Yeats, Raftery, Leahy and Quinn—was well-known in the area. As a result Gaelscoil na bhFilí opened its doors on September 3rd 2007 with an enrolment of twenty pupils and a staff of two, príomhoide Gráinne ní Allúin and Fiona ní Chualáin.

The school is situated at the back of the community centre with its own private entrance. There are now, in its second year running, a total of thirty-seven very happy pupils attending the school, all learning through the medium of Irish. They were immersed in the language from day one and we are delighted with how much they have progressed since that first day in September 2007.

All subjects, from history to science, are taught through Irish and the children are now able to converse as *Gaeilge* after only a few short months and enjoy each lesson, totally unaware that it is through Irish. The teachers also teach *an fheadóg stáin* to even the youngest members of the school. They all had no problem picking it up and, within a couple of months, had a bank of tunes ranging

from *Mary had a little lamb* to various polkas. Eilís Mannion, a fiddle teacher, comes into the school on a weekly basis and teaches the fiddle to all of the children. We are hoping that traditional music will have a very strong place in the lives of the children of Gaelscoil na bhFilí. We also make sure that the children have an opportunity to express themselves through art at least once a week, resulting in some very impressive artwork.

Some parents were apprehensive about sending their children to a Gaelscoil as they were not confident with their own level of *Gaeilge* or, in some case, had no Irish at all. However, now that they see how the children absorb the language, they soon realise that it is not a necessity that they, the parents, speak fluent Irish in order for their children to be educated in a Gaelscoil.

As testimony to the dedication and support of the fundraising com-

mittee and parents of children attending Gaelscoil na bhFilí, a recent *Who wants to be a Millionaire* was hugely successful and a great financial start up has been secured for Gaelscoil na bhFilí.

The parents, children and teachers are delighted with our school and we are very happy. If you would like further information regarding Gaelscoil na bhFilí or would like to enrol your child for the years ahead, please use the following contact details. Telephone 091 630 494 (please leave a message); e-mail eolas@gaelcoilnabhfilí.ie and we can e-mail you an enrolment form or visit our website www.gaelcoilnabhfilí.ie, from where an enrolment form can be downloaded.

Táim ag súil le cloisteáil uait go luath.

LE GACH DEÁ GHUÍ
GRÁINNE NÍ ALLÚIN
PRÍOMHOIDE



Oíche shamhna



An emigrant's view

BY ROSILANE DE OLIVEIRA SILVA

My name is Roilane de Oliveira Silva. I am originally from Goiania, Goias, Brazil and have been living in Ireland for eight years now. I am one of four girls and have a sixteen-year-old daughter; they all live in Brazil, which is the most difficult aspect of being so far from home. I came to Ireland with the intention of working for one year and saving enough money to buy a house for my family in Brazil. Brazil is a wonderful country but it is very difficult to make any money there. The minimum wage is the equivalent of €150 a month, so the opportunity to make twice that amount per week in Ireland and buy property at home convinced us to make the journey from Brazil. A group of three of us arrived in Roscommon town with the hope of getting a job in the meat factory there. However, the jobs had been filled with other Brazilian nationals when we arrived. The time spent in Roscommon was very difficult for us as we didn't have any savings and we were depending upon the kindness of our fellow Brazilians living there. It became so difficult that we decided to leave Ireland and return home. We were organising our return flights when we got word of jobs available in the meat factory in Gort. Having nothing to lose, we travelled there.

We secured jobs in Sean Duffy Meats straight away and temporary accommodation was provided and deducted from our wages. I worked in the lamb boning hall at first, followed by a year in the slaughter halls, before progressing to quality control officer. At first, life was hard due to the language barrier. For example, trying to communicate with a doctor or dentist. Once I made Irish friends, learned English and became more familiar with life in Ireland, everything improved. The first year

in Ireland passed very quickly and I decided to stay on indefinitely. The job was there for me and I had my work permit, so I could travel home to see my family and get back



Danny Moran dancing with Lulu at the *quadrilha* in the Square

photo: David O'Reilly

into Ireland legally. I had secured other accommodation and was very happy fulfilling my dream to buy a house in Brazil.

As time moved on, I became more and more settled in Ireland. I felt a lot safer here and I was helping my family in Brazil. I had bought a house for them and was now able to ensure that my daughter and my younger sister were getting a good education which would give them better opportunities in the future. In Brazil, many children need to leave school to work and help their families. Nearly two years had passed and, by now, I had many close friends, both Irish and Brazilian and I had a good grasp of the English language. The number of Brazilians living in Gort had increased and I wanted to help them to integrate

into the community, so I set about arranging a Brazilian festival with the help of my friends. We organised a festival called the *quadrilha*, which is traditionally a festival held annually in Brazil in the month of June. With sponsorship from local businesses and co-operation from the local gardai we successfully held the first festival in 2004 and have had a festival every year in June since. The festival was a big hit and attracts a lot of media coverage every year plus it fulfilled its original purpose of helping the Brazilian community to integrate with the Irish. The community of Gort got to share in the Brazilian culture, to dance Brazilian style and eat Brazilian food.

After three-and-a-half years working in the meat factory, where I gained great experience and completed a number of valuable courses I applied for and got a job in Centra, working in the deli. Working in the deli improved my English and, when the opportunity for me to complete an outreach diploma in community development with NUIG came along, I felt confident enough to apply. The diploma was part-time for one year and I feel it has helped me to progress to where I am today.

I am still working in Centra but am no longer in the deli. I worked at the tills for some time and am now responsible for ordering the stock amongst other things. I moved from the deli to the tills to gain experience and I moved from the tills to the shop floor to enable me to work part-time in my new job with the Gort fire brigade.

I applied for a position with the fire brigade earlier this year and, after an interview and a medical, was offered an opportunity to complete two training courses, which were a requirement to being offered a position. I successfully competed these courses and am now a member of

Gort fire brigade. Working as a fire fighter is something I have always wanted to do and would not have had the opportunity to do in Brazil.

Ireland has become a home away from home for me and many other Brazilians but, being so far away from my daughter and my family never gets any easier. I ring them regularly and visit them every year or so, except for one year when I organised for them to visit Gort. They

loved Ireland and spent five weeks touring around and getting familiar with my life here. Next year, my daughter might move here to attend university.

Gort has become a model town for integration. There are numerous businesses run by Brazilians, notices in shops are usually in both English and Portuguese and many of my best friends now speak very good Portuguese. To ensure continued in-

tegration and to ensure that no-one is getting too homesick, we regularly organise Brazilian nights.

I feel very at home in Gort and feel very privileged and blessed to have had this opportunity in my life. We can't predict the future and I don't have any immediate plans to move back to Brazil, so the length of time I will remain in Ireland is entirely in God's hands.

Viva Brazil—viva Ireland

Mary Rochford: an appreciation

BY MARK COHEN

Many people were surprised and saddened by the unexpected death on July 21st 2008 of Mary Rochford (née Forbes), formerly of the Square, Gort. Mary was a well-known businesswoman with contacts and friends throughout the country. Her open door was a portal to her legendary hospitality, extensive local knowledge and boundless good humour.

Mary came to Gort in 1955 following her marriage to John Rochford. The newly-married couple took up residence in a premises in the Square. Together they ran a very varied business consisting of an auctioneering and insurance practice, together with a small grocery. John was also a commissioner for oaths. They had two children, P J and Norman. After John's premature death in 1967 Mary demonstrated the resourcefulness, dynamism and strength which were to be the hallmarks of her life. She succeeded John as a commissioner for oaths and kept the other aspects of the business going, all the while bringing up their two sons. She was also

involved in local social activities at this time, particularly those relating to traditional music.

Mary was always in great demand as an oaths commissioner and was highly respected for her discretion, reliability and courtesy. All her life she remained involved in auctioneering, including house sales and the letting of agricultural land.

To be in Mary's company was to experience her concern, her wit, her sincerity. She was at ease in the company of people from all walks of life and was a shrewd judge of character. Hers was an open house in the old style and few crossed her threshold without being invited into the inner sanctum for a drink and a chat. Her memory of Gort people and local happenings over the years was exceptional and her stories could provoke shock and laughter in equal measure. She was someone who did not change with fads of fashion but remained true to herself. Yet, despite her adherence to old traditions, she didn't live in the past. Rather, she embraced the present and had an infectious zest for life.

Mary's life was not untouched by tragedy. Having reared her sons alone in widowhood, she was predeceased by her son Norman in 2002. She faced this devastating bereavement with her characteristic courage and determination. Mary continued to run her business, welcome visitors and exchange stories and reminiscences as before. She neither sought nor wanted the pity of others but was ever grateful for the blessings in her life.

Mary slipped away at a time those close to her could not have foreseen. She was planning and living and laughing until the end. She personified all the best values of an Ireland which is vanishing, if not altogether vanished. She inspired great loyalty and affection among her wide and varied circle of friends, all of whom she touched with her cheerfulness and generosity. She is survived by her son P J, members of the extended Forbes and Rochford families and her many friends, who will forever think of her as an inspiration. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam.*

Gort St Patrick's day parade 2008

BY PADRAIG GIBLIN

A great carnival atmosphere and good weather ensured that Gort St Patrick's day parade, held on Sunday 16th March 2008, was one of the most successful held to date. This, the ninth annual parade, attracted a large number of spectators to the town.

The parade started with the blessing of the shamrock by Canon Michael Kelly, pp, after 12:15 pm mass. He distributed it to members of the Gort Reserve Defence Force. A colour party of the force led the parade, followed by the army band

was the first occasion for the band, formerly known as the band of the western command, to take part in the parade.

St Patrick's Pipe Band, Tulla, Co. Clare, who attend every year, provided more marching music further back. Indeed, this was also the first time to have two marching bands in the parade and they added considerably to the occasion.

Sylvie Linnane was appointed grand marshal of the parade and he proved to be a very popular one. Appropriately, Sylvie was flanked by a number of young members of

Kilkenny, was carried on an open-top 1971 Carmen Ghia car owned by Adrian Feeney, chairman of the parade committee.

Numerous community, commercial, youth, sporting and school groups took part, as well as stilt walkers and novelty acts.

The prizewinners were: youth section, Peterswell National School with *Aboriginal Serpent* and the Parents' Association of Scoil Eoin, Gort, with *Salmon of Knowledge*, joint first; community groups, Orchard Centre with *Cu Culann* and Community Art Workshop with *Children of Lir*, joint



A colour party of Gort reserve defence force followed by the band of the fourth western brigade at the head of the 2008 St Patricks day parade

of the fourth western brigade. This is a twenty-two piece military brass and reed band under conductor Captain Declan Whitston and this

Gort minor hurling club with their hurleys and jerseys.

The recently-crowned Gort rose and show queen, Natasha Schembri-

first and commercial, N2 Design with *Podge and Rodge*.

Taking part in the threshing display and static vintage section were Francis Linnane, Tony Adams and Shane Counihan, Gort; Sean Collins, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare;

P J McMahon, Boston, Tubber, Co. Clare; Michael Conroy, Tubber, Co. Clare and Gerry Keane and Patsy O'Grady, Kilmaley, Co. Clare.

Members of the Western Veteran & Vintage Motor Club, Galway and the Clare Classic Car Club took Part. James O'Hagan, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare, used his 1961 Austin A35 to pull his trailer with milk tanks as in going to the creamery in the 1960s. Ignatius Cahill, of Coole, Gort, drove his 1937 Fordson tractor. The tractor was purchased when new by Cahill's Sawmills and has been in the Cahill family ever since.

Gort Fire and Rescue Service simulated the scene of a road traffic collision. They showed how they remove a casualty from a vehicle using heavy duty equipment. The demonstration went right through the procedure from ensuring the safety of the scene to the securing of the casualty on a spinal board. The simulation brought home to the large number of onlookers the serious consequences of traffic collisions. Gort Fire Crew taking part were John Lally (station officer), Kieran Kerrins (sub-officer), Gerry Deely and Kieran Burke (driver mechanics) and Martin Burke, Colin Downes, Brendan Daly and Rosa de Silva (firefighters). Vehicle recovery services were provided by Sean Mulholland.

The favourable weather ensured that the dancing platform was used much more than in former years. Members of the Sanders School of Dancing from Ennis provided entertainment both before and after the parade. There was great interest in the display of *sean-nós* dancing by a group from Clarenbridge and by Padraic Ó hOibicín from Costello who is a *sean-nós* dancer in the Connemara style. Padraic had also conducted *sean-nós* dancing workshops during the previous day and gave an exhibition at the céilí in the Lady Gregory Hotel on the previous night organised by Mary Coen of the Cooley-Collins festival committee. The afternoon's programme was completed by an exhibition of Brazilian dance and belly dancing.

Live music was provided by Paddy Jordan and group. Pat Howley, Ardahan, provided ambulance facilities. The local gardaí, led by sergeants Damien Flanagan and Peter Carr, ensured that the traffic flowed freely and the large number of parade stewards assisted the gardaí with crowd control.

The parade was reviewed by Mary Leonard (Gortshow), Julia Qualter (Gort Lions Club), Noel Treacy TD, Michael Cunningham (Gort Chamber of Commerce), Councillor Bridie Willers, Councillor Michael Fahy, Margaret Linnane, Maura and Kevin Beakey and Adrian Feeney (chairman, parade committee).

In keeping with the theme of the parade, which was 'myths and legends', the committee had organised a series of artistic workshops for children, given by Shona MacGillivray, in the weeks preceding the event. The weekend's festivities commenced with a three-hour broadcast by *Galway Bay FM* from SuperValu on the Friday afternoon. A French market was held on the Square over the weekend. On St Patricks day (Monday), Eddie Lenihan, the famous storyteller from Crusheen, Co. Clare, regaled all ages with his stories from his vast collection of myths and legends in the ICA hall, Bolands Lane.

Holding the parade on the Sunday before St Patricks day proved to be a major success. In addition to being able to get acts which might not be available on the feast day itself, the parade attracted a lot of favourable publicity for the town by way of



The Gort Community Arts Groups taking part in the parade

tv coverage and photographs and reports in the *Irish Times* and *Irish Independent* on the following day.

The organising committee invite new members with new ideas to become involved in planning the 2009 parade which is to be held on Sunday 15th March 2009. Watch out for meeting of the parade committee which will be advertised in the local papers and in the parish newsletter. The theme of next year's parade will be 1960s Gort. This should give participants plenty of scope to revive life as it was in Gort forty to fifty years ago.

The members of the committee for 2008 were Seamus Killeen (president), Adrian Feeney (chairman), Trish Beakey (secretary), Cathy Curlette (treasurer), Tom Moran (safety officer), Padraic Giblin (PRO) and Shane Counihan, Mary Moloney, Jerry McMahon and Brid Quinn.

Thatched cottages: life and times

BY DICK BURKE



Since the first photographs of thatched cottages in the Gort area were featured in the 1986 issue of *Guairé*, we have one that has been built but sadly about four have been demolished or reconstructed as tiled or slated dwellings. Change such as this is inevitable of course and this article looks at design, life and some of the customs associated with them when they were a common feature in rural villages.

Thatched cottages were quite comfortable if they were constructed to good standards at the time. The roof had very good insulation in the thick coat of thatch and the stout walls of stone and lime mortar were dry with little or no condensation inside the structure. Lime wash was the decorative finish inside and outside. The external coat was a mixture of slaked lime, water and tallow (a form of animal fat) as a water repellent as well as the addition of a blue pigment to give a brilliant white finish. Lime wash on the inside brightened up the rooms and was also a form of disinfectant. Health authorities recommended that any house where tuberculosis

was prevalent be given a fresh coat of slaked lime wash to all habitable rooms.

The kitchen was the main room in the house and was extra large relative to the sizes of the bedrooms and even larger than the parlour if one existed. The kitchen was the full width of the house, with front and back doors directly opposite each other. This arrangement may have suited the sifting or winnowing of corn, where a draught would be cre-

ated between the open doors when barns were not affordable assets.

The daylight provided by the small cottage windows was very poor. The artificial light from candles or lamp provided light at night for any reading sewing or spinning. The arched fireplace was the focal point in the kitchen for heat and where all the cooking was done over the turf fire. Pots and kettles were suspended on hangers from a swinging crane fixed under the arch. Bread was usually baked in a shallow oven laid on red cinders drawn from the fire with further cinders placed on top of the lid to give an even heat all round the baking process. The laden lid would have to be carefully lifted off from time to time to see how the cake was doing. Debris falling on the cake had to be avoided. There was a hob on each side of the fireplace, one of them having a deep hole underneath where the ashes from the hearth would be stored for a few days. This particular hob was a most comfortable seat and often caused rows among us children as we fought about who was to sit on it. It might often be given to a visiting neighbour, who might now and



again doze off after a hard day's work. One worry my mother had was if a piece of cardboard or newspaper had got into the pit during the day and began to smoulder at night; she could be very embarrassed depending upon who the occupant of the hob might be. The rising smoke would quickly dislodge the victim on the hob.

The roof of the cottage composed of thin logs as rafters, often quite crooked, spaced about four feet apart with high collar ties fixed to them with wooden pegs. There were no wall plates or ridge boards. The rafters were just left on the side walls and each pair fixed together at the top.

Wattles of random thickness were laid across the rafters and nailed to them. Grass clods or scraws of very matted grass roots were laid on the wattles and laced to them as a base for fixing the layers of thatch. Hazel rods (scollops), which could be readily bent and twisted without breaking, were formed into staples to secure the thatch with the least member of rods exposed. The final coat was combed and trimmed in various ways to enhance the appearance and then given a coat or two of copper spray as a preservative.

Formerly mostly wheaten straw was used in thatching and, later, reeds from the Shannon basin were used. Nowadays, reeds from Turkey, imported in large truck containers, are used to give a more durable coat of thatch and to help prolong the time until a new coat is needed owing to the high cost of present day thatching.

The excessive cost and maintenance coupled with the wish for a more modern layout has militated against the preservation of thatched cottages or the construction of new ones. Still, there are a few retained and well maintained by people who like their traditional style. And stylish they are, when newly-thatched and lime-washed and adorned with freshly blooming wild roses. They will still feature on postcards well into the future.

Gort no name club

BY ADRIAN FEENEY

The Gort no name club has been in existence for the last seventeen years. The club is running on a voluntary basis. The philosophy of the no name club is for young adults to socialise without the use of alcohol. The club throughout the year runs discos supervised by local parents and the committee. They also put on a cabaret show and compete with other clubs nationally. The host and hostesses who are fourth years at Gort community school and Kinvara Seamount school go through a vigorous interview to become hosts. It is these hosts that organise the local discos, going to films, overnight stays with other no name clubs and a national youth ball at the end of the year. The no name club takes part in the tidy towns competitions and supports local organisations. We sponsor charitable events and raise money through a variety of other means.

Last year, Gort no name club proudly raised €14,310 for other local voluntary groups such as Gort Cancer Support Group, St Patricks day committee, St Colmans GAA, the social services centre, Irish social services, Labane national school, Gort sisters of Mercy, the

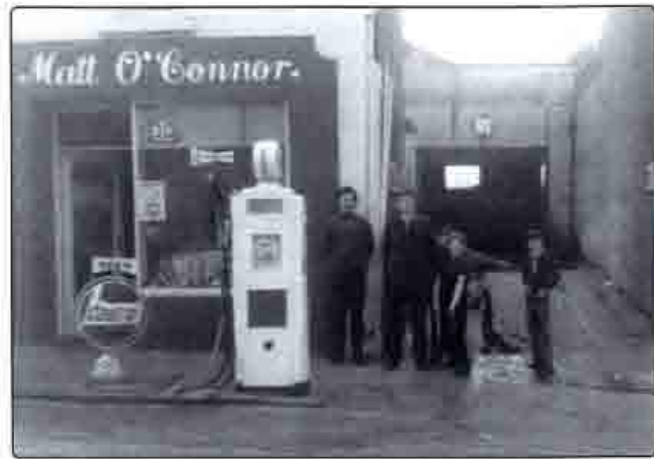
community school dressing rooms, Gort social services, Galway hospice, Frank Lally project, Voluntary Services Abroad, Gort play area, the Niall Mellon township trust and one of our ex-hostesses Mary Nelly, who is working with African children through Limerick university.

This year we have successfully secured a small grant from the VEC for €1,500 with which we purchased projection and sound equipment and we are going to establish a cinema club to be run locally on Friday nights at the local heritage centre.

As chairman of the no name club, I would like to thank our treasurer Mona Glynn, secretary Deirdre Collins and PRO Caroline Quinn and the hosts and hostesses. And, finally, the continual support of Brendan Quinn, Tom Moran, David O'Reilly, Trish Beakey and Marian Diviney. Sincere thanks to Aoife Morgan and Connor O'Leary, our local gardai, who are now on our committee, for their support at the disco nights, Damien Flannigan, local sergeant in charge, who organised many years ago for us to have garda presence at all our discos and, finally, Labane community centre for providing us with the facility to hold our discos.



down memory lane...



Above: photo taken in 1974 outside Matt O'Connor's garage, George's Street
Left to right: Francie Cahill, Tom Curley, Rory O'Connor, John Spelman and Ken Carr



Right: photo taken in the 1940s
Left to right: Mrs Finnerty (Lavalley), Mrs Fahey (Fahey's Cross) and Mrs Cahill (Rineen)



Kilmacduagh hurling team 1928
Back row, left to right: Pat Finnegan, Jimmy Nestor, Peter Grealish, Fergus Casey, Patrick Geraghty, Mattie Kerans, John Carr, Colie Darcy, Mick Quinn, Mick Connell and John Nolan

Middle row, left to right: Jack McGrath, Willie Leech, Patrick Casey, Mick Roche, Mattie McGrath, Johnny Leech, Martin Burke, Walty Kerans and Micko Kelly

Front row, left to right: Joe Stankford, Micko Finnegan (mascot) and Mato Nestor



Convent of mercy pupils pictured in the 1940s
Back row, left to right: ? Gillespie, E Rock, P O'Grady, M Kelly, K Cummins, A Morrissey, A Neilan and P Doyle

Middle row, left to right: ? Daffy, ? Cunniife, ?, P Hayes, E Burke, N Scanlon, R Fennessy, ?, M Burke and ? Collins

Front row, left to right: ? Minogue, ? Minogue, ? O'Connor, ? Treston, D Williams, G Gillane, B Coen, G Treston, A Marlborough, C Glynn, ? Stamford, J Molloy and ?



Above: Gort carnival queen
Back row, left to right: Vera Finnegan (née Cahill), Michael Broghan (mayor), Annie Burke (née O'Loughlin), Bernie Cummins (née Fleming), Chris Fallon (née Coppinger), Attracta Schultz (née Burke, queen), Vera McCarthy (née Conroy) and Pauline Fleming (née Burke)

Middle left: Mai Cahill outside her shop in Crowe Street



Left: infant class, Kilmacduagh national school, 1970
Back row, left to right: Noreen Rock, Áine Lally, Micheál Flaherty and John Flaherty
Front row, left to right: Michael Helebert and Pat Lally

The Sliothár and Camán

It's long and many a year ago,
 Since our hurling game began,
 The skill and commitment,
 Has tested many a man.
 On the playing fields of Ireland,
 Where games are lost and won,
 But it's the pride in our county colours,
 That keeps us on the run.
 The training and commitment,
 That's put in for our win,
 It's sheer guts and determination,
 That comes from deep within.
 From childhood to schoolgoing days,
 To minors and so on up,
 The coveted prize to play for,
 Is the Liam McCarthy cup.
 Fans travel in their thousands,
 For the sport and for the crack,
 As they walk up Jones's Road,
 On their journey to Croke Park.
 On all-Ireland morning,
 Outside the GPO,
 They come from every corner,
 Where they mingle, friend or foe.
 The banter and the colour,
 There is nothing to compare,
 From four provinces of Ireland,
 They are happy to be there.
 Tickets can be a problem,
 We know only too well,
 But you will surely get one
 If you go to Barry's Hotel.
 Now those men who have gone before us,
 Great towering giants of men,
 The Doyles and the Rackards,
 And the mighty Christy Ring.
 We shall sing their glorious praises,
 From dusk till early dawn,
 They have immortalised our hurling
 With the sliothár and camán.

BY SHEILA WALSH

You are not alone

A face in the newspaper
 Eyes filled with sadness
 Eyes which spoke to me
 Eyes which I could not forget

A heinous crime - RAPE! MURDER!
 Hurt, anger, fury, hurled at you
 MONSTER!! MONSTER!! MONSTER!!
 ...Eyes filled with sadness...

A loved one lost and stolen
 A family hurt and broken
 No time to say goodbye
 Fond memories, regrets, sadness
 Days filled with pain
 Days full of mourning
 Days full of loss
 ...Their sentence...t

Time...Forgiveness...Understanding...Healing

You sentence
 LIFE!! LIFE!! LIFE!!
 What life!
 Life without a friend
 Life without one to care
 Life without understanding
 Life without light

Darkness...

Thoughts of you could not leave me
 I had to find you
 I had to let you know
 Even though the world may be against you
 There is one who cares
 One who will listen and not judge
 One who will understand
 One who is there for you
 One who is your friend and you hers
 If you will let her be

You are not alone

Truth...Remorse...Hope...Forgiveness...Light

GOD

BY MARY MOLONEY

Poets' corner

Reflections (in Coole Park)

A copious canopy of ilex trees invites one in
 A yellow-billed blackbird forages through
 December rusted leaves
 Watched by a bluetit and wren

Frosted paving stones lead one through
 A boxwood-bordered pathway
 Towards a celestial copper beech whose
 body is
 Wounded with the names of notaries passed
 away
 Walk here all who wish to leave the town
 Find your body slowing down

The very atmosphere is peaceful here
 A skeletal bean tree, playpen for children
 Reminds adults of passing time helped by
 A sundial reflecting sun

Take brisk walk towards the shimmering lake
 Trimmed by reeds
 Whose surface reflects the icy sky
 Wooded sounds magnify

A house ruin, witness
 To good times past, where merriment
 Fine wines and food were much enjoyed
 When the lady of the house would have
 been content

A red squirrel shoots through
 The lofty boughs of a sky reaching fir
 The old stone seat makes its statement,
 doesn't stir
 Leave within these woods your cares and
 woes
 May tranquillity go with you when you go

BY MICHAEL DWYER

The Goody Boy

I see your face in every tree, your neatly trimmed
 beard lies along the edges of the grass
 Your spirit moves among the leaves, your eyes look
 out between the drifting clouds and smile
 Your heart has tugged at mine, forced a tear
 You are very near and everywhere

You have not died, you surround us with an awesome
 presence
 Keep us safe as you join loved ones in immortal love
 As we poor mortals struggle here below and look
 above
 Your stories struggle here below and look above
 The blazing colour of your pictures inspire one to
 create
 To try to capture, join, to imitate

You have emerged from behind the cabbage to a
 butterfly
 With sunburst beauty wings to flutter by
 For you are not Dicky, you are the goody boy
 Your profile is fused on father's, against the setting
 sun
 Images of you barefooted on the beach in Lahinch
 with mother having fun
 You with rolled-up trousers, she with glasses and her
 granny hat
 Together laughing, mom and son with chat

Our children's love of you will pass to generations,
 yet to come
 There will be laughter when your many videos are
 shown
 You have sown a seed that will have grown and
 grown
 Your music too in future will please many ears
 Of children, who as yet did not appear

BY MICHAEL DWYER

IN MEMORY OF MY LATE BROTHER RICHARD DWYER,
 ARTIST AND MUSICIAN, WHO DIED ON THE NINTH OF
 JUNE, TWO THOUSAND AND EIGHT

Memories of Gort fifty years ago

BY JOHN GLYNN



I was born in Bolands Lane on August 22nd 1935. Shortly thereafter, I am told, we graduated to St Colmans Terrace, which was a compound of twenty council cottages, devoid of running water or sewage facilities. Water was procured from a pump at the back of the Cummins's and in front of Doyle's and Minogues' cottages. Those of you who were around then know what the sewerage disposal system was. For those of you who were not, ask around.

The memories that I have which I consider worth noting could come under the following heading and are in no particular order: convent, fair days, hurling rivalries, Willie Quinn, pictures on a Sunday, Mullins dance hall and coursing.

Convent

I do not know what age I was but I was very young and the convent fire is possibly the oldest memory I have. Some time in the middle of the night, Mr Cloran, our next door neighbour, came banging at our door shouting, "Jack get up quick. The auld convent is on fire. If you have a bucket, bring it with you." Everybody in our house was awake and we all watched the fire from a bedroom upstairs. It was easy to see the convent then. There were no houses across the road, nothing but fields between us and the convent.

The other thing I remember about the convent was an apple tree on their grounds at a point in the property nearest the bridge. It hung out over the river and had the best apples in town. To harvest the apples we—the youngsters from the town, particularly those from the cottages—would throw stones at the tree from the bridge and knock the apples into the river. They would float down under the bridge and we would wade out and get them. There

was a ramp into the river near where the entrance to Aldi is now.

My least fond memory of the convent is this: I was and am left-handed at all things, except writing. The nuns forbade me to write left-handed, assuring me it was a mortal sin to do so. Every time I strayed, they slapped my hand or face and threatened to tie my left hand behind my back.

Fair days

They were very traumatic for young children who had to go to school. From the bridge to the square, the streets were filled with restless cattle with their heads mostly facing the footpaths. Most kids, always accompanied by a parent, walked in the streets and most times, with very little luck, tried to avoid walking in cow's you-know-what. By noon, all the cattle that were sold had been loaded onto rail cars at Gort station or onto lorries. Those that weren't sold were on their way home. Hoses appeared from every store. The streets and footpaths were washed down with the resulting slurry flowing gently into the Gort river.

Hurling rivalries

Some of the most exciting hurling that I have had the pleasure of seeing took place at the hurling field in Gort. The intense rivalry that existed between Gort, Liam Mellows, Ballindereen and Loughrea and so on resulted most times in high quality and high spirited games. Our town was well represented on the county team for years. We had Josie and Stevie Gallagher as well as Tadhg Kelly.

Willie Quinn

Willie was a legend in his own mind. His claim to fame was a publication of four pages called *The Star* that he published weekly. The highlight of that publications was its social column, written in code. It would say things like, "JC was seen walk-

ing out the Loughrea Road with BM or TQ was observed holding hands with LT near the Blackwater". The topic of many conversations for the week was, "Who was he referring to?" Any one with these initials was listed and, through a process of elimination, the list got narrowed down.

Pictures on a Saturday

The thing we kids looked forward to during every week was going to the pictures or, nowadays, movies on Saturday. The cinema was down Barrack Street; the admission was sixpence. In addition to the movie and newsreel, there were a couple of serials, like soaps today. If for some reason you did not get there some weeks—the biggest reason being you didn't have the sixpence—you found someone who did go and had them bring you up-to-date. If you were lucky enough to have a couple of extra pennies, you bought a few squares of slab toffee, which was about the most long-lasting sweet you could buy.

Mullins's dance hall

I was a teenager when Mullins's Dance Hall was built and opened on the Ennis Road. It was, without a doubt, the greatest addition to our town in my young life. They hired top-notch céilí and show bands from across the country. It was the place to go on a Sunday night. Many of the men folk attending usually got there a little late. They first made a stop at one of the twenty-three pubs in town. That stop was primarily to get a refreshment to help them to get courageous enough to ask a young lady to dance. You'd see the girls lined up on one side of the hall, usually close to the cloakroom where they could duck inside if they saw someone coming towards

them that they did not like. The men were on the other side. A man had to walk across the floor to ask a girl to dance, with all his friends watching him. Sometimes, he would be refused with, "Sorry, I'm axed" and had to walk back to his friends, who showed no mercy in their ribbing. Thus the need for the refreshment before attending.

There are many other great memories: the aroma from Maloney's bakery as you walked down Georges Street; Duffy's circus once a year in the field near the old town hall, now covered with homes; the market in the square on Saturday, where you could buy everything from a creel of turf to a stone of spuds; the Legion of Mary and other religious processions, which ended up at the stature in the square, which I am convinced has turned round since I was a boy.

Coursing

In my time, there was a coursing meet in Gort for a few years. I never attended them but participated in the capture of rabbits and hares for that event. It involved a mass of humanity spread over several fields. We would beat the bushes and the rabbits, hares and sometimes a fox would go ahead. There were people with nets about a mile in front of us, behind a wall. As we came closer, the line tightened in. The victims had no place to go except over the wall into the nets. The highlight of that and the motivation as a kid to participate was that you got lots of sandwiches, a bottle of lemonade and a couple of big biscuits.

The experiences of growing up in Gort have served me well in life. We were a hard-working family, none more hard working than our father. He always said, "If a job is worth doing, it's worth doing well and if it is not worth doing well, it is not worth doing." It is a motto I have adhered to all my life and instil into my children and grandchildren.

Since coming to America, I have been actively involved in the promotion and perpetuation of all facets of Irish culture and helping fellow Irish folks in times of need. But that's a story for a later date.

Life after the Leaving Certificate

Mike O'Connor, from Crowe Street, Gort, is currently employed as a lecturer within the school of culinary arts and food technology at the Dublin Institute of Technology and is also finishing his MSc in hospitality management at DIT. Mike obtained a first-class honours bachelor of arts degree in hotel and catering management, a bachelor of business degree in hotel and catering management (block release) an advanced certificate in supervisory development, an advanced certificate in bar skills and a certificate in hospitality studies from the Galway/Mayo Institute of Technology and is a member of the Irish Hospitality Institute.



Mike states that while each summer many young people face the Leaving Certificate examination in order to achieve the maximum points to secure their choice of third level course, there are other alternative routes which one can select in order to fulfil one's career ambitions, albeit taking longer. They can still lead to a successful career. These courses are offered by Fáilte Ireland and delivered in the Institutes of Technology. Mike also points out that the GMT staff were extremely supportive to him and this high level of support has been invaluable to him in his career.

Having been employed within the hospitality sector at an early age, Mike has been with companies such as Le Manoir aux Quat' Saisons, a two Michelin star restaurant in Oxford, the Ritz Hotel, London, the former Great Southern Hotels, the Louvain Institute for Ireland in Europe and Belgium and Seabourn Cruise Line, a five-star luxury cruise liner, which hosted many celebrities and chartered private cruises around the Mediterranean. Mike has held various positions from management

and staff training to compiling travel agent commissions.

Mike represented Ireland in restaurant service competitions both at European and international level in Luxembourg and South Korea respectively. The Department of Education and Science appointed Mike as an assistant examiner for the national apprentice competition, restaurant service finals in 2005 and 2008 and as superintendent for the 2002 and 2003 finals. Facilities Management Catering selected Mike as the manager of the Boyne Suite eighteenth green corporate tent at the 2006 Ryder cup at the K Club. The suite played host to tourism and Fáilte Ireland guests.

Mike's areas of expertise include world skills training programme, food and beverage management, front office skills, general management, team leadership, consultancy work, student assessment and monitoring, implementing quality control procedures and developing strategic plans. His research interests include 'perceptions and expectation of service in the restaurant sector', 'the examination of the significant changes to the Intoxicating Liquor Acts 2000/2004 and other contemporary hospitality management issues.

St Colmans GAA club

BY JOE BEAKEY



St Colmans, Connacht champions 2007

Back row, left to right: Richard Bowes (selector), Gerry Starkin (selector), Andy Coen, Martin Moran, Liam Nolan, Garret Nestor, Robert Piggott, Kieran Kelly, Keith Glynn, Gerry Stanford, Paul Glynn, John O'Donnell, Brian Bourke, Michael McNamara, Tony Finnegan, John Curley, Enda Linnane, Alan Finnegan and Ciran Earls (manager)

Front row, left to right: Brian Regan, Enda Tannion, Garry O'Donnell, Rory Gantley, Evan Killroy (captain), Gerry Quinn, Paul Browne, Eoin Glynn, Darragh Starkin, John O'Donnell, Cyril Kelly (team trainer) and Tony O'Donnell

inset: Evan Killroy and Robert Piggott lifting the cup

St Colmans Gaelic Football Club is based in Gort in south Galway and covers the parishes Gort, Beagh and Kilbeacanty; the club was founded in the late 1980s. It currently affiliates nine teams from boys and girls under-12s and under-14s, boys under-16, minor, under-21 and two junior men's teams and a junior ladies' team which was formed in 2004.

On the field the 1980s and '90s proved difficult times for the club as it failed to establish itself in junior ranks; gaining promotion one year and relegation the next was very much the norm until an under-age structure was formed and early success laid the foundation for what the club has achieved to date.

The club captured the under-16 west league and championship in 2004 led by Garry O'Donnell who went on to captain the Galway mi-

nor team of 2006. Garry's achievements gave great encouragement to many and a under-12 league, under-14 féile shield and championship have made sure the club competes for honours every year.

The past twelve months have given the club a much higher profile,

having had its most successful year to date, winning the West Board junior A championship meant qualification to the county final in Pearse stadium against the north board's Caherlistrane. A slow start by St Colmans meant they were chasing the game and a late rally was



St Colmans ladies' football team

not enough to stop a much sharper Caherlistrane outfit run out five point winners in the end.

All was not lost on the day as Colmans knew entering the game that they would be Galway's representatives in the Connacht junior championship as Caherlistrane held both senior and junior ranks.

Early November the club travelled to Ballinasloe to take on Roscommon champions St Barrys, a game that looked out of reach at half time when Barrys held a nine point lead. This didn't deter the Colmans squad from mounting a magnificent fight back and ran out two point winners in a pulsating contest.

The following week the management team of Ciaran Earls (manager) and selectors Cyril Kelly and Gerry Starkin went back to Ballinasloe to take on Mayo champions Achill in the Connacht club final. A large Gort following didn't witness any of the previous weeks heroics as the Colmans players never looked in any trouble and ran out four point winners to the delight of all those present.

Bonfires lit the way home and a late night was held by all to celebrate a great achievement by the club in such a short space of time. A three month break followed before the all-Ireland semi final in Askeaton, Co. Limerick against Munster champions Canovee of Cork. This would be the club's biggest test yet and a final fixed for Croke park was a huge incentive for the club to complete a remarkable year. The town of Gort got behind the team and the streets were decked out in black and white flags and bunting, a huge crowd travelled and everything looked set.

A slow start again didn't unduly bother those present as the team was capable of a comeback like in previous games but Canovee seemed much sharper and having played two competitive games after Christmas which stood well to them as they won by five points, much to the huge disappointment of the Colmans players, management and supporters.

Success wasn't just confined to the men as the ladies also captured silverware for the third year in a row when they won the county junior B ladies' championship. Manager Tom Kelly and selectors Enda Tannion and Kevin Egan had their work well rewarded when the girls ran out two point winners in a game they never led until the final few minutes to beat Naoimh Mhuire of Oranmore.

Underage success came in the form of a Ted Webb medal, the second to come to the club after Garry O'Donnell's success in the prestigious under-16 tournament. This time it was Kyle McCarthy who turned in some great displays during the summer with the Galway city and west team. Congratulations also to Garry O'Donnell for his role in making the Galway under-21 team and winning the Galway football board's junior footballer of the year and playing a big part in NUIG's year at senior football.

Off the field the club's officers have had a very busy couple of years. Chairman John Quinn, secretary Joe Beakey, treasurer Caroline Quinn, ladies' secretary Leah Kelly and committee members Tom Kelly, Louise Keegan and Gareth Nestor have seen the club grow into one of the largest clubs in south Galway with a membership of over two hundred. They hope to see that figure grow over the coming years.

This year the club appointed Kevin Egan as our club referee and after



Action from the Connacht final

doing the training with all-Ireland referee Mick Curley, he has taken to his task with great enthusiasm and is seen regularly presiding over senior, junior and under-age ranks.

The club will launch its own web site over the coming months and a huge thanks goes to Noel Ruane who is putting it together. Anyone that would like to contribute with articles, photos and so on can contact club secretary Joe Beakey.

Finally the club would like to thank all those that have helped out in any way during the past couple of years and, in particular, all our sponsors.

GAA integration initiative

BY FRANCIS O'CONNOR

On Monday May 12th 2008, Gort hurling club were honoured to have president of the GAA Mr Nicky Brennan and director general Mr Paraic Duffy in the clubhouse to launch a new initiative: a club/school coaching officer with special duties for the integration of newcomer children to the hurling club.

Gort hurling club has shown great vision in seeking to integrate newcomer children to the association. Both the president and the director general have recognised that this is one of the challenges facing the GAA at present and that Gort hurling club was meeting that challenge head on. It is hoped by setting up this part-time paid position that children from all nationalities would be encouraged to play hurling in school with their Irish friends and would provide an outlet for the children to continue to develop their skills.

This idea came about as a result of informal conversations between Pearse Piggott, John Cummins and I. We started looking at how Gort was changing socially and what implications it might have for the hurling club. Scoil Eoin was seeing a lot of Brazilian children taking an interest in the game of hurling but, apart from one or two, this was not being translated to the club. Over a number of meetings we came up with a template that we felt would benefit all parties. We approached the executive of Gort hurling club with the idea and we were delighted with the support we received.

As the position needed to be financed, we asked the club if we were successful in getting funding from Croke Park, would they provide the balance necessary. Again, this was agreed on and we now set about making contact with the relevant people in Croke Park. We knocked on a few doors and received

feedback from a number of committees but the ultimate decision lay with those at the very top. Now it's not easy to get meetings with the president of the GAA but this is where Pearse came into his own. We eventually got that meeting and were encouraged to learn that the new director general Mr Paraic Duffy would also attend. Pearse and John sold the idea and, after a few weeks, we got word that the funding would be made available for a six year period.

Before Pearse and John left the meeting, they requested that both men would come to Gort for the launch of the initiative and, true to their word, both arrived on the evening arranged.

A great evening followed. The president and the director general were welcomed by club chairman Martin Kerrins and county board chairman Mr Gerard Larkin. After all the speeches were over, it was fantastic to see both men engage with the members of the club, both young and old.

After the launch the search started to get the position filled. We are delighted to announce that Tadgh Linnane has started in the job and the Gort hurling club will reap the



Under-12 team manager John Cummins congratulates captain Leonardo Gomez after Gort defeated Killimor in the county final

photo: David O'Reilly

rewards of getting someone of this calibre into the position.

On behalf of Pearse and John, I would like to thank all who helped to get this initiative off the ground, especially the executive of Gort hurling club and those who assisted in getting the clubhouse ready for the launch.

The facilities in Gort hurling club are second-to-none and provide opportunities for children to achieve their dreams. We hope this initiative might further enhance the chances of more children seeing those dreams come true.