

A Year like No Other

Given Irish history, that is an ambitious headline. But Covid-19 has had an impact on us all. Each family has had to adjust to no longer seeing or holding each other in an effort to keep one another safe. This issue examines some of the ways our community has adapted to the new circumstances we will continue to deal with. For myself, I was grateful to keep designing and building the magazine, as well as for FaceTime to keep in touch with my family stranded overseas.

The Guaire Magazine, unable to plan an official launch, has depended upon media and word of mouth to drive sales. Also, this year, www.IrelandXO.com will carry the Guaire on its bookshelf of regional Galway publications to reach the Gort/Kilmacduagh diaspora abroad. Look for your copy in Gort, Labane, Cloon and Kinvara shops or order online at www.guaire.org. Buy an extra one for the relative you haven't seen in months!

We were disappointed to cancel our Guaire Magazine's Children's Writing Competition this year, especially since we had expanded it to include children who tell their stories with art. The contest will return next edition.

There is no lost time for major projects vying for match funding this year: the Gort Town Hall Management Company is renovating the Town Hall, the Gort River Walk group continues to advance the River Walk, and Burren Lowlands CLG is updating a Face Lift for the Gort Market Square. Whether you are a fan of theatre, nature walks, or just watching the world pass by, why not donate to your favorite in lieu of too many Christmas gifts this year? We have included a code with each story that can take you directly to their fund-raising page.

Our table of contents is shadowed by a path through the Coole Forest, which many people rediscovered during lockdown. The diverse voices in this issue range from funny, to poignant, matter of fact, even to academic. As you read them, imagine yourself in Coole Park, under the shade of the Oriental plane tree on our cover, beautifully painted by Josephine Ward.

Thank you for your continuing support of the Guaire!



We thank the following for their support of the Guaire: An Post Gort, Crowe St.; Burke's, Georges St.; Centra, Georges St.; Corrib Oil, Crowe St.; Education World, Bridge St.; Emo Oil Wild Atlantic Way Service Station, Kinvara; Gillane's, Cloon; Gort Garden Centre, Tubber Road; Gort Parish Office, Queen St.; Hawkins, Georges St.; Howley's Service Station, Ennis Road; Keane's, The Square; O'Callaghan's News and Views, Bridge St.; Quinn's, Labane; Spar, Kinvara; Super Value's First Chapter, Tubber Road.

Running for over 35 years, Guaire features the news stories, reflections and history of the local community at home and abroad. Proceeds from the sale of the Guaire Magazine are donated to local charities. We would be delighted to receive your comments and ideas for future editions—contact guairemagazine@gmail.com or go to our website, www.guaire.org.

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Covid & the Gort Community

BY BERNICE CAROLAN

2020 has been a year like no other for all of us! You don't need me to tell you how much of an impact "living with Covid-19" has had on every single aspect of our society. While we all adjust to this new norm, one thing is clear, Covid-19 has ushered in a whole new vocabulary, encompassing a range of revived or even new words, that have now been accepted by society as everyday parlance. I once read that a theme of lexicography is that "great social change brings great linguistic change", and this global crisis surely give credence to this. Words like epidemic, pandemic, infodemic, cocooning, elbow-bumps, hand sanitising, flattening the curve, self isolation, social distancing, face masks, lockdown, quarantine, are now all part of our normal everyday vocabulary. We now don't even think twice about using them.

When I think about this Covid language, one feature that strikes me is the negative connotation to so many of these words; words like self-isolation, quarantine, lockdown, social distancing. Reflecting on this, I find these words quite anxiety provoking, and I stop to think about how easy it would be for society as a whole to become totally overwhelmed by the negativity of all that is Covid-19.

Throughout this whole "non-year" however, one word stands out above all others. I'm not talking about one of these new words. I'm talking about one that has been around since God was a boy! That word is "Community".

When Leo announced the dreaded "lockdown" of our country in March 2020, communities across



SUPERVALU AND CENTRA ESTABLISHED DONATION BOXES TO PROVIDE FOOD TO THE GORT RESOURCE CENTER FOR THOSE WHO NEEDED ASSISTANCE. VOLUNTEERS HELPED DISTRIBUTE IT ALL.

Ireland stepped up to the plate. Locally, we witnessed an outpouring of support from people across our community wanting to help the vulnerable and at risk in our community. People in every parish came together as a community to set up support networks to ensure those in need were not left alone during this time. Between the GAA and the Parish, Gort also got its act together. Headed up by an outstanding young person, Aileen Harte, Gort Community Support Group was established. A rallying call went out for volunteers. The response from our community was amazing. The set-up and administration of this group was a huge task and extremely time consuming. Thankfully Aileen was on an enforced school break, with a very organised skill set and was totally committed to doing everything to make this work. Volunteer phone numbers were collected, a What's App group was set up, information sharing had to be agreed while being mindful of

legalities such as GDPR, insurance and Garda vetting for all volunteers (yes, even during a pandemic these things must be adhered to!). Guidance had to be issued to all volunteers to ensure their safety and the protection of those they were supporting. Due to the nature of the Covid beast, the situation was evolving on almost a daily basis, so updated HSE advice and guidance had to be shared in a very timely manner. Thankfully Aileen had this all very well under control. One of the key concerns at the beginning of lockdown was that some vulnerable people could be overlooked and left unaided, either through fear, pride or lack of information/knowledge. A key part of being a community is knowing the people in your community. Through a range of feedback mechanisms, a list of those who needed to be kept safe and supported was finally pulled together and the willing band of volunteers set to work. The task list was extensive but never boring – shopping, collecting

prescriptions, collecting and delivering hot food throughout the day, stocking up fuel supplies, stopping to have a socially distanced chat. You name it, a volunteer did it! Sometimes a volunteer was the only human contact an elderly person had and that link was a vitally important part of helping our community stay safe and sane throughout Covid. Volunteers drove all over the place, from Galway to Ennis and over to Belharbour. No call was left unanswered.

In times of crisis communities really do band together and bring out the best in each other and Gort was no exception.

A lovely lady made and donated masks for the volunteers; another donated bottles of hand sanitiser; supermarkets gave volunteers complimentary teas & coffees and allowed volunteers to skip the queues.

The normal day-to-day support provided to families by Gort's Family Resource Centre was extremely stretched due to increased demand. Donations of jigsaws, board games etc. were gratefully received and distributed to keep children occupied.

SuperValu and Centra supermarkets supported the establishment of new donation points to help augment the already stretched Food Cloud supplies. Volunteers collected these donations and helped staff in the Resource Centre with packing and distribution.

Hospitals were also locked down and visitors were not allowed to visit their loved ones. Local nurses and admin staff who were working in the hospitals kindly volunteered to bring personal items to patients, easing the burden on worried family members.

Gort Community Support Group worked 7 days a week throughout lockdown and with the lifting of restrictions; the group delivered its

Chariot of Blessings



Fr. Tommy Marrinan PP of Gort and Beagh seen here blessing the parishioners. He was warmly greeted by young and old including the many cocooners who made their first appearance in weeks. We were blessed by Fr. Tommy, blessed by the beautiful weather, the lovely music of Gantley and Clancy families and we are blessed by the wonderful community of South Galway.

last hot dinner on 21/06/2020. While I'm writing this article from a Gort Community Support group perspective, I'm aware that the Guaire is read by a much wider audience than Gort so it's only right to acknowledge here the amazing community response from all those in our surrounding areas. Sherry Anderson once said, "Volunteers don't get paid, not

because they are worthless, but because they are priceless." Gort Community Support Group is an amazing bunch of volunteers who through their actions helped support our community through the early days of this crisis fulfilling the words of the late Helen Keller who said of communities: "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much".

Coronavirus AKA CoVid19 Lockdown: Terms and Conditions Apply

BY ANGELA DONOHUE

Until quite recently our familiarity with the word *Corona* didn't extend beyond that of a popular beverage for many, or, in its plural form, a reputable Irish Pop Band! This new *Corona*, a Virus, is thought to have arrived from *Wuhan*, a province in China possibly not that familiar with many of us either until February 2020 when it arrived in Ireland and by March we had *Lockdown*. Some of us might have known what a Lock-in or a Lock-up was, or even a Breakdown, but a *Lockdown*, now this is a whole new phenomenon, a *Pandemic* phenomenon! Schools, Churches, Bars, Restaurants, Cinemas, Theatres, and all non-emergency Shops, Services and Factories, the whole shebang, all closed down; indefinitely, with the town of Gort being no exception. This is now the new Normal? Never in my wildest dreams could I ever have imagined anything like this. How are we going to cope? How long is this going to last? All the questions with no answers; just wait and see approach. March 16th is our 40th wedding anniversary and seeing that all restaurants closed the night before means our celebratory dinner is cancelled. What are we supposed to do? Initially it feels sort of surreal, like as if every day is a bank holiday; a novelty, living in a bubble with no pressure from anywhere. But soon I began to realise I was stripped of my freedom of movement and little control over what I do. But I am not in this alone; we all have to weather the same storm but some in different boats to others! Not being in full time employment

means I am not as badly affected as those who now find themselves unemployed. But there is no disaster that cannot be turned into opportunity. What about my "To-Do List" that takes pride of place inside the cover of my Diary every year; all Carried Forward from the previous year? Those tasks that there never is enough time for; always too busy? Surely this is now my chance!

Renew Old Acquaintances

I have wanted to visit very good friends of ours living in Greystones for years but firstly they are outside the 2km. radius that we are allowed to travel and besides they're in their seventies and must *Cocoon*, which means they are now to remain indoors and not allowed make contact with anybody outside of their home. Our friends Anna and John are close by in Bray but with underlying medical conditions they are also *Cocooning*. Besides with Social Distancing, no handshakes, hugs, high fives, whatever allowed, plus the fact that you could be forced into Self-Isolation if caught flouting the new Public Health rules by the extra Gardaí drafted in. So best to Stay Home, keep the hands washed! Now this is the time to make a concerted effort to familiarise myself with the gamut of telecommunications features that are out there; Zoom, Skype, What's App, Facetime, Twitter, Gifs, Blog, Webinar, and Facebook. Now all I need is Broadband, a Smartphone, tablet or laptop, and their Mobile numbers, email or Facebook address. Oh no, I only have street addresses in a little address book for Christmas card list purposes, so I think I will park it for now.

Besides not having seen many of them for a long time, surely none of these new "techie virtual things" could possibly replace real physical face to face contact; even if they are supposed to keep us together while being apart!

Declutter

I am a hoarder and to make it worse, a sentimentalist. Since being born in Kiltartan many moons ago, I have moved home over twenty times in my life, so how does so much stuff accumulate? Now I did not lick it off the ground, seeing that one of my Mother's favourite mottos was; "keep a thing for seven years and you will find use for it". So loath am I to let things go. I will when the time is right; so surely this is it. I am a staunch advocate of recycle and reuse and cannot tolerate the expression "throw it out". Out where I say! So with cupboards full of old vinyls, old theatre programmes, and masses of materials all of which can be used again, it is only a matter of finding the right home for them so I just have to Google it! Now the wardrobes are another issue; yes, way overloaded, but with the volume of people decluttering at the moment the poor Charity shops in Gort are going to be swamped with stock when they reopen, so better wait a while. Besides I have high hopes of fitting into some of them again! Old letters, postcards, books and photographs are next on the list. Some of them going back to 1935, (my mother's copybook) including a character reference my mother received from Rose Winkle, Kinvara, when she left the establishment in 1941. All these are of sentimental value of course but I



THE SQUARE GORT

VIEW FROM BEFORE 2020: GORT RETURNS TO A LONELY PAST

have to make a start. It takes ages to reread every letter and postcard bringing back lovely thoughts and memories of people and experiences long since gone or forgotten; hundreds of Photographs all having the same effect. Why am I keeping them? For someone else to “throw out”: so I have sorted them somewhat, but will go through them all again, just in case!

Try the piano again!

I did take piano lessons once, well twice actually. The first time was in South Africa, when I arrived one day for my lesson the teacher had moved, lock stock and barrel, never told me of her intention. My husband said he wouldn't blame her, but I thought it was a bit drastic; we could have talked about it. But Ina, my teacher in Cork was a bit more tolerant and I wasn't doing too bad, but much to my regret my work moved to Dublin and I had to give up the lessons. So

here I am again banging away at the keys and sort of enjoying it as there is no pressure. The only listeners allowed are my two little grandnieces; they love “She'll be coming round the mountain”. That's as good as it gets!

Improve my culinary skills

Firstly I must attack the hundreds of recipes cut from magazines waiting to be filed, categorised and tested. I think of joining the baking brigade as the art is supposed to have taken a monumental leap with banana bread being the clear favourite.

Flour is on top of the shopping list but not a packet to be had in the town of Gort; all sold out. Monkeys are said to be falling out of the trees with the hunger so best abandon the baking, besides what about the extra pounds piling on, no, Maura from Slimming World wouldn't be happy when weigh-in resumes.

Everything Else

There are books to be read, artistic needlework to be done, Box Sets and films on Netflix to be viewed, two rolls of wallpaper waiting for three years to go up on some wall, etc. etc., the list goes on but to be honest, two months into this Lockdown and the list is no shorter. I have come to the conclusion that it is not the lack of time at all that's the problem but lack of desire. So best forget about the To-Do list, and focus on the “want-to-do” list; so one good lesson learned from all this.

The new highlight of my life now is my twice weekly visits to Gort; this on line shopping is not for me! The Square and all the other streets look so deserted. The shutters are down on several shops. O' Connor's Coffee shop, a daily meeting place missed by so many, open for confectionary sales only. People queue outside the chemists for counter service at the door. The main supermarkets ensure that customers keep the distance with

Waiting out the Pandemic

clearly marked queue lines, with hand sanitisation facilities at entrances while staff are protected at check outs with Perspex shields. Colman Keane's is good for a few essentials with a friendly smile and chat, while Hughie O Donnell is guaranteed to have a story, even a lecture on the Prophecies of St. Malachy, even a bit of fresh meat (with a few onions thrown in). With the unusual stillness and quiet in the town, you realise that many of the usual familiar faces are not out and about, no punters to be seen tipping in and out of Paddy Powers, and no Friday Market buzz. There are no stylish people to be seen attending week-end weddings around the Church. But most conspicuous of all by their absence are the school children. All at home being Homeschooled with the help of parents and "teachers-on-line". Junior Certs are happy to have their exam cancelled while Leaving Cert students have to depend on Predictive Grades to determine their future.

There was huge emphasis placed on the importance of keeping oneself in good physical and mental shape during this Lockdown. This was nicely facilitated with the most amazing weather which allowed many non-cocooners, within the radius of course, to take full advantage of Coole Park and River Walk. Anybody thinking of sneaking in a little outing to the Flaggy Shore was told to Stay away, Go Home and wash your hands! Gardening was greatly assisted by the on line ordering and delivery service from Gort Garden Centre. If Thaw Sheedy was still around, he would have been inundated with demand for bicycles and bicycles repairs. Having greatly missed my Aqua Aerobic Class every Wednesday

morning at The Lady Gregory Hotel, and all the lovely ladies in the group, I was happy to join a Pilate class Zoomed into my living room every Friday morning. The local hurling team that should now be in serious County Championship training displayed a great sense of social cohesion by supporting the more vulnerable members of the community assisting in any way they could. On line viewing was enhanced with a couple of grand performances by Wild Swans Drama Group. A nice distraction from the TV production "Normal Lives" by Sally Rooney,

I think a cure for this virus will extend beyond our heritage of superstitious beliefs and will probably take a little more than tying a red ribbon to the tail of a cow on May Eve or a rub of Biddy Early's bottle.

currently sending Joe (Wash your hands) Duffy phone lines into meltdown! Our spiritual wellbeing was well looked after by Fr. Tommy, Fr. Michael and the team, by live streaming Mass every Sunday at 12.00 pm; almost surreal sharing mass with fellow "Gortonians" all over the world. Funeral masses were the saddest occasions of all with only a handful of family members allowed who were deprived of the normal comforting words and support of the local Community. The weekly newsletter was available on line, with anniversaries remembered as normal. Many children were greatly disappointed having their Holy Communion and

Confirmation postponed. On May 3rd Fr. Tommy visited every corner of the Parish on his "Pope Mobile" which was streamed live into our homes which was lovely to watch. I think a cure for this virus will extend beyond our heritage of superstitious beliefs and will probably take a little more than tying a red ribbon to the tail of a cow on May Eve or a rub of Biddy Early's bottle. While we wait, all we can do is emerge from our cocoons and face the new normal lives as best we can. Apart from all the lessons learned about "simple things are the important things"

and "focus on what you need and not what you want" etc. etc.; high on my agenda will be a visit to Christiana, my Fabulous hairdresser in the Square. Next I can't wait to see the expression on some faces after the first pint of Guinness in months! The novelty of popping into Pat Smyths for a browse and knowing Sullivan's is open for lunch and The Gallery for a coffee and a chat. Foreign holiday plans can remain on the back burner but a day trip to Inis Oirr would be nice or a little week-end break. The simple basic desire to have something to look forward to and the right of choice and a little control restored in my life!



LEGENDARY NEWSMAN OF SOUTH GALWAY

THE 'BOULD' WILLIE QUINN

BY MARY LYNESKEY

If Willie Quinn was here today he'd be described as a 'Legend' and rightly so, for he was some man for one man. Modernization has robbed us of the likes of Willie --the 'Characters' who refused to toe the line, rebels never afraid to express themselves, often outrageously. The mention of his name in Gort evokes a smile, a story told, a flashback to an era largely forgotten. As the fella said, 'you had to have been there'.

Willie was cultured, a sophisticated Labanese native born in 1917. He is remembered as well rounded and intelligent, with a healthy interest in everything happening around him and beyond. A Garbally graduate and free spirit, Willie's sense of adventure took him to Scotland when most would rather do nothing than risk doing wrong. Comfort zones were alien to him, to be avoided at all costs. He wasn't plagued with a narrow focus that dictated you get a job and stick with it for a lifetime. No, Willie was different, blessed with a global vision, moving effortlessly from one career to another, as changeable as the wind. He had an unshakeable sense of his own destiny and allowed nothing to faze him. Willie Quinn *did* things and hit the ground running the minute he climbed out of the cot. He earned a crust as a reporter for



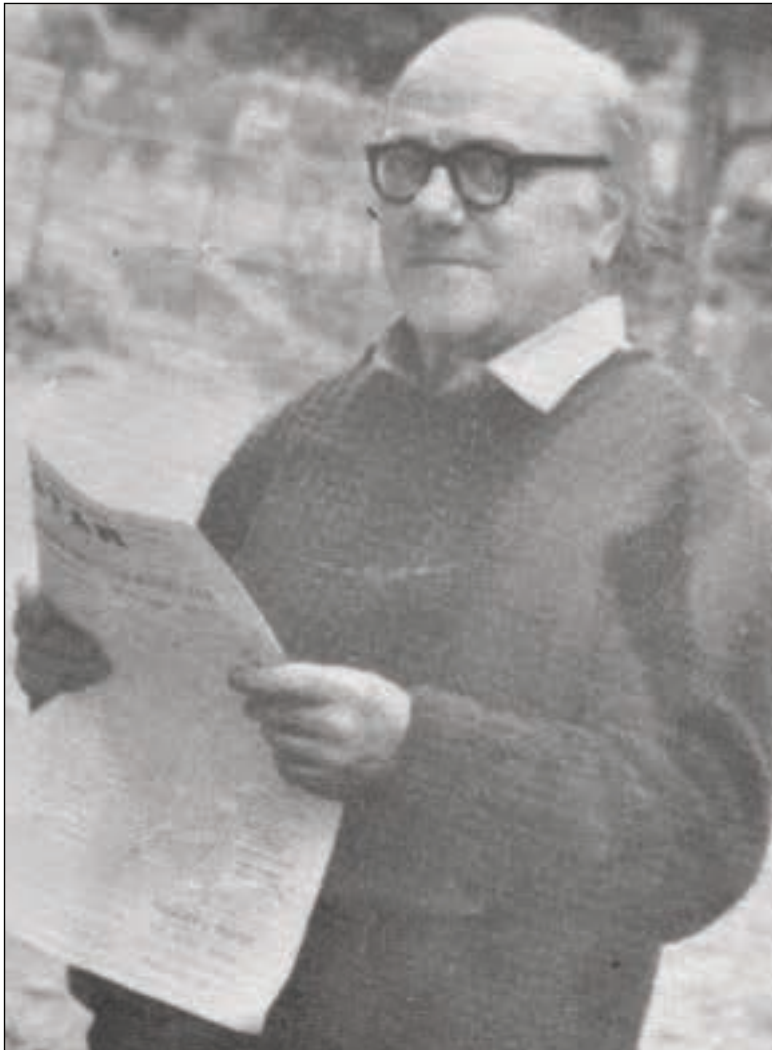
1960'S: BACK ROW, (L-R), MAI DUFFY (CROWE ST), NED WALSHE (THE SQUARE), VINCENT O'SHAUGHNESSY (THE SQUARE), KITTY DUFFY (ATTYMON), UNIDENTIFIED MAN. SEATED (L-R) JOHNNY COUNIHAN (CROWE ST), MICK CAHILL (GLENBRACK), MARK SCULLY (CHURCH ST).

The Scotsman newspaper before eventually drifting back to Gort, where, among other things, he shook things up by launching his own newspaper *The South Galway Star*, an extraordinary achievement for a lad on his own.

No matter what Willie was doing he immersed himself completely in it and gave 100%. He had a knack for getting information out of people and had a memory like an elephant. Nothing escaped his beady eye as he sped around selling Ads and gathering news. Willie reported on everything, down to the smallest iota. He applied himself with furious

concentration on a range of topics that varied widely, from a mesmerizing fascination with trivia to a genuine interest in current affairs. He wrote candidly and lifted snatches of daily life from the mundane to new levels, often turning some random curiosity into a news item worthy of front-page status. Nothing was ever wasted, every scrap of knowledge jammed in as he diligently sought to provide value for money to his readers. He was always respectful and accurate in his reporting, though often tinged with his wicked sense of humour. Willie's paper never refused ink. While he poked fun at times, he was mindful

THE 'BOULD' WILLIE QUINN



WILLIE QUINN WITH AN ISSUE OF THE STAR

of the content, ensuring it was true and suitable for all age groups. The detail was phenomenal and gave good account of everyday life west of the Shannon in the latter half of the 20th Century.

The 'Star' sold for the princely sum of 2d (pennies) in outlets all over Galway and Clare, including various church steps of a Sunday morning. Hail, rain or snow, Willie distributed his newspaper widely. His greatest passion was writing and where others might have folded their tents in despair at the enormity of it all, Willie thrived on deadlines, working tirelessly on a paper that would have sent lesser mortals to the home for the

bewildered.

His ability to look and think outside the box allowed Willie to plough his energy into a plethora of stuff that would make another man's eyes water. He was a pioneer entrepreneur who could turn his hand to anything in a town still shy of the ways of the outside world. Willie had travelled, was well read, and embraced change with open arms. During his 80 years he wore many hats. It would be easier list things Willie *didn't* do than what he did. If necessity was the Mother of invention, Willie was the Father. He was a reporter, editor, publisher, photographer, painter & decorator, auctioneer,

furniture dealer, barber, poet, writer, artist, inventor, playwright, songwriter, and purveyor of one of the first mobile chip vans in County Galway.

A familiar camera-clad figure in the Classic Ballroom, Willie captured romance and the very essence of people with a precise passion. Closeups of eyes staring warily into the heart of the lens showcased local inhabitants at every opportunity. There wouldn't be too many photos in the town of Gort only for Willie. Willie snapped them all, taking thousands of photographs over the years. Some images were stark, all technically skilled. Flecks of memories filled his lens as he moved silently through an event, be it a Fair Day, a procession of Holy Communicants parading their beauty on Corpus Christi, whatever was happening Willie was there.

The windows of his home on Church Street were plastered weekly with the results of Willie's mysterious dark room, where an alchemy of bright light and dark shades transformed flimsy film into print. As children we did our damndest to breach this inner sanctum to see for ourselves how he performed his weekly magic, but Willie adamantly kept it out of bounds. We would linger, hoping to get his back turned, but he had our measure and kept a close eye on our shenanigans. He ran his barber shop there too and didn't seem to mind us wandering in for a 'gawk' as he clipped away. His good friend Colie Moran recalled Willie cutting his hair one day and when he was finished declared his own thatch could do with a trim. They swapped positions, stared briefly together at the landscape in question before Willie entrusted his pupil with sharp cutting tools and the task of trundling the machinery carefully across his sparsely covered scalp.

THE 'BOULD' WILLIE QUINN

A talented songwriter, Willie gifted Colie with original handwritten lyrics of ballads, including *I'm a Simon Worker Now*, *Brave Pateen Donoghue*, *Sweet Salthill*, and the hilarious *The Cow They Couldn't Milk On Christmas Day*, complete with a blank tape, carefully signed 'first recording rights' and endless encouragement to record 'fearlessly'.

When he wasn't working, writing or taking pictures, Willie liked to make things. One invention was an item called the Housewife's Choice, a robust twig fashioned from reeds and combined with a broom handle which the women of the parish clamoured to get their hands on. Another creation was a grotto, a glorious hand-painted depiction of the Holy Family that he sold around Christmastime.

Conscious of our extraordinary surroundings, Coole House, Thoor Ballylee, Kilmacduagh and the Burren, Willie painted murals of their distinguishing features on the exterior of his home and in other public buildings around the town.

Willie knew his stuff and could hold his own with the best of them. Opinionated and highly respected, he would defend his beliefs vigorously in any debate. He had forgotten more than most people would ever know but the ability to suffer fools was beyond him. Incompetent and stupid people were tolerated then usually left to their own devices, it was the arrogant buffoon, the smart aleck who would do you down that he could not stomach.

I heard tell of a stranger appearing in Bourke's in Church Street once



where a few lads, including our Willie, had gathered to wind down the day with a few pints, a smoke, and a leisurely chat. Sipping a G & T the gatecrasher held them hostage with a drivelous monologue, his audience trapped in the confines of the small bar. The lads sat there, counting the bubbles on the top of their pints, offering the odd nod, their opinions neither sought nor given. As the intruder rabbited on, he failed to notice Willie, eyes turned upwards like the eyes of a dying saint, beseeching the Lord for an end to the torment. Willie enjoyed a chat as good as the next man but had zero tolerance for a condescending bore; his close friend was anarchy and when they got together, they liked to cause a stir. He interrupted the proceedings by way of a loud harrumph. 'My Good Man,' he said, raising his glass in mock salute, 'if I opened the pores of my intelligence you would drown in the depths of your ignorance'. The frankness of this declaration brought about a hasty retreat, a chorus of raucous laughter ringing in the ears of the departing dope.

Willie was never alone, a never-ending supply of words waiting to be written kept him company always. He featured regularly in the Guaire – articles, poetry, open letters produced with ease. In 1984 Willie wrote an optimistic letter

published under 'Out And About' appealing to the borrower of a book some 20 years previous to return same. It's not known if the *History of Kilmacduagh* ever surfaced.

Willie Quinn packed an awful lot into his 80 years; he could have done with another lifetime considering all he had on the go. His approach to life was one of joy, filled with entrancing experiences. He had inclinations of his own he just got on with, instead of procrastinating like the rest of us. In contemplative mood, Willie once penned 'the spoken word can pierce, depress, elevate or pass on, but the written line is an everlasting memorial that may influence, for good or evil, generations yet unborn'.

His love of language, his intoxication with words, refining them into a thing of beauty, is endorsed by that line. A fitting epitaph also sums up his love of community, 'Fear not, nor grieve at my departure. For you who I've loved so much, my roots and yours are forever intertwined'. He may be gone but his indomitable spirit lives on in his work, his poetry, his plays, his published articles, his history and memories, forever embodied in the treasures he gifted to his adopted home of Gort. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

THE GUAIRE MAGAZINE IS ALWAYS INTERESTED IN YOUR OLD PHOTOS. IF YOU FIND LOCAL PICTURES FROM THE PAST, CONSIDER GIVING A COPY TO A MEMBER OF THE GUAIRE'S TEAM. YOU MIGHT FIND IT ON OUR 'DOWN MEMORY LANE' FEATURE IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

GCS Providing Shields to Our Superheroes!

Gort Community School has endeavoured to make a difference during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Currently the school, under the leadership and vision of Michéal Dervan in the Engineering department, is producing face shields to help front line workers in the medical profession combat COVID-19.

The school's laser cutters are being used to produce the shields which are of a very high quality, using an acrylic support and a clear PVC visor. The school are producing up to 100 per day and are donating the PPE equipment free of charge to local hospitals and nursing homes. Mr Brian Crossan, principal, stated 'We have state of the art equipment in our Engineering and Technology rooms and I am delighted to be able to put them to good use during these difficult times. We have already donated safety glasses to a local nursing home and now we are producing Face Shields to help combat COVID-19.'

The Oranmore Civil Defense offered a huge thank you to Gort Community School, noting: "They donated face shields that they made in the school, to our unit to help keep our members safe. We are hugely appreciative, and they were put to immediate use. We had crews out each night this week helping the Blood

Transfusion Board with their clinics in Tuam. Each day saw full clinics.

Well done to the people of Tuam and surrounds. Thank you to our volunteers who put in long hours each day and once again a huge thank you to Gort Community School."

GSC is very proud of our past



LORRAINE MURRAY AND CIARA O'SULLIVAN

pupil, Michael Noonan making a difference in London during the Covid pandemic. Michael Noonan, Head of Technology at Queen Elizabeth's School in Barnet demonstrates how he's making face shields in the fight against

coronavirus rather than his day job of teaching pupils.

If interested in obtaining some of the masks, contact info@gortcs.com
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From St. Colman's VS to Gort CS

BY STAN MC EOIN

Gort Community School (G.C.S.) opened on 4th September 1995, the day after Clare won its first all-Ireland senior hurling title in 81 years. Its principal, Denis Corry, a former Clare goalkeeper, became the captain of a new team, one no less dedicated to its task than the Clare team of '95. His new team was an amalgamation of three smaller teams. The first one, the Sisters of Mercy, was engaged in charitable work and education in Gort since 1857. Since the early 1920s they had provided secondary education to local girls.

In the 1956, the Galway diocese, opened Our Lady's College in what is now the Medical Centre. A new school, now the Lady Gregory Hotel, was opened in 1969.

The third team in the amalgamation was St. Colman's Vocational School. Like community schools, vocational schools came from government initiatives, in contrast to the religious schools, which compensated for the inadequacy of the state's role in promoting education. Vocational schools provided only two years of second level education until free secondary education was introduced in 1967.

St. Colman's Vocational School

The 1930 Vocational Education Act ensured that schools were established in all reasonably sized towns. Gort Vocational School could have been in Coole Park, but in 1939 the school was built on part of the site of the old Workhouse. In 1940, St. Colman's Vocational School opened, with Liam Martin as Principal. This was an opportunity, for boys especially, to get at least two years second level education as there was no opportunity for a boy to go to secondary school unless his family was well off, or he was very clever and could get a scholarship to St. Mary's College in Galway. Girls, however, had secondary education readily available to them, thanks to the Sisters.

Liam Martin was followed by Seamus O'Donoghue as Principal in 1946. In 1956, woodwork and metalwork rooms were built. Mary Bohan succeeded Seamus O'Donoghue and she oversaw a huge explosion in numbers when an enlightened Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley introduced free second level education and a school transport service. In 1970, students sat their Leaving Cert.

Mary Bohan was a woman ahead of her time who spoke fearlessly on behalf of her students to both church and state influencers. She was a hard taskmaster, but she never expected more than she gave



PAT BOURKE

Guairé Magazine would like to congratulate Pat Bourke on his retirement this year. After 15 years as caretaker, Pat filled another 25 years as the GSC Girl's Basketball Coach, with many winning seasons.

herself. She presided over the installation of 11 prefabricated classrooms, which were to be a temporary measure, as a new school was promised.

In 1974, Micheál Breathnach became Principal and he remained until the amalgamation of the three Gort second level schools. He introduced computers to the school – Commodore 64s. This put St. Colman's ahead of most second level schools at the time. On the Commodore 64s students learned BASIC programming, while Dympna Coen taught an early version of word processing. There was a huge growth in extra-curricular activity during Micheál Breathnach's tenure. With hurling and camogie, Irish drama productions and debating were fostered; plays were presented under the direction of Paul Brennan; twinning visits were made to Lismore Comprehensive School in Craigavon, as well as to Denmark, France and Germany; the school magazine VOCAT, was produced annually and there were annual retreats for the senior students.

Micheál was a great Principal, a caring friend to teachers and students. He encouraged continuous professional development in order to promote excellence. He was a far-seeing, caring, hard-working man, but the school could not have been the success it was without a dedicated staff, who were a great support to one another and who also had great 'craic' together. They included Paddy Moloney RIP, Dympna Coen RIP, Mary Egan RIP, Helen Andrews RIP, Máire Griallais, Paddy Grealish, Dick Burke, Pat Cradock, Raymond Monahan RIP, Paddy Loughnane, Barney Winston RIP, Joe McLaughlin, Pat O'Toole, Seán Ó Neachtain, Máirtín Ó Curraín, Rosemary Carney, Vera Tyrrell, Christy Monahan, Tony Donoghue, Tony Hoade,

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LAST PHOTO OF ORIGINAL STAFF OF OUR LADY'S COLLEGE 2016. BACK ROW, (L-R) MICHAEL JOYCE, PADDY MOONE, CARMEL MEHAN, JOHN CONNEELY, SEAN DEVLIN, BERTIE KEELY, BISHOP BRENDAN KELLY, COLM WARD. FRONT ROW, (L-R) DERMOT MONAGHAN, DEIRDRE MCGREAL, UNA MURRAY, PAT DALY, SEAMUS ROBINSON. MISSING FROM PHOTO ARE JOE LAMBERT, PAT FARRELL, MUADHLA MCDONAGH, RITA WOBBE.

Myles Brennan, Ollie Moran, Siobhán Bean Uí Chonaire, Áine Quilty, Mary Whelan, Chris Moran, Fr. Enda Glynn, Anna Casey, Fr. John Mahon RIP, Bernie Larkin, Patsy Hehir, Fr. Jimmy Walshe, Pat Murphy, Mary Coen, Stan Mac Eoin.

Gort Community School

During the seventies and eighties community schools were established, most of them from an amalgamation of a vocational school with one or more denominational schools. Initially, such development was not welcomed by any of the three school authorities in Gort, each of whom wished to develop their own school independently.

In the late eighties Micheál Breathnach learned that the Diocesan authorities were willing to consider an amalgamation of the three Gort schools. The VEC, however, insisted that it wanted a new vocational school. Nonetheless, a train of thought was emerging which reflected a wish for an amalgamated school. Meetings held between Department officials and representatives of the management authorities and the teachers were held in Gort Convent in the late eighties. Each of the authorities was interviewed in turn, and then representatives of the teachers of the three schools. The delegates from the Vocational School represented the view of the staff, which was approximately two thirds in favour of amalgamation. Following on the decision to build a new Community School, the process moved rapidly.

Though there were 900 second level students in the early nineties, the new school was to cater for a considerably smaller number, due to a survey which showed, erroneously, that there would be a considerable drop in numbers.

Regular meetings were held between the staffs of the three schools, and procedures were put in place to ensure a smooth transition. These meetings facilitated

teachers in getting to know one another in a meaningful way and in promoting more co-operation between the schools.

When Gort CS opened in 1995, some senior students would have preferred to remain in their old 'habitats', but their teachers embraced change and found it an invigorating challenge. Over a relatively short time the old differences disappeared, for students and teachers alike, and a unified community, aiming for excellence and maximum co-operation, emerged. The values and ethos of the three founding schools were maintained and strengthened

A wide range of subjects was now on offer to all students. The extra-curricular activities from the three amalgamating schools were maintained, including hurling, camogie, soccer, rugby, basketball, debating, concerts, twinning with schools in Europe, participation in Young Scientists Exhibition, publication of school magazine (Fusings) and the introduction over time, of others including music, musicals, swimming.

In the most recent whole-school evaluation (2016) by the Department of Education and Skills, the following key findings in the report included the following:

- Parents surveyed expressed overwhelmingly high levels of satisfaction with how the school is run and with how their children are progressing. Students expressed very high levels of agreement that there is a good atmosphere in the school and that they feel safe and well cared for in the school.
- The board of management provides very good leadership and the parents' association provides very good support to the school.
- The principal and deputy principal have a very effective working relationship and model an ethic of hard work in striving to achieve continuous school improvement.
- Holistic development of students is provided by a very broad curriculum, by very good student care

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structures and by co-curricular and extra-curricular activities voluntarily provided by teachers.

Such outstanding results could not have been achieved without the inspired leadership of Denis Corry. In response to this, there was dedicated input from post holders, teachers, students' council, parents' association and ancillary staff. The latter included outstanding individuals such as the caretaker, Ian Cahill, who transferred from Our Lady's College, Vincent Costello RIP, of Mulrook who was formerly in St. Colman's VS. Ian, along with Vincent, was a powerhouse in the school who kept everything in order.

Vincent, when he retired, was replaced by Kevin Cleary of Crusheen and when Ian resigned he was replaced by Pat Bourke of Gort. Kevin and Pat are a huge asset, with Pat renowned for his basketball success with school teams.

Secretarial staff have been an important support to teachers and students. The first permanent secretary, Máire Donohue of Kilbeacanty, transferred from St. Colman's. She was joined by Una Murray of Kiltartan, formerly of Our Lady's College. She will be forever remembered for her wit, good humour and healthy disregard for status. When Una retired she was replaced by Rena McGrath of Seehan, who had been

part-time. Annette Hansberry of Clochnacava and Orla Greaney of Craughwell are also in the office.

The school has been very fortunate in having outstanding workers who come to the school every day when classes are over. They ensure that the corridors and every room in the school are spic and span for the following day. They include fine people like Kathleen Diviney RIP, Claire Moran RIP, Mary Clancy, Colie Moran, Mena Kenny, and Maureen Loughnane.

The school's Parents' Association has done outstanding work in its dialogue and cooperation with the principal, staff and students. It organises the very successful book rental scheme. Some of its members have been active in the national body and at least one parent, Terry Shoosmith, has been on the National Council of the Parents' Association.

Gort Community School has had outstanding academic results with students getting Easter Week scholarships and entrance scholarships to a number of universities. Equally impressive is the work done by the many Special Needs Assistants who help students who require extra support, and students with autism. Students in the spectrum are integrated into ordinary classes, as much as possible, but there is also an Autism Spectrum Disorder room, where students can relax and get special help.

50 Years Ago



OUR LADY'S COLLEGE LEAVING CERT CLASS OF 1969-70 COULD NOT HOLD THEIR 50TH REUNION DUE TO COVID 19 CRISIS. BACK ROW (L-R), OLLIE FORD (CASTLETOWN), GERRY FLAHERTY (TIERNEEVIN), GERRY FAHY (CORKER), JOHN JOYCE (GALWAY RD), MATTO KEANE (CAHERNAMADRA), BRIAN BRENNAN (GEORGES ST), MICHAEL DONOHUE (CAHERMORE). MIDDLE ROW (L-R), PATRICK MURPHY (BALLINDERREEN), JOHN FAHY (GRANNAGH), JOHN S O'CONNOR (CRAUGHWELL), NIALL KEATING (CROSSFORD), SHEAMUS KEEHAN (FOXTAIL HILL), KIERAN MCGANN (BELLHARBOUR), PAT KEARNEY (BALLYTURN), JOHN BREW (TUBBER). FRONT ROW (L-R), BRENDAN FORD (KINVARA), GERRY HANNON (ENNIS RD), JOHN GLYNN (CHURCH RD), PAT GRIFFEN, RIP (BARRACK ST).

50 Years and Counting

BY BILLY KEANE

I have been asked to write a few lines in connection with our class reunion in the Lady Gregory on the 3rd of August 2019. This was our 50th reunion as we started in 1964 and finished in 1969. We were the last class to finish in the old school beside the river (now Dr Joyce's Medical Practice). We started with a class of 47 pupils and finished with a class of 38 after 50 years. A remarkable achievement but then we were a remarkable class. Some of us also spent some time in the Old Town Hall while part of the college was being renovated and it was the coldest spot outside of the Antarctic. Billy Kilroy first approached me in early January 2019 to see could we organise a 50-year class reunion. So we decided to co-opt Michael "Gillers" Gillespie and Thomas A. Murphy from Kinvara. We couldn't have picked two better classmates as they had a great depth of knowledge in locating our class. The emails, phone calls, letters and texts paid off handsomely as 33 of us met on that Saturday night. We had a beautiful con-celebrated mass at 4.30pm led by Fr Martin Downey (with his usual quirky jokes), and aided by Fr Michael Flaherty (Killina) now residing in

Florida. Photographer Audrey Nestor then took group photos in a very professional manner. By the way, our two teachers who attended were Sean Devlin and Colm Ward. Also I would like to mention our teachers who have passed away RIP, Fr Christy Burke, Fr Christy Walshe, Fr Patrick Healy, Fr Leo Morahan and Ms Angela Coen. Many of the lads did not recognise each other until they were introduced. I suppose with all the false tans, hair dying and crown toppers it became a little bit harder. But the good news is that we have another reunion planned for the 30th of July 2022. We thought 5 years may be too long as time waits for no man. Lest I forget that the class of 69 was the 1st class in the history of the College to win the Connaught Colleges Senior Hurling Final beating St Mary's our great rivals. Also, in 1969 we had the distinction of winning the Junior and Senior Connaught College's Basketball Finals on the one day, and the following day the same team represented Galway to win the Connaught Minor Title. I would just like to finish on a sad note that since our Reunion, our dear friend and classmate Frankie Williams passed away this March 2020. Hope to see all the lads again in July 2022.



PHOTO BY AUDREY NESTOR

BACK ROW, STANDING (L-R) BILLY KEANE (GEORGES ST), BILLY KILROY (THE SQUARE), NOEL BRADY (TUBBER), MÍCHAEL CAHILL (RINERUSH), MICHAEL NAUGHTON (ROO), FR MICHAEL FLAHERTY (KILLINA), WALTER MURPHY (BALLINDERREEN), OWEN BRODERICK (DERRYBRIEN), PATRICK FAHY (FAHY'S CROSS), THOMAS MURPHY (KINVARA), FR MARTIN DOWNEY (KILTARTAN), JAMES LISTON (THE SQUARE), (TEACHER) SEÁN DEVLIN (THE SQUARE), MARTIN DONOGHUE (CAHERMORE), (TEACHER) COLM WARD (CIRCULAR ROAD), MICHAEL GILLESPIE (CIRCULAR ROAD), RAYMOND NOLAN (CHURCH ST), GERARD DONOHUE (THE SQUARE), RONNIE KILLEEN (CHURCH ST), PATRICK WALSH (KILTARTAN), PAT BOURKE (CHURCH ST), CARL MURRAY (BRIDGE ST). SEATED, (L-R) THOMAS MURPHY (ARDRAHAN), PHILLIP BOND (ARDRAHAN), JOSEPH COX (ENNIS RD), MARTIN MCMAHON (BOSTON), BRENDAN KERINS (ARDRAHAN), EAMON MCTIGUE (BALLINDERREEN), FRANKIE WILLIAMS, RIP (BALLYHUGH).

The Race For Education

BY JOHN CONNEELLY

Around Easter 1958 our teacher in Kinvara N.S. Joe Muldoon, entered a number of us for the Martyn scholarship which was held in Gort. Success meant that our tuition fees were paid in the new Our Lady's College which was situated where Dr. Richard Joyce's surgery is located today.

This school was opened by Fr. Christy Burke in 1956 to supply secondary education for students in the South Galway and North Clare area. Going to secondary school at that time was very much a privilege, as boarding school fees, although low, were beyond the budgets of most households. The result was that less than 10% of my peers went to second level.

In 1958 most people did much of their travelling by bicycle, so my father brought me to M.O. Regan's shop in Kinvara, to buy a secondhand Raleigh bicycle, waterproof pull-ups and a waterproof overcoat. A large schoolbag was procured in J.J. O'Shaughnessy's and I was ready for action! Some older boys had already blazed a trail for us and so on the first Monday in September the great adventure began! We set out for Gort.

The cycle to Gort was brilliant. We used the Cahermore Rd, as the Killina Rd was not tarred and because the sun was shining we had great fun with our fellow cyclists. Students joined us at Cahermore Cross, Crann Mór and Kiltartan and we tramped up along Crowe St. Like a company of the Seventh Cavalry arriving at Fort Laramie on bikes! It was about 8.45 am and we could hear the alarm clocks ringing in the houses as we passed.

Gort was a very prosperous town.

It was the centre of business in South Galway. A variety of shops dotted the Main St, while Coens supplied the hardware needs of the whole area. Miss Donnellan's shop in Barrack St. sold comics and became a popular venue for us country lads! We arrived at the school and thirty-three first years made their way into class which was held in what is now Dr. Joyce's waiting room.

Very quickly we settled into the routines of school and we learned the pranks that first years were subjected to. Our books were hidden; our bicycles were chained to trees. Some students ended up being pushed into the river which at that time of the year was very low. If they got wet the standard explanation was that they fell in! However, after a short time things settled down and we enjoyed our new friends and the rhythms of school life. One of the institutions of the college was going to First Friday Mass. Because we had to be fasting since midnight the night

before to receive Communion – and everyone had to receive – a tradition grew up of going across to Glynn's hotel for breakfast. We really looked forward to this every month. Eggs, beans, toast, and chips for one shilling! I had never tasted real chips before. I had eaten Willie Quinn's chips, but these were too salty to enjoy – and so did not compare with Glynn's. I often think that we were more attracted to the chips than to Communion!

Like all schoolboys cycling distances to school we engaged in all kinds of escapades. One of these was the annual beet fight when two factions would confront each other throwing beet. This happened around November when farmers had put their beet out on the road to be taken to the factory. Getting hit with a large beet was no laughing matter!!

Another escapade we indulged in was raiding orchards. We were invited by the owners of these orchards to come in and ask for apples whenever we wanted them. But this was not a challenge. Two old ladies lived in a house on our way. They were the kindest and most generous people you could meet. They would give us all the apples we wanted if we asked for them, but we wanted the dare. After the apples were picked in Autumn they were locked away in the barn, so a strategy had to be worked out to get into the barn. This is how we did it. Two of us walked up the hill to their house with a flat tyre- the air had been let out of the tyre deliberately so that it would appear as if there was a puncture. We asked for their repair kit – everyone had one in those days- which we knew from the past was kept in the barn. One of the ladies kindly went to the barn, unlocked it and brought the kit out



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JOHN CONNEELY STILL ASTRIDE HIS FAITHFUL BIKE

to the road where we pretended to fix the puncture. Both ladies engaged us in conversation while one of our companions went to the barn and stole the apples. They would have given us all the apples we needed if we asked for them but the thrill of stealing them was the greater attraction. As I think back to this incident, I feel sorry that we took advantage of such kind and wonderful people! But, such was the thoughtlessness of being young!

One of the skills required to survive cycling eighteen miles each day was to be able to fix a puncture. The necessity for this became apparent one winter's night when I got a puncture at Roo. It was raining and we had no lights! So, the bicycle was upended and the tube exposed in total darkness. Air was pumped in and I felt for where it was escaping. I then got

the hacksaw. I used this to clean the area around the hole in the tube. Then I applied the solution to the tube to help glue the patch over the hole. All this was done under the shelter of a waterproof cape used by one of my companions. The last task was to apply the patch in the proper place. One of my companions was a smoker and had one match left! So, at the appropriate moment he lit the match and I attached the patch to the tube in the correct spot. I rubbed some chalk onto the tube to prevent it sticking to the tyre, put it back in, pumped it and we were on our way!

The Liturgical Festival was a memorable day for the students in Our Lady's College. All the schools in the deanery of Kilmacduagh assembled in Gort Church to celebrate the Festival and to compete in the Plain Chant

competition. The solemnity of the day was underlined by the presence of the Bishop, Rev. Michael Browne. However, for twelve and thirteen-year-old first years, the great attraction of the festival was the presence of seemingly hundreds of young women from all the schools, Seamount College, St. Joseph's Convent and St. Colman's Vocational school all decked out in their uniforms. We gathered in numbers to gaze on these apparitions, too fascinated to take our eyes off them and too shy to talk to them. We were like wildebeests attempting to cross the crocodile infested rivers of east Africa, dying to cross but too nervous to take the risk. We just dreamed!

When I think of these times I realise how much more advanced the first years of today are in terms of technology, experience of the world and ambitions. They have more opportunities in life and a more comfortable lifestyle. But, for all the faults in South Galway in the 1950's, and there were many, life for us was happy. We enjoyed the things we had, and we organised the things we wanted to do. I never remember telling my parents I was bored. Maybe this was because if I did, I would be given a job to do! We cycled everywhere.

We played hurling; we fished; we swam in the sea in the summer; we went 'to the pictures'; we dreamed of girls; all the things that were available to us. Despite all the attractions of the present day there was something about life then that is missing today. I think it was the amount of social interaction in the community which helped people to feel that they were never on their own. The agonies and ecstasies of life were experienced by individuals but also by communities. Was life better then?? I am not sure that it was. But, being young was a joy in itself!!

In the Life of a Midwife

BY MARY MORAN

"Hello," my name is Mary. I began my Nursing Career in 1986 and evolved into Midwifery in 1991. Since then I have known little else as a career, and often joke that I cannot pull a Pint, or use a cash register!

My career has taught me much about putting other people's needs ahead of my own. I have learned many things by being with patients on their journey through illness to health and sometimes to death. Some of my knowledge and experiences could never have been learned from research and text. This knowledge was gained by observation of human resilience, endurance, and suffering. Looking beyond the monitors and medical equipment as patients challenged verbally and nonverbally "Look, I am here." "Listen, it is me."

A mother I met while staffing on an Ante-Natal ward comes to mind. She gave birth prematurely to a little boy, twenty-four weeks gestation. An intrauterine death

due to foetal abnormality, one that was difficult for anyone to even look at.

This mother was psychologically unable to look, touch, or hold her baby when I received her care twenty-four hours post-delivery. Her age and body language externalised grief, loss and milestones that would never be

met. Broken hearted and devastated, she created a silence in the room that was difficult to deal with. While the activity on this busy ward continued in the background, life for this woman in this single room had come to an unpleasant stand still.

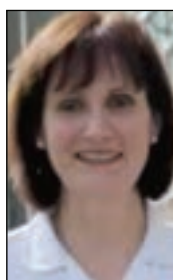
She agreed to have her deceased baby rooming in but placed at a distance from her. Her fears were also creating distance within her confined parameter. Quiet and withdrawn, she shared little to no conversation as I got on with my

duty of her necessary physical care. She was organising a home burial and waiting for her husband to arrive to finalise arrangements.

In the meantime, this mother had one request: she drew my attention to a beautiful hand knitted cardigan. She requested her baby to be laid out in this garment although it was made for a term infant. She stated her concerns in relation to the size of the cardigan. I promised her I would make it work. I proceeded to dress the baby. I tucked and folded the clothing around the baby's tiny body until the abnormality was concealed. Two tiny hands and the angelic face of a much-wanted baby boy was revealed.

The mother sat looking through the window in silence as I worked. When I had finished the mother stated that if I was happy with the infant's appearance, she would be content with that. A name still had to be chosen. This mother was very reluctant to be on her own in the room with her baby.

I sat in front of her. I acknowledged how difficult this situation



MARY MORAN



was for her. I told her she had a beautiful child despite the circumstances. I acknowledged her fear of not wanting to look at her baby, but if she changed her mind, I would be right there with her.

Then I told her about my fear; “we cannot change the present situation and in a few weeks’ time when you are at home, I am afraid that you may have huge regret that you didn’t see your baby”. I paused, met silence, then slowly consent was given with a nod towards the cot.

I lifted this tiny corpse in its elegant attire and held him in my arms as Mum and I together viewed all things normal about him. As I watched the dam of grief collapse and the avalanche of tears cascade, I cried with this mother in the privacy of her room as if this

was my baby. How could you not feel this mother’s pain? The success of my efforts was rewarded when she extended her arms to finally hold her son. The glimmer of healing was visible.

The patient is paramount; holistically, physically and psychologically. It was this and other similar situations which inspired me to write the following reflection for our International Pregnancy & Infant Loss Remembrance Day UHG 2018 in the hope of giving peace, comfort and healing to these women and their families.

Most days in midwifery practice are generally joyous, celebrating the arrival of new life, a very special time. However sometimes situations are different and couples

experience loss. If you have been affected by the contents of this story please seek support from your G.P., Feileacain - Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Association of Ireland. pregnancyandinfantloss.ie

A Little Lifetime Foundation

This story won an award in a competition which was run by National H.R. H.S.E. to celebrate International Nurses & Midwives Day 2019. My story along with other winning nominations has been formulated into a booklet to raise funds for A Little Lifetime Foundation, who provide support to bereaved parents. The booklet titled “The Patient is Paramount” was launched at Dr Stevens Hospital Dublin on September 20th 2019 celebrating Culture Night. Confidentiality has been preserved.

A Midwife’s Reflection; Healing Together

When your heart is breaking or you feel like your world is ending and you are asking

Why me? Why my baby? Why us?

When your tears are flowing, blinding your vision as you navigate waves of grief,

We want you to know; you are not alone.

Sometimes angry, sometimes sad. Sometimes exhausted and lonely,

Trying to cry or maybe feeling no emotion at all,

We want you to know; we understand.

We want to acknowledge your baby’s life, a life that formed within you.

We want to acknowledge the hopes and dreams you had for your child.

We want to acknowledge that things changed.

We empathise, We sympathise for your loss.

Accepting the new reality can be difficult, moving on can be a lonely journey.

We know you acknowledge milestones,

Maybe they are in your private thoughts,

Maybe you acknowledge openly with a special ritual or a lighted candle.

What do you find healing for you?

We hope you have some good memories to help you through the difficult days.

Memories carried in a special place in your heart. You will never forget.

Midwife means “with woman” but to us as Midwives it means much more.

We are with you, your partner, and your family, through your challenges.

There is some pain that we cannot take away, if we could, we would.

We offer compassion, kindness and care.

Let us reach out together, speak, we are listening, it is okay to voice it all.

Let today be a day of healing,

A day to remember a special life gone by.

Some people have long lives and others are only here for a short while.

It has been said “It’s not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving.”

Therefore, we give this day to you.

Mary Moran. Midwife U.H.G.

Reeling In The Years

BY DONAL CONNOLLY

Gort Town Hall has a rich history and character apart from its distinctive architectural qualities. This site and structure have been a chapel, a school, a centre of temperance, a meeting place, a leisure centre, a crèche, a badminton court, a music hall, a dance location, and a performance venue. The building was a heritage centre for ten years and despite the failure of that initiative, it will always be a centre of heritage and an inheritance that is the responsibility of society to protect and maintain. The history of the site ownership goes back to the Battle of the Boyne, when ownership of the locality was taken from the O'Shaughnessy family and given to Sir William Prendergast for his support of the Crown. The site's eventual role in education and multiple functions make this building worthy of national investment.

The Town Hall's original lease dates back to the 28th October 1828 and was granted by Charles Vereker, Lord Gort, to the trustees: Right Rev. Edmund Ffrench, Bishop of the United Diocese of Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora; Rev. Michael Duffy PP; Daniel Lahiffe; Daniel MacNevin, Rosepark and Patrick O'Donohue, Gort. The lease was for the grounds and site of the present parish church. With the church grounds the proprietor also leased the site of the existing old Roman Catholic chapel (listed in Griffith's Valuation of 1847) to be a school for the education of the children of Gort. The lease is for a thousand years (until 2828) at the nominal rent of an 'annual peppercorn'. The original use of this site as a school was the intention at the signing of the 1000-year lease although the 'National School System' did not begin until 1831. The old chapel on the site was used as a schoolhouse and teacher Patrick Mahon taught 75 boys and 19 girls there in 1835.

The Tudor style St Colman's Hall was built on the site in 1847 by Fr. Michael Nagle and opened on 16th March 1848. With its steep gabled form and sneaked

stone façade, it is a notable feature of the streetscape. The symmetry is typical of early school buildings, with separate ends for boys and girls. Built as a detached five-bay two-storey limestone-fronted building, with full-height gabled projecting end bays to front elevation it has a recent full-width two-storey flat-roofed extension to rear. The building has a pitched artificial slate roof with cut limestone chimneystacks to end gables, copings, finials, and eaves course. There is a cast-iron pedestrian gate and railings to a shallow forecourt between projections to the front of the site.

When this school opened, Fr. Nagle estimated there were 500 children in the town. Just before the Famine the population of Gort was estimated at 3,000 persons comparable to Gort's census of 2011, which was 2994 persons. The attendance at the new school was 180 boys and 200 girls, some pupils paying 1d (a pre-decimal penny) a week, though many others stayed away because of hunger and want of clothing. The completion of the Convent of Mercy (1859) and the Boys' National School in Ballyhugh (1910) provided new facilities for the boys and girls of Gort.

The building became a Temperance Hall for Gort and South Galway. The hall was used for dances on the upper floor and Gannon's band ('Moscow' Sweeney played with them) from Loughrea was popular with the locals up to the mid-fifties. Many road shows or touring theatre companies passed through the hall from 1910. The great Anew McMaster toured Ireland from 1915 to 1959 bringing Shakespearean theatre to the small towns and villages. Billiards, cards, and meeting rooms downstairs were well supported from 1912 on with various competitions drawing interest from as far away as Banagher, Portumna and Ballinasloe. Some may remember the intense competition for the Berry Coen Cup in the '60s.

The Coen family presented the Berry Coen Cup after the sad loss of their young son Berry in 1958. Many clashes were had to win this cup and sometimes auction money with it. Some pooled together to buy a renowned player and former winner such as Liam Gillane RIP and others as these were sure to reach the semifinals at least. Occasionally a complete outsider would win. One such to mind was Bert Reeves RIP,

17TH CENTURY

AFTER DEFEAT BY CROMWELL, O'SHAUGHNESSY LANDS (GORT TOWN) GRANTED TO SIR WILLIAM PRENDERGAST, FIRST LORD GORT

18TH CENTURY

JOHN PRENDERGAST-SMYTH INHERITS, CREDITED WITH CREATION OF GORT AS MODERN TOWN BY DESIGN OF BRIDGE ST AND SQUARE

19TH CENTURY

CHARLES VEREKER NOW LORD GORT, LEASES SITE OF OLD ROMAN CATHOLIC CHAPEL FOR SCHOOL. ST COLMAN'S HALL BUILT, BECAME NATIONAL SCHOOL

20TH CENTURY

LISTED IN NATIONAL REGISTRY OF ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE, RESTORED FOR COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS, DRAMA

ST COLMAN'S HALL, 1847-TODAY



PHOTO BY WILLIE QUINN

ST. COLMAN'S HALL IN 1985.

then manager of Braids Factory, now Topform. At practice he appeared to be a poor player, so handicappers were lenient and Bert romped home. Across the hallway were two rooms, the first a card room where many games of poker, 25 and 45 were played. Poker games went on until early morning, with many a few pounds at stake. Damien McGrath recalls entering the card room one Sunday morning after 12 o'clock Mass to find six lads engrossed in a game of poker behind the iron lung (stove). The timber partition inside was on fire and the room filled with smoke. McGrath ran out for a water bucket and prized out the boards, quenched the fire. Low and behold, the six to a man were still engrossed in their game and oblivious to what had occurred.

By 1974 the hall had fallen into disrepair and a local group formed a structural committee to carry out work. To the rear of the card room was the meeting room, used by Pioneers who were plentiful in those years and local committees such as the GAA, Badminton and Vincent DePaul.

By 1977 the Town Hall Committee, The Hall Structure Committee, The Youth Club, the GAA, the Chamber of Commerce, The Clergy, The Mercy Order of Nuns had contacted Bishop Casey of Galway. Questions arose

about who owned the Town Hall, who had the deeds and who were the trustees. Architect Howard Konic drew a set of plans with facilities to accommodate 250 persons seated for a theatre on the ground floor, full sized badminton to the rear with shower and toilet facilities, but it never came to pass. The renovations were costed at £36,000. Many local groups were prepared to be involved but powers that be in the church postponed it and the plans, still available to this day, were forgotten.

Those dedicated to the Hall formed another committee of sixteen members. During this time, businesses raised money for windows, doors were replaced, and the floor upstairs strengthened and lined for badminton. Badminton flourished for a time, the Convent reaching the senior schools final against Taylors Hill in 1977. In 1990 Bord Failte appointed Gort a Heritage Town. The County Council got a lease to renovate the Town Hall as an exhibition centre and Bord Failte funded an attendant.

In 1996 the Gort Heritage Trust began a fund-raising campaign. 1998 April 3rd The Gort Theatre Group held a meeting and opened a 'book of support' in the AIB Gort. When the plans for the Town Hall were disclosed there was no indication of a space for rehearsals or performances. Theatre space had originally been part of the hand over agreement between the Diocesan Trustees and the Gort Heritage Committee. The group's two interim venues, Our Lady's College Auditorium – now Lady Gregory Hotel and the Mercy Convent Hall were now unavailable.

By 1999, work began on the Hall to convert it to a Heritage Centre, with the Gort Mini Theatre Group assured of their right to use the first floor for rehearsals and shows. In 2005, the formal Heritage Centre was closed. Intermittent use continued in the following years, but in 2013, Galway County Council ended their lease on the building, and it reverted to the Diocesan Trustees. During the 2019 H.E.A.R.T. of Gort Festival, the doors and windows of the St Colman's Hall got a fresh coat of paint from volunteers from the Wild Swans group and the Gort Vibes Cinema Club, which uses the venue for their monthly cinema screenings. In 2020, a LEADER grant for Gort Town Hall was announced. The team of the Wild Swan Theatre Company and the Gort Town Hall Management Limited applied to fund improvements to the building, updating the fire safety system, repointing the stone, and internal upgrades.

Drama in its many guises was always a part of this building. Around 1929, many plays were performed

ST COLMAN'S HALL, 1847-TODAY

WILD SWAN THEATRE
COMPANY PRODUCTION OF
"THE FIELD". BACK ROW, (L-R)
ROSE FINNEGAN, IMELDA
COUNIHAN, NIALL
FINNEGAN, JIM EARLY RIP,
MARTINA NEYLON, PAT
O'DONNELL RIP, KEVIN GLYNN,
MAX LEE, MICHAEL KILROY
RIP, JIMMY HANNIGAN,
SHANE COUNIHAN, AUSTING
MCINERNEY, TOM MORAN.
FRONT ROW (L-R) LISA LEE,
PATRICIA HANNIGAN, HELEN
LEECH, JACK GLYNN.



(directed by Fr. Tarpey), and the names of some are remembered (Professor Tim and The Gassoon). HMS Pinafore was staged in 1947 along with a period of panto throughout the 50's.

The drama interest continued as Fr. Brendan Kelly and Paddy Coen added gravitas with some serious work well produced and directed. Several other curates namely, Frank Larkin and Christy Walsh, kept the tradition ticking over with Sullivan's Hotel hosting plays in the '70s, when the hall was in disrepair. The late William Quinn of Church Street, poet, playwright, and publisher often graced the boards of this establishment.

Much interest in performing Lady Gregory's one act comedies evolved around this time in conjunction with Louis Muinzer (who died in 2004), a distinguished Queens University professor and a leading Yeats scholar in the world. Muinzer ran an annual Summer School on William Butler Yeats through to the '90s, based at Sullivan's Royal Hotel. By 1996 the current drama group, then known as the Gort Mini Theatre, was mounting productions by Brian Friel and John B. Keane with growing confidence and skill. These productions were only interrupted in 2000 while the building was renovated and returned to life as a Heritage Centre (2000-2010).

The Beagh Community Centre accommodated productions for two seasons and housed a memorable performance of Lend Me A Tenor in 2000. The Gort Mini Theatre group became the Wild Swans Theatre Company around this time and when a particular play was going well they travelled or were invited on many occasions to Belfast, or London, including a memorable trip for the St. Patrick's Day celebrations to San Francisco in 2011. More recently an exciting

development has occurred with members of the group writing their own material. This venture has been very successful. The success of a theatre company is highly dependent on the group having a home, a space to meet, plan, rehearse and socialise new members. The opportunities to capture new talent through local schools which nurture performance at an extremely high standard, to hold creative writing and acting workshops will grow as this theatre group celebrates 21 years of continuous output.

Today the Town Hall's shining lights are its drama performances. In addition to the Wild Swans, Gort Vibes Cinema Club has brought cinema home to Gort since 2008. The Lions Club, with a few locals, are negotiating with Galway County Council to return the Hall to Gort people for the functions and games which gave it its former glory. Negotiations continue and perhaps the former and present users of our Hall will have their wishes come true to see this splendid building return to them for their perusal and entertainment.



These efforts earned a grant in 2020 to update the Hall into a theatre space. The Hall was reopened in September 2020 to use by local groups for meetings, etc. while renovations are planned. Fund raising efforts to reach the required match funds continue. With careful and wise investment this building can continue to inspire generations to come, being an integral part of Gort's cultural history.

Article supplemented with material from Damien McGrath and the Connaught Tribune.



ONSTAGE, (L-R) LIAM COLLINS, CAOIMHE CUMMINS, KEITH MULCAIR, HANNAH MOLONEY, KEELEY MCGANN, JAMIE CALLANAN, EMMA TRAYNOR, ANDREW MURRAY, EADAOIN GARDINER.

GCS Talent Rocks Judges to Win Awards

This year, Gort Community School have received 3 awards in the GUMS (Galway University Musical Society) Secondary School Musical Awards which were announced in a virtual ceremony due to the Covid19 restrictions:

1. Best Cameo - Ciara Loughman
2. Rising Star - Jamie Callanan

AND.....

- 3.

BEST SHOW!!

The adjudicators described our show

as "outstanding" and "incredible". They said they were "left speechless" by our performance. They acknowledged the contribution of everybody involved in the show.

"Ní neart go cur le chéile!"

REPRINTED FROM
GCS FACEBOOK PAGE

The Guaire Magazine Committee would like to congratulate everyone who worked so hard to make the show a success!



ICA Members Scrub Up Well

BY SARAH FAHY

At our last guild meeting in February, Gort ICA Guild made plans to make calico dolls for University Hospital, Galway. In fact, we had lots of plans for a very busy spring – we were organising a fund-raising coffee morning in aid of Gort Cancer Support, which fortunately went ahead in early March. We also had plans to hold our annual plant swap and to broaden our horizons with our annual summer outing.

The theme of our guest speaker that February evening, Mary Kealy, was 'Love Thy Neighbour', where Mary emphasised how important it is to reach out to our neighbours and our community, and how we are often not aware of how lonely other people may be. Little did we know then just how important this message would be. That within a few weeks many of us would be facing one of the most challenging times in our lives, and that our neighbours and our community would become so important to us. And how new phrases such as 'social distancing', 'social isolation' and 'cocooning' added to feelings of loneliness for so many in our community.

Sinead Lawlor invited the ICA to get involved with 'Sew Scrubs for Ireland' - an initiative to facilitate communities to support our frontline workers by creating a remove community of skilled volunteers to make much needed scrubs. ICA National President, Josephine Helly who is also a member of Gort ICA, put out a call to all the federations in the country & the response was phenomenal. 1,000 scrubs later & still sewing, the ICA have helped in this Covid crisis & should be very proud of



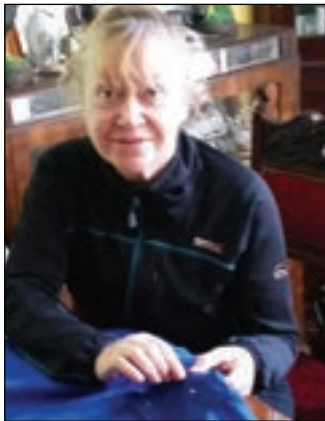
their work. They also contributed €4,000 nationally to help buy the material needed. The Gort branch members made their mark by sewing scrubs for local nursing homes.

When our fellow guild member, and ICA Federation President, Josephine Helly, put out the call in early April for ICA guilds to get involved in making much needed scrubs for our Health Care heroes, Gort ICA Guild did not need to be asked twice. It wasn't long before a pattern had been drafted, and the material was cut. Then our busy



CATHY CURLETTE

COPING WITH COVID19



EILEEN HAWKINS

team of sewers – Cathy Curlette, Bridie Glynn, Eileen Hawkins, Mary Coen, Mary Kelly, and Vera Killeen got out their sewing machines and set to work. Normally for a project like this we would have worked together in our hall on Bolands Lane, we would have worked, and chatted, and laughed. Instead these dedicated sewers worked alone, but at least the laughter continued – with the regular sharing of jokes on WhatsApp – many of them not suitable for sharing now with a more discerning readership! Stay safe everyone, Cathy Curlette

Eileen Hawkins – I volunteered because I had a sewing machine, some experience in sewing and wished to help. I reckoned



ON YOUR MARK,
GET SET,
SEW!

VERA KILLEEN CUTS OUT PATTERNS FOR SEWING BY FELLOW ICA MEMBERS.

scrubs would be relatively easy to sew and within my capabilities. It's important in a time of need to do what you can. I learned a new sewing technique called Lap and Fell which I like and how to make a garment reversible. Great feel good factor afterwards. Glad to be of help.

Mary Coen – I was delighted to help sew up some scrubs for the Frontline staff at Rosemount Nursing Home. The group enjoyed being able to support a local cause as thankfully we are all healthy.

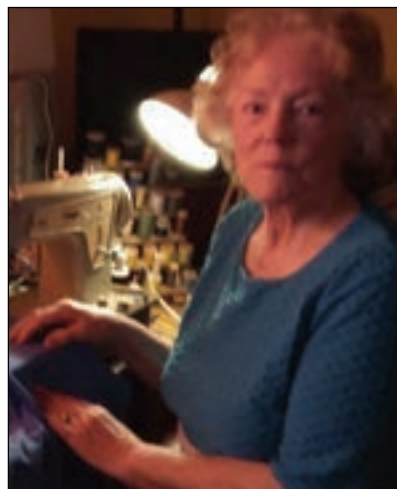
Bridie Glynn – My instructions for sewing scrubs is Sew one, rip one, sew one plain, repeat the first one once again. Be safe everyone.

Mary Kelly - Being a part of the

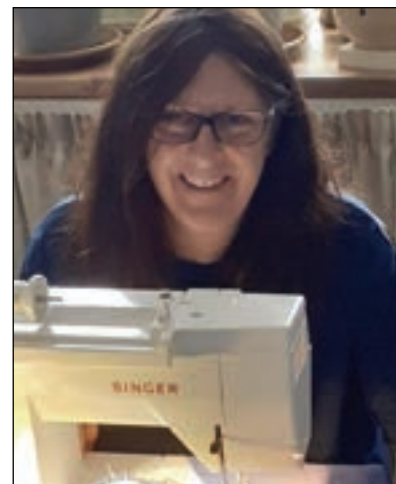
scrubs sewing group was wonderful. All the tips from the others through our WhatsApp Group helped me complete the task with my limited sewing skills, while doing the work from our homes. Thanks girls.



MARY COEN



BRIDIE GLYNN



MARY KELLY

Celebrate with Annabel

BY ANNABEL DUFF-SMYTH

'Come let us Celebrate' is the name of a Christmas carol I wrote in December 2009, while living in France. It had been triggered by a remark made by the lovely guy who had arranged some of my music in the past. He did not like Christmas carols! So I was thinking about that one day when sitting at my organ, when this carol arrived along with another, which reminds me of the wonder Christmas holds for children. The carol is called Christmas Time.

Writing songs was not something I had ever considered doing. It all started back in 1984 and happened quite suddenly and in an unexpected way. Yes, I could sing a bit and play keyboard a bit for my own enjoyment, but that was it. Life was busy and stressful with work, family and the troubles in Northern Ireland. Eventually ill health stopped me in my tracks and I found myself at home for several months. At that time I met a yoga teacher, who encouraged me to meditate, so I thought, 'Well why not, if that helps!'

So there I was sitting in my large, heated walk-in hot-press on a cold January day, being quiet and still, when suddenly words started flowing into my mind. I had been meditating for six months at this stage, but even so, that was a surprise. For the next three days, every conscious moment was filled with words, words and more words, so I started to write them down. They just flowed. There was a rhythm to them, but no punctuation, no beginnings or endings.

I contacted a musical friend and after looking at all these words, she said, "Annabel, I think some of these are songs." On closer scrutiny, that seemed to be possible, so I sat down with my guitar and a tape recorder and thought, "OK, if the words can come, maybe the music will too." And it did! Out of the two hundred 'poems', sixty were songs.

The songs continue to arrive, sometimes inspired by events, sometimes for no obvious reason. Sometimes the music comes first and the words later. Sometimes the other way round and now, often both together. I cannot deliberately make that happen. I may get one song a fortnight or none for months. It is exciting and interesting, for I never know what is coming. I have recorded some of the songs, but there are many more I would love to do.

My husband and I came to live in Gort, three years ago



ANNABEL DUFF-SMYTH

and we have settled in well. It is near family and we wanted a small, community-minded town with good transport links and all the basic amenities. It more than meets our needs and expectations. My husband loves being near the family and has mighty craic at the local bowling club. I was happy to develop my garden, play my songs and go out for coffee. Yes, we are retired!

However the desire to record more songs was strong, so I contacted the friend, who had worked with me in the past, but he regretfully had stopped recording, so I had to find another way. At that point, Renee Brennan came into my life. She is a member of the Gort Mixed Choir and music is one of her passions. We got talking and she eventually implored me to get my songs transcribed, recommending Nicola Cahill, the local choir mistress. Nicola is a gem, so musically talented and amazingly for me, loves my songs.

That work started in the autumn of 2019 and to my surprise and delight Nicola asked me if she could teach one of my songs to the Gort choir for the Christmas Eve Mass. Of course I said yes. The song she chose was 'Come let us Celebrate' and the rhythm was a Viennese waltz.

Rehearsals with the choir started in November 2019 and continued through December, with the choir

COMPOSING FROM THE HEART

members being very enthusiastic about the song. The part of the song that really resonated with them was, 'I will rock you, I will rock you, sweet child of mine.' Waltz time is really suited to these words.

My husband and I came briefly to one of the rehearsals and I was delighted with their rendering of my Christmas carol and even more delighted to hear it sung on Christmas Eve. Another of my songs was sung at the St Brigid's mass in February and two more were scheduled for Easter.

Unfortunately the Covid-19 Pandemic arrived and all has been put on hold. The latter two songs came when

I had been in Chartres Cathedral in France, some years ago. One is particularly poignant now and is called 'I Am Here', a reminder of God's presence. Hopefully they will be performed in a happier, safer future, when we will once more be able to come together and celebrate.

Editor's Note: In July, Annabel released a CD, 'Crystal Waves', which can be purchased at the Gort Cancer Support Centre or Gort Parish Office. All funds raised will help provide support services to those affected by a cancer diagnosis.

Come let us celebrate at this Christmas time

Verse 1 Come let us give our thanks, for this babe so fine.

Now is the time for joy, at his birth,
Now is the time for peace on earth.

Chorus: Sing Hallelujah, the child is born,
Sing Hallelujah on this morn.
Sing Hallelujah, come what may,
For God is with us, always.
I will rock you, I will rock you
Sweet child of mine,
I will rock you, I will rock you
Child divine.
Sing Hallelujah, come what may
For God is with us, always.



Verse 2 Come let us celebrate, come let us meet to-day
Come let us bless this child, in the same old way.
Light us the candles now for this birth,
This is the time for love on earth.

Chorus.

Written in December 2009, France

A Punchbowl Full of Dreams

BY COLMAN GLYNN

Gort in County Galway is a town well known for its literary connections. There are many beautiful landmarks in the area, some of which are naturally formed and are quite phenomenal. It is to one of these unusual places I would like to bring you.

This almost forgotten place, which we will visit, was formed *fadó fadó* back in the mists of time, its rare beauty moulded and sculpted by Mother Nature herself.

A mile from the town of Gort on the old Ennis road there is a signpost indicating a place named "*The Punchbowl*". A narrow road leads you up a hill and there a less

obvious sign leads you through a rusty gate into a small wood comprised mostly of beech trees. You will find three large depressions in the ground there under which the local river runs. These depressions take the shape of a large punchbowl, hence the name.

The first depression is lined with trees and ferns and the river can be seen flowing through it, almost as if the bottom of the bowl had broken off. The second is unblemished but lined with trees, brambles and large boulders. The third looks as if somebody had dropped a large bowl and broke off one side of it, forming a mound in the shape of the letter c. The river

flows into this bowl and continues on its way underground via a hole in the rocky cliff face. The hole is not unlike an open mouth which seems to swallow the river.

An earthen path leads down into this c-shaped depression, and at the bottom there is a small level area by the riverside. The remainder of what was once a semi-circular concrete seat can be seen. This was once a picnic area used by the gentry from the nearby Lough Cutra castle. A concrete seat and table had been constructed there for their convenience, but we must at least credit them with their choice of a beautiful place. Time or more mischievous beings have all but destroyed this outdoor furniture, but Mother Nature has



PAINTING BY COLMAN GLYNN AS HE IMAGINES THE PUNCHBOWL OF THE PAST

TREASURES WITHIN 2K

stepped in again. Moss has grown over where the seat was and now it looks as if somebody has thrown a soft green cloak over the rocks to form an even more comfortable seat.

The best time to visit this place is during a fine autumn day, when the ground is covered with bronzed leaves from the beech trees. This, together with moss and ground ivy, creates a beautiful soft carpet. The dappled light from the autumn sun shining through the trees illuminates the place in a golden glow.

Sitting on the moss-covered rocks and listening to the river sing as it flows over its rocky bed and then rushes into the mouth like cavity in the rock face, is captivating. The only other sounds come from the birds or occasional rustle of leaves by some wildlife creature. This is a magical place. It is easy to imagine that fairies and the other world are there on the other side of any tree. If you close your eyes and let your mind drift you can be anywhere you wish. But be warned, it may be difficult to return.



PHOTO BY DENNIS NAGLE

THE PUNCHBOWL TODAY, MISSING THE CONCRETE BENCH

Happy 90th Birthday!



MRS FRANCIE KELLY OF CHURCH ST CELEBRATED HER 90TH BIRTHDAY WITH HER FAMILY. BACK (L-R) JJ (SON-IN-LAW), MAUREEN (DAUGHTER-IN-LAW), MARK (SON-IN-LAW), SINEAD (GRANDCHILD), LAURA (GRANDCHILD), JOHN CAREY, GARRY (GRANDCHILD), JOANNE (GRANDCHILD AND GODCHILD), BRENDAN MASSEY. FRONT ROW (L-R) ANNA (DAUGHTER), ISLA (GREAT GRANDCHILD), THERESA (DAUGHTER), FRANCIE KELLY, CARMEL (DAUGHTER), EVELYN (DAUGHTER), AND COLETTE (DAUGHTER).

From Ireland to Uganda, an Eye-Opening Account

GEORGIA SOMERVILLE

Uganda is an amazing place. It's full of such bright, lovely people who have little to nothing, yet who seem to always have a smile on their face and kind words on their lips. Everyone we encountered was brimming with life, and incredibly welcoming to just a couple of kids from Ireland. To spend ten days with them was a privilege I'm incredibly thankful for, and one I'll never forget.

On the 12th of April 2019, 3 teachers, 2 charity representatives and 25 students, myself included, travelled to Uganda. It took us 31 hours of bus journeys and plane journeys and van journeys. Eventually we arrived in Kumi and promptly crashed into our beds as we were attending Sunday Mass the next day.

Sunday morning arrived we set off to Father Dao's, who is the charity's contact in Uganda. We were brought into a church, which was more like a large rounded room and given huge palm leaves. We found out the the palm leaves were to be waved when we were singing. We didn't know the words, but you couldn't help but join in.

And then, the children rushed to the school next door, and we followed. Their cheers of excitement could be heard for miles. They sang for us, and we sang back and danced for them, which we had dreaded to do, but the children's attempts to join in had us grinning from ear-to-ear.

After breakfast we went out to the vans and came across a heart-breaking sight. The red dust from



GEORGIA SOMERVILLE

the roads had made the back of the vans dirty, and the children had written, 'bright white people give us money'. It was hard to look them in the eyes when saying goodbye. Seven months later I clearly remember finding it and feeling helpless as there was nothing I could do.

Our first school was most definitely our hardest. Nobody knew what to do, and we were essentially just going with a flow like a rapidly twisting river throwing everything around and we were a shoddily made canoe trying to stay afloat. Eventually the group of us managed to get into the swing of things. We played soccer and other games with the children, and entertained their mothers by teaching them Western dances, which may or may not have included 'The Floss'. There is a video of it circling on the internet somewhere. It's slightly

embarrassing.

At a small assembly my friend, Jessica and I presented the school with a sports pack. We performed our dance for the second time, and the principal thanked us for coming. We headed back for sandwiches before our next school.

And that's how it went for the next few days. Up early, breakfast, first school, lunch, second school, return to the lodge, dinner, free time, group meeting, free time, bedtime.

Thursday rocked up, and we visited the children's hospital. We spent a good half of our day there, playing with the children who were due operations. We met their parents and stayed by their bedsides. When it was time to go there were tears shed, from patients and students alike.

Whilst on our first day in Uganda we endured the whole seven-hour drive from Kampala to Kumi. On our way back we stopped and stayed overnight in Jinja to visit the deaf orphanage the next morning.

The deaf orphanage held children who were abandoned by their parents due to their disability. Disabilities in Uganda are seen as a curse upon one's family. The parents, hope that by leaving the child, they leave the curse. That is why the hospital in Kumi is so important because healing the child is seen as a miracle. Thus, the child turns from a plague upon the family to a blessing from God. Unfortunately, deafness is not curable, and the children are abandoned and arrive at the orphanage.

Music is a large part of Ugandan



OUR VISIT WITH CHILDREN FROM THE DEAF ORPHANAGE

society, integrated into every form of life. Being deaf did not prevent the children from showing us this. They performed dances for us, one of them even break-dancing for almost a minute straight, whilst others played the drums in the background. It was absolutely amazing to watch, and afterwards we all formed a large conga line and danced around the property in one huge circle.

The children wrote their names for us with chalk on the ground and we blew bubbles for them with bubble wands. They introduced us to their dogs and they also took us to see the well that the charity had provided them with. They also had pet pigs.

Another tearful goodbye, yet also a happy one as we could see the joy we had brought them. Off we went, chugging along down to Kampala where we spent another night before heading home.

Our plane took us back from Uganda, through Ethiopia and Madrid, until finally on Sunday morning, we arrived in at Dublin Airport. My dad collected my

friend and I to have Sunday lunch with my grandparents.

I remember I had been rushing on the plane to try and get changed into something that was not covered in the red dust from Uganda, and it was strange because it wasn't really something that had occurred to me to be worried about until then.

It was odd, being back home. I had to put on my seatbelt, the roads were smooth, I didn't have to apply a million layers of sunscreen and mosquito repellent and there was a lack of company. After spending over a week surrounded by giddy children, the blazing sun, and receiving no reprimands about car safety, being back home felt a bit unrealistic. Life hadn't stopped while we were away, and it certainly didn't stop when we came back. Once Sunday lunch with my grandparents was done, I helped my grandmother bake a cake for my uncle's birthday. Everything just plopped back into its normal routine like it was the most natural thing in the world. Which it was, and still is, but after performing a

completely different routine for what seemed like forever, wrapping my head around it took me a while.

One can watch TV, and see the ads asking for donations to help provide wells for poor African towns, the ones that show the malnourished child as the narrator tells you their name and then asks for £3 to help the village. But that's just on TV. It's a lot different seeing that child face to face, having them tell you their name and you tell them yours, holding that child's hand as you teach them how to play games and then carry them as you search for a bottle of water they could drink out of.

Looking back on it eight months later, eye-opening is the only word I can think of to describe what our time in Uganda was like. In all honesty, it's really something that one needs to experience for themselves, which I would highly recommend to anyone who's given the opportunity. It was genuinely one of the most amazing things to happen in my life, and I'm incredibly grateful for it.

Restoring Lavallylisheen

BY BREEDA SHINNORS TUIE

On the morning of Sunday 25th August 2019, dawn broke and the rain was gone. We were busy setting out everything for our celebration of the restoration of Lavallylisheen Childrens Burial Ground. In the afternoon, families began the walk from Gort railway station along the Pound Road by the river. For many it was a pilgrimage, remembering the families who had walked there, decades ago, in a sad cortège. Other families, travelling from all four provinces, arrived as well. Fr Tommy Marrinan was joined on the altar by Fr Michael Brennan, Fr Joe Roche and by Fr Noel Gillespie. Fr Gillespie had travelled from South Africa to be present. Michael Drumm came from Co Cavan, bringing his family to honour his brother Patrick, who died, aged 4, following an accident in 1943. Patrick's father was serving with the Irish Army at Lough Cutra Castle then and moved to a new posting shortly afterwards. Michael met Tony O'Connor, who remembered Patrick, and took care of his grave subsequently. The Drumm family were gratified to know that Patrick had not been forgotten by many people in Gort. Dermot Duffy, chair of the Lavallylisheen Children's Memorial Committee, welcomed all. Fr Tommy asked families to take one white rose to remember each child during the family naming ritual of roses. That ritual and the beautiful music of local singers Kilbrencah, while all reflected and remembered these children, brought a sense of joy and celebration to what had long been very sad and forgotten memories. Then the conversations with old friends began, and we heard all the appreciation expressed: of the people who had

worked so hard here, and of those who had contributed so generously, to return Lavallylisheen to the Garden of Angels it had been in the past. Gradually the talk moved downhill to where refreshments were being served beside the river. Since that day, visitors to the Garden of Angels appreciate the community spirit of the volunteers who are keeping it so well maintained.

We don't know when the first grieving father carried a little son or daughter uphill to Lavallylisheen. Was he aware then that people in other places were making that same choice, taking their dead child for burial to a ringfort? It was a safe place, protected by the ancestors. The great respect in which these sites were held would be assisted also by stories of fairy power and punishments.

The ringfort was an Early Christian farmstead, constructed by farmers who were raising cattle. A later phase of use of the site at Lavallylisheen happened about a thousand years ago, when the souterrain was constructed. The inhabitants of the site in either phase may have had a burial plot within, or adjacent to, the site. But we can say that the first interment in the children's burial ground, as we know it, took place later, when all was 'ruin once again'.

The complex beliefs of the ancient Greeks and Romans about the afterlife included the idea that children would go to a separate place from those who had time to live their lives and could be judged by their deeds. That this belief persisted through the centuries is evident in occasional archaeological discoveries of the separate burial grounds of children. But the continuation of that traditional belief is nowhere as evident as in this county.



MICHAEL DRUMM VISITS HIS BROTHER PATRICK'S GRAVE

PHOTOS BY
AUDREY NESTOR

County Galway has the highest number of identified children's burial grounds in the country. The standard explanation was that they were intended for unbaptised children. The vague suggestions made to explain why they are not evenly distributed across Ireland do not stand up. The practice of exclusion of the unbaptized from consecrated burial ground existed across the country. The Eastern Church practice was different. So, we might expect to find an even distribution of burial grounds for early newborns across many countries of western Europe. Conflicts in French cemeteries do not suggest that there was any community alternative there. An account from the Basque region mentioned a baby's monument in a family's garden. Where archaeologists have found separate burial grounds for children, they are not exclusively newborns, and

GORT'S GARDEN OF ANGELS



TOP OF PAGE FR TOMMY MARRINAN LEADS SERVICE. ABOVE, (L-R) SARAH GAFFY, CARMEL KELLY, SANDRA GAFFY, VIVIENNE KELLY, MATTHEW GAFFY, SEAMUS CLANCY.

there are sometimes one or two adult burials present also. There is very little testimony from families of the children in the existing literature. In the absence of that testimony, assumptions have been made and the children's burial grounds are explained in terms of the anthropological classification of marginalisation, and the archaeological findings are fitted to that.

Our own experience of Lavallylisheen did not fit the standard explanation. Children under 5 years old, including early newborns, were buried there. Then, while we worked on returning Lavallylisheen, we had vital conversations with the children's siblings, neighbours, sisters-in-law, and daughters and sons of neighbours.

In Ireland, as in other lands, early

Lavallylisheen Childrens
Burial Ground...
25th August 2019

The passing train slowed respectfully,
As many were gathered in prayer.
Remembering all the little children
Whose spirit rests in this sacred place.
A day to think, a day to cherish
A day to pray, a day to sing
A day of Remembrance.

R. Brennan

Christian teachers accommodated and incorporated the existing beliefs they found in the culture, the sacred wells, or the seasonal festivals, and people continued to interweave their beliefs and practices in great and little ways. Our generation grew up in a highly organised Church, and it seemed that 'First, know the rules' was an inherited commandment. But little glimpses into the past suggest that, in previous generations, the community response to any authority could be a bit subversive.

GORT'S GARDEN OF ANGELS

In comments about local people written from Gort Military Barracks in 1752 we read that 'the majority are papists and very superstitious' and they 'speak Irish and generally English, which they strive to conceal, for if you ask a question in English they generally answer it in their own tongue'.¹ And 165 years later, when Lady Gregory sat in the kitchens of local houses around 1917, she listened to a rich palette of ancient beliefs, blended with understandings of the Old and New Testaments. 'Mrs. Dennehy' told her: 'Those that mind the teaching of the clergy say the dead go to limbo first, then Purgatory, then either hell or heaven.....But these that mind the old people don't believe, and I don't believe, that there is any hell. I don't believe God Almighty would make Christians to put them into hell afterwards.... The [soul] wanders for a while... and pays its debts.... and when it is free it puts out wings and flies to heaven'.² This was a community where Christianity had come and settled into a traditional belief system 1500 years earlier, and people had not changed very much in the meantime. When a child died, the soul had no need to 'pay its debts' and the body was taken to where the community had chosen to take its children, to the top of the hill, or to the edge of the world, outside of the cultivated area, where it could be undisturbed and safe. They would be there together, all the children. A little consolation for the grieving parents. When adults died, they were prayed for, Mass was said, and they were taken to monastic or church graveyards, or blessed cemeteries, and prayers for them would continue, because nobody knew when 'the soul is free'. Baptism was important. A child was taken to church to be baptised within 48 hours after birth. But the midwife had a responsibility to



AT THE OPENING, (L-R) MICHAEL GILLESPIE, BREEDA SHINNORS TUIE, CARMEL CRAWFORD NÉE GILLESPIE, SHEILA DUFFY, MICHAEL O'GRADY.

baptise in emergency. A man who was born in Co. Tipperary in 1909 told me that at his birth the midwife said he would not live. She baptised him, wrapped him in a blanket, put him in a basket, and a young girl who was there as home help, was sent running through the streets with him, to his grandmother's shop, so that she could see and hold him before he died. Telling the story in his 80's, he mused that it was all that rattling along in the cold air that brought him to life. Our teachers would have said that it was his baptism by the midwife that got him started. In primary school, we were taught how to baptise correctly in emergency. It was expected that we would be called on to take that responsibility at some time. The unbaptized, then, were babies who did not survive birth long enough for emergency baptism. 'Mrs Dennehy' might say: 'Leave the baby in God's Hands now.' The Committee was fortunate in their plans to redevelop Lavallylisheen. We were supported by the generosity of the adjoining landowner, the parish priest, and the contributions of time, labour, skills, services, materials, and financial support of the community. We did not know how many children were buried in Lavallylisheen, or how many

unbaptised children were among them. Some children's graves had memorials with names and dates. Most had unmarked stones. Families planted daffodils and bluebells on their graves so long ago, and they bloom each year. In the early 1930s, a Sister took her class to visit 'The Garden of Angels' on summer days, to sing hymns and pray. There is another children's burial ground (CBG) near Ros a Mhíl known as 'The Garden of the Children'. We compiled a Children's Memorial Register from the knowledge we could retrieve. We recorded 46 of the children who died between 1872 and 1961. We do not know the length of life of 16 of the children. Of these, there are no given names for 2 children; there are desired given names for 2 children; and there are given names for 12 children. Children ranged in age from newborn to ten years old. Lavallylisheen is not unique and if further research is done on the CBG's of our area, it may be that they belong to the old strong tradition and custom of South Galway, as well as the Islands, Donegal, Antrim and Kerry. The ruling on the unbaptised was accommodated as part of that deacróich. That ruling was challenged during Vatican II, and in 2007 Pope Benedict said that limbo was not

GORT'S GARDEN OF ANGELS



ABOVE, THE NEW ENTRANCE. AT RIGHT, KEVIN NOLAN AND PAUL O'DONOHUE OF GORT RURAL DEVELOPMENT INSTALL STONE BY JETHRO SHEEN.



church doctrine. There are children's burial grounds in many of the townlands in the area. They were close to and part of the lives of their community. Most will be inaccessible now, and in danger of being forgotten. As we found, there is still time to record the testimony of those who remember the children. The list here is not complete and the placenames given are not precise, but close: In the general Kilmacduagh area: Rockvale; Kilcorkan; Ballymulfaig; Seehan; Derreenatloghtan. In the general Killina area: Cappanapisha South; Cappagh Beg; Cahermore; Cahercon. In the general Kiltartan

area: Rinerush; Lydacan. In the general Kilbeacanty area: Ballyconnell/ Lurgan; Kilcouran; Killafin. In the general Peterswell area: Carrowbaune. In the general Shanaglish area: Bunnasragh; Rathorpe. Each CBG belongs to its own community, families, and children. It deserves to be honoured by the telling of its own story. Plaques

giving a received standard version can be avoided.

Our world has changed so much since the early 1960s. The great advances in medical science would save the lives of most of the children of Lavallylisheen, if they were born in recent decades. The deep grief of parents at the loss of a child can be shared now in the rituals of church and community, no longer in silence. We have new well-maintained cemeteries and our old graveyards 'were transformed, following the invention of the strimmer'.

Lavallylisheen today is The Garden of Angels, maintained by local volunteers who keep these grounds in excellent condition as a place of peace, where we go to reflect, to share, to listen, to remember. Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireas na daoine.

Notes:

[In Lavallylisheen, and in all CBG's, the first principle is respect for the site, and for the owners of the surrounding fields.]

1 Barnard, T. 2009 'A Description of Gort in 1752 By Thomas Wetherall', Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society, 61, 107-114.

2 Gregory, Lady A. 1920 Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland, Gerrards Cross, Bucks..

Trailblazing the Path

BY DAVID MURRAY

Chair, Gort River Walk Development Group

In September 2018, amid the background of a proposal of a massive biogas plant in Gort, the threat of losing a potential valuable amenity spurned on a few people to protect the concept of a river walk around Gort. This amenity was highlighted in the Gort Local Area Plan but there was no sign of it progressing. In fact, many factors were pitted against it. Firstly there was no real sense of where the walk could be. The river bank was so overgrown with briar and an ugly invasive vine called 'Old Man's Beard' that you couldn't even see the ground. Beneath this tangled jungle there were trees knocked down with big boulders and rocks that made the ground very dangerous to traverse. The second detractor was that the potential start of the path behind Aldi was a massive illegal dump, with burned-out trailers, caravans, and tonnes of rubbish, making this an unlikely starting point for a river walk.

Persistent Expectation

There was also a legacy that put a dark cloud on any vision of getting

a vibrant river walk. That was the history of the area north of the bridge. This was a 'no-go' area for many years as it was the site of a large dump and landfill. This history was a constant reminder as rubbish could still be seen peeking out of the whole area. These factors combined made envisioning a river walk very challenging indeed. There was another legacy though, that provided an inspiration to break through the stagnation and negativity that imbued this area. According to Renee Brennan, women of Gort, their children in prams, used to be able to walk around Gort from Kinincha over a foot bridge at Lavally and back in the Pound Road. In fact, in 1975, Vinnie Moloney and Jack Williams installed a footbridge made from steel girders that replaced a wooden footbridge removed in 1955 for safety reasons. A Connacht Tribune article titled, "Putting final touches to riverside walk" detailed Vinnie and Jack's work to make this a reality. This was a major anchor for what was to come as it was a different, much more positive, legacy than the old memories. The

people of South Galway had been denied the river for decades and we wanted to bring it back. The final inspiration though came from the Blackwater River and area itself. It's absolutely amazing. Its journey to Gort is literally unbelievable. It is a disappearing river and by the time it has made it to Gort, it will have disappeared and reappeared at least five times. The Blackwater River emerges from a large cave 3km upstream from Gort Bridge and disappears 3.5km downstream at Castletown. Past Gort Bridge the river is fast then it suddenly slows, deepens, and meanders, then speeds up again as it reaches Lavally, over 1.5 km away. The flora around the riverbank is vast and there are great panorama of a winding river with the Slieve Aughties in the background. The Pound road is a beautifully hedged rural road that skirts the river towards Lavally. We realised that this would be an beautiful amenity if we could get it up and running.

Kickstarting the River Walk

We realised that it was now or never. We needed to push through



GORT RIVER WALK



and make this happen and we would need a huge support from the community and our local authorities to do so. Our approach was simple: we would aim to be able to walk along the river from the back of Aldi to the Pound road and to Lavalley in 2019.

In November 2018, a group of volunteers met at the back of Aldi. With help from P.J. Murphy (now a councillor), we reformed a fence into a gate to access what would be the start of the river walk trail. We continued with steps down to the riverbank. Emmett Murphy (Galway Stone) donated a tonne of gravel to form the steps. Once that was in place, we organised a volunteers day and between Gort Scouts, Gort Men's shed and a host of other volunteers we made a start - 58 people in total. The Scouts were tasked with marking the trail: a sign of our intent. They

planted 1000 daffodil bulbs along the trail in a day of fun! The Gort Men's Shed crew were tasked with removing a massive briar patch that was blocking the path. It was a superb day with great community spirit, and we knew we were on a very positive wave. It was the ideal start to break through not just briars but the negative legacy that had held the place for decades. In three weeks and with tremendous support from our fantastic volunteers, we tore through briar patches and fallen trees until we made the connection and were now able to walk from the back of Aldi along the river to the upper bank and onto the Pound road. What we set ourselves as a goal for 2019, we did in three weeks before the Christmas of 2018. Our new goal then became to raise awareness of the walk and our theme was ...

'Just keep walking'. We got a donation of pebbles from TJ O' Mahony and made more steps to make the walk more accessible.

The rubbish at the start of the trail was unbelievable. Often as we made our way down the steps, the question would be asked, "What are we going to do about the rubbish?" Our guidance was, "don't focus on the rubbish - focus on the trail - the rubbish will get sorted if we do that". We thought it would take years, but the illegal dump site was closed down that January and the rubbish was all gone by May.

Getting backing

We wanted to develop a trail, but we had no idea how to do this. We needed to get advice from many people and Karen O' Neill was an incredible enabler for this. She made sure we talked to everyone and we walked the trail with them all, Ecologists, Galway County Council, Inland Fisheries, two trail consultants, Communities and Water. We also contacted our local representatives and the then Ministers Sean Canney and Ciaran Canon came out for a walk. Everybody noted that this had incredible potential for a most wonderful amenity. Both Ciaran and Sean indicated that there were different vehicles for funding the development and they highlighted the Outdoor Recreational Infrastructure Scheme (ORIS) as a viable option. In order to get these schemes however, we needed to have public backing. We needed to highlight the work we had done and the vision of where we wanted to go.

Raising Awareness

2019 was about making the trail walkable and raising awareness. We created a Facebook page called

GORT RIVER WALK

'Gort River Walk', ran a photography competition, and had a 'River Walk Sketchers' club run by Shona MacGivelay. We sent articles to our local newspapers to highlight the potential of our wonderful amenity. We had a 'float' in the St. Patrick's Day Parade in 2019 and won a prize (and got some initial funds!). We became an integral part of the Heart of Gort Festival and organised a river walk where we brought 100 people to explore the trail. Thanks to Karen, we had a biodiversity day with Eanna Ni Lamhna, a great event with 50 people attending. We soon had several hundred Facebook followers. Then it started to happen - we got footfall. People started exploring the River Walk. It was amazing. Within one year of us breaking ground, the trail path matured as more people walked it. We didn't need to trim the paths as much as footfall firmed the path!



HUGO SMITH, CIARAN O'DONNELL, ROB MILFORD, P.J. MURPHY, DAVID MURRAY, SEAN O'CONNOR

Phasing the project.

Our vision was firmly set on getting a looped walk around Gort that would involve bridges, planning permission, flood risk assessments. We split this up into different phases, so we had a natural evolution of the trail development. We dubbed the initial phase as Phase #0: this was about exploring the trail and raising awareness. Our next Goal, Phase #1, was simple: We wanted to be able to walk from the town centre to Lavally on a firm path and start improving biodiversity along the trail. We had one main challenge across a ditch difficult to navigate and the upper bank and Pound road could get quite wet. We needed to educate ourselves on how to design a trail. We started with a brilliant publication called 'A Guide to Planning and Developing Recreational Trails in Ireland' from the National Trails Office. We needed some initial funds as our expenses were

mounting. The driving force behind our fund-raising was the energetic Sally Smith (Open Sesame) and this started with a wonderful open-mic night in Café 21 in December 2019.

We also hired a Trail Consultant to work through details on how best to develop the trail. Using this guidance we put together plans for Phase #1 to approach Galway County Council and be prepared the ORIS application. Joe Byrne was instrumental in getting us to the table with Galway County Council. With their support and the support of our councillors and our ministers we were successful of getting funding of €20,000. Things were starting to roll!

Phase 1 funding

The announcement came in late January 2020 just as spring brought us another biogas situation and also severe flooding in the area.

Then COVID-19 hit, and it hit hard. While it put our Phase #1 plans in jeopardy it also illuminated something quite spectacular. In the harshest of COVID restrictions, the River Walk became an opportunity for many people in Gort. With the good weather we had in April and May, it became the great escape. We knew that we just had to progress this as fast as we could.

While we had everything set up for Phase 1, we had already started to prep for Phase 2. This was about the bridge, a different ball game. We needed to design the bridge, apply for planning permission, get lots of surveys done, as well as biodiversity, wildlife, flood risk and environmental assessments. This would come with a large cost. The main driver behind this bridge was architect Brent Mostert. Brent did a huge amount of work to conceptualise bridge and organise what we needed for Planning

GORT RIVER WALK

permission. I was tasked with working with some of the landowners to see if we could get their buy-in for the bridge. Vivian Diviney, Des Leech and Dermot Keran were incredibly supportive of the idea where all of our community would benefit.

If we went for ORIS funding again then we would need to show that we had funds to match and we needed to progress the planning permission significantly. We needed more help from the community in order to 'Get the Loop'. Sally again came to our rescue and organised a Go-Fund me page where we have been humbled by the great support from our community. The funding is for three things:

- Deliver Match funding for Phase 1
- Get key planning permission items prepared for our ORIS application (EIA, Flood risk assessment, etc.)
- Get match funding in place for Phase 2

We needed between 10k and 20k funding to deliver a bridge (basic vs arched) and what we get will determine our end result.

Phase 1 took off at rocket speed at

Breaking Announcement -

We have just recently received word that we have been allocated funding from the Government for €60,000 for the rehabilitation of the old footbridge on the walk -

This will help us in "Getting The Loop" bringing this excellent concept closer to completion!

the end of July and this is looking very good at the moment. The paths are well formed, and drainage has been sorted in several areas of the Pound road. The trail is more accessible and safer, and much of the invasive species has been dealt with on the east side of the river.

The preparation for Phase #2 is well underway but we will need the right level of funding to make this a reality. The community has been supporting us. We have already raised €5,000 in funds but need more in order to deliver this project to the communities of South Galway and North Clare so

generations can avail of this amenity.

We have a great team and a highly committed set of volunteers who really want to deliver this incredible feature so we ask you to continue to support us so that we can get our Gort River Walk by the end of 2021!

Acknowledgements:

This project wouldn't have been possible without the support of Galway County from Feidhlim from the Gort Area Office as well as Bernie O' Donnellan who helped coordinate our ORIS Funding. Thanks to our public representatives who supported this project including Deputy Ciaran Cannon and Sean Canney on our Councillors Joe Byrne, P.J. Murphy and Geraldine O' Donohue. Thanks also to Pat Finn, our FAS liaison and the FAS workers, especially Sylvie Linnane who did trojan work!

As well as the people mentioned here, a special call out to our hardworking volunteers: Stefano, Hugo, Flor, Patrick, Bernie, Nadin, Katleen, Padraig, Shona, Sharon, Kieran R, Ciaran & Renee. Thanks, Suzanne, for the videos.

Thanks so much to people who donated to date - you've really helped us get up and running on this project!

For more information visit the Gort River Walk Facebook page or Google 'go fund me Gort river walk'. The next steps in this incredible project... are yours!



RIVER WALK PATH READY FOR YOUR NEXT STEPS! PHOTO BY NADIN REICHEL



The Castle By The Lake

BY HANNAH RUSHE

Lough Cutra Castle is situated on the old Ennis Road and is within cycling distance of my late grandmother Bridget Hehir's house, I was brought there many times by my parents when staying at Rindifin.

At that time, you could wander around the grounds. My memory is of the wonderful peacocks with their magnificent tails which fanned up in glorious colour.

Last year my good friend Flavia Armitage posted on Instagram a picture taken outside Lough Cutra Castle. She was on a visit to the home of her great great grandfather, the First Viscount Field Marshall Hugh Gough.

I asked Flavia if she could tell me about her family history for an article in Guaire and she very kindly agreed to do so.

The Gough family originally came from Wales and settled in Limerick in the early 17th century. There were three Gough brothers: Robert, Francis, and Hugh. All were Anglican clergymen and graduates of Oxford University.



FIRST VISCOUNT FIELD MARSHALL HUGH GOUGH

First Viscount Field Marshall Hugh Gough

Flavia's great great great grandfather, Hugh Gough was born in 1779 in Annacotty, County Limerick, the fourth son of a military officer. He entered military service at the age of 15 and following an illustrious military career, he became a renowned commander in the British Army for his service in China and India.

It is said he never lost a battle. His Regiment, the 87th Regiment of Foot, later became the Royal Irish Fusiliers. They comprised recruits from Tipperary, Galway and Clare, and the regiment was known "the Faugh a Ballaghs" (Clear the Way), after their ancient Gaelic battle cry.

In 1807 Hugh Gough married Frances Maria Stephens and they had six children. According to Turtle Bunbury, writer and historian, the tall and handsome young man attended a military ball in Plymouth, clad in the green uniform of the 87th Regiment. His blue eyes lit upon a young woman in a short skimpy muslin frock, with curly black hair rolling down her neck. Frances Stephens, the daughter of a general, had dreamed the night before that she would marry a man in a green uniform.

When she saw Gough, she whispered to her father, "that is the man I saw in my dream". They danced the night away.

Flavia adds, "Queen Victoria had a strange relationship with Goughie, as he was known! She was jealous of his long and very happy marriage to my great great great grandmother. But there was some



LOUGH CUTRA CASTLE IN THE 1950'S

THE GOUGH FAMILY OF LOUGH CUTRA



FLAVIA AND HER HUSBAND PETER ARMITAGE IN FRONT OF THOOR BALLYLEE.

fondness when she wrote a condolence letter to him after Frances passed away and stressed how lucky he was to have had her around for so long and how much he loved his wife and children.”

The Goughs and Lough Cutra Castle

The castle was designed in the early 1800s by John Nash, an English architect who also had worked on Buckingham Palace. The first owner, Colonel Vereker, the second Lord Gort, was intent on building a mansion on Situation Hill on the Lough Cutra estate lands, which overall then comprised an estate of 12,000 thousand acres. He had visited Nash's East Cowes Castle in the Isle of Wight with the Prince Regent, and Vereker fancied a similar mansion for himself. The building of the castle was supervised by the

Pain brothers and the castle was built on the opposite side of the lake from Situation Hill, with a magnificent view of the Lough Cutra lake and the mountains in the distance. During the building of the castle one of the Pain brothers fell from the scaffolding and although injured, he did survive.

In 1851, Lough Cutra was offered for sale by order of the Encumbered Estates Court. Some sections of the estate were parcelled off and in 1852 the castle and immediate land was purchased by James Caulfield, in trust for a Mrs Ball, Superior of the Loreto Convent, Rathfarnham, in County Dublin. For a short period of time Lough Cutra Castle became a convent school.

Following his retirement and advancement to the peerage, Viscount Gough bought Lough

Cutra Castle and much of the original estate in 1854 with some of the proceeds of his retirement pension. Much of the work done previously in the gardens and woods of the estate was undone by the sale of timber when the community of nuns was in possession. Hugh Gough turned what was a neglected swath of land into the American garden on the south-west of the castle and he also enlarged the house.

Lord Hugh Gough died in Dublin in 1869. The family vault is in St. Brigid's Church, Booterstown where he is laid to rest. He had lived most of his retired life in St. Helen's Booterstown, Dublin. His former residence in Booterstown is now the Radisson Hotel. It has been described as one of Ireland's most magnificent private mansions. Built in 1750 as a home for Barrister Thomas Colley and originally named Seamount, it was renamed St. Helen's by Lord Gough. He left his residence in Lough Cutra to his family.

An island in the lake is called Apple Island and later, during the ownership of Gough's son Captain Honourable George Gough, the 2nd Viscount (1815-1895), the island was investigated with regard to planting trees and shrubs. A large number of gun metal and coins relating to the visit of King James II were found. It had been used as a place of refuge after the revolution of 1689. There were also the ruins of a church which indicated the early days of Christianity.

Kathleen Mona Gough

Flavia's grandmother was Kathleen Mona Gough, also called Poppy. Mona was born in India. Her name and personality stood out for me and I wanted to know more about her. Mona's grandfather was the 2nd Viscount Gough. His son, the

THE GOUGH FAMILY OF LOUGH CUTRA

Hon. George Hugh Gough, (1852-1900) was her father. George Hugh Gough was also a military man who served in India and South Africa. He had active service in the Anglo-Egyptian war in 1882. He sustained head injuries during the Battle of Abu-Klea in the Sudan in January 1885. He died of these injuries at the age of 47 in 1900 and was buried with full military honours in Bloemfontein in South Africa. There is a collection of his letters he sent home to his wife in Gort, Hilda Eve Gough née Moffat. The letters are part of the Gough Family papers (1804-1926) held in Clements Library, University of Michigan, U.S.A.

There was a close relationship between the Yeats brothers, Lady Gregory, and the Gough family. It is said that Mona was one of W.B. Yeats' many muses. He would often call upon her to visit him when he needed inspiration. She would sit at his feet and comment about his beautiful hair. He gave her a copy of his book 'The Tower' and inscribed it for her.

Mona Gough had a remarkably interesting marriage. It seems she took her time to decide on marriage and returned the ring a few times! She married Lt. Col. Ivan Douglas Guthrie of the Guthrie Clan in Scotland. Guthrie Castle dates back to the 15th Century. She would always come back to Lough Cutra Castle for holidays and especially during the summers brought her friends with her. A designated bedroom was hers alone. She enjoyed visits to Coole Park and to Thoor Ballylee.

Although Mona painted and illustrated much of her own work she never sold any of her paintings. When her grandchildren came along she wrote poems for them and illustrated them for the children.



MONA GOUGH WITH HER FRIEND KAREN SWIMMING IN LOUGH CUTRA LAKE UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THE BOATMAN.

Lady Gregory and the Gough Connection

Eleanor Laura Jane Gough, a daughter of the 1st Viscount Hugh Gough, married a brother of Lady Gregory, Robert Algernon Persse, one of 15 children. There were also other family connections between the Goughs and the Gregorys.

Lily Margaret Graham Parry married Robert Gregory, the only son of Lady Gregory and William Gregory, in 1907. Margaret and Robert both studied art at the Slade School of Art in

London, where they met. Margaret illustrated three of Lady Gregory's books and for which she was most appreciative. Robert served with the Connaught Rangers and as a pilot with the Royal Flying Corps in WW1. He was shot down in January 1918 over Padua, in Italy.

Margaret did not marry again for many years after losing her



MONA AND FRIEND KAREN IN THEIR SWIMSUITS WITH MONA'S FATHER, GEORGE HUGH GOUGH, BESIDE LOUGH CUTRA LAKE.

husband. In an interesting episode of the Troubles, she was the sole survivor of a car ambushed by the IRA in Ballyturn, Gort in 1921. In 1928 she married her neighbour Guy Gough, one of Mona's brothers, who lived in Lough Cutra. The castle became too expensive to run, so the family moved from the castle to the renovated stables in the

THE GOUGH FAMILY OF LOUGH CUTRA



MONA GOUGH MARRIED IVAN DOUGLAS GUTHRIE OF GUTHRIE CLAN ANGUS IN SCOTLAND IN 1921

castle grounds. There were no children from this marriage. She died in Exeter in 1979, aged 95 years. Margaret's son Richard,

from her first marriage, lived close to his mother in her later years. Guy Gough was best friends with W.B. Yeats. Together, they organised the funeral of

Lady Gregory when she died in 1932. Yeats arranged for himself to head the cortège and Margaret, now the new owner of Coole Park, was not pleased to be in second place as the cortège made its way to the new cemetery in Galway (Bohermore). When the chance came, she passed out the Yeats' carriage to take up her rightful position as head of the family! A feisty lady, indeed.

The 21st century

A lasting legacy of the first Viscount Gough to the Gort area is Lough Cutra National School which opened in 1867.

Today, the current owners of Lough Cutra Castle provide accommodation for corporate events, location shoots and weddings. Nash's East Cowes Castle is no more, but Lough Cutra Castle, with its long and varied history, continues to grace the South Galway landscape and keep guard over its beautiful lake.

Author's Note: I am grateful to Flavia Armitage for telling me her family stories and including permission to use family photographs.

PROTESTANT CHURCH
ORIGINALLY BUILT BY
LORD GOUGH,
RENOVATED IN 1866 TO
BECOME A SCHOOL FOR
LOCAL CHILDREN. NOW
CALLED SCOIL ÁINE
NAOFA LOCH CÚTRA, OR
LOUGH CUTRA NATIONAL
SCHOOL, MICHAEL
CUSACK (FOUNDER OF
THE G.A.A.) WAS THE
SCHOOL'S FIRST
HEADMASTER IN 1866.



Pillars of the Community

BY PATRICK HYNES

We have been around Gort for a long time. Somewhat imposing but also somewhat inconspicuous, we have been keeping a watchful eye on the town. Stoic and rooted in the town, unscrupulously, we could be accused of being gossips or being nosey but we are not. Casting an eye over the daily happenings for many decades, we have started to project our inner thoughts. We have watched St. Colman's Vocational School expand from the original four classrooms to six classrooms and then expand with the installation of the first prefabs in the 1960s. Then, we watched it close after amalgamating into what became Gort Community School. We were there for the constant flow of students in and out of the school for over 50 years, commenting on their scholastic endeavours. With the introduction of free secondary education by Minister for Education, Donogh O'Malley, the foot flow increased dramatically in the 1960s as did bicycle flow! Sniffing the smell of sawdust in the woodwork room, listening to the filing of metal in the metalwork room, watching the bubbling contents of glass beakers in the science room, repeating French phrases in French classes, listening to the clanking and tap-tap of the typewriter keys and the ring of the typewriter carriage....all the activities that by stealth we oversaw, as students and teachers went about their daily lives. In the late 1980s we watched the headmaster's Ford Sierra drive between us, through to the school. We watched the caretaker dig the

shrubbery and mould the clay.

Before that, there was a lawn and flower beds, which were eventually replaced by a tarmac carpark. We wondered if the tarmac would stick to, and burn, our feet.

We did not just keep an eye on the school. We listened to music from the Classic Ballroom in its heyday; we listened to music from Springs nightclub in its heyday too. We listened to céilis in pubs. We listened to samba in apartments. This year has been quieter. Several St. Patrick's Day parades have gone past us, but we missed the parade

We listened to music from the Classic Ballroom in its heyday; we listened to music from Springs nightclub in its heyday, too. We listened to céilis in pubs. We listened to samba in apartments.

this year. As usual we were waiting, but Covid-19 has impacted everything. Not a vintage tractor or car in sight. No floats and no street theatre. The substance of our society is impacted by Covid-19 but there will be recovery. We watched people pace the footpaths during the Covid-19 lockdown especially during the 2km restrictions. We even got a wink from passers-by. Some of them became greyer as the weeks went by. We, on the other hand, become darker as the years go by and need an occasional freshen up to get us back to grey. We have seen it all before. Remember, there were dark days of the workhouse, the civil war and the great depression. We wish we had an unobstructed view of the square but the railway bridge gets in our way. Once upon

a time, we peered down towards the cattle fairs in the square. We caught a whiff of that distinctive bovine smell of the cattle going by, many having made the long journey into town. After the fairs, we watched shopkeepers hose down the front of their buildings. We were there for the change from fairs in the square to the establishment of the Gort Co-operative Livestock Mart. Now, we are conscious of the animals rumbling and mooing inside in trailers as they pass us by. We watched loads of turf arrive by

horse and cart at Kerin's corner from Derrybrien, and turn right to head to the square to be sold. Later, we caught the peaty smell as the turf burned in houses throughout the town.

We have counterparts, some more elegant than us and some more bedraggled than us. We wish we could see up Queen Street to the library and have a peep over Church Street at the town hall. We know that our counterparts at the library cast an eye on the Canon Quinn Park, and occasionally watch with sadness as some of our locals make their final journey past them. Occasionally, we have been nearly hit by cars turning sharply. We remember when cars were scarce in Gort. We sometimes whisper to each other about the changes. We

TREASURES WITHIN 2K



POSTS THAT ONCE SUPPORTED A GATE TO THE WORKHOUSE NOW GUARD THE COMMUNITY

listened out for the beeping of car horns when local teams won matches and indeed were excited in 1978 when St. Colman's Vocational School won the All Ireland inter-schools hurling title. Excitement was palpable when the title came west of the river Shannon that year for first time ever.

We used to watch the enjoyment of homecoming visitors to Gort. Conversely, we watched sadly as people started their return journey to Shannon airport with tears in their eyes leaving loved ones behind. With the new motorway we miss out on seeing that part of life now. The Gort diaspora is worldwide. Indeed, we overheard a local man telling his friend that when he was recently on a trip to the Kimberley region in Northwest Australia, he picked up a book in a tiny roadside stop called "Kings in Grass Castles" by Mary Durack. Imagine his surprise when on the fourth page he is reading about the author's grandfather travelling to

the cattle fairs in the market town of Gort prior to immigrating to Australia in the 1850s to become a major player in the establishment of cattle stations in the Kimberley region. How serendipitous was it for our local man to experience the randomness of picking up a book with Gort connections in such a remote place!

We have considered retirement, but our work is not done. We have held the heavy wrought iron gates high for the Vocational School for over 50 years and the Gort Workhouse prior to that. Standing square with our pyramid tops, us four pillars watch over the town. With the sentiments of Joni Mitchell's song "The Circle Game" we too are:

"Captive on the carousel of time
We can't return we can only look
behind
From where we came
And go round and round and
round
In the circle game"

We know that
our counterparts
at the library
cast an eye on
the Canon
Quinn Park, and
occasionally
watch with
sadness as some
of our locals
make their final
journey past
them.

In Memory of a Hero

Sometimes an image alone can't tell the story. So it is with this photo on the facing page: taken in 1924 as Garda Patrick Joseph O'Halloran's coffin left Gort for his final resting place in Shanaglish Cemetery.

Garda O'Halloran began life on Georges Street, Gort, 15th May 1896. Born to Patrick O'Halloran of Bodyke and Catherine Loughrey of Gortacornane, he was the fifth of six children. The family lived in a house (now PJ Hawkins Shop) between Hartes and Julia Ruan's house, known to local people as Hartes Corner.

His career began as a signalman with the Southern and Western Railway before he joined the Civic Guard. The Civic Guard formed on the 22nd of February 1922 to replace the disbanded Royal Irish Constabulary and was renamed the Garda Síochána on the 8th August 1923. The Civic Guard were initially armed but when 19-year-old Civic guard Charles Eastwood was accidentally shot dead by a colleague on September of 1922, it was decided that henceforth it would be an unarmed police force. To qualify for recruitment to the Civic Guards the candidate had to be male, single, at least 5 feet 9 inches tall (1.753 meters) and pass an exam on arithmetic, reading and spelling.

Patrick joined the Civic Guards on 31st March 1922 and is on record as being a private of the IRA. Once trained, he was posted to Swords, Dublin, then to Skerries before his final transfer to Baltinglass Station, County Wicklow in October 1922.

Garda O'Halloran's post began eventually, as in January 1923, he and three others defied a mob that attacked the station with crowbars and sledgehammers. The following January 28, 1924, he was less



GARDA PATRICK O'HALLORAN

successful. The Irish Independent of January 31st 1924 carried an account of that day.

On the 28th of January 1924, Peter Jordan and Felix McMullen hired a taxi from the Ormond Hotel in Dublin and asked the driver James Smith to take them about 35 miles to Baltinglass. On arrival in Baltinglass they asked the driver to park beside the post office and to wait for them. The two men walked from there to the National Bank.

They asked to see the bank manager and upon entering his office they produced two guns and told the manager, Maurice Wolfe, to hand over the keys of the safe. Wolfe took from his pocket not the keys but a .25 revolver. McMullen shot and wounded the bank manager. Wolfe fell but fired a shot to raise the alarm. Jordan came out of the Manager's office only to find Cecil Shade, a bank clerk, attempting to throw the keys of the safe out through the bank window. At this point Mrs. Wolfe appeared from upstairs and seeing her

husband on the floor ran out onto the street shouting for help. McMullen tried to stop her but failed, he then bolted and locked the front door. At gunpoint the men ordered Shade to open the safe with the keys he had. Shade attempted to comply but none of the keys would open the safe as he had removed the key from the bunch and thrown it out the door as Mrs. Wolfe left.

By this time Garda Patrick O'Halloran, who was on duty, heard first the gunshots and then Mrs. Wolfe's cries for help. Blowing on his whistle to attract attention, he was joined by Joseph Germaine, a civilian, with a revolver which he gave to O'Halloran. Together they attempted to kick in the bank door. The robbers made their escape through a rear door and onto the main street via a side alley. Despite there being no other Garda present, O'Halloran gave chase. As the robbers and Garda crossed the bridge over the River Slaney, McMullen turned and shot Garda O'Halloran in the abdomen at point blank range.

The robbers made their way back to the taxi; just as they got there the taxi driver was returning from the nearby pub where he had treated himself to a few pints. The men told Smith to drive as fast as he could back to Dublin and asked to be let off near Terenure where they refused to pay the taxi.

Garda O'Halloran was treated where he fell and then brought to the barracks where he was attended by Dr Kenna and Rev. P. O'Hare. He was then transferred to the Curragh Military Hospital. Despite heroic efforts, he died within twenty-four hours from his wounds. A trail of blood could be seen from where he fell. The gun

DOWN MEMORY LANE



PICTURE AT THE CURRAGH SHOWS THE REMAINS OF THE LATE GARDA PATRICK O'HALLORAN BEING PLACED IN MOTOR HEARSE FOR CONVEYANCE TO GORT. REQUIEM MASS WAS CELEBRATED WITH FUNERAL TAKING PLACE AFTERWARDS IN SHANAGLISH.

PHOTO FIRST RAN IN IRISH INDEPENDENT IN 1924

that Germaine gave him was recovered with the safety catch still in place.

A manhunt for the robbers ensued and Jordan was taken into custody on February 15th. He was formally arrested after the taxi driver identified him. McMullen was captured on the 17th of February in Liverpool England after Jordan decided to help the Gardaí.

Garda O'Halloran was described by his colleagues as being "a very efficient and brave young man". He was also held in high esteem by all the townspeople, as a good Catholic who was a member of the Sacred Heart Sodality. Patrick died on the 29th of January 1924 at 29 years of age. At the inquest of his death the jury returned a verdict of willful murder.

Felix McMullen 26 years old and Peter Jordan 29 years were ex Captains in the National Army. Peter Jordan was also a schoolteacher, and ironically they both had tried and failed to join the An Garda Síochána.

They were tried on the 24th of February 1924 by Judge O'Shaughnessy. This was appealed (the first of its kind in the Irish Free State) a retrial was held on the 10th of July and McMullen was sentenced to death and Jordan to

twenty lashes and ten years penal servitude. Felix McMullen was hanged in Mountjoy Prison on the 1st of August 1924.

Garda Patrick Joseph O'Halloran's body was brought back to Gort and on the 31st of January he was interned in Shanaglish Cemetery. General Eoin O'Duffy, Commissioner of An Garda Síochána, delivered an oration at the graveside where he said it was at the will of the people whether the Garda Síochána remained unarmed or not.

In July of that year, Patrick's mother Catherine O'Halloran appealed for some compensation for her son's death as she was his next of kin and had no way of supporting herself. She was now 62 years of age. Patrick sent her £5 every month and helped her out anytime he came home; she now lived with her daughter who worked in a local shop. There was a hearing and while her son was praised in every aspect possible, she got no compensation. Catherine died in March 1937.

On Sunday the 4th of November 2018, the County Council for the Municipal District of Baltinglass together with senior members of An Garda Síochána from Baltinglass and Gort Barracks, members of the Defence Forces and



A MEMORIAL STONE TO TWO MEN KILLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY UNVEILED IN BALTINGLASS IN 2018.

Garda band, together with invited guests and relatives unveiled a memorial stone to commemorate Garda Patrick Joseph O'Halloran, killed while on duty in Baltinglass on the 24th of January 1924.

Also commemorated was, Private Michael McGuinn, 33rd Infantry, who was killed while on a peace mission with United Nations. A memorial stone to two men who died in the line of duty was unveiled in Baltinglass in 2018. It recognizes the sacrifice of Garda Patrick O'Halloran (1924) and Private Michael McGuinn. TG4 ran a docudrama on the failed raid in October 2019.

DOWN MEMORY LANE



GORT CONVENT PRIMARY SCHOOL TOUR TO WESTPORT IN 1974, 2ND AND 6TH CLASSES

Reminiscing on the Past

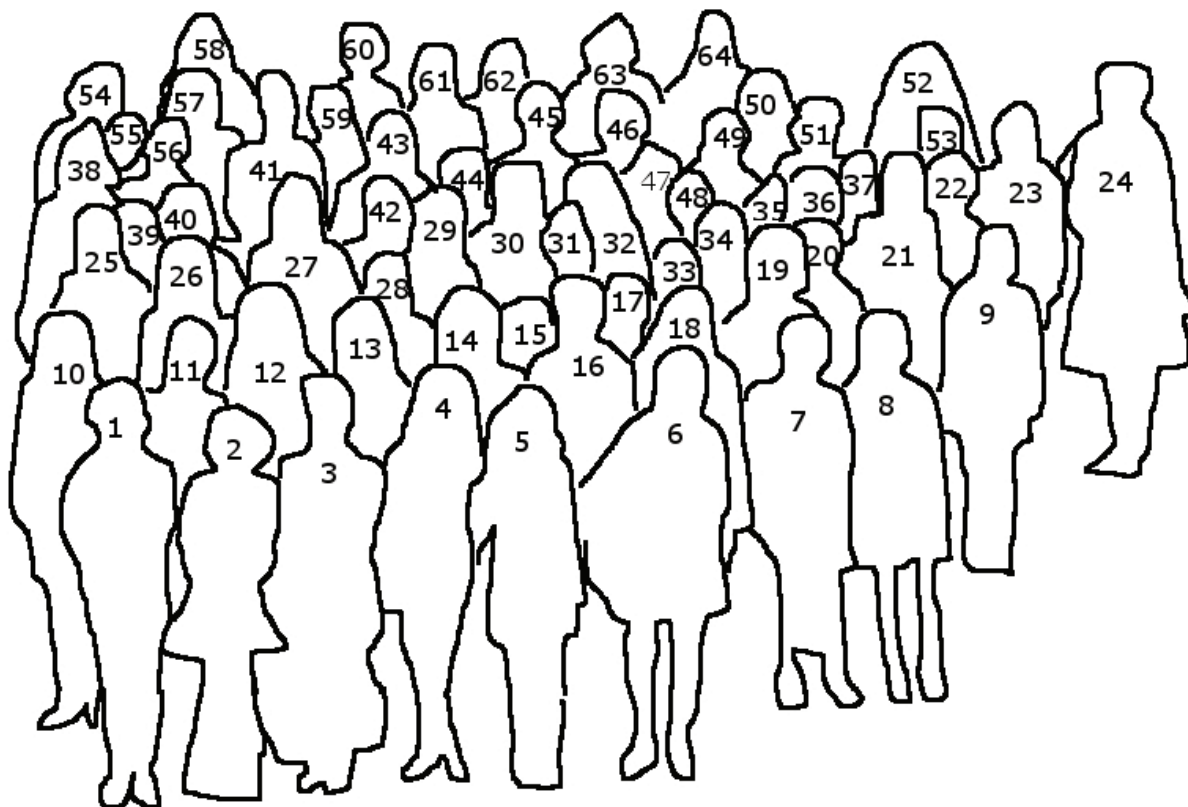
BY MARIE NESTOR

Many hours of enjoyment were spent trying to put a name on everyone in this photo. Many students have come and gone over the years with some only staying for a short while. Mary McNevin, Noreen Minogue and myself reminisced over so many happy memories of our time in the convent primary school. With the help of many including Geraldine O'Reilly and Geraldine Nolan, we solved the puzzle through text messages, Face Book, and phone calls. We shared many laughs together and fondly remembered our classmates and teachers who have left this world, may they rest in peace.



EDITORS'S NOTE: Guaire Magazine appreciates all old photos from the Gort Community and will be delighted to share your best in our 'Down Memory Lane' feature.

DOWN MEMORY LANE



1 LOUISE O'CONNOR (GEORGES ST), 2 PAMELA JORDAN (THE SQUARE), 3 SHEILA CUNNINGHAM (GALWAY RD), 4 DOROTHY PRENDERGAST (ENNIS RD), 5 MARY MCNEVIN (GALWAY RD), 6 JAQUELINE FAHY (CLOUGHNACAVA), 7 DEIRDRE NOLAN (CROWE ST), 8 ANN NOLAN (CROWE ST), 9 BRIDGIT DONOVAN (CROWE ST), 10 FIONA MURRAY (RINDIFIN), 11 ANN NESTOR (LOUGHTYSHAUGHNESSY), 12 NOREEN O'REGAN (THE SQUARE), 13 BERNADETTE MOLONEY (ENNIS RD), 14 GERALDINE MOLONEY (GEORGES ST), 15 RUTH SMITH (CLOONE), 16 MAUREEN O'CONNOR (GEORGES ST), 17 ALICE SMITH (CLOONE), 18 CAROLINE MCGANN (BALLYHUGH), 19 SUSAN JOYCE (GALWAY RD), 20 ANN LALLY (CROWE ST), 21 EITHNE LALLY (LAVALLY), 22 LINDA MINOGUE (ENNIS RD) RIP, 23 CHRISTINA DEELY (CAHERBRODER), 24 SR PETER RIP, 25 DARINA FAHEY (ENNIS RD), 26 EILISH SPELLMAN (ENNIS RD), 27 GERALDINE O'REILLY (ENNIS RD), 28 MARIE NESTOR (LOUGHTYSHAUGHNESSY), 29 AVRIL DUFFY (GALWAY RD) RIP, 30 MARY ROCHE (CHURCH ST), 31 ANNMARIE KELLY (CHURCH ST), 32 BERNADETTE FENNESSY (CHURCH ST), 33 FIONA HICKEY (GALWAY RD), 34 MARY TERESA FLAHERTY (ENNIS RD), 35 JOAN HALLINAN (LOUGHREA RD), 36 THOMASINA QUIGLEY (GEORGES ST), 37 NOREEN MINOGUE (ENNIS RD), 38 ELIZABETH JOYCE (GALWAY RD), 39 TERESA WALSH (CLOUGHNACAVA), 40 JENNIFER LISTON (GEORGES ST), 41 JENNIFER DUFFY (GALWAY RD), 42 PAULINE CAHILL (GALWAY RD), 43 CARMEL CAHILL (GALWAY RD), 44 MARGARET DONOVAN (CROWE ST), 45 MAIREAD O'DRISCOLL (GALWAY RD), 46 MARJORIE SMITH (CROWE ST), 47 BRED A PIGGOTT (THE SQUARE), 48 HILDA ROCHE (BRIDGE ST), 49 KATHLEEN O'REGAN (THE SQUARE), 50 NOREEN CORCORAN (CHURCH ST), 51 KAREN O'FLYNN (THE SQUARE), 52 SR JOHN RIP, 53 ANN GALLAGHER (GEORGES ST RIP), 54 MARTINA WALSH (CLOUGHNACAVA), 55 FRANKIE CONWAY (LAVALLY), 56 AUDREY O'CONNOR (GEORGES ST), 57 MAURA CUMMINS (ENNIS RD), 58 SR BERCHMANS, RIP, 59 MARY MOLONEY (GEORGES ST), 60 MARY MURPHY (GALWAY RD), 61 GERALDINE KILLEEN (CEANNAHOWN), 62 CHRISTINA HALVEY (CLOUGHNACAVA) RIP, 63 MAIREAD WALSH (RINDIFIN), 64 SR CARMEL RIP.

DOWN MEMORY LANE



PHOTO BY WILLIE QUINN

1979 GORT FESTIVAL, (L-R), COLIE MORAN (RAKERIN), MIKE GLYNN (GEORGES ST), CHRIS NESTOR (BRIDGE ST), PADDY JORDAN (THE SQUARE).



INTER COUNTY HURLERS OUTING AT THURLES GOLF CLUB IN THE MID-70'S. (L-R) SEÁN ÓG O'CEALLACHÁIN (RTE JOURNALIST AND BROADCASTER), TOM LAMBERT (GEORGES ST), SEAN O'SIOCHÁIN (CROKE PARK GAA ADMINISTRATOR), SEAN DEVLIN (THE SQUARE), JOSIE MCINERNEY (CHURCH ST), MICKO MCINERNEY (ARDRAHAN), TOM BOLAND (KILLIMOR).

1959, THE BACK OF HANRAHAN'S PUB IN THE SQUARE, NOW DICEY REILLY'S: (L-R), DOMINIC SPELMAN (CAPPAVARNA), MICK WARD (BOLANDS LANE), MAUREEN AND DAN HANRAHAN (THE SQUARE), DAN JOHN DONOHUE (THE SQUARE), JOHN GLYNN (CROWE ST), TOMMY MURPHY (CROWE ST), PAUL DONOHUE (KILBEACANTY). FRONT, MENA SCANLON (BALLYHUGH) AND DINKY THE DOG..



DOWN MEMORY LANE



THE 1968-69 "A" GORT GIRLS BASKETBALL TEAM: BACK ROW, (L-R), LORNA BRODERICK (GEORGES ST), NUALA CRADDOCK (HEADFORD), MARY KELLY (GLENBRACK). FRONT ROW, (L-R), MARY BURKE (GEORGES ST), BREEGE BURKE (GEORGES ST), PHIL MONAGHAN (BRIDGE ST).



BASKETBALL IN THE '60S WAS PLAYED IN FRONT OF THE OLD MART (NOW ALDI) ON A PORTABLE BASKETBALL NET. (L-R), MICHAEL BRODERICK (THE SQUARE), MICHAEL BRENNAN (GEORGES ST), KIERAN MOLONEY (KININCHA), JOHN CUMMINS (ST COLMANS TERC).



PHOTO BY WILLIE QUINN

OLD FOLKS' PARTY IN EARLY 1970S: (L-R) JIM MINOGUE (ST COLMAN'S TERC), PATRICK NEILAN (GLENBRACK), MARY MINOGUE (ST COLMAN'S TERC), JULIE MCGRATH (SEEHAN), TODDY CONNAIRE (BALLINGER'S CORNER), MATTIE MCGRATH (SEEHAN), SARAH O'ROURKE (BALLYLENNON), WILLIE LEECH (KILMACDUAGH), MOLLY MAUGHAN (GARRABEG).



IN THE 1930S: PAT GLYNN AND WIFE ON GEORGES ST, NOW JOHNNY KELLY'S BAR.

Emigration, Civil War and Hurling

Guaire casts a spotlight on five Gort men who played major roles in Galway's first All Ireland hurling title and the times they lived in.

BY BRIAN BRENNAN AND CHRISTINE BRENNAN

The 1923 All Ireland Hurling Championship is unique for many reasons. It was the first final to be played after the Irish Civil War. It was only four years since the fateful events of Bloody Sunday where fourteen people were killed and over sixty injured when the RIC opened fire on the crowd in Croke Park at a Tipperary v Dublin football fixture. The final itself wasn't played until September 1924 because Limerick refused to start the championship until all Civil War prisoners had been released. Many of those same prisoners would go on to play an active role in the championship itself, including Gort's Michael V. Trayers, Manager of the Galway Hurling Team. It was Galway's first all-Ireland win. And lastly and most significantly for Guaire, five

Gort residents (three from the same street, Georges Street) were involved in the winning Galway side. Less than forty years after Gort GAA was founded, the club would provide talent for all spheres of the game at a county level – players, trainers and management. This article does not seek out to retell the story of that 1923 final which is well documented. Instead, we endeavour to find out more about the Gort men involved and to help shed some light on life at the time. Starting with a team photograph the storylines have brought us to New York, Montreal, a German Plot and internment.

The Senior Galway Hurling Panel for 1923 included five Gort men; players: Edmond 'Ned' Gilmartin, Bernard 'Bernie' Gibbs, James 'Jimmy' Morris, trainer John 'Jack' Berry and manager Michael V Trayers.



GALWAY' FIRST SENIOR HURLING CHAMPIONS OF 1923. BACK ROW (L-R), TRAINER **JOHN BARRY** (GEORGES ST, GORT), J DERVAN (TYNAGH) IN WHITE, TOGGED PLAYERS ARE ANDY KELLY (TYNAGH), RICHARD MORRISSEY (CRAUGHWELL), MARTIN KING (GALWAY), **EDWARD GILMARTIN** (BRIDGE ST, GORT), STAFF GARVEY, **BERNARD GIBBS** (GEORGES ST, GORT), MICHAEL KING (GALWAY), AND COUNTY BOARD CHAIRMAN AT THE TIME, TOM KENNY (CRAUGHWELL). KNEELING IN MIDDLE ROW (L-R), TOM FLEMING (GALWAY), JIM POWER (TYNAGH), JUNIOR MAHONY (ARDRAHAN), IGNATIUS HARNEY (TYNAGH), MICK GILL (BALLINDERREEN), MICHAEL CALLANAN (CRAUGHWELL). FRONT ROW (L-R), IN TOGS ARE LEONARD MCGRATH (MULLAGH), MICHAEL DERVAN (TYNAGH), CAPTAIN MICHAEL KENNY (TYNAGH), **JAMES MORRIS** (GEORGES ST, GORT).

1923 HURLERS

BERNIE GIBBS

Bernie Gibbs was one of thirteen children born to George and Bessie Gibbs. George was a nailmaker and the family lived beside Mullin's pub in Georges Street. Tragically, the family buried three young children. A headstone is erected by George and Bessie in Lavallylisheen Children's Graveyard in memory of Patrick (2 years), James (5 months) who both died from scarlett fever in September 1880 within days of each other. They also lost Catherine who was born and died in 1872. Bessie passed away in 1910 of a stroke.

The earliest involvement of the Gibbs family in GAA goes back to the 30th September 1910 with Gort's victory over St Flannan's College. Bernie's brother George played full back that day and it was reported that a farewell address was made to him on the occasion on his departure to Canada. Bernie was an active member of the Galway South Board and is recorded as the Secretary for a number of meetings. ÓLaoi¹ describes "one of the finest goals ever seen was scored by Gibbs in the 1923 all Ireland final". The final itself is described as a robust, dashing encounter played in front of 15,000 people on a beautiful sunny day. The final score 7-03 to 4-05.

A short year after gaining the All-Ireland title, Gibbs emigrated at only 20 years of age to New York. At the time of emigration, Gibbs was regarded as "the greatest exponent of hurling in Ireland". Bernie worked in the bar trade and married Margaret O'Reilly in 1927. He became an active member of New York G.A.A.

¹Annals of the G.A.A. in Galway 1902-1934, Fr Padraic ÓLaoi



BERNIE AND MARGARET GIBBS WEDDING PORTRAIT.
INSET: FRONT AND BACK VIEWS OF GIBBS' 1923 ALL IRELAND MEDAL.

Edward 'Ned' Gilmartin



EDWARD "NED" GILMARTIN

Originally from Toomevara, Co. Tipperary, Edward Gilmartin lived in Bridge Street and was a chemist. On the day of the all Ireland final, Gilmartin was described as "like a cyclone amidst the forwards". He played junior hurling with Tipperary in 1910 and won the Junior Munster Championship. With Toomevara "Greyhounds" Club, he won a Senior hurling championship medal in 1912, defeating Ballina in the final. Ned Gilmartin married Maura Murphy from Lisheen and their children were Brian (who won three county minor hurling medals with Gort in 1957, 58, 59), Adrienne, Muriel, Evelyn, Maura. Ned was a keen golfer and a founder member of the Gort Golf Club.



GILMARTIN'S PHARMACY ON BRIDGE STREET

1923 HURLERS

MICHAEL VINCENT TRAYERS

Originally from Oranmore, Michael Trayers was born in 1892 to Michael and Nora Grealy of Creganna. His father was a carpenter and passed away suddenly seven months before he was born. Nora went on to remarry to Martin Hynes of Gort mill in 1895. Michael studied in Gort and went on to UCD, he had a reputation as a journalist. Michael was involved in the Irish Republican movement. A Royal Irish Constabulary statement from June 1917, describes Trayers as leading a group of 100 men in manoeuvres co-inciding with an electioneering demonstration attended by De Valera in Gort.

Trayers was described as giving the commands on that day and was charged under the Defence of the Realm Act. He was among the many leading republicans across the country who were arrested for the so-called 'German Plot' to enlist German aid for the Irish independence struggle. Trayers was interned in Mount Joy Prison at the time of the famous hunger strike which culminated in the death of Thomas Ashe.

By 1929, Trayers was married to Gretta O'Sullivan and was living in Montreal Canada where they had 5 children. Michael was involved in hurling in his new home and a



MICHAEL TRAYERS

member of Montreal Shamrocks GAA club.

JAMES ANTHONY MORRIS

James Anthony Morris, the youngest child of John & Maryanne Morris and brother of Edward, was born in the family home in Gort on the 14th July 1896. Known as Jimmy he became a great hurler. He played hurling with the Gort Hurling Club and was a member of the team that won the Senior County title for the first time in 1914. Beaten in the 1915 final by Craughwell, Gort regained the title in 1916.

Members of those teams included Jim and Joe Stanford, Pat, Michael and John Hayes, Jack & Josie (Crab) Fahey, Eddie & Matt Nestor, Matt Halvey, B (Babby) and S. Stack, Pat Cook, Tom Mack, Pat Roche, Jimmy Morris, Josie Kelly, D. Reynolds and B.

Gibbs, P.J. Cooney, John Cooney, John Quinn, John Spelman, Martin Farrell and Colman Quinn. Many of



JAMES MORRIS

the newly formed Tank Corps. He fought at the Battle of Amiens and died in 1918 outside the village of Vauvillers.

these also played with Galway County Senior Team. Jimmy was an all-round sportsman playing rugby and hockey and a noted swimmer. It is said he also played hurling for Clare. Jimmy worked as a postman. Sadly, he died at the age of 32 from pneumonia. He is buried in Shanaglish cemetery, Gort. The Galway and Clare Gaels erected a large memorial to him there. Jimmy's brother Edward joined the Royal Engineers in 1916 and served in the 15th Battalion of

Excerpt and photo from "A Tale of Two Medals" by Eamonn Weber, Guaire Magazine 2016

JACK BERRY

Jack Berry, Georges Street, was Trainer of the Galway team of 1923, Galway's first All Ireland win which was fought against Limerick. Jack worked in weights and measures in the market in Gort

Square. He succeeded his father as the weigh-master in Gort and joked that he was unique in being a 'Grey' Berry. Originally from Co. Galway, Berry's father was a

member of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. His sister Kathleen 'Dolly' became well-known figure in Gort who worked as a dressmaker. Jack is buried in Kilmacduagh

A Face Lift for the Gort Market Square

BY TONII KELLY

Burren Lowlands Group juggled two major efforts this past year. One was the establishment of Forge Works, a coworking and collaborative space for entrepreneurs, start-ups, and remote workers. The centre will be a focal point for enterprise development, training and business support in Gort and the surrounding Burren Lowlands region. That project, headed by Laura Tannian, is expected to open in 2020 at a location on the Tubber Road.

The second push by the Burren Lowlands Group ended months of anticipation. BL had asked local architect Brent Mostert to develop a vision of the Gort Market Square. His design included cleaning up the plinth for the Christ the King Statue, adding seating and planters in the Square and planters with trees along Church Street. Phase One, completed January 2020, saw Jethro Sheen remove the worn iron railings around the statue base. These were replaced with cut limestone paving and the statue was cleaned of years of accumulated debris. At that time, Phase Two would have to wait for another grant opportunity. As it happened, Brent's design corresponds to current Covid requirements for social distancing in public spaces. Burren Lowlands applied for, and received, a Town and Village Renewal Covid19 grant meant to enable communities to comply with new rules on spacing in lines, seating, etc. This will allow completion of Phase 2 of the renovations. Actual benches and



RENDERING OF COMPLETED FACE LIFT FOR THE GORT MARKET SQUARE

planters will be installed so that residents and tourists alike can enjoy coffee or tea from the available shops while adhering to social distancing guidelines. The project is scheduled to be done by December 2020.

The new refurbishment of the Square gives a boost to the positive image of the town, as it welcomes the news that Failte Ireland's Burren Discovery Trail will be coming though Gort in 2021. Gort and the Burren Lowlands are situated perfectly as a Gateway to the Burren!

The Burren Lowlands Group is delighted with the result so far but needs your help to raise match funding for Phase Two. Your donation left in either Sullivan's Hotel, Bank of Ireland Gort, or online by scanning the bar code at the end of the article, gets us closer

to resurrecting the Square as the modern icon of Gort town! As the principle market town for the Burren Lowlands region, the Burren Lowlands Group is delighted with the result so far and wish to thank all involved in the project. This includes Joe Byrne, who coordinated with Galway County Council, all the local councillors and Gort Credit Union, all of whom contributed to funding the project. Thanks are due to Karen O'Neill, Teresa Butler, Mairin Doody, Conservation officer, Feidhlim McGillycuddy, Gort area engineer and Pat Finn and the local Fas team.

This includes Joe Byrne, who coordinated with Galway County Council, all the local

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Tidy Towns in Lockdown

BY BERNICE CAROLAN

Gort is a place I've always been very proud to call home. It is a town that through good times and bad, has made a concerted effort to present itself in a positive light. In my youth, Gort had a very active Tidy Towns group who together with business owners and residents, worked tirelessly to ensure our town was a place to be proud of, whether you were one of it's resident or a visitor just passing through. With the passing of time, this group disbanded; economic challenges and population drift saw Gort undergo some fundamental changes.

Gort no longer has a preponderance of owner occupied business premises in the town centre. Town houses, once proud family-run businesses and single-family homes are now multi-occupancy apartments with leased shop units on the street front, some sadly unoccupied. New housing estates have sprung up around the town with a mix of owner occupied and rental properties.

The opening of the motorway has seen a growth in the

commuter workforce. Gort now has a wonderfully diverse mix of nationalities resident in the town along with excellent primary and secondary education facilities. The entire dynamic of the town has changed. Gort is now a multicultural commuter town, with a population of over 3,000 and the importance of "community" is now more important than ever.

Gort is blessed to have a wide range of community groups, whether in the areas of sport, environment, education, social care, enterprise and development, all individually working towards improving life in the town and the surrounding area. But Gort, as a community really needs to work together to get the town back on it's feet, to ensure inclusion and integration of all it's residents and business owners in securing the long term future of a town we can be proud to live in, work in or visit.

One of the groups seeking to support the regeneration of the town and restore the feeling of pride in our community is the recently formed Gort Tidy Towns Group (GTT). The work of this group is one of the



PHOTO BY BRIAN BRENNAN

AT CANON QUINN PARK, READY TO BEGIN: BACK ROW (L-R), CIARA DOLAN, MARION RUANE, KIERAN REYNOLDS, FIONA O'DRISCOLL, LOURDA KILLEEN, BERNICE CAROLAN, STEPHANO SOLPEZA. MIDDLE ROW (L-R), TONII KELLY, BRYAN BRENNAN, BRIAN ROCHE, MATTHEW ROCHE, CAOIMHE SOPELZA. FRONT ROW (L-R), RENEE BRENNAN, NOREEN O'CONNOR-HALL.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



READY TO GIVE A FACELIFT TO ANOTHER EMPTY STOREFRONT ARE (L-R), ETHAN MINIHAINE, JOHN CAROLAN, BERNICE CAROLAN, GUS O'DONNELL, RHYS MINIHAINE, FIONA O'DRISCOLL.



FLOWER BEDS MAINTAINED BY UNSUNG HEROES OF THE BALLYHUGH ROAD.

cornerstones to support the recovery of our town. As an historic market town, Gort should be brimming with life and energy and should be “dressed” to showcase its potential.

The aim of the Tidy Towns group is to get engagement from all the community who live and work here, to ensure the town is free from litter, is warm, welcoming, lively and vibrant and properties are well maintained. Doing this will pay dividends and will promote a sense of pride and encourage investment in the town.

Thanks to the singular effort of one business owner, Ed Somerville of Gort Garden Centre, Gort Tidy Towns was reformed in 2018 and formally registered with Galway County Council as the official Gort Tidy Towns group in 2019.

Formally registering GTT with the County Council has signalled our intention and commitment as a group, to actually do something, to slowly but surely strive to improve the town of Gort. Registration gives us formal recognition at local authority level and in doing so, allows us to actively seek engagement and support from the local council to support our efforts, to submit bid applications for funding when specific pieces of work have been identified and to enter the national Tidy Towns Competition annually.

The aim of a Tidy Towns Group is to encourage people of all ages and skill sets, to come together within a community and working collaboratively outdoors, make Gort an attractive and welcoming place to live

and work. In doing so we hope to instil a greater sense of pride in our community, protect our landscape and heritage to hand on to the generations who come after us.

GTT has been up and running for just over a year now so what have we been up to?

Since inception we have banded together as a small, but very willing group of volunteers who meet each week for just one hour to undertake various activities. We have formed a committee to co-ordinate the efforts of the wider group and to liaise with relevant authorities when required.

As stated earlier, we have registered with Galway County Council and also with the Galway CoCo Public Participation Network for additional support and representation.

As a group of volunteers, we work between April & October only and in this time we have organised weekly Tuesday litter clean – ups around the town and held two very successful National Spring Clean Days. We are currently working closely with the County Council and our very supportive local Councillors to secure a recycling centre for Gort, given the huge concern about illegal dumping in the area. So yes, as a group we often litter pick, but we hope through active engagement in our community, we can help bring about behavioural changes with regard to this issue in particular.

We are aware of the need for active community engagement and have worked with the Gort Community School, reinforcing the need for

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Join Us, Tuesdays at 7pm, April -Oct.

engagement at an early age, assisting the school with a €2000 grant for new recycling bins. A number of students have also offered their talents, producing some wonderful artwork that can be seen around the town.

We have procured, painted, planted and positioned various planters around the town to brighten our streets. We have built new flowerbeds using recycled tree branches. We have weeded, planted and maintained flowerbeds at the entrance roads to our town. We are in discussion with the local Council to allow us to plant bee pollinator sites on some verges. We have also engaged with the school students to make bird boxes as we increase our awareness of nature and biodiversity in our surroundings. We successfully lobbied the local council to clean the Gort River Bridge that was damaged by graffiti and we have made Gort a designated poster free town during elections.

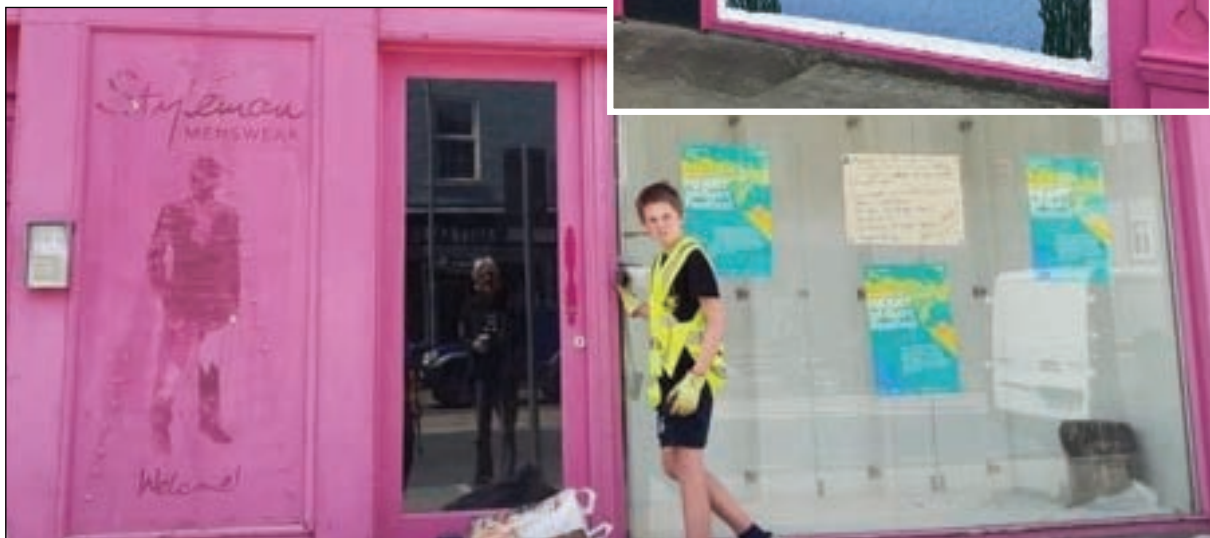
In 2019, we entered the National Tidy Towns Competition to test the water so to speak! Did you know that Bord Fáilte originally launched this competition way back in 1958? The aim of the competition is to encourage entrants to see their town as a stranger might see it. It encourages groups to identify problem areas and working in partnership with relevant authorities, strive to find solutions to problems.

The process of entering the competition was a really useful learning exercise that has helped GTT form our work plan for the future and has focussed our attention

on some key areas for action in the coming year. One of the areas highlighted in the Tidy Towns Report 2019 was the entrance wall at St Colman's Park, which was described as "crying out for fresh painting".

GTT approached a local artist, Shona Mac Gillivray, and discussed options for a mural at the park entrance. Draft impressions were drawn up and a funding application for grant monies from the Community Enhancement Programme was submitted by GTT. At the beginning of September we received a letter confirming the success of our application for funding.

Gort Tidy Towns Group warmly acknowledges and appreciates the funding we received through the Community Enhancement Programme, and the support from Galway LCDC, Galway County Council, Department of Rural & Community Development, and a special thanks to Councillor Joe Byrne.



ABOVE, ETHAN MINIHADE PREPARES EMPTY STOREFRONT FOR ARTWORK AS A REFLECTED GUS O'DONNELL SUPERVISES FROM INSIDE. MURAL, INSET ABOVE, IS THE WORK OF CATHY COUGHLAN, AIDEE COUGHLAN AND ARTIST JENNA COUGHLAN.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT



ARTIST SHONA MACGILLIVRAY FINISHES WORK ON NEW MURAL..

As I write, Shona is busily pulling everything together on this project with help from a number of willing volunteers. To see the finished article, drive out the Tubber Road to St Colman's Park when you are next in Gort to see what awaits you there as the finished mural.

Behind the hi-viz jackets seen on the streets every Tuesday evening is another group of extraordinary people who love to work and take responsibility for their specific areas, quietly getting on with their tasks without any of the fuss and fanfare and their input does not go unnoticed. Business people also strive to ensure, in challenging economic times, that their premises are clean and tidy and colourful. We have also had the most amazing support from the local Harvest Studio and Orchard House residents, whose on-going dedication and hard work has really helped us throughout the year. Together with our local County Councillors, the work teams of the Council and those on the FÁS scheme are as willing and obliging a bunch of individuals, we could ever hope to call upon. Gort Tidy Towns could not function without the input and support of so many individuals and groups in our community.

The people of Gort have been great, responding to calls for assistance with topsoil, trailers, as well as donations, including badly needed teas and coffees, when you've seen us working.

As a community the people of Gort have been great responding to calls for assistance.

Each & every individual makes a fantastic contribution and without your input we would not be making the progress we have to date.

However, as always, we need more!

We really would love to see greater engagement from all the residential communities, local businesses and community groups in Gort. We need a range of resources to grow and develop. You all have skills, ideas, and talents that we could surely put to use to improve our community.

So if you want to know more or you think you can help in any way, please check out our Facebook page and get in touch with us. We meet every Tuesday evening in Canon Quinn Park from 7-8pm, between April and October and everyone is welcome.

"Help Keep Gort Clean & Tidy"

Complex Problem, Simple Solution

BY DAVID MURRAY

It's been a long journey through many difficult times for the communities of South Galway and North Clare as the severity and frequency of flooding has led to an increased yearly threat of flooding in the past four decades. Ask any farmer in the vicinity of our infamous Turloughs and they'll give you a straight answer - an overflow channel. The concept of an overflow channel connecting Turloughs was first mooted by Mick Donnellan in a meeting in Labane in 1960 when there was severe flooding in South Galway. In a meeting in Labane in April 1992, Michael Ryder of Ardrahan suggested that we should "Cut a channel from Coole Lough to Kinvara like the late Mick Donnellan. He would have done it too, but it would have cost £3 million and there was no money in the kitty". The 'Channel' or 'channels' have been touted each and every decade since. It should be no surprise that overflow channels will be the preferred solution. They are the preferred solution all over the world and manifest as overflow channels, storm channels or storm drains - They only kick in when the waters are too much for the normal flows (be it from excessive rain fall to glacial melt) .

The devil is in the details though and this is where solutions started to diverge. The 'channels' proposed have been as simple as "2 pipes laid between Coole Lake and Kinvara" (March 1994) to a 7.5m deep channel of 5 km length (Jennings's - O' Donovan 1998), the latter which came in at a price tag of €48 million. The main reason for this deviation is that the underground channels and Turlough

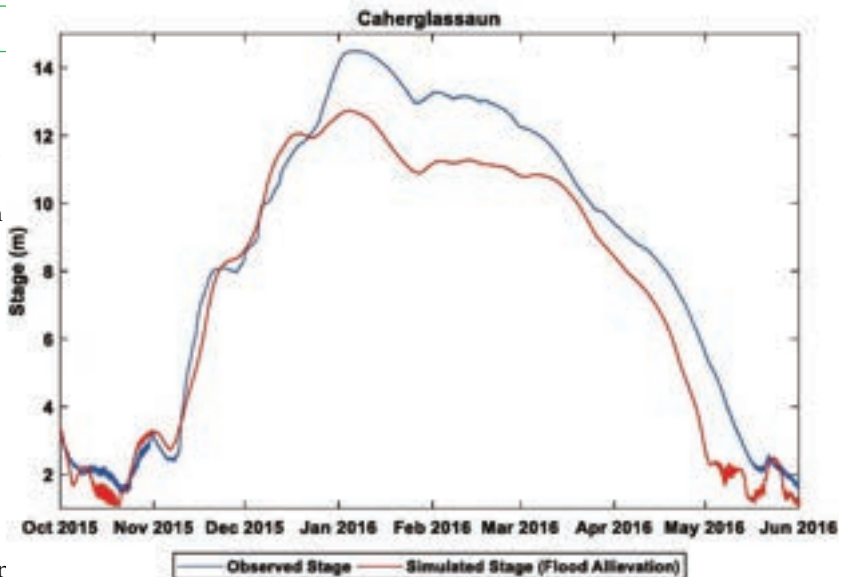


Figure 1: Historical (Observed) and simulated levels with flood alleviation (Morrissey¹)

interconnectivity have until recent times remained a mystery - bringing a high degree of uncertainty.

It is this uncertainty that has been the main blocker to any progress in flooding solutions for South Galway - and that uncertainty means unpredictable impacts that any solution would have on the flood risk of communities downstream of any work, as well as impacts on the Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Up until recent times we have had blunt instruments to model the underground behaviour and a lack of the necessary level of provision of viability of proposed flooding solutions.

The feasibility study that was undertaken as part of the South Galway/Gort Lowlands Flood relief scheme involved creating a precision instrument, almost surgical, that could remove the uncertainty of impacts holistically from mountain to sea. This precision instrument is in fact a hydrology model of the entire

catchment including all of the rivers, Turloughs and existing underground channels. The crafting of this model involved the following

- The extraction of Turlough levels from previously installed Turlough level monitors and the installation of new Turlough monitors. To supplement this data (and fill in the gaps in preceding 6 - 8 years), GSI/TCD undertook the analysis of Satellite imagery
- The captures of the full topology of South Galway - this was done through extensive LiDAR survey covering most of South Galway and included field surveys.

These Turlough levels and LiDAR surveys allowed more precise measurement in the change of volume of Turloughs and an estimation of the underground connectivity. The precision of the hydrology was tested against extreme historical flood events and other historical data and its accuracy assessed and refined until the model became precise enough

SOUTH GALWAY FLOODING

to use to flood analysis.

The hydrology model on its own doesn't tell us much but now we can put it through various flood event simulations (including increasing climate change) to understand the flooding impacts from now into the future. This allows the consultants to understand the flood extents and durations and from this to extract a 'benefit'. For instance, it's been reported that in extreme future flood events, the Gort Motorway would be closed by flooding and can also estimate the average duration it would be closed for.

This can result in a precise benefit. The same also for homes, businesses, and farms flooding. The other critical aspect of the hydrology is to understand the dynamics of flood alleviation solutions (channels, culverts resizing, attenuation etc.) and understand the impacts of flood level/duration decreases AND potential increases as water runs from mountains to seas. This has been documented in research paper here :

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022169419310960>

The graph on the previous page shows the 2015/2016 flood levels at Caherglassaun (in Blue) and the impact of creating 6 channels of various sizes between Turloughs on Caherglassaun lake.

There are several things we can observe with this simulation.

1. The reduction in maximum peak (from 14m+ to 12m+) - which will have major reduction in severe flood risk
 2. The reduction in duration from (e.g. levels > 11 m at Caherglassaun went down from 12 weeks to 4 weeks)
- With this analysis we can see the immediate benefits of a flood relief

solution, but it comes at a cost. The analysis of this is quite expensive from a computation point of view and these full catchment simulations could take up to 10

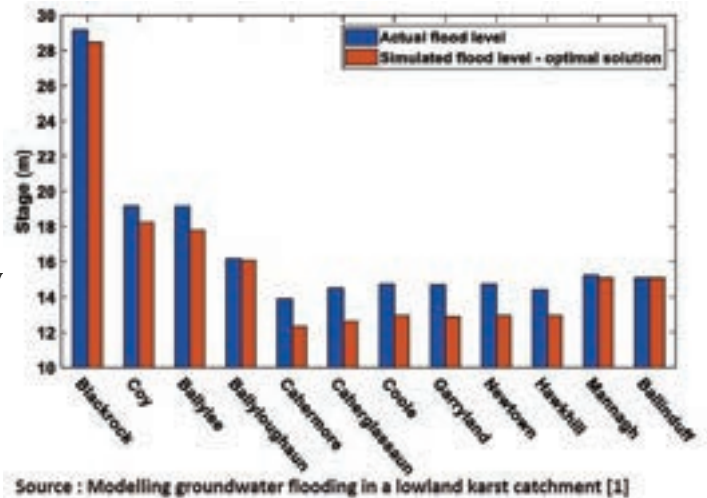
days to run initially (and 72 hours at the end after some optimization) Unfortunately, there is a lot of trial and error involved in tweaking the right channel widths/depths into the model so it has taken 100s of simulations to fine tune to the optimal solution.

So yes, it has taken several years but we are no-longer guessing at something between a 2 x 12" pipes and a 5km x 7m deep channel and wondering about impacts - we can analyse the effects with a high degree of precision and come up with viable and tested solution proposals.

The study asserts, "The optimal solution resulted in an average reduction in peak flood volumes of 1.1 m with a total volume of flood water redirected overland to the sea at Kinvara (instead of through the underground conduits) of 48.6 Mm³."

This optimal solution allows us to see the maximum levels drop in each of the Turloughs which will offer major benefits in reducing flood risk an impacts.

So yes, this was a complex problem and a lengthy analysis that has resulted in several specifically sized



Source : Modelling groundwater flooding in a lowland karst catchment [1]

channels - a simple solution. Now, based on detailed analysis and the simplicity of the solution we are now in the situation where we can precisely calculate cost-benefit of the South Galway Flood Relief scheme - we have never been close to this stage before.

Momentous news!! - we have reached positive Feasibility for South Galway Flood Relief Scheme, according to a Galway County Council statement, "I am very pleased to inform you that a potential Scheme (environmentally acceptable and cost beneficial) has been identified. This is the first time a potentially feasible solution has been identified to resolve the flooding issues in the South Galway - Gort Lowlands area."

Getting this positive feasible solution is a hugely positive and unprecedented step forward for our community and the work in getting us here has to be acknowledged. However, while we can take a moment in positive reflections we need to quickly get beyond reports, design, ministerial approval and get sign-off an get these solutions built so we can put flooding firmly behind us!

Reference :

¹ Modelling groundwater flooding in a lowland karst catchment, January 2020, Patrick Jerome Morrissey, Ted McCormack, Owen Naughton, Paul Meredith Johnston, Laurence William Gill

Fred Perry Returns to Gort

BY JOE BYRNE

Founded in 1924, Gort Golf Club recently secured their second ever All Ireland title. The Fred Perry trophy is an interclub four-ball championship for teams of 10 players, all of whom must be over 55 years of age on the 1st January in the year of the event. The final was staged in beautiful Rosses Point, Co. Sligo. The team was captained by Ronnie Killeen and the panel comprised of players from many parishes across South Galway and North Clare.

Our All Ireland journey began back in May 2019, when Gort opened their campaign with victory over Galway Golf Club. Further wins over Oughterard, Galway Bay and Portumna set up a Connacht Final versus Mulranny Golf Club from Mayo. The final was contested over two legs both home and away. A trip up the Atlantic coast to the scenic Mulranny was first up

where Gort secured a hard-fought 3-2 win which left them in a commanding position for the return match. This was played two weeks later in front of a big home crowd and our boys delivered in style with a 3.5 – 1.5 win on the day. Former Galway GAA great and current Connacht Council delegate Jimmy Duggan was in attendance to present the trophy and pennant to the team afterwards. The All Ireland series was next on the agenda with the finals scheduled for the end of September. In the lead up, the panel held several practice matches including a few trips north to Sligo. The panel and club officers departed early on a damp Wednesday morning, the eve of the semi-final for one last practice round on the famed Sligo links. The semi-final on Thursday was played in tough conditions which had a sprinkling of all four seasons, but the players coped admirably and

defeated the challenge of the Ulster champions Loughall from Co. Armagh by 3.5 – 1.5. One more sleep then a crack at the All Ireland title where the Munster Champions, Templemore from Tipperary awaited.

The final began with a 10.00 a.m. tee off and the drama that was about to unfold was hard to imagine. At one period midway through the back nine anything but a Templemore win looked impossible as Gort were only ahead in one of the five matches, but this team had different ideas. The momentum began to swing in our favour and suddenly the scoreboard began to show a more optimistic outlook. Every match went the full distance to the 18th green with three matches going to tie holes. Under the shadow of Mount Benbulbin the All Ireland was decided on the 21st Hole and it was fitting that a Kiltartan man Michael Cahill hit the winning putt in Yeats Country.



RONNIE KILLEEN (CAPT GORT GOLF CLUB) WITH THE VICTORIOUS GORT GOLF CLUB TEAM AFTER THEIR VICTORY IN THE 2019 FRED PERRY TROPHY FINAL AT COUNTY SLIGO GOLF CLUB. BACK ROW, (L-R) JOHN SKEHILL, MICHAEL RYAN, BRENDAN MCDONAGH, JOHN HYNES, MICHAEL MCINERNEY, JOHN MOYLAN, PAT MCCARTHY, STEPHAN DERVAN. FRONT ROW (L-R) MARTIN CALLANAN, MICHAEL CAHIL, ROBIN LAHIFFE, KEVIN MULKERRINS, JOHN KELLEHER AND PADDY COUGHLAN.

Bowling: Your New Passion?

BY LEO SMYTH

The thing is, bowling did not die out with 16th century English sailors, on the contrary it is alive and well in West of Ireland. From Claremorris to Ballinasloe, through Turloughmore and Corofin, (and of course, Gort) senior citizens gather in local halls to roll a three-pound bowl along a mat towards a small yellow ball some forty feet away. Sounds easy?

Well yes, but there is a wooden block about one foot wide halfway down the length of the mat. How do you achieve that, you might ask, since the little yellow ball is slap bang in the centre of the mat? Well, one side of the bowl is heavier than the other and so it will actually curve in as it slows down. The trick is to roll it along with the right starting speed so that it slows down at just the right spot and winds up beside the yellow ball (called a jack). That's the theory anyway, the bowls don't always do what they're supposed to!

The Gort Community Centre Bowls Club was started in October 2017 through the initiative of Gerry McMahon, who was elected chairman of the Club. Manager of the Community Centre, Carmel Dowling was strongly supportive and sourced five of the specially made regulation mats and other equipment. Soon, 20 people from Gort and environs were busy practicing, supported by coaching from our vibrant sister clubs in Loughrea and Knocknacarra. An interesting feature of the sport is that women and men can play with equal success—a good eye is more important than big muscles.



MEMBERS OF GORT CLUB WHO COMPETED AT KILLARNEY: STANDING, (L-R) PHILIP DUNNE, KITTY GILLANE, MICHAEL J HELLY, KATHLEEN DERRANE, VERA KILLEEN, LEO SMYTH, GERRY MCMAHON. SEATED (L-R) MARY HELLY, MICHAEL KELLY, SEAMUS KILLEEN, JOHN MURRAY, EILEEN GLYNN, STEPHEN DERRANE.

With practice, new members quickly learn to land the bowls at or near the yellow jack. Ah, but this is a competitive sport! As you're congratulating yourself on your aim, the opposing team—normally the most pleasant people you could find—are bad-minded enough to knock your bowl away, supplanting it with their own. This is all the more likely to happen at the inter-club competitions organised by the Western Bowls Association or the Active Retirement Network Ireland.

In September 2019, the Gort Club competed at the National Bowls Competition held in the Gleneagles Hotel in Killarney. One of the three Gort teams won their way through quarter and semi-finals to compete in the Finals of the Plate Competition, going down fighting to a very skilled team from Mountbellew. Still, for a newly formed club, it was quite an achievement.

Bowls is good for exercise, for concentration and above all, for fun. After fighting it out on the mat, we all adjourn for tea, biscuits and chat. Following a successful Open Day, numbers playing are on the increase, but we are still open to anyone coming along to have a go. As we get older it is good to have a sport to take part in with fellow senior citizens who soon become friends. The rules can be adapted for people who have physical challenges so that all can play to the limit of their ability.

The only way to appreciate this game is to try it and the more experienced members are always willing to show you the ropes. We play in the Community Centre on Tuesdays 5-7pm, Thursdays 3-5pm and Fridays 5-7pm.

You can contact me, Leo Smyth (Club Secretary) on 086 816 3716 or Carmel Dowling at the Community Centre on 087 206 5950.

Extra Extra! Read All About It!

BY TONII KELLY

It seems everyone is asking for money, doesn't it? Here at Guaire Magazine, we have managed for decades to avoid passing on our mounting expenses to you, the reader. We know many of you send the magazine across the world to family and friends, incurring postage costs. We expressed our appreciation for your patronage by keeping the price to a simple five euros. Our appreciation hasn't changed, but our circumstances have.

As Editor, it is my obligation and my privilege to explain the thinking behind a change in price that will occur in the Guaire Magazine of 2022.

I took over as Editor for Issue 35, November 2016. I soon discovered that working with the previous designer, who had relocated to Canada (an eight-hour time difference) was a test of patience, more his than mine! As that first year unfolded, and expenses for design added to the production costs of the issue, I thought there had to be a better way.

There was, and we saved the costs of design in 2018 when I began producing the magazine pages in my office upstairs. I quickly realized another cost problem. As Editor, it was my job to decide what to use in each issue. But there were so many fine, well written articles that I couldn't leave any out.

You may have noticed the bookbinding of that last issue. The 90 pages required that method of joining all the pages, and it added to the cost of printing. As did the simple fact of 90 pages! This year's Guaire is more restrained, as I set aside stories for 2022. To your benefit, Issue 37 weighs less and should cost less to mail as well.

So, what's the problem?

Our mission is to support the Gort Community as well as to showcase the literary talent of the area. In 2018 we initiated the Guaire Magazine's Children's Writing Competition for local children between 9 and 12. We sponsored the fees and travel costs of four authors to offer free workshops to interested students on the process of writing. We commissioned two original



sculptures from Jethro Sheen of Sheen Stone Works as prizes for the schools of the winning contestants. We bought Kindles for the winners as prizes along with their stories' exposure in the magazine itself.

In 2019, we hosted a writer's workshop and a panel of authors who shared their writing experiences with the audience during the H.E.A.R.T. of Gort Festival. That fall, we began what should have been this year's competition but Covid19 ground it to a halt. We had planned to extend our reach to children who told stories with art rather than words. An art workshop was cancelled, along with the writing workshops. Due to CoVid19, when schools closed, so did the chance of our competition. We will be ready for 2022 to start it again.

The Lavallylisheen Children's Burial Ground Committee began efforts to restore the graveyard as cherished place. Our Committee voted to contribute by commissioning Jethro Sheen to create a stone plaque for the entrance to the graveyard. We continue to look for community projects as the next year unfolds.

All the above is to let you know that the decision to raise the price to €7 in 2022 has not been taken lightly. We argued about it at contentious meetings. In the end, I believe that as the Guaire Magazine works to develop the writing gifts of local children and showcase the very talented authors among us, you will find you get more than your money's worth.