



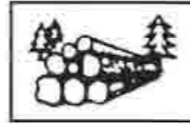
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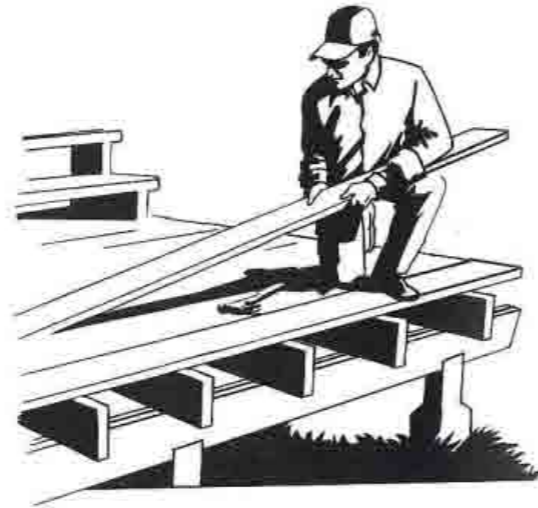
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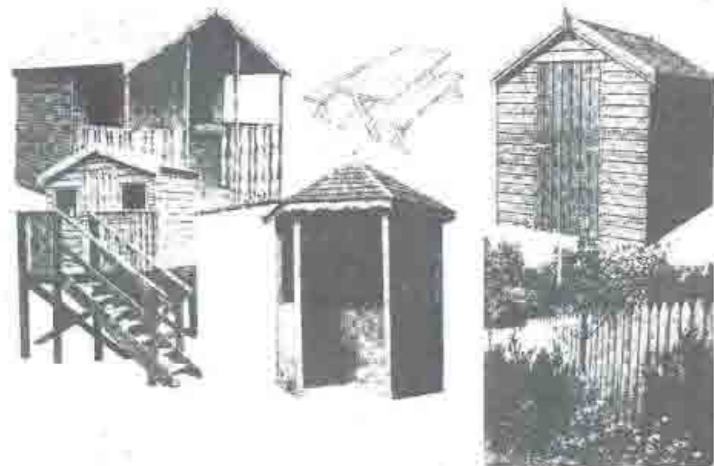


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Contents

| | |
|--|-------|
| Cooler memories of Jack McNeill, Ballyhugh, Gort..... | 3 |
| The family tree..... | 3 |
| Canon Paddy Healy, 1935-2004..... | 5 |
| Gort: a wonderful place to work, to holiday and, above all, to live..... | 7 |
| Picture parade..... | 8-9 |
| Sr de Lourdes book launch..... | 11 |
| Teaching in Uganda..... | 13 |
| Johnny Cummins—happy migrant..... | 14 |
| Asian Memories—Cambodia, Laos and Nepal..... | 17 |
| Jessica Burke—showjumping..... | 21 |
| How to make the most of what you have..... | 25 |
| Cloone river..... | 27 |
| Wasn't that a party?..... | 28 |
| Sun shines on Gort Show..... | 31 |
| 'First responders' go live in Gort..... | 33 |
| Gort & District Lions Club..... | 35 |
| Letter to the editor..... | 35 |
| Square memories..... | 37 |
| Land of the Kiwi..... | 38 |
| Down memory lane..... | 40-41 |
| Some of my experiences of working in Romania..... | 42 |
| An excellent business..... | 45 |
| The Wild Swan Theatre Company..... | 46 |
| Poetry..... | 48-49 |
| Mick Cahill reflects on bygone days..... | 50 |
| "It's a long, long way from here to there"..... | 52 |
| The light of other days..... | 55 |
| The Phoenix project..... | 57 |
| Crowe Street in two eras..... | 59 |
| The changing face of Gort..... | 60-61 |
| Chalk and talk..... | 63 |
| 2004: a good year for our public speakers and debaters..... | 66 |
| Woodturning excellence..... | 66 |
| Michael Kennedy, potter..... | 67 |
| The girl of yesteryear and the uniform she wore..... | 68 |
| Amsterdam, 'Venice of the north'..... | 71 |
| The Classic ballroom..... | 72 |
| The town hall, a place of fond memories..... | 73 |
| The Connaught Rangers..... | 75 |
| Gort & South Galway Association in London (1971-1991)..... | 76 |
| Rugby: Gort win first..... | 78 |
| Connaught junior cup since 1937..... | 78 |
| Gort Hurling Club development..... | 80 |

Guaire 2004

Editorial

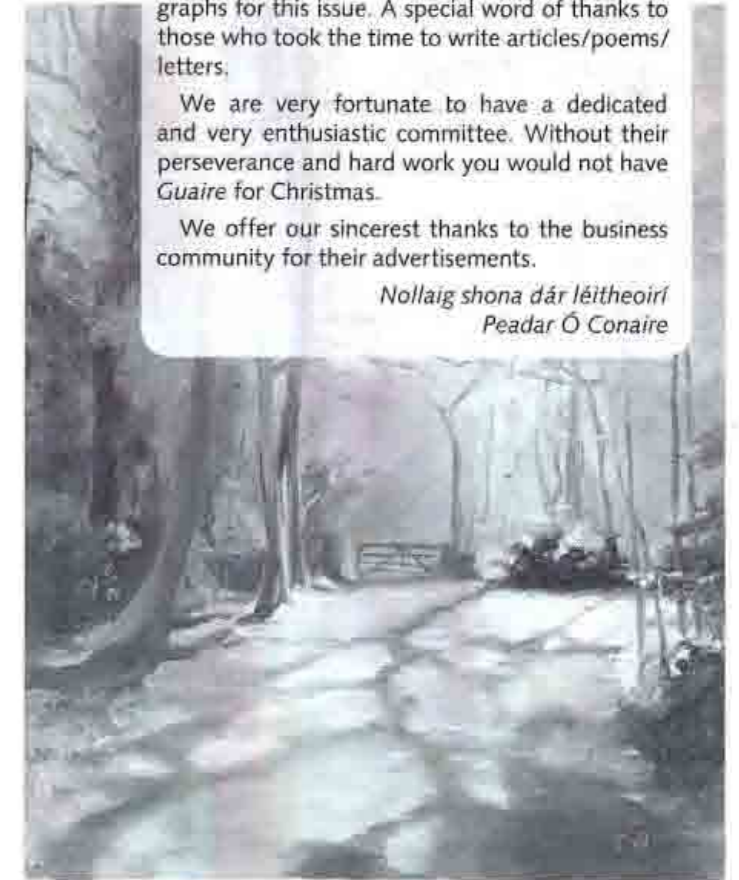
We are very pleased to put another issue of *Guaire* before you; we hope you will find it interesting. The magazine contains a wide variety of articles, poems and photography. Of course, we are totally dependant on you, the general public, to submit material for publication.

We are grateful to all those who gave us photographs for this issue. A special word of thanks to those who took the time to write articles/poems/letters.

We are very fortunate to have a dedicated and very enthusiastic committee. Without their perseverance and hard work you would not have *Guaire* for Christmas.

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

Nollaig shona dár léitheoirí
Peadar Ó Conaire



Cover picture: The black gate at Cooler. Painting by Josephine Ward

Guaire is a community-based magazine and depends upon community support and involvement

Price: €6.00

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Editor | Peadar Ó Conaire |
| Editorial board | Ian Cahill, Maura Helebert, Gerardine Killeen, Mossie Clabby, Brian Brennan, Colm Ward, Evelyn Roche, Josephine Ward, Rose Finnegan, Martin O'Connor, Monica McGrath and Paddy Cooke |
| Photography | Pat Fitzgibbon |

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Coole memories of Jack McNeill, Ballyhugh, Gort

retired forester, born 1919

My first memory of Coole was walking down the avenue on a Sunday evening with my father and other children (in 1928); we met a man dressed in dark clothes and as he came towards us my father said "that's W B Yeats". He didn't speak or notice us; he just kept going with the head down. I'd say that's the one and only time I ever saw him.

My first memory of Lady Gregory was on a Sunday as a little lad in Crowe Street—seeing her go to service in Gort, in the Coole carriage—John Diviney was driving and she was waving to the people and they to her. It was a lovely carriage with a hood on it for shade or to keep the rain off.

Then we used go down at harvest time for apples, up to the hall door and "Some apples Lady please"—always addressed her as 'Lady'. She'd come down to the orchard and you could take as much windfalls as you were able to carry but not off the trees. She used to go round to the schools with apples.

Of course when she came to Coole first she wasn't like that much—she was a bit on the 'bossy side'. "You know where she came from, Roxboro—she was one of the Persses".

St Stephens day—up to the door, she could come to the door herself and the first few there would get half-a-crown—we were often lucky—then a slice of the Gort brack, but you had to sing an Irish song, nothing else would do.

I was never inside the door—the only time I was there was just before it was demolished. The grounds and avenue were well kept, there were three or four men employed at that. The Griffins from Gort used to be down painting there.

She went around the country everywhere collecting folklore and writing it down. She was mad for Irish. Pat Mulcair in Castletown was a great Irish speaker and she used to converse with him. She got a lot of stories. Of course she was away a lot also.

In 1903, the night of the big wind, she was in London and half the woods of Coole were flattened and I heard that from a man who saw it, Tom Molloy of Glenbrack.

She used to visit the Workhouse and bring in snuff and tobacco.

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The family tree

It's only natural that people should have an interest in their roots. We were fortunate if we had grandparents or other senior relatives who could help us at the 'tracing'. However, there are other avenues which one can pursue and I would like to share them with you. Be sure that you know the name of your civil parish and also the barony name.

Your county library headquarters have **tithe applotment books**; they date from the 1820s to 1830s and give the occupiers of land; **Griffith's Valuation**, c.1855 gives the name of the occupiers of every house and **1901 census**—a must; **1911 census**—another must

The parish priest of your native parish has **register of baptisms**; dates vary from parish to parish, the interest taken by priests in the past is another factor. One house-keeper was known to have destroyed parish records in a quarrel with the parish priest; **register of marriages**; the same applies here; **register of deaths and burials**; they are usually of a much later date, in some cases early twentieth century.

The National Library, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 has **tithe applotment, Griffith and parish records** up to 1880

The National Archives, Bishop Street, Dublin 2 has the **1901 and 1911 census**.

Your health board's headquarters has a **register of births, marriages and deaths** from 1864; however, not all of them were registered.

Other sources include **graveyards**; marvellous places—be prepared to rub the stone with grass; **school roll books**; the local national school might be of assistance; the **Valuation Office**, Irish Life Centre, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 2; excellent for change of ownership of farms etc. from c1860.

Best advice: if the information can be obtained at county level, it is best to go there rather than to Dublin. Happy searching.

Sr. de Lourdes Fahy, Gort

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Canon Paddy Healy 1935-2004

The tragic death of Canon Paddy Healy in February of 2004 saddened all of us who knew him. He had retired as parish priest of Beagh in June of last year and we had all hoped that he would enjoy a long and happy retirement. He had surely deserved it, having served for twenty-four years as a parish priest after a long teaching career. He was parish priest of Lisdoonvarna from 1979-1988 and parish priest of Beagh from 1988-2003. However, the abiding memory of him for most people in south Galway and the neighbouring parishes of Tubber and Killanena in Clare, will be as a teacher in Our Lady's college.

Ordained at Maynooth in 1959, he began teaching at Our Lady's in 1960, when the college was located at the present day medical centre. Hundreds of students completed their education there, with no more than four or five rooms available as classrooms. Fr Healy was one of a small group of teachers there and taught science without the use of a lab, or any science equipment. When the new college opened in 1969, a building which has now become the Lady Gregory hotel, he got his science lab. at last.

He continued as a science teacher up to his retirement. He taught at a time when discipline was very strict in schools; corporal punishment was in place for most of his career. In that system there was very little rapport between teachers and pupils, the only

interaction being in the classroom. Yet Fr Healy, who was very strict in the classroom, was always approachable outside of class and showed a genuine interest in students' welfare.

He was a career advisor at a time

enabled him to have such an accurate memory.

Fr Healy retired from teaching in 1979 and left the area to return to his native Clare. After nine years in Lisdoonvarna/Kilshanny parish, he returned to south Galway. He was appointed parish priest of Beagh in 1988, taking up residence in the parish house in Shanaglish. He spent his first few months on a visiting tour of the parish, as always anxious to get to know everyone.

Once he got to know people they were never forgotten and he followed the lives of his parishioners with a keen interest. He was the first to call at a time of grief and the first visitor to a person in hospital. He could always offer comfort and with it, practical

advice and help. His interest would remain long after the event. For those qualities he will be badly missed by the people of Beagh. He was a regular visitor to the two schools in the parish, as education and young people had a special place in his heart. From the altar he held the church line rigidly on all issues but in private, he was understanding and forgiving to those of different views. He was too good natured to ever fall out with anybody and it is unlikely that he made any enemies in his lifetime.

His untimely passing will be felt by all who came in contact with him, either as a pupil or a parishioner. All of us know we have lost a real friend. May he rest in peace.

Paddy Noonan



Canon Paddy Healy on his retirement from Beagh parish in 2003
On his left is his sister Mary and on his right Anne Whelan of the Beagh parish committee

when career guidance was unheard of and was a shrewd judge of a student's ability. He always had advice to offer and was never slow to point out to a student that engineering would be a more suitable career for him than medicine. That interest in students' careers didn't stop when they left the school, but followed on for years.

Even up to recent years he could trace the career of a student from the sixties, telling you where he was, what he was doing and who he was married to. He would always be enquiring after students in your class and had a remarkable ability to reel off the names from a class of twenty years ago. It was his genuine interest in people he had known that

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Gort: a wonderful place to work, to holiday and, above all, to live

by Tom Naughton

In the spring of 2003 following on the successful completion and leasing of the industrial unit at Gallagher's Walk to InterMed Precision, Jim Murren of IDA Ireland felt that Tom Baker and Tom Naughton should explore the possibility of Gort Chamber of Commerce applying for decentralisation of a government department to the town.

Again, Tom Naughton turned to Michael O'Grady and Colman Sherry and a committee was formed to examine the project. It consisted of Tom Baker, P Cooke, Regina Monaghan, Michael O'Grady, chairperson and Colman Sherry. Initially, an eight-week deadline was set to prepare and make a submission to the appropriate government department.

In no time at all, the project had taken on a life of its own, driven and managed by the chairperson Michael O'Grady, a man of boundless energy, vision and foresight.

By July 2003, the committee had identified three achievable priorities:-
1 decentralisation of a government department to the town
2 promotion of tourism
3 entice industry to town

It was decided that a video would best display and serve their requirements. By the end of the month, Telegael Corporate Television and their project director, Sharon Gill were on

board. Telegael Media Group is based in Spiddal and is in business since 1988. It is one of Ireland's leading television and animation companies. Their brief was to produce a video of no more than fifteen minutes to clearly demonstrate Gort as a great place to work, a great place to holiday and, above all, a great place to live.

In October Mr Charles Lynch of Galway County and City Enterprise Board was contacted and advised of the chamber's unique and innovative project. His company was asked to share in the anticipated success of the project with some financial help. Mr Lynch and his board confirmed their support for the project financially. At the same time local businesses and individuals were asked for their financial support and their immediate positive response was very reassuring.

The video was officially launched in the Lady Gregory hotel on the 24th May last to a large audience representing various companies, professionals, businesses, trades and private individuals. The video is thirteen minutes and twenty-five seconds in duration. It opens with a montage of shots covering historic areas, restaurants and bars with traditional music and, of course, the eighteen-hole golf course. The tourist section features shots of what Gort has to offer visitors, ie places of interest, hotels, bars, restaurants, sports and leisure

activities and a sample of the nightlife. It also includes footage of local festivals. The industry section outlines all the services available, especially in the commercial, including the new industrial unit in the Gort business park, financial and other sectors. For those looking at Gort as a possible residential area, the production conveys a sense of security and community spirit, with the wide range of facilities available including education, childcare, health services, local amenities, transport, quality of housing equivalent to elsewhere at much more reasonable and affordable prices and, of course, the stress-free lifestyle of Gort. The closing sequence reinforces all the many features freely available locally.

The video/dvd will be on sale locally leading up to Christmas and will make the ideal Christmas present for our loved ones abroad. It will retail at little more than cost price. The video will be distributed to private sector bodies, public bodies, private departments and government departments.

The chamber chairperson Tom Baker wishes to place on record his sincere thank you to the sub-committee for the production of such a professional and valuable instrument on the promotion of Gort as a great place to work, a great place to holiday and above all—a great place to live.



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This page, clockwise from top left
 Pat O'Donnell with his dog Hector, winner of several prizes at shows
 New water-pipe laying in progress Gort, June 2004
 Brazilian Fiesta (Quadrillia), The Square, Gort 17th June 2004
 "A view from the Loughrea road", a painting by Robert Keran



PICTURE PARADE



This page, clockwise from top left
 Signal box, Gort railway station
 May 2004



Construction of ALDI supermarket on the old Mart site George's Street, Gort May 2004



Launch of 'Guairé' 1991 back: Mossy Clabby, Colm Ward, Fr John Mahon, Séan Leahy (r.i.p.) and Brian Brennan; front: John Melville, Peadar Ó Conaire and Pat Fitzgibbon

PICTURE PARADE



Senior citizens' outing to Knock shrine, July 2004



'Roses' at Coole Park, August 2004



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Sr de Lourdes book launch

An extract from the talk given by Colmán Ó Clabaigh, o.s.b. at the launch of Sr Mary de Lourdes Fahy's book *Kiltartan, Many Leaves, One Root: A History of the Parish of Kiltartan* "...turning to the book itself, it would be impossible to do it justice in the time available to me but I would like to share some thoughts on two sections of it that struck me particularly strongly. I found part of the chapter dealing with the effects of emigration on the parish incredibly poignant. This was so when reading some of the entries in the missing persons section of the Boston Pilot newspaper:

Catherine Horan, Ballylee. Sailed on the Prince Albert from Galway for New York 12th November 1858. Last heard of in July 1859. Was with Daniel Bradley, Brooklyn. Stout build, black hair and about fourteen years of age. Information to be gratefully received by her mother Mary Horan.

One can still sense that mother's concern and fear for her child, born during the famine and now lost to her in a strange land. Similarly Lady Gregory's reflections following her encounters with Kiltartan people when touring with the Abbey theatre in America:

I was passing not long ago by a roofless, long deserted cottage near Kiltartan and a neighbouring woman told me that a few years ago a well to do man had come from America, son or grandson of the last who lived there and had taken two stones from the wall, taken them back to America. It has always been so. That little Ireland has held the hearts of men through the ages.

I also found it fascinating that when the community in Kiltartan gathers to worship or wed or bury the dead that they are doing so in the same place they have been gathering for three thousand years. The archaeologists tell us that the medieval church is probably on the site of a pagan bronze age sanctuary and that the church itself shows signs of once having been an early Christian monastery, as well as having been rebuilt at least three times in its history.

This sense of the parish church as tribal gathering space is a very powerful one. For in every tribe the origin legend, the foundation myth, the history, is of crucial importance. Without it the tribe, the community, the parish loses its sense of itself. And each community needs a custodian and promoter of that history. The aboriginal people of Australia con-

ceive this process not in literary terms, but in terms of singing the tribe's song. For them all things were sung into being and the very land itself is impregnated with song lines along which the gods walked at the dawn of creation, singing. For them the historian is one who, with ear tuned to another frequency, runs along the song line, singing the song, preserving and transmitting their identity, holding them in being. And I find most appropriate that the greatest of the Kiltartan poets, W B Yeats, shared this view. Addressing Irish poets on their role as custodians of their peoples identity he urged them to "Sing whatever is well made".


*Sing the peasantry, and then
Hard-riding country gentlemen,
The holiness of monks and after
Porter drinkers' randy laughter;
Sing the lords and ladies gay
That were beaten into the clay
Through seven heroic centuries;
Cast your mind on other days
That we in coming days may be
Still the indomitable Irishry.*

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Teaching in Uganda

by Orla Stanford

The *Realt* programme was founded seven years ago. It is a partnership between the training colleges Coláiste Mhuire Marino and the Church of Ireland. The colleges select students to go and work in different parts of Africa each year. I went to Fort Portal, Western Uganda with three other girls. We were teaching in three primary schools, visiting schools around the district and interacting with training teachers in the college where we stayed.

At first it took time to get accustomed to the heat, insects, the basic facilities and the different culture. It was difficult to adjust to the conditions of some schools, the lack of toilets, soap, running water, doors, windows, teaching materials and even furniture. With the sponsorship money that we raised we supplied teaching materials to the three

schools, boxes of exercise books and sports equipment. In Bukuku school we got fifty desks made especially for the younger children.

Teaching everyday brought us in contact with poverty and sickness. It encouraged us to get more involved, to see the homes of the children we were teaching. We made contact with an organisation that helps child headed families and orphans. We were always given the warmest welcome where ever we visited but it was hard to see the suffering of people and the conditions where they lived. We were able to supply many families with new beds and new mattresses and mosquito nets with our donation money. For more information please contact <http://www.angelfire.com/country/childcareuganda/index.html>

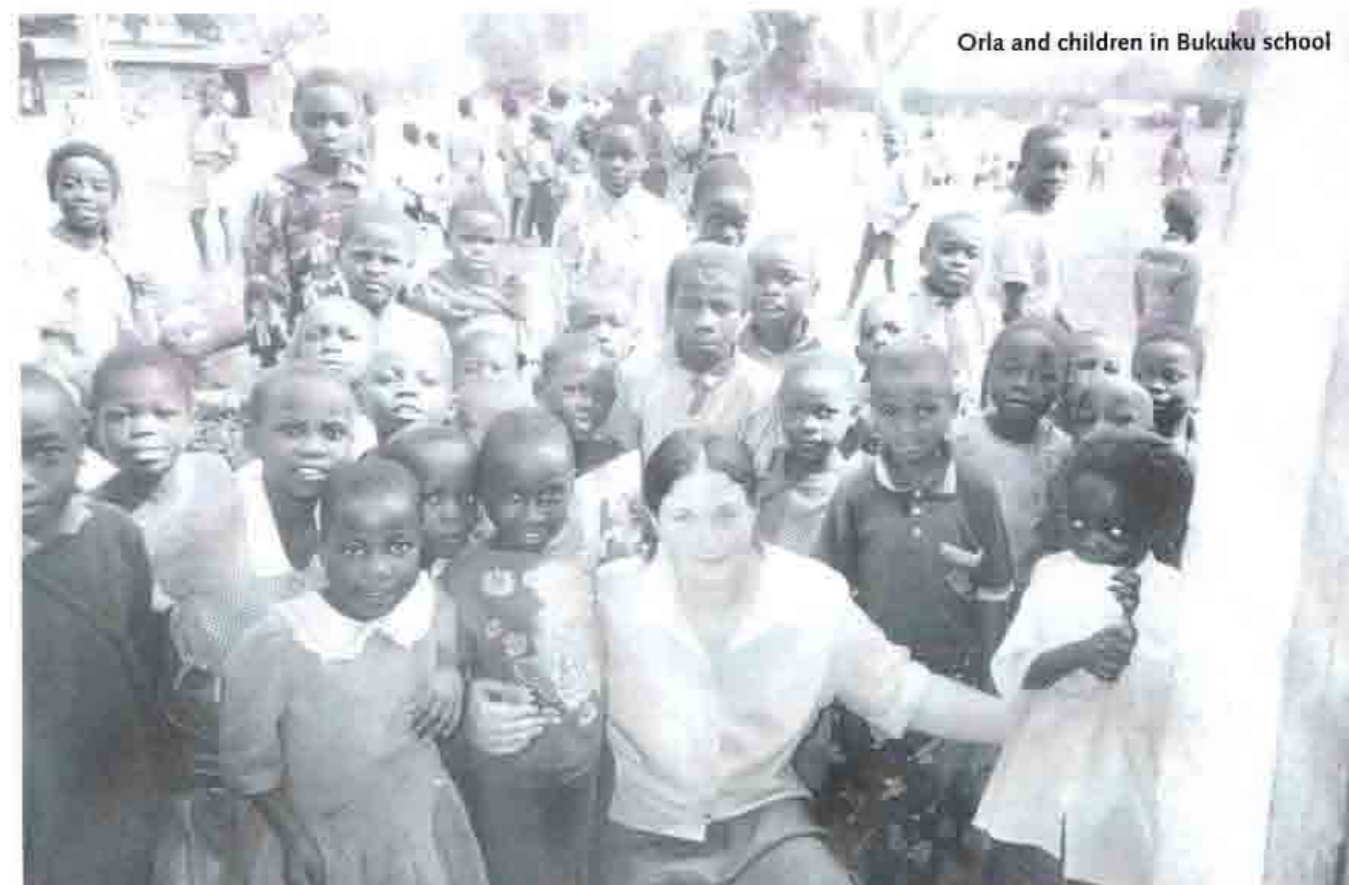
AIDS has had a crippling effect on Uganda. Currently 77% of the overall

population of Uganda are youth. Of that 77%, 30% are orphans and 39% are either HIV+ or have already developed AIDS.

Child-headed families are widespread, that is why I took on a family to support while I was over there. Sending \$30 a month educates seven children. The greatest gift you could give an African child is to pay their school fees. The organisation is desperately seeking sponsors to give these children a better life.

My time in Africa has had a positive effect on me but it would not have been possible without the fundraising efforts of friends and family and the generosity of the people of Gort and surrounding areas. You have helped make a difference in peoples' lives and have saved childrens' lives.

Webale muno (thank you very much)



Orla and children in Bukuku school

Johnny Cummins —happy migrant

by Peadar Ó Conaire

As migrating Canadian geese head south to warmer climates in October of every year, Johnny Cummins does the opposite. He leaves the relatively mild winters of Ireland for freezing Toronto. Johnny has been doing this for a number of years, going with his beloved wife Bernie (r.i.p.) for the first time in 1990.

Johnny's daughter Maura lives with her husband and young family in the town of Milton. It is a typical Canadian town—loads of open spaces, no boundary walls between houses, numerous parks and play areas, the typical house being two-storey over basement. The sporting arenas, which include swimming pools, are all under cover because of the severity of the Canadian winter.

It is a multi-cultural town with Scottish, English, Welsh and French people as well as Canadians making up the core population. There is, of course, a scattering of Irish as well.

As regards the weather it is quite the opposite to Ireland. The seasons are guaranteed. Winter starts in November with heavy snowfalls. This invariably continues through December and January, so a white Christmas is a certainty. The first day of spring is unofficially March 21st. All ploughing has to be done by October as the ground is frozen rock-solid until spring again. The fields

stretch as far as the eye can see, soya bean being the main crop. In mid-winter temperatures can drop to -17°F and with a wind chill it can reach -30°F.

At these extreme temperatures a person's nose can freeze, legs turn red and



Roads cleared of snow early in the morning

wet hair is frozen solid after a 200 yard walk. Freezing rain is common and can be very dangerous. Dogs may only be walked for twenty minutes according to law and they must wear booties. They must be kept in the house or in a heated kennel. Snow ploughs are out early clearing roads, walkways and footpaths. Householders are responsible for keeping the area in front of their own houses clear of snow.

Johnny found driving quite difficult at first. Left turns presented a challenge and also the fact that you can go right on a red light if there is nothing coming. Most eighteen-year-olds have cars; four to five cars per household is the average. Cars are changed very regularly because of snow and salt damage. This is not amazing in a country where gas is only fifty-five to sixty-five cent per gallon. The average price of a car is a little over half of that which applies in Ireland. Amazingly the roads are a lot safer than in Ireland. One of the reasons being strict enforcement of the driving laws.

The other factor is the drinking habits in Canadian society. There are very few pubs and there is strict control of liq-

uor sales; only over-nineteens can buy liquor, with identification. People buy liquor in beer-stores and consume it in their own homes. Canadians are not big drinkers.

Canadian roads are of excellent quality and people use their cars to travel very long distances. Johnny drove the 600 mile journey to Montreal; he was enthralled by the Sky Dome with its revolving restaurant up in the clouds at 1,430 feet and the Air Canada Centre with a basketball arena seating 18,500 spectators. It is a city of six-and-a-half million people and is reckoned to be the cleanest in the world.

Johnny, a keen golfer all his life, has played all the major courses in the Toronto area. A game of golf is relatively cheap there at €40. The golfing season is short, May to October. Beer, sandwiches and ice-cream can be bought on the course but buggies or caddy cars may not be brought into the rough. Chipmunks are often encountered in the rough. On one occasion when Johnny was playing in a four-ball an eagle swooped down and took his partner's ball from the bunker only to drop it

again from a height. (I wonder what's the local rule on that.)

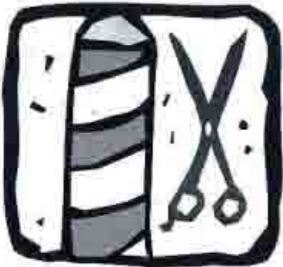
So what does Johnny miss when he comes home from his sojourn in Canada? Most foodstuffs and drink are cheaper over there including meat and fruit. It is a very orderly society and very safe. Everything is clean from Tim Norton's drive through to pavements, parks and so on. He also misses the long walks in the clean, dry Canadian air but most of all he missed his granddaughter, Mairéad.

Finally I asked him what he missed most when he is over there. Christmas Irish-style is unknown in Canada. The build-up starts in November with a lot of bulk-buying. In such a large country where many people are isolated, it is a common sight to see people coming to town in pick-up trucks and filling them up with provisions long before Christmas. The festive season is really just one day, many people go back to work on St Stephen's day. Christmas is generally low-key, not at all like the way it is at home.

Happy Christmas to Johnny in chilly Toronto.



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Asian Memories—Cambodia, Laos and Nepal

by Irial P Conroy

From the Philippines we flew to Bangkok, Thailand. We sorted out a visa, gorged on spicy Thai food and headed for Cambodia.

In a continent where dusty, bumpy journeys are the norm, the trip from Poipet on the Cambodian border to the town of Siem Reap is very high in the 'painful yet memorable' ranking.

The hardships involved in getting to Siem Reap were more than made up for by the splendour of the nearby Angkor. The temples of Angkor, mostly built between the ninth and fifteenth centuries, are the great historical legacy of the Khmer civilization. My first thoughts when I heard the word 'Khmer' were of the infamous 'Khmer Rouge' who terrorised Cambodia in the '70s under the leadership of Pol Pot.

I learned however that 'Khmer' refers to a kingdom and its people who held sway over a vast territory in south-east Asia during their heyday. The temples of Angkor are spread out over an area of seventy-seven square miles—there are at least forty accessible sites but many more than that are still enveloped by forest or not yet cleared of mines.

Cambodia's currency is the riel but they're more than happy to take other harder currencies. I was having a coffee with two friends in Siem Reap and when we came to settle our bill I paid in riels, one friend paid in dollars and the last guy paid in Thai baht.

From Siem Reap we headed for the capital Phnom Penh—another bumpy trip. En route we stopped at a small 'restaurant' and I went out the back to avail of their toilet facilities. The urinal was attached to a five-foot high wall and as I was standing there, I happened to look over the wall. What did I see grinning at me but about ten crocodiles. Needless to say my head retreated rapidly and I vacated the toilet in record-time. I pre-

sume that the crocs were being kept for their meat and skin as there is no room for pets in Cambodia.

While in Phnom Penh we visited the harrowing Tuol Sleng prison where the Khmer Rouge detained and tor-

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Despite having the dubious distinction of being the most bombed country in the history of warfare (during the Vietnam conflict) the countryside is very green and beautiful. In general I found the Laos people to be very gentle, friendly and happy. Punctuality however, is not a virtue many possess—they have abundant patience instead. We waited a few days in Luang Prabang (former capital) to get a boat up the Nam Ou river to a village called Nang Khiaw. However, when we arrived at the riverside we were told that there was a problem with the boat and that we'd have to wait a few more days. So my patience was wearing thin when I approached the



We are joined by young 'workmen' on the road to Nang Khiaw, Laos

man in the ticket-office for the boat. We saw gruesome photos of the state of the remaining inmates taken by the Vietnamese when they liberated the prison. We heard about adolescent guards being forced to kill their own families, about killing babies by smashing their head against a tree or impaling them on bayonets (to save bullets), about torturing people by putting centipedes in their mouths. A lot of it is so gruesome it's hard to believe but I think it's good that some evidence of the massacre has been left—just to remind people just how inhumane humans can be.

Laos

The next visa to appear on my passport was one for Laos (known from antiquity as Lan Xang—land of a million elephants). We spent the first few days in the capital, Vientiane. Sitting beside the Mekong river, Vientiane is a sleepy capital city. Baguettes, cafés and a monument that resembles the Arc de Triomphe attest to French occupation

man in the ticket-office for the boat.

Me: There's no boat so do you know can I get a bus to Nang Khiaw?

Ticket-officer: Yes, is no problem.

Me: OK, so where do I get the bus and when do they go?

Ticket-officer: Is north bus terminal, bus goes every time.

Me: So what time would that be - 9:00 am, 11:00 am, 1:00 pm?

Ticket-officer: Bus goes every time.

Me: So if I go there right now, can we get a bus?

Ticket-officer: Bus goes every time.

When we got to the bus station and had sat on the bus for a few hours while passengers arrived we figured out that 'bus goes every time' translates to 'bus goes whenever it's full and that can be any time.'

One of the joys of travelling is in meeting fellow travellers from various countries and backgrounds. English is generally the common language but communication is not always smooth. We were sitting down in our guesthouse chatting with two German men when

I mentioned that someone had recommended the 'fried bamboo' in this town. One of them looked very shocked. "Someone recommended that you eat that?" he said with a disgusted face. I didn't see what the big deal was and was a bit confused by his disgust. The topic went away until later when the landlady came in shouting that her monkey had escaped. Our German friend looked at us with suspicious eyes—it turns out that he had thought I had said 'fried baboon' and was linking us with the disappearance of the monkey.

Travel in the north of Laos was particularly slow and uncomfortable (one trip was in the back of a truck vying for space with six pigs), accommodation and food were generally basic but the scenery and people were fascinating.



With friends Chris and Robert in the Thorong Pass, Nepal

A lot of the hill-tribes still wear their traditional clothes, which can be very colourful. We met a Laos man one day who told us a few good stories including one regarding the clothing customs of one of the hill-tribes: an American couple came upon a village where the

couple were back again but when they entered the village they were dismayed to see that all the local women were bare-breasted again and they said to the local women: "What have you done with the presents we bought for you?" One of the women replied: "We thank

local women wore nothing to cover their breasts. They thought that this was very indecent and when they went back to the states they collected money, bought a big amount of bras and went back to the village and presented them to the local women. The local women accepted this gift gratefully but when they started wearing the bras they found them uncomfortable and sweaty. However, they didn't want to offend the Americans and wore them until they left. Six months later the

you very much for your presents—they have been most useful" and she led the couple into a shed full of chickens where the bras were gainfully employed to hold eggs.

Menus could also hold unexpected surprises: One guesthouse I stayed in proudly offered 'sweet and scour fish' and 'savorless soup'. In another if you were feeling very hungry at breakfast time you could get 'toaster and jam'.

Top of the world

I was sad to leave the peaceful land of Laos but was also excited about heading for my next destination—Nepal. I had heard a few people on about a trek called the Annapurna circuit and wanted to attempt it myself. The Annapurnas are a group of peaks in the Himalayan mountain chain and the trek basically winds its way around them. The trek took about three weeks and rises from the lowlands up to 5,416 metres (nearly 18,000 feet) at the Thorong La Pass. At that altitude you're four times higher than Ben Nevis and higher than any mountain in Europe or north America and your body only gets half the oxygen it would get at sea-level. Consequently

breathing is laboured and you have to worry about getting altitude sickness but the views are spectacular.

The trek follows the path of locals and donkey-caravans from village to village. There are no roads (or motorised vehicles) once you leave the lowlands so all provisions are carried up by donkeys or men. One of the first things that hits westerners in Nepal is the incredible weights carried by Nepali porters. These guys are hired by trekkers and by other Nepalis to carry their gear/goods and they can carry anything from thirty to over one hundred kilos (think how much all your luggage weighed the last time you got on a plane, generally the max is thirty kilos).

Bear in mind that most of the trails are steep and also that often these guys are carrying awkward shapes. I've seen a guy carrying a few doors and windows tied together, another guy carrying a chair strapped to his back with a sick man in it and a guy carrying a big fridge-freezer (they have hydro-electricity in some of the towns up in the mountains). Even though they're used to it, it's incredibly tough work but most

of them are still pleasant. They'd put most olympic athletes to shame.

After finishing the trek I spent some time in Kathmandu. It's a city of ancient temples, narrow streets, impatient rickshaws, intricately carved old wooden buildings beside hastily thrown up concrete ones, sari-clad women, colourful markets, endless energy and hagglers. You walk down any street and you have a medley of locals trying to sell you everything from chess-sets to Khukri knives (used by the legendary soldiers from Nepal—the Gurkha soldiers of the British army), carpets to tiger-balm. This 'celebrity status' can be annoying at times but at other times it's good fun.

Shortly after leaving Kathmandu I arrived back in Dublin airport. I went to get something to eat. The first thing that struck me was that my celebrity status was definitely gone—the person at the till hardly glanced at me. Secondly the cost of a simple breakfast took me aback. I was still thinking in Nepali rupees and for what I paid for breakfast a Nepali porter had carried a fridge-freezer up into the Himalayas for a week.

I'm gradually re-adjusting.

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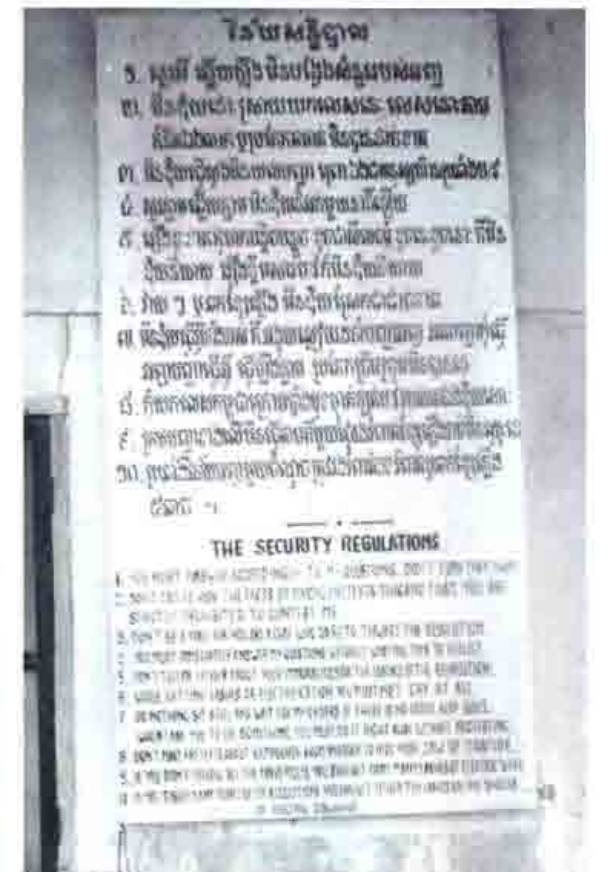
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Right: warning sign outside a museum in Laos. The visitor needed a torch to enter the museum as there was no electricity

Far right: security regulations at Tuol Sleng detention centre where prisoners were detained before being sent to the 'killing fields' in Cambodia

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Jessica Burke—showjumping

Jessica is passionate about horses and has been from a very early age. Her father Francis gave her her first pony for her sixth birthday, 'Lady', Elaine Cahill's old pony. She then joined the south Galway pony club and has never looked back. Jessica hunted with the Galway blazers at six years old, she did some hunter trials at seven in Lough Cutra castle but it was not long after that when we knew that Jessica's keen interest in showjumping was going to be hard to shake off.

Showjumping in Ireland is a minority sport and if you want to be competitive, it is very time consuming and takes a lot of hard work. It is a tough sport, when things go wrong inside in an arena it can be a very lonely place and in showjumping there are two elements, you are dependant on the pony to perform as well as yourself.

The showjumping season is at its busiest from May to September with the outdoor shows and then the indoor shows begin in October and this year are running right up to early December. Pony jumping is divided into three categories of pony heights, 128cm/12' 2" ponies are ridden by children twelve years old and under; 138cm/13' 2" ponies are ridden by children fourteen years old and under and 148cm/14' 2" ponies are ridden by children sixteen years old and under.

Jessica is twelve now and from January 1st 2005 will not be eligible to ride 12' 2"

ponies. Sometimes, if children are too tall, they move on to the next category before their time. Each pony has to be officially measured at a SIAI (Show Jumping Association of Ireland) measuring centre, the pony is then chipped and has his own passport with registration number and only then can tickets be issued. When the pony jumps in a competition his performance is recorded on his ticket, each ticket is returned to the SIAI by the show committee. Each double



Jessica riding Drumloughra Pelly at Cavan grand prix 2004

clear round earns the pony points, the pony moves up through the grades, D to C and to B and then A; once a pony is an A pony he is A for life. At each show there are relevant competitions for each grade pony. An A pony is referred to as an open pony, only open ponies compete at the big shows.

Preparation for a typical show day begins the day before, riding out each pony, washing and sometimes plaiting the ponies (if there is time), stables mucked out, then the tack has to be cleaned, the lorry cleaned and load whatever can be loaded for the morning. In the

morning the ponies are checked and fed early so they are ready for their journey. Each pony has then to be rugged, tails bandaged and travel boots put on their legs so they do not hurt themselves on the lorry and then the jockeys have to be cleaned and fed and their gear loaded, boots, chaps, helmet, blazer, whip, tickets for each pony. If it is only a one day show this is not so bad, but if it is a three or four day show like Dublin RDS or Millstreet then feed and buckets for

the ponies, clothes and extra riding gear has to be packed and sleeping gear for the lorry. The lorry can carry six ponies and the living area in the lorry can sleep four to five people. When you go away to a show the ponies are kept in stables (they get the bed and breakfast).

The main focus of the showjumping year is Dublin, the RDS normally, but last year the European championships were held in Necarne castle near Enniskillen so the SIAI ran a national competition in conjunction with it and that was a big experience and this year 148 cm ponies only have a big competition at the Belfast indoor show in December. To qualify for any of these shows there is one qualifying show in each province. Typically for the RDS qualifying shows there are 80-120 ponies in each of the three competitions 128cm, 138cm and 148cm, seven ponies qualify each day

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Presentation at Cavan grand prix 2004

jumped, probably between 1.3m-1.4m high. Jessica is probably a little young for this level as most of the other competitors will be aged fourteen- to sixteen-years-old but the experience will be invaluable for both pony and rider.

Jessica normally jumps her own ponies and some for her friend and mentor Denis Harrington from Lough Cutra. Denis has always encouraged and nurtured Jessica from the age of nine and has always been part of the team. She occasionally jumps for other owners and as she progresses in the 148cm category this will be more the norm as good grade A 148cm ponies are very expensive and for her to compete at the top she will have to try to get to ride on the best ponies.

Now Jessica is in first year at school she has to manage her time well. A typical day means home from school at 4:30 pm, have her dinner and down to the stables at 5:00 pm until 7:00 pm, ride out two or three ponies, each pony would have to be ridden every second day and at any one time she would have five or six ponies in work. Then back up to do her homework until 9:30 pm or so and a show or two most weekends. Jessica's brother

for Dublin. Twenty eight ponies in each category arrive in Dublin, there are two qualifying rounds, again seven ponies from each qualify for the final in the main arena for the Saturday morning. Each one of these qualifying rounds is very pressuring for children and sometimes on the parents and one simple fence down can be the difference in reaching the final or not.

Jessica has made the final every time but she has had no luck in the main arena, in 2003 in the 128cm and 138cm final and in 2004 in the 138cm final she was fifth.

To date some of her proudest moments are being on the Irish 138cm

team in 2002; in 2003 she jumped with Michael Whittaker in the main arena in the horse/pony pairs; she won the national 128cm championships in Necarne castle, the Tullamore and Millstreet derby, Cavan grand prix and winning the indoor 138cm at Millstreet. This year she was a member of the 138cm Irish team; also won Cavan grand prix & Tullamore derby and various other competitions. Jessica has just started to ride 148cm ponies and is gradually beginning to have success. She has qualified for the Belfast indoor horse show in December on a 148cm pony, twenty-four ponies will qualify in October and November, the fences will be as big as ever she has

Ronan took up riding last year and is now a great help to Jessica to warm up or cool down a pony, Ronan himself has just started riding novice 128cm ponies this year, Jessica loved playing camogie and cross-country running but she had to give them up because this sport takes so much time.

Ultimately showjumping as a career has its attractions but it takes a lot of hard work, money and lots of luck. So for the moment Jessica will look forward to Belfast in December, enjoy ponies for another four years hopefully, enjoy all the friends she has met through the game and the healthy lifestyle that it entails and then who knows?

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How to make the most of what you have



by Susie Coen

It's always worth taking stock of what we really want to achieve in the style stakes. For some, it's snapping up the must-have item of the season just as it reaches the store, but the great majority of us would give our eye teeth to finally come home with the most figure-flattering wardrobe possible. The art of clever dressing cannot be underestimated but there is a time-tested quick-fix guide to making the most of everything you've got.

1 Look in the mirror. Not at the flaws but at the good stuff, all the things you get complimented on. Never hide these attributes. Never. Unless it's too cold.

2 No woman thinks she has a perfect body. That may not exactly even out the playing field but it shows you how much self-esteem and confidence matters when it comes to style.

3 Try on all your favourite articles of clothing and note why they flatter you. These are the colours, fabrics, shapes and lengths you should seek out. If you're completely in the dark about what suits you, ask a trusted friend to shop with you. Do experiment occasionally with different styles—fashion can be great fun if you let go of any preconceived ideas.

4 A clean-lined, well-cut suit is one of the most flattering outfits you can wear. Think linear and lean, not tight. Dark tones create a long line. A colourful top puts the focus on your face.

5 Never compromise the clothes proportions that work for you, regardless of which way the winds of fashion blow. Hold on to them and the rest will seem breezier.

6 Yes, every colour goes with black. However, it does not always go best with black and although black is the easiest monochrome to wear, it may not flatter—it absorbs rather than reflects light. Experiment to find a neutral that works with your skin tones.

7 You can moan but high heels make your legs look super and the rest of you look slimmer.

8 Body shapers can lift, shape and flatten. They really can help. But they don't work miracles. Work within the limits of spandex. If you ask too much of it, you'll have bulges where you never had them before.

9 Above all, the key to looking great is fit. Nothing makes inexpensive clothes look smarter—or expensive ones look worse.

10 A gentle reminder: confidence is the greatest form of self-flattery, so wear it proudly. Stand up straight, relax your shoulders, stick out your chest and let everyone know you really do look this good.



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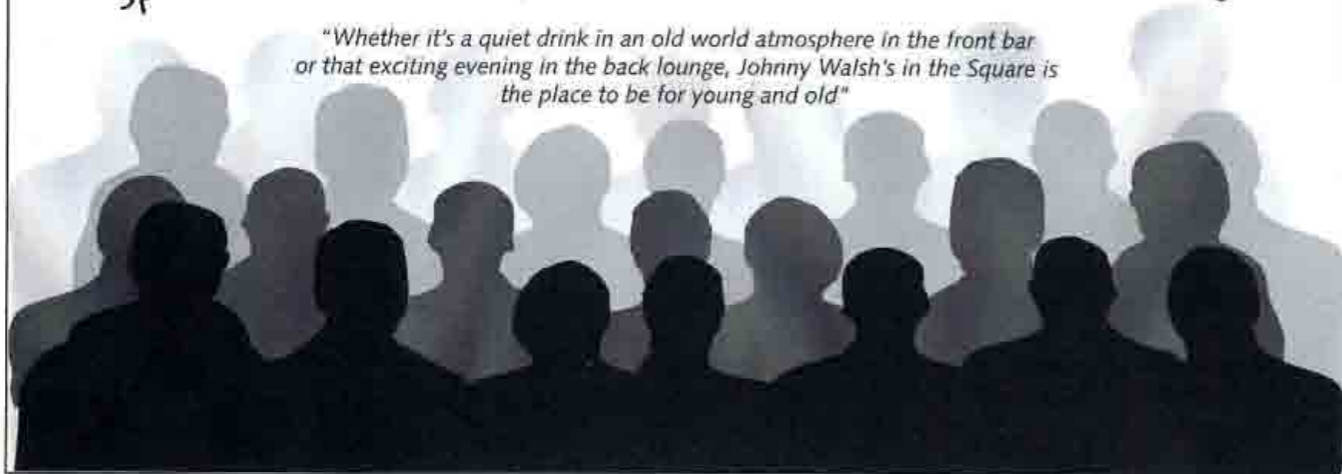
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Cloone river

by Peadar O Conaire

Bernard Gillane's love of horses goes right back to his childhood. His father kept up to six work horses on the farm. These horses were very often sold as three-year-olds and Bernard has vivid memories of going to sales as a youngster.

Later on when he took over the running of the family farm Bernard developed an interest in thoroughbreds. He acquired his first thoroughbred mare in a swap for a bullock with Tony Murphy of Athenry, thirty years ago. Some years later he bred a horse called *Mount Parsom* which won a lot of races for captain Gerry Mullins.

About fifteen years ago Bernard decided to get out of breeding. Since then he has been buying foals and yearlings, mostly on the land, from contacts in the south-east. Sometimes an animal bought in the morning, is sold in the evening. A bay horse called *Streamstown* won several races and was later sold at Doncaster. Another successful horse was *Cloone Bridge*. Bought as a yearling in Wexford he won quite a few races, including the novice hurdle in Galway and came third in the Sun Alliance hurdle at Cheltenham.

Cloone Bridge was trained by Aidan O'Brien, who was starting up in Piltown at the time and ridden by Charlie Swan who was attached to the O'Brien stables. Charlie Swan later trained both *Cloone Bridge* and *Streamstown*.

Cloone River

The horse that has given its owner and thousands of punters much to cheer about bears the name of the river flowing through Bernard Gillane's land, that is, Cloone river. Yet, this is a horse that Bernard might not have owned at all.

A friend of his, Larry Byrne, offered the yearling to Bernard at a price he couldn't afford. Some years later Bernard met a Newry man, John McNeill, at the Galway races. John told him he had some nice horses on his land. On his next trip to the north Bernard bought a yearling and a two-year-old horse from John. Some three years later both horses were being schooled in Roscommon, ridden by Charlie Swan, when the five-year-old damaged a leg and couldn't be saved. This was a big blow to Bernard as Charlie Swan had rated the particular horse in the top five he had ever ridden. Bernard was now left with the four-year-old cheaper purchase, *Cloone River*. Charlie rated him no more than an average horse. *Cloone River* was returned to Val O'Brien in Athenry and

Galway races that year. He told Paul that *Cloone River* was ready to race again. Paul had a syndicate in Wexford who were very interested in the horse but terms could not be agreed between the owner and the syndicate. Bernard decided to leave *Cloone River* with Paul at his stables in Wexford.

In October *Cloone River* won the maiden and handicap hurdles at Punchestown. After a winter rest it won on the flat in Clonmel, came fifth in the Ulster derby and came to Galway for the hurdle where he finished second on ground that was too heavy for him. The next success was the gold cup in Tralee on the flat and a premier handicap with Tadhg O'Shea up. Willie Supple rode him at the Curragh in the premier handicap this year where he came from

last to third in the final fifty yards. There followed a second placing at Down Royal under Tadhg O'Shea.

All along both owner and trainer felt that winning the Galway hurdle was well within *Cloone River's* capabilities, given the right ground and a bit of luck. They got both on the day and under the astute riding of John Cullen, *Cloone River* was first past the post. It later won in Tralee and again in Galway in September.

Bernard is reluctant to talk about the future of this remarkable horse, it will be rested for the winter. As an

eight-year-old it should have two or three years left in him. So is Cheltenham an option? Yes, if circumstances are right, especially ground conditions. I asked Bernard if he has a horse capable of emulating the feats of *Cloone River*. The answer was in the affirmative: *Cloone Leader*, is the big hope for the future. So, shrewd punters, now you know.



Winner of the 2004 Galway hurdle *Cloone River* l-r trainer Paul Nolan, Bernard Gillane, Pat Furlong, jockey John Cullen and Kathleen Gillane

was successful in Galway first time out, winning by half a length in a bumper at the 2001 festival meeting on a wet evening.

The next major outing was as a six year old in Ballinrobe, over hurdles with Ruby Walsh in the saddle, where the horse took a knock which kept him out of action for nearly four months. Bernard met trainer Paul Nolan at the

Wasn't that a party?

by Cathy Curlette

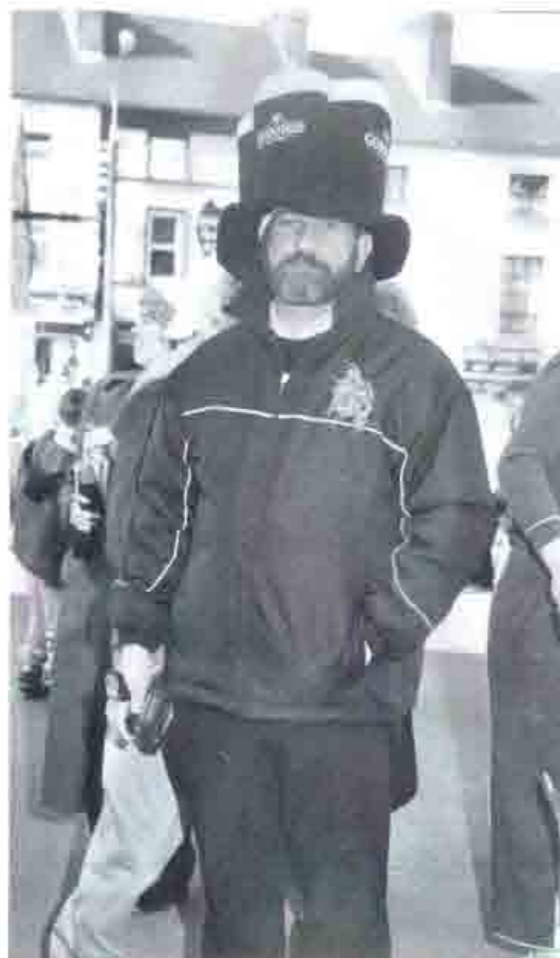
Starting on the Friday evening before St. Patrick's day at the Lady Gregory hotel, the fund raiser dance got under way with music by the *Perfect Strangers*. The Gort St Patrick's day parade grand marshal nominations were introduced by the very competent master of ceremonies, Mike (the Finnster) Finn. Mike proceeded to ask each nomination two or three questions before requesting a song from each contestant. First on the stage was Mary Moloney sponsored by Finns Furniture Store who sang *The Fields of Athenry*, Pauline Daly sponsored by O'Connors Bar entertained the crowd with *Country Roads*, John Mullins sponsored by Piggotts Eggs did *Sweet Caroline* and Seamus Killeen, who was sponsored by Kettle of Fish, showed off his voice. Tom Browne sponsored by the Lady Gregory Hotel entertained with *Cracklin' Rosie*, Mary Finn sponsored by Tommy O'Donnells Bar sang *The Gambler* and Tom Kelly sponsored by Kilroy's Bar was introduced with *Hey Babe*. The draw was made and the grand marshal for the St Patrick's day parade in 2004 was *The Babe*, aka Tom Kelly.

Kilroy's bar is on a roll this year not only being the sponsor for the queen of Gort show, Linda Carey but now the sponsor for Tom (The Babe) Kelly, the grand marshal for the St Patrick's day parade.

The best dressed window competition winners, sponsored by the Gort Credit Union, was announced from the reviewing stand at the parade. First place was won by Power of Flowers Gort, second place was Keane's and third place went to Piggotts post office and travel agency. Thanks to Mary O'Halloran on the Tubber road for being the judge and congratulations to the winners.

The St Patrick's day parade was lead by the FCA under sergeant Niall McGuinness followed by the grand marshal, Tom (The Babe) Kelly in full morning dress, top hat and sash included.

Have you ever wondered how



Gerry McMahon, Sycamore Grove keeping a watching brief at Gort St Patrick's day parade 2004

Cuchulainn got his name? Just ask any student from Ballyglass national school.

The Kiltiernan national school was very environmentally friendly with 'green and clean'.

The Gort Lions Club & district are very busy collecting eye glasses for their 'need your specs' programme as well

as sponsoring and promoting diabetes screening and their guide dogs for the blind programme was promoted by Woody, a purebred black labrador who was most ably handled by master Jack McInerney and his very capable assistant, Phillip McInerney. It was rumoured that the mystery man in black on the float was none other than Paddy O'Grady, the reporter for the *Clare Champion*.

The Tribes motor cycle club was well represented with more than twenty-five bikers and going international with a very well dressed Scot who wasn't shy about showing what is really under a Scot's kilt.

The Orchard Centre depicted the Irish big breakfast and even served St Patrick his breakfast in bed.

The ladies of the ICA Gort guild are very busy building a new hall and will certainly accept any and all funds donated. With the speed that the wall was going up, a lot of help with funding is definitely needed.

And a salute to Bertie was well represented by Georges Street float with Gillanes, Gerry O'Donoghue, family butcher, Matties Pot and O'Connors Bar being very visible.

The Gort Mart's float, with the sheep, calves and pony was definitely a hit with the children, especially those wishing for their own Shetland pony.

Help, I'm a celebrity, GORT me out of here. Who was that buxom lass on Finns Furniture float? No, not Carmel, the other one. The one with the bright red nail polish and tummy. Could it be the

Finnster? I do hope Calvin Finn didn't get "smoked" out of the hammock from the barbecue.

Wonderful participation from Little Feet community school, Kinvara brownies, Busy Bees and St Thomas's camogie club. The Convent primary school Gort choir sang at the 11:00 mass

under the direction of Mrs Rosemary Lahiffe, then walked in the parade lead by Sister John.

The marching music was supplied by the St Patrick's Pipe Band Tulla, looking very smart in their uniforms and sounding wonderful.

A large contingent from the Irish Camping and Caravan Club. What boy or girl watching the parade didn't want their own *Spyder* go-cart? Cahill Broderick was having problems fishing from the row boat, seems all he could catch was a wiggly snake.

J Dooley Plant Hire was ready to dig a post anywhere you wanted and Kinvara Landscape showed a wide range of garden products.

The Ardrahan AG Show had St Patrick watching the animals on their float with many vintage tractors following.

And those vintage automobiles. What wonderful examples of days gone by and who didn't want to drive off that prime condition '58 MG saloon, even with the black lab as a passenger.

When asked if the champagne was chilling, the chauffeur of the Lady Gregory Hotel limo replied that it was chilled and gone.

And for all those Elvis fans, himself was seen in the Gort St Patrick's day parade not only getting in and out of

the Sullivans Hotel limo, with four of his security guards, but performing along the parade route.

The Gort No Name Club was well received by the crowd as they distributed crisps and sweets along the route.

The face painting by Marion Fahey was a big hit not just with the children,

vintage threshing in the square was well received. The live music in the square by *The Celtic Star* was supplied by Siobhan O'Halloran, Christy Hurley and Willie Doorhy. The traffic and diversions were well controlled by the gardai under sergeant Pat Fahy. The safety officers and stewards did a magnificent job and once



Mim Moloney and Anne Walsh pictured at Gort St Patrick's day parade 2004

but the adults as well and the children enjoyed Gort's bouncing castle. The step dancers from the Brady-Scanlon school were a crowd pleaser as well as the local set dancers. Francis Linanne's display of

again Gort had a wonderful parade but only because of the wonderful participation, of the many sponsorships, donations and volunteers. Thank you one and all. See you next year.



AIMS double award winner 2004

Michael Coen, son of Andrew and Mary Coen, Crowe Street, Gort, is the proud winner of two AIMS awards in 2004. Having been nominated in 2002 and 2003, it was third time lucky for Michael in 2004 when he scooped the awards for his performances in *Man of La Mancha* (Loughrea Musical Society) and *Anything Goes* (Ballinrobe Musical Society). Congratulations, Michael.

ICA

ICA Gort Guild has received planning permission to demolish the existing hall in Bolands Lane to be replaced with a brand new state-of-the-art premises. It will consist of a two storey building with two meeting rooms, toilets and kitchen which will provide much needed facilities for the community.

The achievement of this project will rely on many fund raising events. One of the first fundraisers was the annual sale of work on Sunday November 28th and was held in the ICA hall in Bolands Lane.



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Sun shines on Gort Show

After a wet morning the skies cleared at noon to attract the biggest attendance yet to the twenty-third annual Gort Show held on Sunday 8th August 2004. The show was officially opened by Emma

cause of the large entry. The Champion young horse was exhibited by Andrew Connor of Roscrea and the exhibitor of the champion brood mare was Caroline Giles-Lee from Malahide, Dublin.

The photography section was one of the highlights of the indoor classes where there were over two hundred photos on display. The judges also praised the high quality of exhibits in the other indoor sections—home and garden produce, flowers, handicrafts and poultry. The children's section was again most popular including twenty-five exhibits in the decorated hard boiled egg class.



Aine Kelly presenting her cup in memory of her late mother Kitty Fahy, Loughrea to Adam Downey, Ennis Road, the most successful exhibitor in the post primary section of Gort show 2004. Adam also won the special prize of €25 presented by the Quinn family, Ballinakill

Kilkelly, Kinvara, the new Gort rose and Gort show queen. Emma was driven to the show by Adrian Quinn, Labane in his open top vintage car followed by a cavalcade of vintage cars. The cars had earlier taken part in a sponsored vintage car and tractor run around Lough Graney and Lough Cutra respectively for the benefit of Women's Aid.

Emma had a busy day attending the various sections of the show and presenting prizes in some of the classes. She judged the "dog I'd like to take home" and picked the dog exhibited by Serena Finnerty of Tubber. The high number of entries in the dog show had been attracted by the quality and quantity of prizes which were sponsored by Chanelle Veterinary, Loughrea and Gerry Burke, animal feed specialist, Gort.

The judging of the horse and pony classes went on until late afternoon be-

cause of the large entry. The Champion young horse was exhibited by Andrew Connor of Roscrea and the exhibitor of the champion brood mare was Caroline Giles-Lee from Malahide, Dublin. The photography section was one of the highlights of the indoor classes where there were over two hundred photos on display. The judges also praised the high quality of exhibits in the other indoor sections—home and garden produce, flowers, handicrafts and poultry. The children's section was again most popular including twenty-five exhibits in the decorated hard boiled egg class.

Among the stands to attract a lot of attention were a display of unusual hens by Tracey and Derek Pulein of Tubber and the Gort Heritage Centre stand which included a very interesting video of old farming and domestic methods as well as a photographic quiz which tested your knowledge of local history and architecture.

Mary O'Connor of Oughterard relived old methods with her demonstrations of butter-making with a glass churn. Mavis and Stephen Gormally of Make Your Mark Embroidery, Gort gave an active display of embroidering tea-shirts, work wear and so on. Raymond Forde, Barefield displayed his extensive range of gift products in wood. Gort ICA guild had their usual display of their work and Alan Shoosmith, Killanena displayed his *Natural Eye* cards. Tommy Flanagan's outdoor display of his Honda quads attracted a lot of attention.



Emma Kilkelly, Gort rose and Gort show queen presenting the trophy and rosette to Serena Finnerty, Tubber, the exhibitor of the "dog I'd like to take home" at Gort show 2004

year was held in the field adjoining the community centre together with the dog show and the various entertainments for the kiddies. The Guinness jazz band gave a recital of top-class open air music throughout the afternoon.

The members of Gort ICA guild provided catering facilities to their usual high standards for exhibitors, judges, stewards and the general attendance.

Reflecting the growth of Gort in recent years over fifty babies took part in the bonnie baby competition.

The officers and committee of Gort & District Show Company are Canon M Kelly, parish priest (president); Brendan Murphy, Lowry Murray, Peggy Barry, Michael Roughan and Denis Corry (vice presidents); David O'Reilly (chairperson); Mary Leonard (indoor chairperson); David Curley (horse section chairperson); Eileen Glynn (organising secretary); Kathleen Curley (assistant secretary); Fiona Curley (horse section secretary); Ann Walsh (treasurer); Padraig Giblin (p.r.o.); Paddy O'Grady, Mim Moloney, Kitty McGrath, Ann O'Reilly, PJ Downey, Pat O'Donnell, Peggy Spain, Nancy Casey, Mary O'Reilly, Michael and Maura O'Grady and Mary Moloney (executive committee officers).

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'First responders' go live in Gort

by David O'Reilly

The community action in response to emergencies (CARE) 'first responders' team is up and running in Gort and district.

These highly-trained voluntary members both male and female—who all live locally—are ready for a call out whenever an ambulance is summoned. Gort town as yet does not have its own ambulance service. The first responder team is fully equipped to provide life-saving defibrillator treatment to accident

and sudden illness victims. A defibrillator is a vital piece of equipment used for heart resuscitation. It provides a life-saving shock to the patient.

Each responder group goes through forty-two hours of training to standards set by the National Ambulance Training School and the American Heart Foundation. There is on-going training for the groups and recertification each year and every ninety days in the case of the defibrillator. Included in

the first responder team has is time. It is estimated the 'team' (minimum two people) can be at any emergency within ten minutes. This time difference can be vital in providing emergency treatment and noting changes or otherwise in the condition of the patient/s. The 'team' is fully trained in CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) and also in advanced emergency first aid.

Those who become involved can range from school-age to those in their



The Gort first responder group at a function in the Lady Gregory hotel where they were presented with their National Ambulance School and American Heart Association Certification.

front l-r: Vincent O'Connor WHB, Claire Donohue, Annette Mulcair, Kevin Glynn, Carol Richards, Pat Howley, James O'Neill WHB and Deborah Walsh

back l-r: Dan Casey, Oliver Connolly, Bernie Finnegan, Esther Glynn, David O'Reilly, Maura Donohue, Flor Burke, Danny Fahey, Stuart Walker, Joe Donohue, Tom Lambert, Rose Finnegan and Tommy Nolan

absent from photograph: Eamon Broderick, Ian Cahill, Marion Cahill, Gerard Keely and Michael O'Grady

the training are: accident scene safety, spinal immobilisation techniques, airway management, patient assessment, control of bleeding, burns and extremes of temperature, medical emergencies, fractures, prevention of infection, respiratory emergencies, cardiac emergencies, assisting a GP or ambulance crew, oxygen therapy and special technique lifting.

It typically takes thirty-five to forty minutes for an ambulance to arrive in the Gort area in response to an emergency. The first responder team is activated simultaneously by ambulance control. The obvious advantage

seventies. This is a wonderful opportunity to be part of a vital local service which at any time in the future might be required by friend or family. There is no charge for the course as it is funded by the Western Health Board. Training new members is carried out annually so those who may express an interest in becoming part of this very exciting team can contact Carol Richards at 087 363 7631.

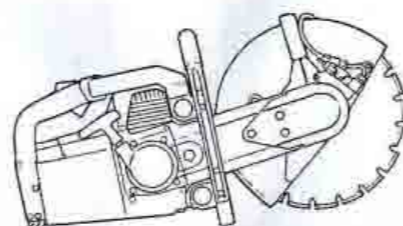
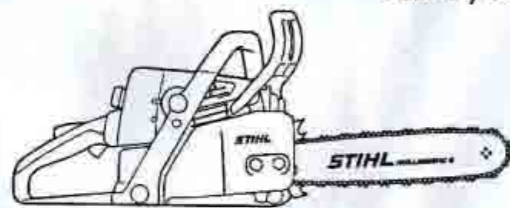
At present there are twenty-four active first responders on call—eight female and sixteen male. A new group will begin training before Christmas in the Gort community school.

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Gort & District Lions Club

by Paddy O'Grady

Gort and District Lions Club has had its most active year (2003/04) since the club's formation in 1992. Its twenty members remain committed to the motto of Lions Clubs International, we serve and plan to expand on involvement in Lions service programmes, along with support for worthy local causes and projects.

By the time you read this, 2004 will be drawing to its close and other activities will have been successfully completed (hopefully) during November. Among these is a youth award to encourage and support young people who are actively involved in their communities. The annual primary schools table quiz is being organised at the time of writing and the event is always very entertaining and educational.

Over the past few months, the club raised over €6,000 to send twenty dairy goats to Tanzania, one of the poorest countries in the world. The provision of goats to twenty low-income families was organised in conjunction with *Bóthar* (helping people to help themselves). A worthy humanitarian need.

A fund-raising golf am-am held at Gort golf club, raised a substantial

amount for the benefit of Cancer Care West. The club sometimes organises events which have a strong social element as well as fund-raising and two of these were held in July/August in Kinvara. A breakfast morning was enjoyed by over 200 at the Pier Head restaurant and a medieval banquet at Dungaire castle was attended by about fifty.

Some of the other activities worthy of a mention include: diabetes screening held in Gort and Kinvara, fund-raising for Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind, participation in the Gort St Patrick's day parade, re-building of Orchard Centre fund-raising project supported, donations to local families in need, 1,500 pairs of used spectacles collected and sent to needy people in Africa, assistance with primary schools hurling and football tournaments organised by Gort district gardai, table quiz for adults organised, visits paid to the sick and elderly in local nursing homes.

The Lions Club year of 2003/04 has been a year of positive achievement and the members will continue to relish the challenges and look forward to the opportunities which Lionism presents.

Letter to the editor

Maree Road, Oranmore, Co Galway
8th October 2004

Dear Peter,
Following our conversation on Thursday 7th October, I hope this may be of some interest to you.

Gort Cars 1950 to 1956

| | | |
|-----------------|---------|---------|
| Myles Killeen | IM 6401 | DI 2045 |
| Christy Carthy | IM 7810 | |
| Josie Gallagher | ZM 449 | |
| Joe Keane | ZL 767 | |
| Delia Quinn | IM 8467 | |
| Jack Kilroy | ZM 1903 | |
| Tony Larkin | ZM 9 | |
| Ollie Roche | ZM 6713 | |
| Martin McGlynn | ZM 104 | |
| Fursey McCarthy | IM 8969 | |
| Rynal Coen | DI 5942 | |
| Bernard Coen | IM 7736 | ZM 1473 |
| Nicholas Walsh | ZM 2239 | |
| Joe Hogan | IM 9077 | |
| Colm Corless | ZM 48 | |
| Fr. Martin Coen | ZM 667 | |
| Joe Egan | IM 8912 | |
| Mattie Reilly | ZM 1000 | |
| Dennis O'Brien | IM 7504 | |
| Christy Clancy | ZR 720 | |
| J J Coen | ZM 226 | |
| Lord Hemphill | LYU 219 | |
| Dick Connors | IM 6672 | |

I worked at Coen's Hardware in Bridge Street, Gort, from 10th April 1950 to 31st March 1956. Here are the names of some of the people who were there in my time:

Bob Forde, Gerald Brady, Martin Horkins, Michael Tannian, Jimmy Scanlon, Mattie Collins, Mattie Reilly, Tommy Keely, Joe Pete Hehir, Paddy Killeen, Stephen Killeen, Maisie Dillon, Maureen Walsh, Lily Keane, Susan Keane, Seamus Kean, Bridget Regan, Margaret Regan, Babie O'Donnell, Tom Walsh, John Power, Tom Conolly, John Davey, Paddy Corrigan, John McCole, Jack O'Leary, John Glynn, Angela Manning, Betty Chambers, Ann Linnane, Bernie Rock, Jim Morris, Randal McDonnell and Tony McGlynn

Best wishes, Tony McGlynn

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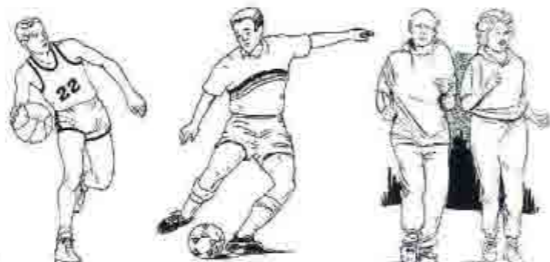
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Square memories

by Tomás O'Quigley



Tomás O'Quigley pictured with Rynal Coen after winning the Galway golf trophy at Loughrea golf club

I came to Gort on 23rd November 1951 and I set up a barber's shop at Baby Hazel's in the Square. This was the house nearest to the post office. The Square has changed a lot since then. As I used to sit on the windowsill of the barber's shop and look around, **Lally's hotel** was on my right. Gort golf club owes a great debt of gratitude to Lally's hotel. Bridie, who is still with us, thanks be to God and granny. Before we had any facilities in the club, we used always hold our functions there. They looked after us very, very well.

Moving anti-clockwise around the square, next was **Shaughnessy brothers**, who ran a hardware and grocery shop. They had two or three travelling shops on the road, also. Next to Shaughnessy's was **Lulie Shinners** who was famous for his notice in the window: 'Lulie Shinners: teas and dinners'. It being the custom at that time for private houses to provide dinners and refreshments, on fair days, as there were so few restaurants.

Passing Lowrey's Lane we had **Thomas Coen's** public house, where I had many a drink on Sunday mornings with Jerome Shaughnessy and Jimmy Madden before they went off to play a hurling match; **Dennis Gilligan's** hardware shop; **Silver's** boarding house where many ESB workers involved with the rural electrical scheme stayed; **Jim Mitchell's** grocery shop, run by his wife Emily, while Jim himself took to the road in his travelling shop; **Mairéad Finnegan's** sweet shop; **Welsh's** public house—Baldy, as he was affectionately known among his friends; **Pat Keane's** public house and grocery. His business was in decline at the time. A nicer man you could not meet; **Dennis Madagan's** grocery. Dennis was known as a hard businessman but few realised that he bailed out many a friend, financially, in times of need; **Pete Moylan's** residence, a builder from Kilbeacanty; **Lally's** shop: Frank the postman lived here, the man who did so much for under-age hurling for generations in Gort;

Hanrahan's public house. I remember that Brian McMahon on one of the occasions he called to see me (I was a past pupil of his) was very amused at the sign in their window which said "All drinks free here, tomorrow"; **Pat McCarthy's** social welfare office and **Batty Fahy's** residence which had previously been a Bank of Ireland.

Let's cross the road now and continue our journey: **Kilroy's** pub, one of my locals at the time. Eileen was a great conversationalist and good company; **P J Burke** drapery, his brother Tommy also had a draper's shop in Bridge Street; **Gillane's** bakery: famous throughout south Galway for their Christmas brack. I can vouch for it myself, as I had many a slice and never did anything compare to it; **Hayes's** pub and **John Water's** residence: he was the weighmaster on market day, which was on a Saturday. He was a very generous man and if he met you on Saturday evening and he had a few bob at all, he would want you to have a drink. If he wanted you to drink whiskey, he would say "Have something, have something good", because whiskey was much dearer than porter, that time.

One market day the Square was the centre of life in the town. The turfmarket was around Christ the King. Potatoes and corn around the weighhouse. Hay and stray were over towards the church.

Across the lane was the 'burned house': **Tommy Lee** had a draper shop in one part. Overhead superintendent **Dunning** stayed with his wife. When the house caught fire and the alarm was raised, a certain **Johnny Spelman** saved their lives. Johnny happened to be working with the ESB and staying in Silver's. While everybody else was running around like headless chickens, Johnny got an extension ladder and rescued the superintendent and his wife from the third story window.

Rochford brothers, still in business; **Miss Agnes O'Grady's** flower and meal

store, grocery and pub. In better times this had been a thriving business but in 1951 it had seen better days. As I recall, it still had not embraced electricity, preferring to use oil lamps; **Reidy's** harness makers and **Broderick's** public house: I remember fondly granny Broderick with her snow-white hair and snow-white blouse.

Crossing the road again to Shaughnessy's corner, **Henry** had the main Ford dealership. I bought my first car from him in 1960 and I must say that he was the greatest gentleman that I ever did business with; **John Spelman's** bar and grocery: the grocery was more like a delicatessen today. It was the cleanest shop for miles around, certainly ahead of its time; **Munster and Leinster Bank** who were very slow to lend a few pound. They held back many a good man; the **courthouse**: many a poor wretch went up the steps there. Thank God I was never inside in it.

Fitzgerald's bakery: they had a thriving business with a van on the road doing deliveries every day. I remember in particular the baker, the 'Bomber' Casey. He was a big man in every sense of the word and a good friend of mine. I had first met him a few years earlier passing through, when I stopped to visit my girlfriend at the time, who thank God I eventually married, Patsy. Her aunt Sis was just serving the Bomber's dinner and when she saw me, she made two halves of it. I don't know about the Bomber, but I had plenty in my half.

Broderick's boarding house. A renowned halfway house for the Mayo calf jobbers. They stopped for a meal on the way 'up' to markets in Abbeyfeale and the like and on the way back on the Tuesday, Aggie Jennings would send them out to me for a shave, while she was getting their meal ready. Thank you Aggie.

That brings me back to where I started, sitting on Baby Hazel's windowsill, looking out on the Square.

Land of the Kiwi

by Brian Murray Rindifin

"So, what's it like then?" is the most typical question I'm asked by friends and family of life in Wellington, New Zealand. Normally I try to find some sort of comparison based on the population being the same as Cork city, the sun being so intense that they give the midday sunburn time with the hourly radio news, that the traffic is something like the opposite of gridlock and that there are more cafés and restaurants than days of the year. But none of these things, true and all as they are, really help to create much of a picture of this coffee-obsessed capital city of New Zealand.

Wellington is a city with character aplenty from the arty people who sit drinking their flat whites (coffee for the uninitiated) to the large islander types who sit watching the rugby (any rugby,

any time, anywhere). The major thing that dominates this town though, as all old schoolteachers would love to hear, is geography. I don't mean that they spend a lot of time looking at maps in Wellington but rather that the shape and topography of the city is quite unusual to Irish eyes. The first impression of the city is of some kind of Mediterranean port town that has sprung up from the hills which rise almost immediately from the waterfront. Everywhere dotted along the hills are houses of all sorts of shapes and sizes and apparently arranged in some quite random order. The idea of a housing development is almost unheard of here as people reserve the right to build wherever there is land. Some of them occupy the most impossible positions, located on stilts cut into steep hillsides. Many of the houses in my

suburb can only be reached by way of private cable car or by walking up many steps. Any poor unfortunates who have ended up being door-to-door salesmen or bin collectors will have become a whole lot fitter after a few weeks in Wellington. The position of the houses is even more noteworthy when you consider that Wellington sits right on one of the most active earthquake fault lines in the world. This is, of course, responsible for the rugged beauty of the harbour and surrounding hills. During my year here there have been about four noticeable quakes. Fortunately none have even been big enough to knock things off shelves. Still, we await the big one.

The city sits on a large harbour at the southern tip of the north island of New Zealand. The expanse of water stretches down towards the south island and be-



Fox glacier, Westland, New Zealand

yond to the Antarctic. Most days looking out from where I live you can see lots of people wind surfing or sailing in the bay. In fact if you were to look very carefully you might even see me struggling to keep a dinghy from capsizing. The city provides an ever plentiful supply of wind and waves for anyone who enjoys the challenge of water sports. However with winter water temperatures only a few degrees higher than that off the west coast of Ireland, it's usually better to try and stay afloat and wear a wet suit, just in case.

The weather

One of the things that is very similar to home besides the laid back nature of the locals is that there is an obsession with the weather that rivals even the average west of Ireland farmer. In fact the obsession goes into even more forensic and scientific details. The talk is normally based on the wind direction and wind speed rather than the temperature of the rain. This means that a casual "Not a bad day then?" will get a response of "Yis but I hear that there is going to be a southerly wind gusting to 60 k/hour later on." rather than the Irish version of "Aye, sure only a soft shower of rain". The reasons for the obsession are that the weather in this corner of New Zealand is totally dominated by the prevailing wind. There is something a little bracing about a wind that blows virtually unimpeded from the South Pole. The café chairs along the promenade tend to be vacated at these times in favour of more sheltered spots. Weather that can change at short notice is not a new phenomenon for someone from Galway. However a change of ten degrees from one day to the next is not uncommon here. It was Kiwi rock band 'Crowded House' that sang about *Four Seasons in One Day* after all and they really did know what they were talking about.

Like every Kiwi success story they are still adored over here along with anyone who manages to excel at sport, music

or the arts. Ultimate pride is reserved for those who manage to put one over on the old enemy from across the pond (that would be Australia). You get the impression that a victory over the Aussies at tractor pulling would be front page

news. It goes without saying that rugby matches between the two countries take on the importance of all-Ireland finals and world cup finals rolled into one. The obsession with beating their bigger, more successful and richer neighbours might be familiar to those of us who can remember Stuttgart 1988 or Lansdowne Road in recent times. The number of column inches devoted to rugby during international weeks would rival even the Irish coverage of Keanogate last summer. Thousands usually show up just to watch their training sessions. Having been along to see the all-blacks play on a few occasions it's fair to say the New Zealand supporters have some pretty lofty expectations of their team. Anything other than a comprehensive victory is likely to lead to calls for heads to roll. This even happened last year when the team were booed off the field after only beating Ireland by the odd try in their first test in Dunedin.

Lord of the Rings

During my time here the major obsession has been the 'Lord of the Rings'. To say that the locals are quite enthusiastic about the movie and the way NZ walks away with the 'best scenic background' oscar is an understatement. Wellington is the location for the world premiere of the final instalment and also where the special effects were created. Large signs at the city airport proclaim your arrival in the capital of middle earth. A fifty foot high figure of the character Gollum straddles the local cinema and would surpass even Macnas for dramatic effect. The most common sentiment among tourists is that the whole country looks like one large movie set. If you think of somewhere like the lakes of Killarney with bigger snowcapped mountains and bluer lakes then you'd not be far wrong. Making the scenery of the magnificent south island look spectacular was surely the easiest part of the move.

Of course there are some things in NZ that make you realise you are on the other side of the world (literally) and Christmas is certainly one of them. Only here could December be celebrated by a band of make-believe Santa Clauses wearing red shorts, t-shirts and sunglasses singing *Let it Snow* while everyone around slapped on the sunscreen. It's a surreal enough moment without even beginning to worry about the thoughts of barbecues on the beach or in the park. The fact that Christmas is the start of the summer holiday summer season is a bit of a change to home. Instead of settling in to watch 'Raiders of the Lost Ark', it's typically an opportunity to get some serious hillwalking or cycling done in the great outdoors. I used to think that Ireland shut down over the Xmas season until I came to NZ. From the 20th December until the end of January the country pretty much closes down. If they are not at the beach then they'll be at the lake but they definitely won't be at the office. Even the fish 'n' chip shops close down for about fifteen days. Forget about getting anything done here until February at least. Truly the only work done over Xmas is flipping the steaks on the barbecue.

Some of the other things which remind you that you're not in Ireland is that the cost of living and the bad traffic is somehow not the main topic of conversation. I suppose when a three-course meal for two in a nice restaurant costs about \$70 or €35 then there isn't too much to complain about. The local fish 'n' chip shop will fix up an enormous supper for you for about \$6 or €3 so even the backpackers can eat well.

The price of the average Wellington house rarely rises above \$200,000 and fully comprehensive car insurance will set you back a whopping \$400 on average. The petrol price being a little over \$1 per litre does make the cost of the long winter weekend trips to the mountain (volcano actually but that's another story) to go skiing pretty bearable. The normal golf green fee outside of cities won't top \$20 so it's easy to find weekend diversions on the way. You've got to watch out in the summer though as that sunburn time can get down to ten minutes. Ah, it's a hard road this Kiwi lifestyle really.

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Gort football team - south Galway board champions 1951

back l-r: Frank Lally, Naoise Burke, P J Lyons, J P Hehir, John Colie Quinn, (with cap) Stephen Gallagher, Joe Glynn, (with cap) Jimmy Grogan, Paddy Killeen, Maurice Roche, Tom Nelly, Dick Connors, Petie Howard (with cap), Martin Halvey, Naoise Lally, Jimmy Madden, Paddy Brody, Tom Casey, Tomás O'Quigley, George Flaherty and Miley Sweeney
front l-r: Paddy Cooke, Séan Cooke, Mick Hayes (kneeling) Jerome Shaughnessy, Kieran Murphy (mascot), Josie Gallagher, Johnny Spelman, Pudney Piggott, Ned Daly and Pat Grealish

1951



above: Gort hurling team (junior A) 1958

back l-r: Seamus Killeen, Mylie Killeen, Gerry Cahill, Paddy Kelly, Ronnie Burke, Tom Disken, Paddy Fahey, Dave Hynes, Flan Considine, Eric Shaughnessy, Joe Noone and Joe Keane

front l-r: Ray Canning, Gerry Loughnane, Jack Hayes, Michael Regan, George McCollaugh, Pádraic Cahill and Liam Nolan; **sitting:** Ronnie Killeen

left: presentation by the South Galway NFA to John Murray, Castleboy, on the occasion of his wedding in 1954—fifty years ago

l-r John Murray, Castledaly; Paddy Fahy, Kilbeacanty; Dennis Regan, Kiltartan; James Moran, Kilbeacanty; Brendan Downey, Kiltartan; Matto Nestor, Kilmacduagh; Christy Farrell, Peterswell; Malachy Melville, Kiltartan;

Christy Fahy, Kilbeacanty; John Melville, Kiltartan; Tomo Curtin, Ardrahan; Colman Finnegan, Kilmacduagh and Mattie McGrath, Kilmacduagh

bottom left: basketball blitz in convent in '70s

back l-r: Pat Burke, Patrick Griffen, Billy Keane, Richard Burke r.i.p., Michael Gallagher, Michael Broderick, Junie Finnegan, John Nolan and Francis Burke

front l-r: Christy Monaghan, Damien McGrath, John Kilroy, Gerard Hannon, Jimmy Lynskey, Gerard P Fahey and John Staunton

Picture taken in Church Street by William Quinn



left: Gort hurling club dinner dance 1974

back l-r: Sean Cooke, Ronnie Burke, Sean Devlin, Martin Brennan, Brendan Murphy and Toddie Byrne, county board

front l-r: Paddy Quinn, Paddy Fahy, Norman Farragher, chairman Galway county board, Michael Sylver, president Galway county board, Canon George Quinn and Gerry Sheehan



**down
memory
lane**

above: Gort choir in Labane 1952

l-r: Ann Coen, Marg. Clandillon, M Carolan, C Considine, L. Spelman, Catherine Clandillon, Ann Fitzgerald and F Reidy

above right: Legion of Mary outing

l-r: Angela Coen, Maureen Fennessy, Enda Daly, Nancy Fennessy, Rena Shaughnessy, Josie Cahill, Patsy Quigley, Pat Nelly, Tommy Mc Govern, Mai Brennan, Peggy Shaughnessy, Mary Roche, Maeve Kelly and Fr Michael Spelman



Some of my experiences of working in Romania

by Patrick Hynes, Ballyhugh

As the plane taxied along the runway after landing in Bucharest we looked out and saw the remains of a scrapped plane by the side of the runway. A few jokes were exchanged and a few giggles expressed. Nervous laughter, in an attempt to relieve the tension perhaps, as we anticipated what experiences lay ahead for us in one of the largest institutions in Romania.

It was July 1999 and a group of volunteers from Ireland were going to work with children and adults with special needs in Spital de Capii Neuropsihici, Siret, Romania. This was to be the first of three trips that I would make to one of the most deprived areas of Romania. The horror that I experienced there was unbelievable. First and foremost as a human being I was horrified, but secondly as a professional working in the area of intellectual and physical disabilities I was shocked at the conditions that I found the children of this institution in.

The Romanian Challenge Appeal, an English based charity, has been working in Siret since 1990. Founded by Monica McDaid it endeavours to bring life and hope to the residents of this horrendous institution. The institution has been called a hospital and also called an orphanage, but the word that would best describe it is a hellhole prison. The charity have worked since 1990 directly with the children and also with locals, training them on how to work with and care for people with special needs. In true development vision the charity immediately saw the importance of actively engaging locals in the work of the charity and thus a partner charity was founded in Siret. One of the objectives of the charity is to assist the process of de-institution of young people living in the institution by bridging the gap between them and the local community. No small task when you consider that most of the residents had lived in the institution all their lives and knew no different. The norms that

we commonly hope exist in our society here in Ireland were practically non-existent in the institution. Many years of abuse, neglect and lack of stimulation and love had left these children with many problems and scars, not just the physical ones. Vital humanitarian intervention was provided and executed with fantastic effort by the charity.

The charity have been responsible for the building and staffing of six houses to accommodate children rescued from the hospital. They also provided immediate care to those living in the hospital. On a political scale they have put pressure on the Romanian government to stop this human abuse crisis. In 2001 the institution finally closed. But, there is still much work for the charity to do. They have purchased the local state farm and are running it as a self supporting project to provide finance for the charity and to provide vocational training for the young people from the institution.

Against this backdrop I went to work in Siret. It has to be one of the most profound experiences of my life, yet one of the most humbling and fulfilling. I will never forget walking into the institution. It was a large three storey over basement building that reminded me of an old barracks or hospital. Over 550 people resided there in absolute squalor. The smell was overpowering and stomach churning. Children ran around everywhere and they were fascinated to see us and pulled at our clothes. Many shied away when you moved towards them, a legacy of many years of physical abuse. Old memories are hard to forget. Rooms/wards were overcrowded with children and young adults, yet all the furniture that was evident were iron beds and a few broken chairs and a table in most of the rooms. Many children had physical disabilities and were lying on urine soaked cots with absolutely no stimulation. Some were even too weak to cry. All the children wore rags and many were barefoot. On average 20

children lived in each ward, with one 'carer'. For many, their day consisted of sitting on their bed and rocking.

The charity was doing valuable work by providing care, education, stimulation, love and support to these otherwise forgotten children. Back in 1990, most people saw the media reports on Romania and the aftermath of Ceausescu's regime. However as the years passed the media hype calmed down and other world atrocities caught world attention. Fortunately there were people to work with the desolate children in Siret. I am proud to have joined those dynamic people working with the Romanian Challenge Appeal.

My work was varied and changed each of the three years that I was there. Primarily I worked in the area of special education and training. I had great plans going out but soon revamped my ideas to suit the environment I was situated in. Art, music, play and sport became the basis of everyday work and a method of communication. It was amazing the simple things that brought a smile to the children's faces. Many were very enthusiastic and wanted to learn and do things. It was difficult to send them back to their rooms after working with them and some would cry. The desire for attention was great but sadly they never received enough.

During my second trip there I was involved in community training and preparing the young adults for life in the community outside the institution. This was a difficult task, especially as I discovered cultural differences and it took time for the locals to accept people with disabilities. Inclusion and advocacy have a long way to go yet. Many of the group that I worked with on the community training and life skills training were living in two group homes built by the charity.

Sports activities were met with joy by the residents of the institution as it was a way of escaping from the building, if only for a short time. They love soccer

and this was an area where they were proud to teach me and grinned at my hopeless ability to play soccer. The sense of confidence and normality that they gained during this time was wonderful to see, making it all the more difficult to send them back to the institution after their games. They even played matches against the volunteers on some evenings and usually won. It was interesting to see the variety of footwear that they wore or sadly the lack of footwear in some cases. Most of us gave our runners away before leaving to return to Ireland. We had many takers.

In 2001, on my third trip to Romania, I saw changes in the country and also there were changes in the work that I was involved in. This time one of my friends (who has made the trip with me on the three occasions) and I were asked to help assess the children for their suitability to live in group homes and the possibility of them being able to work in the town etc. Informally, this would be done as part of our everyday work in the 'classrooms'. These classrooms were small concrete buildings not too unlike a boiler house or small shed. They had flat concrete roofs, poor ventilation and were stiffling hot in the summer. They were difficult and uncomfortable to work in but were an improvement on the basement of the institution where we had worked in the previous years. Different groups of volunteers had painted the rooms in an attempt to brighten them up.

When we were asked to work on the assessments it proved difficult. Firstly, because we had not ever done anything like this before. Here in Ireland we would have professionals such as psychologists etc. to do such work and while we had over 15 years combined work experience with people with intellectual disabilities between us, it still was a daunting task. However we did our best with limited resources and our recommendations were in tandem with that of the directors and programme managers of the charity. It was a tough assignment because we felt that everyone deserved the same opportunity. Those that were not moving into homes built by the charity moved to other institutions throughout Romania.

In Romania there appeared to be differences and some improvements in the

three years that I have been going there. One of the most noticeable things was the emergence of filling stations along the roads and an improvement in the quality and variety of products available in the shops. In Siret there was a little pizza parlour and in 1999 we had to order food a few days in advance before eating there. That had improved to ordering food a few hours in advance by 2001. Many of the cars averaged 20 years old and were typically a model

stimulation their potential for progress is good. I remember when I worked in the institution, these children were virtually abandoned all day and it was difficult to get permission from the state carers to work with them. They needed so much stimulation and also so much care and physio programmes. We were lucky that many of our Irish volunteer group were physical therapists or physical therapy students from the Irish Institute of Physical Therapy in Dublin. For five



Patrick Hynes (Gort) and Christina Casserly (Loughrea) working with some of the children in Siret, July 2000

called Dacia. Again by 2001 cars were getting newer and more models were appearing. Siret had lost some of its industry including a carpet factory. A new Swedish furniture factory set up operations in Siret and two of the ex-residents of the institution have gained employment there. A fantastic achievement for them and an integral aim of the charity fulfilled.

The various houses opened by the charity provide different levels of support to the children and young people living in them. Some are very independent such of 'Killybegs' house, a gift from the people of Killybegs in Donegal. Daniel O'Donnell, the singer, had done much fundraising for the charity and has visited Siret. To date he has raised over 1 million for the charity. The latest house to be built is accommodating 17 physically disabled children who require high support and much physical care. They are young and with the right

years they operated an outreach programme in Siret.

The boys who have moved into one of the group homes visit 15 of the poorest and most needy families in the area buying food and taking it to them twice a week. They stay and talk to the people and offer whatever other help they can, such as small repairs or clothes in winter. It is great to see the boys being able to actively engage in meaningful work and it has boosted their confidence to be able to give something to the community that they live in and not be constantly the recipients of aid or help. When I return next to Romania, I would like to work on that exciting project.

Another exciting project that I would like to work on is the new farm project. Two years ago, thanks to a generous sponsor, the charity purchased the local state farm. The farm is intended to provide work and income for the residents of the group homes. Buildings have

been refurbished, some demolished and workshops constructed. Spring cereals have been sown and two chicken barns for 1000 chickens have been built. All the children and young adults, will be involved in some way on the farm, giving them experience of a variety of work in the open air and a sense of tangible achievement. One of the boys (who has cerebral palsy), who I worked with on life skills training in town, is now learning - with hard boiled eggs - how to pick eggs out of nest boxes safely. What fan-

tastic training and work opportunities. None of this would be possible without the charity and volunteers.

Working in Siret with these wonderful children and young adults has been a fantastic experience. While it has been emotionally difficult and often physically difficult due to the uncomfortable working conditions and the lack of resources the positives outweigh the negatives.

Each time that I left I was sad. Like many of the volunteers, I found that the children will always be in my heart and mind. I wanted to stay longer each time and it is not possible not to be affected by the experience. To see and witness those unfortunate children lost in such an awful inhuman world was devastating. As I left in 1999 I kept thinking of the lack of freedom they had to do basic things that we take so

easily for granted. As I boarded a flight to New York four days later, I realised that for them to do that would be the equivalent of me going to the moon. Many of the life opportunities that we take for granted are denied to them.

Fortunately things have improved but still have a long way to go. There is a lot of hope and the charity is doing marvellous work in one of the most disadvantaged areas of Romania. With the help of volunteers and the dedicated staff of the Romanian Challenge Appeal, changes and results are possible. I was privileged to be part of this, to be part of the lives of these children and I would like to thank all the people (especially here in Gort) who supported me when I was fundraising. *Go raibh maith agat.*

My favourite saying is kept to last and I think it is very appropriate here. "In 100 years time, it will not matter what kind of car I drove, or what size house I lived in, or what my bank balance was. But the world might be a better place because I was important in the life of a child".



The institution in Siret, July 1999

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An excellent business

by Ute Krewer

Like so many small farmers we always kept about five hens for our delicious breakfast egg, but the fox increasingly became a problem—he seemed to have lost any fear of humans. Even running after him and barking—to show the dog what to do—didn't scare him...but it scared the dog.

Something had to be done. Luckily we heard about these electric poultry fences that promised to keep the fox away, so we got a hundred metres shipped over and thirty hens (the idea was to sell a few eggs to make the hens pay back the investment). My husband, being handy at woodwork, set off to build a house for them, the design was inspired by the odd book on farming and our own ideas and soon enough the hens were laying away. The demand for our eggs increased every week—people like the eggs and their 'old fashioned taste' so we started selling to shops and the Galway market and soon had to stock up and put up new houses.

Today we keep four flocks of one hundred hens each and we even rear our own replacers from day old chicks. Our farm is approved by IOFGA, the Irish organic farming association, which means that we have to fulfil strict requirements

like in and outdoor space, flock size, perch, nest, pop hole size and so on to avoid stress for the hens which are also not beak-trimmed. An inspector comes every so often to check up on all that. We buy organic feedstuff through a mill in Wicklow (G Burke stocks it) which is GMO- and bonemeal-free, contains no medication, chemicals or additives and is a huge factor in the expensive production.

Animal welfare plays a big part in organic farming: our hens are outside all day (they run in during the showers but come out quick to get the worms), the fences are moved frequently to get the hens on fresh grass and avoid diseases (it is quite amazing how much grass a hen eats). We spend a lot of time keeping the houses clean by adding fresh straw and spreading woodshavings over the droppings. Eggs have to be collected three times a day, water troughs and feed has to be refilled and we close the houses at night (fear of pine marten and mink). The grass around the fences has to be cut regularly during the summer to prevent earthing of the fence.

We also had to get an egg packing licence to fulfil department standards. So, we built a special, tiled room, got a grading machine and had to stamp



Ute Krewer with her happy hens
 every single egg by hand and label the boxes according to standards. It is quite a bit of work but the feedback from our customers encouraged us to continue and go through all the licensing procedures.

We believe our hens are happy hens and you definitely taste it in the egg, which by the way are sold in Gort in the Open Sesame shop in the market hall and in O'Reillys fruit and veg shop, Main Street. With all the knowledge and experience we gained we would not touch a battery egg any more. It is sickening to think of the poor hens in cages and sheds during all their lifetime without being able to scratch and roam around. Hens have their own natural behaviour and are not egg-producing machines.

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The Wild Swan Theatre Company

by Austin McInerney

Through the chair. Ladies, gentlemen, reverend fathers, sisters, elected representatives, neighbours, friends, all of Brazil and last but not least fellow members of The Wild Swan Theatre Company, I'd like to welcome you one and all to what can now be considered the annual general progress report from south Galway's and a bit of the top of Clare's very own home grown theatrical troupe otherwise known as The Wild Swan Theatre Company.

Firstly let me point out that this wonderfully illustrative and appropriate name was the result of much consultation, deliberation, confrontation, altercation and eventually conciliation that lasted at least 5 to 10 minutes. Therefore on behalf of the company I will insist from now on, on us being called by this name

and not the handy short cut of simply 'The Drama Group'.

If The Stroke can stop being The Stroke, if Bryan McFadden can become Brian McFadden we shall therefore be for ever permitted to be known as The Wild Swan Theatre Company and so it shall be in the end.

2004 has been an odd year for us, it seems like we did nothing but yet we achieved so much. The year commenced in March with a four-night production of the very amusing '44 Sycamore' by Bernard Farrell. This was a fast moving modern comedy set in a plush



Turned out to be a boy

Dublin suburb with the residents of 44 Sycamore Street/'new' middle class couple trying to impress and entertain their more established neighbours with hilarious results.

The play depicts life's constant struggle to be accepted and 'to keep up with the Joneses'. The cast comprised some of the company's most experienced and popular members with Donal Connolly, Imelda Counihan, Marian Cahill Collins, Jim Earley and Kevin Glynn partaking.

The play involved some extra technical and visual aids that tested the will of the back-room staff but special mention goes out to Yvonne Mulvey for her outstanding dedication to the cause and getting everyone out of a 'hole' whenever necessary.

The play was a popular success but even more so for the Swans as it was

their first performance on the new larger stage with moveable backdrops that not only allows us to dramatically change the stage's size but also to pack it up and move lock, stock and barrel to whatever location we want. This should show that plans are well in place for The Wild Swans to enter the meat grinder of the drama circuit so watch this space.

The summer involved our usual preparations for the celebration of Lady Gregory and Coole Park with the autumnal gathering and the Gregory weekend. One of our favourite plays *Spreading the News* by the lady herself was resurrected for these events with general ease seeing as we have now performed it over fifteen times in such locations as the Town Hall, Coole Park both indoor and outdoor, Thoor Ballylee, Belfast, London, The Taibhear in Galway and oddly enough the departures lounge of Shannon airport. Serves them right for delaying take off.

Alas all was not good news with *Spreading the News* this year. The Abbey Theatre in Dublin which is celebrating its one hundredth anniversary launched a drive to have various amateur dramatic groups to perform plays of its co-founders Lady Gregory and William Butler Yeats in the Abbey itself. When we heard of this we were beside ourselves with delight and we immediately launched our campaign to be one of those to perform. We chose *Spreading the News* as it was a play written by Lady Gregory, originally set outside Gort court house and involving local people of south Galway. One would think we would be booking the bed and breakfasts. You would have thought the Abbey would have loved the nostalgic

effect but, to put it simply, we didn't get a sniff of it. Ah well, their loss.

Much ground was also made in the development of the Wild Swan Youth Theatre Group. We are constantly looking for new talent and this year we found it in bucketfuls. Under the guidance of Imelda Counihan and Marion Cahill Collins, the group performed 'The Golden Apple' which was written by Lady Gregory and adapted for stage by Cecily O'Neill. Performances were held in the Town Hall and Coole Park.

It is a clear objective of the group to promote and develop youth theatre in the area as some of the regular group are getting a bit old in the tooth.

Our annual trip to Belfast was in a different vein this year as we had no scripts, this year was improvisation year. Following on from our most successful fake wedding celebrations in The Lady Gregory when we managed to marry P J Downey with Nora Connolly in a most bigamist way, we brought the idea across the border to an unsuspecting audience in our second home The Wellington Park Hotel. To make a long story short, Jim Earley got married and it was a boy.

So one would be forgiven for assuming we had a great year, indeed we had an eventful year but all was put into focus on our return from Belfast when we learnt that in that very week our old friend and colleague Louis Muinzar had passed away. Louis was the beloved director of the Belfast Delphic Players, a professor of English in Queens University, a doctor, a broadcaster, writer and producer. Louis has translated books in a dozen different languages.

But to us he was a dear friend. Husband to Betsy and father of Thomas.

To us Louis was most noted for his love of Yeats and together with the Delphic Players, visited every July and we in turn went to Belfast. It was Louis that coined the phrase 'Kiltartanese' in describing the local dialect. His love of Gort, Coole and Ballylee was extraordinary.

Originally from Indiana in the USA of Irish extraction Louis retired from Queens after 26 years in 1989. He is to become an honorary member of the Wild Swan Theatre Company and we shall miss his friendship as will Betsy and Thomas. May he rest in peace and live on in our thoughts. We hope that the Delphic Players will continue to travel and continue this exchange for time to come.

2005 is currently being planned out by the Politburo that is the core group of The Swans. A play will be produced sometime in March with details being announced in the near future.

Finally special mention must go to some of our back room team who bring their considerable skills and brain power to bear regularly for our shows: Peggy Casey, Tommy Nolan and Eamonn Fennessy. There are many others that help without a whimper and we'd be lost without them but these guys put in the hours. Thank you.

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Poetry

Intruders

I did not stand beneath the cherry trees last spring,
To gaze up at their snow soft canopy;
Short life blossoms that every April bring,
Their tale of winter's death and summer's panoply.

I have not heard the cuckoo's tuneless, two note song,
Nor watched a skylark o'er some meadows soar;
No corncrake's plaintive call, though twilight's long,
Only a motor's searing drone and engines' roar.

by Frank Lally

A Smile

What a wonderful world we live in
So many luxuries at our fingertips
What a long way we have come
But some of the loveliest luxuries in our busy lives are free
Like relaxing around a roaring fire at home talking to friends

Like Coole - mystical, magical Coole
Listening to the soothing sound of silence
Nature's leveller
Swans sitting sentry on their territory on the lake
Their long graceful necks watchful and haughty
Trees reaching up, up to the sky
If they could talk, what tales they'd tell
Of the illustrious men and women who have walked before us

Ah, but the loveliest gift of all is the gift of a smile
A big open smile that touches another human being
That wipes away the stress for even a moment:
Leaving both feeling better
Or is this just me getting older, oh dear
Reality, too, is a leveller, I fear.

by Peggy Casey

The Way We Live?

We have taller buildings, but shorter tempers.
Wider freeways; but narrower viewpoints.
We spend more but have less; we buy more but enjoy less.
We have bigger houses but smaller families; more conveniences, but less time.
We have more degrees but less sense; more knowledge but less judgement.
More experts, but more problems; more medicine but less wellbeing.
We spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast.
Get too angry too quickly, stay up too late, get up too tired.
Read too seldom watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.
We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life, not life to years.
We've been all the way to the moon and back; but have trouble crossing the street to meet a
new neighbour.
We've conquered outer space but not inner space.

by Della Lally

Iraqi Dogs of War

The dogs of war are howling,
We hear them loud and clear,
Their wild and rabid growling
Chills every heart with fear.
The young, the old, the middle-aged,
Try as they can to hide,
Their quest alas is useless
As bloodstained bodies tide.
The handlers of these awful hounds
Blood on with visage bland,
They talk of liberating
The people of this land,
Of freeing them of tyrants
And from despotic rule;
Explain it to this little child
Dead in a gory pool,
Or too the aged man and wife
As they at rubble stare,
Remains of all they had as home
The dogs of war don't care.
What greed is it that draws them here
To this far foreign land?
'Tis surely not its figs and dates
Much less its arid sand;
And liberation rhetoric
It has a hollow sound,
To a populace in terror
Of a heinous killer hound.
Then as the blood seeps slowly
Into this desert soil,
A viscous liquid answer gives
It is Iraqi oil,
Pestilence, strife, starvation,
Of this rack who will reckon?
As long as venal greed is served
'Twill merely seem a speck.

by T. Ó C.

Dead or Alive

I'm floating
Sleep, sleep, sleeping I am
Am I dreaming?
I'm dreaming, sleeping I am
I can see you,
I can hear you.
I'm dreaming
Help me, oh help me,
I can't move.

I'm dreaming dreaming,
Dreaming I'm falling
Falling into the deep.
Help me. Help I cry out,
I'm dreaming, dreaming
Am I dead, am I dead?
My breathing has stopped.
I can't move
Am I dead?
I hear you
Am I dreaming, dreaming?
I am.

I'm gasping, gasping, gasping,
AIR, give me air,
Am I dead, am I dead?
I try to touch her soft warm body
I can't move, I can't move,
Am I dead?
Help I cry out, help me
I can't breathe
Am I dead?
Help I cry out
And everyone laughs,
Down, down I'm going
Am I dead?
I'm awake, I'm awake,
I'm not dead.
I'm not dead, I'm not dead,
I'm alive, I'm alive,
Yeah I'M ALIVE.

by Jim Collins

Happy Gold

A place to lay your head,
Be it ditch or be it bed,
Some clothes to keep away that stinging cold.
A little bit to eat,
Some shoes to guard your feet,
What would you want with silver or with gold.

A smile to light your face,
Some words in the right place,
A nod or thanks to lonely or to old.
For the things they say will last,
When you are gone on past,
Are far greater than your silver or your gold.

What good am I on earth,
If my fellow men I hurt,
With arrows or with words they kill like stone.
Be as happy as you can,
And please your fellow man,
Leave aside your silver and your gold.

by Seán Leahy

Last dance

Almost pretty perfect
In gardens of stone
The wind blows
Heavy to the bone.
Almost everything seems
So peaceful and fair
But the shadows of
Darkness lie there.
So if you're troubled
And your spirits are low
Think of those
Gone before,
They didn't have time
For that romance.
They never had time
For a last dance.

For as far
As anyone can see
Almost pretty perfect
Your face is numb
Your mind is blank
And you're ready
For the next attack.

by A Coppinger

Gort

Gort, in South Galway
On the edge of the Burren,
Whose traditions stretch back
To years long ago,
To Guaire the generous
And Colman the religious,
Their influence shaped us
They speak to us still.
Our culture is rich
In poetry and music,
Rafferty the poet
We claim as our own.
Yeats lived among us
Composing his verses,
While Lady Gregory of Coole
Played host to the Thesps.
In the month of October
We salute Kieran Collins,
With a feast of good music
(It's not to be missed)
The musicians will gather
From all parts of Ireland,
And play in his honour
A fitting tribute.

We're renowned for our sportsmen
Especially our hurlers,
On the field of endeavour
They brought us glory and fame,
They set our hearts racing
With their skill and their daring,
We cheered them with joy
When they defeated the best
But time has moved on now
We must live in the present,
This town that we love
Has known growth like its fame,
A new age of technology
Has imposed itself on us,
And we must try to adjust
To the changes it brings.
A new prosperity
Has brought in many people,
Some from a country
Far away cross the sea,
The folk from Brazil
Who now live among us,
Bring a colourful tradition
To mingle with our own.
But let the shadow of Guaire
And Colman still cover us,
While we look to the future
With hearts brave and true.
We'll embrace a new age
New ideas, new people,
While retaining those values
From which we all grew
by Mary Brennan-O'Donovan

Mick Cahill reflects on bygone days

—Interview with Dick Burke

Deerpark is a small townland which lies fairly centrally in the parish of Kiltartan. It's main access route is through Rinrush after crossing the railway line near the railway bridge on the Kilbeacanty-Kiltartan road. It is a quiet and peaceful area of good neighbours and good farming practice undisturbed by the constant noise of traffic on the main road.

It is here in Deerpark that Mick Cahill was born in 1915, the only boy in a family of six. Farming had been the way of life for the Cahill family for generations. Mick's father died when he was a young lad of seventeen and he had to take over the responsibility of running the family farm. He continued to do so until recently when the time came to hand it over to one of his sons.

You attended school in Kiltartan

I started school at the age of five and we were taught in the junior classes by Minnie Shaughnessy. There was no fooling in her class though she never slapped us. She had good control of her pupils but she was very good to us. Mr Treston taught us in the senior classes. The subjects I remember best were history, geography, catechism and 'bills'. He put great emphasis on the 'bills'. That skill was very useful to us that time as we could help at home to make up the prices of groceries, the price of eggs and the prices of potatoes and corn. Our parents had difficulty with this as they hadn't attended school as regularly as we did. Mr Treston was a gentleman. I remember learning *Máire ní Eidhin* and *Annach Cuan*, two of Raftery's poems.

We had another teacher named Dan Sexton for a few years. I remember he sent me to Gort one day for the newspaper. He gave me his bike but it was too big for me. I managed by putting one leg under the bar and on my way back I was travelling too fast and couldn't take the turn at Bohercam. I got a puncture and I decided there and then to fix it. There



Cutting corn at Gillanes in Rinrush with a 'meitheal' of neighbours in to lend a hand. Sitting is Mick's uncle Martin Cahill. Also included are Ben Shaughnessy, Colie Shaughnessy (r.i.p.), Jimmy Donoghue, Mary Donoghue, Ellie Shaughnessy, Bridie and Madge Gillane and Young Mick Cahill driving the horses.

was always a repair kit attached to the saddle. I put about six holes in the tube when I was putting back the tyre. I ran the rest of the way to the school with the bike to make up for the lost time. I told him that a cat ran across the road and I went over his tail and he attacked the tyre with his claws. The pupils were in stitches laughing at the story and they couldn't keep in the giggles for the rest of the day. He didn't blame me and sent me to Gort again a few days after that to get a hurling ball at Treston's shop. He would always supply us with a new ball if we lost one. He would pay for the ball out of his own pocket. He was a lovely man and in fact there were four young men of the Sexton family from Kinvara around the area at that time, Dan teaching us in Kiltartan, Fr Andy was c.c. in Gort parish, Bob was teaching in Ballyturin and another brother was the doctor in Ardahan, all real gentlemen.

The school was never cold. There was a fire in each classroom. To get into the junior room you had to go through the senior room. We would go out in the morning to pick *cipins* to help start the fires. Two senior boys would be appointed to set and start each fire. They would blow and blow 'till they would nearly burst blowing. It took about half an hour to get the turf blazing and blazing it would be when they would join their class. Coal and turf would be

delivered from Gort from time to time. In some schools the pupils would have to bring a sod of turf each day to add to the fire. Some lads would pick up their sods along the way if there was a reek of turf near the road.

You were very interested in hurling and still are Mick

Well there was a lot of hurling in south Galway when I was young and long before that too. Hurling was a great pastime for us. Well there wasn't much else to do apart from work. There was no radio then or pictures to go to. We spent all our spare time in the evenings and weekends either practising or playing matches. Any fella that was any good was on a hurling team and the rest were hoping to be called in from the sidelines when someone got knocked out. My best years in hurling were between 1935 and 1947.

Kiltartan parish had two junior teams in the late 1920s. At that time rules weren't so strict and you could draft in good players from the edges of neighbouring parishes. We had some players too from Crowe Street in Gort, I played centre half back in the early 1930s when Kiltartan reached the semi-finals on two consecutive years.

[Mick Cahill gives a detailed account of hurling in Kiltartan and Gort and the rivalry between those two teams in Noel Lane's 1975 publication *South Galway*

GAA Board 1913-1975 and also in his interview with Sr de Lourdes Fahy which is included in her recently launched book *Kiltartan, Many Leaves One Root.*

Were ye supplied with hurleys for matches then Mick or how did ye come by them?

There were no hurleys available. We only had our own home-made *camáns*. We were always on the look out for a good 'makings'. A neighbour threatened me with jail once for cutting down a tree on his land.

Paddy Cahill of Coole and Martin Linnane of Ballylee would never refuse to saw out a hurley or two for us. We would shape them up ourselves and smooth them up with a piece of glass. Hurleys then had square tops and it was difficult to lift the ball with them but anyway it was mostly ground hurling that was played.

You said you heard some Irish spoken

There were a number of old people who used to cross down through here from Ballylee walking on their way to mass in Kiltartan. You would overhear them sometimes talking to each other in Irish. Yeats too would pass down this way on his way to Coole. He would never speak to us, just keeping to himself. People used to say that he was composing something or other as he walked along.

You must have some memory of the Black and Tans?

I remember being in Gort one day with my mother when the lorries came up through Crowe Street. They were firing shots into the air as they passed through



A farm scene at shearing time Mick Cahill (left), Colie Shaughnessy (right), Pak Diviney (front) and Michael and Pat Cahill (children) June 1959



Three men very proud of their new *báneens*, from left Pat Quinn, Ballyaneen, Mickey Cahill (Mick Cahill's father) and Mickey's brother Martin Cahill

Gort. The people were terrified. Later while we were still in Gort people were saying that some woman was shot in Kiltartan. I was too young then to understand what was happening. People would say that 'Tans' would go into shops and pubs and take whatever they wanted, they would not be challenged. Some men would walk through the fields to keep out of their way but this was dangerous too as they would question you to know why you were avoiding them and not walking on the road.

Farming has seen a lot of changes since you were first out on the land with your father

Well, the sickle (reaping hook) and then the scythe were in common use then for a good many years in cutting corn and hay. Then came the horse drawn mowing machine which was used for many years before the Reaper and Binder came. That was used a lot in hire work cutting corn until the combine harvester completely took over. That too has become a rare sight as people grow very little corn now.

In the early years the grain and chaff were removed from the sheaves by flail or by scutching. The flail was a dangerous weapon for the bystander or even for the user if he wasn't experienced. It was made up of two sticks about three feet long tied together with a piece of seasoned pig skin. It was swung around in a circle over the operator's head and lashed down on the ears of corn. In scutching the sheaves were lashed down against a stone that was fixed in a raised position. The grain and chaff would be

separated by winnowing. This was done by pouring the mix from a basin in the barn between the two open doors where the draught would blow the chaff away from the dropping grains of corn. This would often be done on a breezy hillside near the farmyard as well. [People were using natural resources quite a lot or renewable energy as it is called now.]

Then came the hand winnowing machine. This was a great labour saving device, you'd enjoy turning the handle to see the different parts

of it operating. The threshing mill came then and solved all problems. Straw, seed and chaff were separated and discharged in three different directions from this new invention. A *meitheal* of neighbours would follow the thresher from haggard to haggard to help fork the sheaves, stack the straw and bag the grain and generally help the threshing. The housewife supplied tea, brown bread and butter, usually some boiled eggs and scones or currant cake. The straw from the threshing machine could never match the scutched straw and many farmers continued to scutch some corn for thatching purposes. Every farmer would regularly take a *caiscín* of wheat to the mill for home baking. The brown flour would contain the whole wheat grain. It made very healthy bread.

You seem to have enjoyed country life and you are still keeping an interest in present day farming

Yes, I can say that I enjoyed life on the land and being out in the fields. I enjoyed music and dancing and fishing in the local river as well. I have no regrets, you make the best decision at the time and there is no use looking back and brooding over it. By all means look back on the good things of life as well as looking forward.

You have given me a lot of detail on various aspects of your life, too much to include in this article but we may take it further again. Thank you and we wish you many more years of good health and happiness.

"It's a long, long way from here to there"

by Colman Keane

Or, "having received an e-mail from a female, China, here I come"

The 17th of August 2003 started like any other but soon manifested an air of excitement as I received an invitation to join with the Irish trade delegation in conjunction with the state visit to the people's republic of China by the president of Ireland Mary McAleese. The old cliché of "Go west young man", changed to "Go east Colman". No doubt, I had to go, the only hiccup was its cost. Now readers let there be no illusion, long gone are the days of the freebies. It is as you are aware the twenty-first century and I was not a councillor on a junket but a wool man on a mission.

Flying over Soviet air space, my mind wonders and I dwell upon Siberia, the Gulag archipelago and the historical hardship of the Russian people. "Sir, more coffee?" as a smiling face greets me back to reality and tells me that we are four hours from Beijing.

It is now time to get serious and study my brief. Our accommodation was in Liangmaqiao Road, the Chaoyang district of Beijing, the city centre. My room on the twenty-eighth floor, a suite, had an extended view of the city and a bed that one could possibly play a game of table tennis on.

Thursday 9-10-2003

My first commitment was a 6:00 am lecture on trading and so forth. In China followed by questions and answers at 7:15 am. Boy, oh boy, was I in for a shock, several I hasten to add but practically all pleasant. For instance, the word 'patent' or patentcy appears to be non-existent in China. I heard a story where a well-known American computer company had introduced a new p.c. on to the US market last year called Apple 147. It has been alleged that two weeks later one could purchase a Pineapple 247 in Shanghai?? Census figures indicate that there are 46,000 people per

week becoming eligible for the workforce. There are 500 million people involved in agriculture. Enormous figures are bombasted in all industrial sections alike but I have to add that I have been introduced to an enormous culture-rich people. I recall as a child asking the question "How old is old?" and the answer I got was, "As old as China".

At 8:15 am we were driven from the Kempinski hotel by coach to the Irish Embassy where there was witnessing of agreements/contracts by the minister for education and science, Noel Dempsey t.d. from 10:00 to 15:00. We returned to our hotel and had a break for one hour. At 17:00 we departed by coach for dinner at Xe He Ya Ju restaurant followed by a reception at the state guest house which was attended by our president Mary McAleese and various Chinese government representatives. My first taste of genuine Chinese food was an absolute treat, duck neck and head followed by turtle, traditional vegetables and rice, yum, yum.

Friday 10-10-2003

Another early morning rise at 6:30 and you may notice that I did not mention the time I went to bed last night and I won't. 7:30 started with a security check before EI presidential breakfast at 8:00. President Mary McAleese spoke at length on Irish/Chinese business and what we could offer each other in educational and learning faculties. At 10:00 I left for a personal meeting with members of the Chinese textile, wool division, some twenty minutes drive from our hotel. This meeting extended well into the afternoon. Next on the agenda was one of the highlights of my mission. 19:00 we were coached to a pre-Riverdance reception at the great



Karl Zang, boss of CTRC and Colman Keane

hall of the people, West Road of Tiaw An Mew Square. There is no doubt, we were treated like royalty. Government buildings, a style of architecture I had not previously witnessed, the Terracotta warriors of Xian, the magic, the myth, the mystery of ancient Chinese civilisation. 20:00 Ms Moya Doherty, producer and Mr John McCoglan, director of Riverdance, mingled and chatted among the Irish contingency. Let the show begin, 10,000 seated in the Great hall of the people, heart of China, pride of millions of Chinese, Riverdance. Oh my god, what wonder, the acoustics, you could hear even above the pounding feet and the swirling music, the audience gasping for breath, then an explosion of shouts and whoops as all that air burst out again in a wave of wonderment. I was never so proud to be Irish surrounded by 9,800 Chinese aristocrats. To try and regain normal adrenaline after the show, what better place to go than "Dirty Nelly's Beijing"? It has been said that some Irishman sang a Peter Sarsted song, "Where do you go to my lovely?" that night. I wonder whom that might have been?

Saturday 11-10-2003

Rise and shine, it's 8:00 am Beijing time, a taped morning call beckoned. Yours truly would have preferred 10:00 am, hence a cold shower, a woolly business meeting. 11:15 in the hotel lobby, At



Colman Keane meeting Mary MacAleese

13:00 we depart for Sheng Yang, where we witnessed a conferral of honorary doctorate by the Harbin institute of technology. At 16:00 we visited the human economic development zone where there was an economic briefing by the Hunnan authorities and a briefing by Enterprise Ireland followed with an address by the president of Ireland Mary McAleese. We return to our hotel at 18:30 to savour more traditional Chinese culinary.

Sunday 12-10-2003

According to our schedule, a free day but not so free as today is shopping day and we also fly to Shanghai. We were very fortunate to have a guide to bring us to the street markets. There were endless stalls offering all kinds of everything. To give you a few examples: heavy men's winter shirts, two dollars; up-to-date dvds, twenty for twenty dollars; PS2 games, ten for twenty dollars. Incidentally my children have a great laugh now showing their friends Mickey Mouse in Chinese. Pre-departure at Beijing airport, the Health authorities insist that all passengers have their temperatures checked in order to prevent and help the spread of SARS. I sleep for the duration of our flight with Air China.

We check in to our hotel, the Shanghai Porterman Ritz-Carlton hotel at 20:00.

Later that evening we savour some Chinese traditional dance and song: I must say, much different to the Tulla Céill Band.

Monday 13-10-2003

Not an early morning rise for a change as our first official appointment is not until 12:00. Again as in Beijing, security check 11:30, followed by a presidential lunch hosted by the mayor of Shanghai. Before lunch I had the vision of bacon, cabbage and Kinvara spuds: not to be as we were again treated to traditional Chinese culinary. A few free hours, four

as a matter of fact and off to see the sights of Shanghai. The Bund (Wai Tan) on Zhong Shan Dong Yi Road, the City God temple, Yu Garden and the Xiang Yang flea markets, then to Shanghai museum and finally the Jin Mao tower (eighty-eight floors). After all of the

above, bags full and droopy eyes, back to the hotel for a brief rest. The next official appointment now only half an hour away, time was not on my side, hence a rushed taxi ride (I missed the bus) to Mao Ming Nana Road where the joint Enterprise Ireland/consul general's reception was being held in the Shanghai Garden hotel. A delightful evening was had by all.

Tuesday 14-10-2003

Rise and shine, our last official gathering was the Enterprise Ireland's Presidential Breakfast in the hotel I was staying in. President Mary McAleese represented our country not alone in stature but with dignity, elegance, knowledge and with an air of fondness and respect for the Chinese people. We are all so proud of her.

Alas all good things come to an end, so homeward bound. A journey of a life time etched and carved in my mind, memories of a great race, a great nation, hard working, humble people that is China today.

Wednesday 15-10-2003

Departure: Shanghai/Pu Dong 12:25 for Amsterdam. Viewing the Mongolian Mountains to the south from 36,000 feet on a crisp cool clear day I think of Genghis Khan, the great wall, Kublai Khan, the various dynasties and the last emperor. Amsterdam to Dublin, Dublin to Galway, Gort.

Now, one year later, October 2004, I still cherish my memories of China and will to my grave.



Alan Browne, Tuam and Colman Keane

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The light of other days

Some of our readers may be old enough to remember the time when the annual parish sports were eagerly awaited. Competition was keen, local rivalries abounded and hawkers did a roaring trade. Sr Maura Crowe, Convent of Mercy, Gort discovered a programme of Tubber sports (1914) recently. She would be very keen to contact relatives of participants or anybody who could throw more light on the subject. Note the names of the competitors in the 100 yards (and the prizes.).

4

EVENT 2
100 YARDS (OPEN Handicap)

First Prize—Silver Hot Water Jug
Second Prize— Silver Plated Egg Stands

| | Yards |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1. James Casey, Clontarf | 7 |
| 2. P. Burke, Tubber | 7 |
| 3. M. Conway, Tubber | 7 |
| 4. P. J. Moroney, Gort | 8 |
| 5. J. Maza,borough, Tubber | 8 |
| 6. P. F. Pigott, Gort | 8 |
| 7. M. Heir, Tubber | 8 |
| 8. J. Fitzgibbon, Drumcoligher | 8 |
| 9. Greaney, Limerick | 8 |
| 10. J. Brooks, Ennis | 8 |
| 11. M. S. Crowe, Tubber | 8 |
| 12. J. Keane Risher | 8 |
| 13. P. Moyan | 8 |
| 14. P. McLin, Tubber | 8 |
| 15. P. Heir, Tubber | 8 |
| 16. P. Fogarty, Tubber | 8 |
| 17. E. McEernis, Tubber | 8 |
| 18. M. Geoghan, Tubber | 8 |
| 19. P. J. Kelly, Tubber | 8 |
| 20. J. McNamara, Crusheen | 8 |
| 21. T. Holiday, Limerick | 8 |
| 22. R. Nezza, Limerick | 8 |
| 23. F. O'Carroll, Ennis | 7 |
| 24. J. F. Fitzgerald, Gort | 7 |
| 25. D. J. O'Dea | 7 |
| 26. T. J. Sexton, Clontarf | 7 |
| 27. M. O'Neil, Labashceda | 7 |
| 28. T. O'Donohue, Boston | 7 |
| 29. M. F. Cahill, Kilmurry | 8 |
| 30. W. J. O'Donohue, Crusheen | 8 |
| 31. M. J. Lynam, Tubber | 8 |
| 32. F. Burke, Tubber | 7 |
| 33. A. Lynam, Tubber | 8 |
| 34. G. P. Pigott, Gort | 8 |
| 35. T. Quinn, Peterswell | 8 |
| 36. J. Fogarty, Tubber | 8 |
| 37. T. Hejloran, do | 8 |
| 38. M. Henly, do | 8 |
| 39. T. O'Brien, do | 8 |
| 40. J. O'Donohue, do | 8 |
| 41. J. Honrahan, do | 8 |
| 42. P. S. McNabon, Newmarket | 8 |
| 43. M. A. Lawlor, Limerick | 8 |

A page from the copybook of John Ward of Rinneen dated 17-12-1891. John was the eldest of a family of nine. He farmed in Rinneen with his brother Peter until his death in 1952

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SUNDAY, 23rd AUG., 1914.

COMMENCING AT 1 P.M. SHARP.

NOTE—None but Officials and Competitors (during their events only) allowed inside the enclosure.

"CHAMPION" Printing Works, Ennis.

Rinneen
17/12/91

Dear Father

I wish to inform you about the present which has been promised to me by my teacher. He has promised me a very nice Christmas card and intends to present it to me after my Christmas vacation. I am very thankful to my teacher for the nice present which he has promised to me for getting off my books so well and doing my exercises so well. I am studying my tasks very hard for the past month in order that I may be able to make a good result in my examination for my classes and in order that I may be promoted into the next class at my next examination which will come off very soon. I am yours truly

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The Phoenix project

The builders, artisans, manufacturers, builders' providers and the people of south Galway working together to rebuild Orchard Centre, Gort. The 9th February 2003 dawned a bleak day for Orchard Centre, its clients, the staff, the Brothers of Charity and indeed for everyone involved in its tragic burning.

Happily however, the people of Gort and south Galway rallied round and within a few days alternative accommodation had been arranged about the area. Strange as it may seem, this breaking up of the group into smaller

ones gave both staff and clients an opportunity to assess their needs in a new light—and this assessment is being brought to play and fulfilment in the new Orchard Centre now being built.

The generosity of the area since this sad day would have made King Guaire proud and never more so than on Friday June 18th 2004 as the builders, manufacturers and artisans of the area stepped up to re-build the centre at cost—in these days of self-interest this has nearly to be unique.

This however is but the beginning and any help or assistance along the way will

be gratefully accepted. Hopefully this project will stand as a monument to everyone involved and indeed to the people of Gort and south Galway. May it be a unifying catalyst for good in the area.

The following letter received from the self-advocacy committee of Orchard Centre, underlines the importance of the Phoenix project:

Dear builders

We would like to thank all the builders of south Galway for their help in helping us to re-build Orchard Centre. We really appreciate all your help that you have given us so far.

We are feeling really good, at the progress of the centre at the moment. After the fire we were all upset from being split up from each other. Our friends are scattered all over the town. We look forward to moving in really soon. It is lovely to see it being re-built again. The men are doing great work.

Yours sincerely
 Ann Mahon

chairperson, self-advocacy
 —that says it all.



Work in progress on new Orchard Centre

THE PHOENIX PROJECT

The Builders, Artisans, Manufacturers, Builders Providers & People of South Galway working together to restore

Orchard Centre for the Brothers Of Charity.

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telephone Shane or Pat 091 63 51 04

Crowe Street in two eras

Pudney Piggott and Jack McNeill collaborated to give us the names of residents of Crowe Street when they were children and the present owners. Do you agree with them?

| right side going down | | present owner |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------|
| Piggott's | shop | Piggott |
| Considine's | post office | Hilary |
| Nolan's | bar | Blackthorn |
| Eklim's | tailor | Ken Carr |
| Shiela Glynn | small shop | Coolie Blinds |
| French's | retail | Mrs Nolan |
| John Ramplin | workman | rented |
| Paddy Nolan | shoemaker | rented |
| John Bond | trader | rented |
| Spelman's | business | Finn Honan |
| McNevin | | Luke Kelly |
| Cinema | (4 th for pictures) | shed now |
| Grealish | | |
| Glynn | | |
| Macklin's | workers | for sale |

| left side going down | | owner now |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Katie Turner (dressmaker) | Pearse Piggott |
| 2 | Guard Sullivan (guard) | John Sullivan jnr |
| 3 | Treston's (harness maker) | optician and apts |
| 4 | Hughe's (shop) | early to late shop |
| 5 | Porter Store (T Blake) | Johnny Sullivan (acct) |
| 6 | Buckley's (signal man) | vets office |
| 7 | Gillane's (shop/dressmaker) | flower shop |
| 8 | Connolly's (workmen) | John Counihan |
| 9 | Nonie Fox (dressmaker) | May Counihan |
| 10 | Jim Gibbons (hurley maker) | May Counihan |
| 11 | P. Hughes (tailor) | |
| 12 | Dinny Williams | (co council foreman) |
| 13 | Mrs Farrell | |
| 14 | P Cookes (postman) | vacant |
| 15 | Connors (carpenter) | vacant |
| 16 | May Cahill (shop bakery) | vacant |
| 17 | Tom Fogarty (tradesman) | vacant |
| 18 | Mikie Kyne (shoemaker) | Honan's |
| 19 | Revenue Barracks | J Sullivan car park |
| 20 | Martin Jordan | council new houses |
| 21 | Paddy Glynn | council new houses |
| 22 | Micky Jordan (small man) | council new houses |
| 23 | Pat Glynn (carpenter) | council new houses |
| 24 | Jim Kimbsey (workman) | council house |
| 25 | P. Nilands (foreman council) | council house |
| 26 | Jim Hynes (motor mechanic) | council house |
| 27 | John A Keane (farmer) | new estate |
| 28 | Murphys (handy man) | Paddy Piggott |
| 29 | Colie Cooney (horse trainer) | garage |
| 30 | Jim O'Grady (painter) | garage |
| 31 | Honor Fahey | P Carty |
| 32 | Henry Dalton | Carty |
| 33 | Tiger Daly (trader) | |
| 34 | Mick Sweeney (traveller) | |
| 35 | John Geraghty | |
| 36 | Jack Lynch | Katie Nolan |
| 37 | Mick McQuaid (butcher) | son, Mickey |
| 38 | P. McNeills (foreman council) | Nancy |
| 39 | Joe Williams (council worker) | Wallaces |
| 40 | P Glynn | Robert Coen apt |
| 41 | Patsy Callinan | Robert Coen apt |
| 42 | Joe Rock (farmer) | Martin Rock |
| 43 | Gerald Piggott (salesman) | new house |
| 44 | Peter Glynn | Cyril Glynn |
| 45 | John McNevin | Hickey's |
| 46 | Pat Linnane | Hickey's |
| 47 | Todie Connaire (council worker) | Mrs McInerney |
| 48 | W Ballinger (weigh master) | Cusacks |



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above: one of Gort's landmarks, Glynn's Hotel, being re-vamped

above right: new factory at Gallagher's Lane

right and far right: Coen's Drapery, Bridge Street, has changed hands and is presently under re-construction

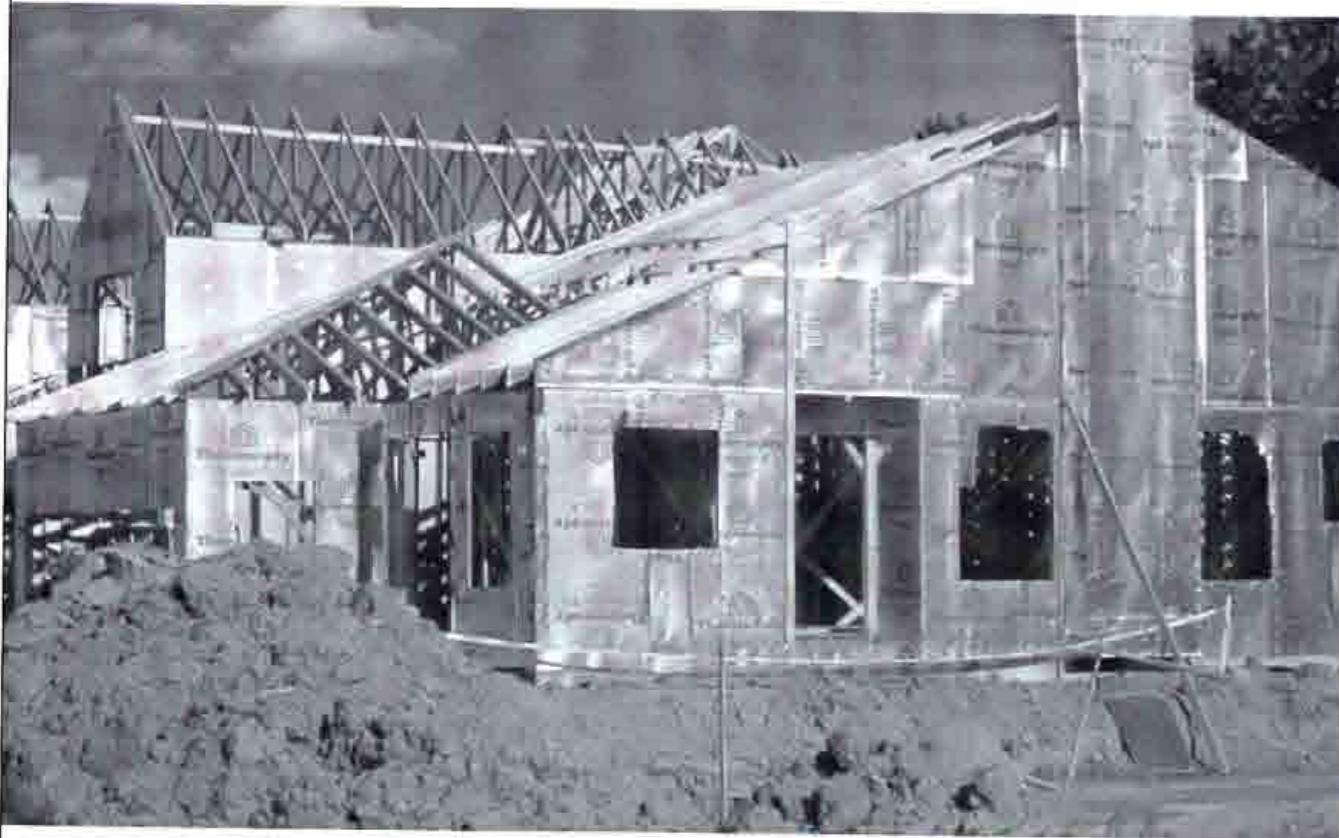
below right: house building in progress

below: Boland's Lane comes to life again



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director: Jimmy Considine

Chalk and talk

by Peadar Ó Conaire

In the '60s the student teacher's dream was to get a job for July 1st. This would ensure a salary for the summer. I was one of the lucky ones. I was offered a principal's post on the 1st July 1966 in Ballybrittas, Co Laois. As there was no accommodation available in the village I had to stay in the nearest town, Portarlinton, seven miles away.

I arrived in Portarlinton on the last day of June, went to my digs (which the kindly parish priest had arranged for me) and enquired about the whereabouts of the school. Armed with directions and a sturdy bike from the man of the house, I set off to find my workplace, which turned out to be two stone buildings, the junior and senior sections being separated by a concrete yard. This layout seemed strange to me but stranger

still was the fact that on my arrival there was a large gathering of local people and pupils in the yard and a lot of the children were crying. It transpired that the assistant teacher was leaving to get married in Tipperary; the principal was moving to a bigger school in Offaly. I discretely left this valley of tears, cycled back to Portarlinton and got my bag ready for the commencement of my teaching career the following morning. As it happened the assistant, Kitty Hillery, offered me a lift in her sparkling new car, so the old black bike became redundant after just one day. Years later I discovered that a neighbour of ours in Crowe Street, Jo Hickey, was Kitty's sister. Small world.

My stay in Laois was short. I left in November to take up principalship of Kilmacduagh national school. The

manager of the school was Dean Denis Hynes whom I knew well from secondary school days. I was to collect the keys at his house on a Sunday evening. I travelled to Gort by bus and knew immediately I was at the parish priest's gate when I saw the black Morris Minor (reg. no. LIF 147) outside. Anybody who went to school to the Dean would never forget that registration number.

He offered me tea and 'a nice fresh egg', Gort, home to the stranger. Later in the evening he drove me to my 'digs', Mattie Cummins' in Tierneevin. I remember Cummins' for many reasons, but principally bean a ti's superb cooking, people 'visiting' on winter nights, girls cycling to secondary school in Gort, meeting at the church on dark winter mornings and visits to Julie's rather quaint shop round the corner.



Kilmacduagh school pupils, 1969

front row l-r: Declan Kelly, Albert Linnane, John Lally, Aidan Finnegan, Patrick Helebert, John Rock, Gerry Carr, Christopher Kelly, Raymond Finnegan, Gerry O'Connor, Sean Carr, Tony Hannon, Gerry Lally

second row: Brendan O'Connor, Noreen Rock, Mona Lally, Margarite Flaherty, Michael Helebert, William Rock, Patrick Flaherty, Kieran Finnegan, Michael Flaherty, John Flaherty, Áine Lally, Patrick Lally, Fidalus Kelly

third row: Patrick Kilkenny, Bridget Rock, Ann Morgan, Mary Helebert, Rita Helebert, Mary Hannon, Geraldine Helebert, Catherine Cummins, Rita Watters, Dympna O'Connor, Geraldine Linnane, Liam Carr.

back row: Peter Conroy, Pat Rock, Bernard Cummins, Pat Finnegan, Gerard Flaherty, Mary Ann Rock, Ann Grealish, r.i.p., Patricia Lally, Geraldine Roche, r.i.p., Pauline Carr, Marie Flaherty, Bernie Lally, Bernadette Kelly.

Before Christmas that year, aided and abetted by Mattie Cummins, I bought my first car, a three-year-old Anglia. I would safely say it was the most washed and polished car in the parish. Being on wheels enabled me to see more of a college student I had met that summer in Spiddal. We married three years later.

On arrival at the school the first morning, I noticed there were no big boys there. I was told they had gone down to

League winners 1973



back row l-r: Alan Counihan, Frank Shaw, Francis Walsh, P Conroy, John Sullivan, Tony Monahan and Derek Fahey
front row l-r: Patrick Mulcair, Michael Kilroy, John Counihan, Pearse Piggott (captain), Joe O'Connor, Dermot Duffy and Gabriel Piggott

the wood to gather *cipeens* for the fire. They eventually arrived back with their loads and with a lot of huffing and puffing we got fires going in the Mrs and Master's rooms. The following spring we used go for nature walks in the woods, where the tenth and eleventh fairways are now. Towards the end of that school year we got a set of jerseys. The following year we organised a footballing weekend in the midlands and a trip to Croke Park on St Patrick's day for the railway cup finals. Forester Tom Cox presented us with goal posts and cross bars and Johnny Waters, who had purchased a farm at the end of the school road, put up the posts in the field beside Aggie Carr's, where the new school was subsequently built.

The children walked to school but in winter-time the infants were brought on bicycle carriers by parents. Dr Browne came to examine the senior pupils for confirmation in 1968. Some were in awe of the great man but everyone passed the test. Next in importance to

confirmation was the liturgical festival in Gort where schools got an opportunity to sing popular hymns and were awarded certificates in competence. It was a day of great merriment and hilarity for pupils. In the third term sixth class pupils were geared towards the primary certificate examination. It was a time of change and the primary cert. died a natural death. I supervised the last primary cert. examination in Killomoran school.

In 1970 I succeeded Gerard Heenan as principal teacher of the boys' school. My assistant was a nineteen-year-old, straight out of college, Mattie Murphy. He was very keen on hurling. After a few months Mattie was appointed principal of Kilmacduagh national school and Mary Lane (Connolly) joined me in Gort. Subsequently as numbers increased

Annette O'Loughlin (Walsh) was appointed as second assistant (succeeded by Gretta Cafferky). The main problem was shortage of space, a two room building on a half acre site meant that floor and play space were at a premium. I had fifty-one boys in my own room for most of a year. That number would qualify for three teachers nowadays.

The board of management decided to actively look for a site for a new school. In the meantime I taught fifth and sixth classes in the town hall for two terms. The convent authorities came to our rescue, offering us a room for the junior classes. We

gladly availed of the offer and continued with our bi-location school until September 1984 when we moved into the new building on the Tubber Road. It had taken seven years of lobbying, debate, agitation and fundraising to achieve our objective. The main difficulty was the acquisition of a suitable site. In the end Canon George Quinn agreed to sell the site (earmarked for a swimming pool) to the board of management for a nominal sum.

The street league was Gort's own all-Ireland. The final attracted large partisan crowds cheering on their young heroes. Rivalry was keen especially between near neighbours; a Crowe St v The Square final was always eagerly awaited. Participation in the city league meant that Gort boys, if they were good enough, could be chosen to play in the Annual representative matches against other cities. Most years we managed to have at least one player on the panel. In 1973 Pearse Piggott was selected for both the football and hurling teams that played Limerick.

In the '80s we initiated an annual tournament against Board's Mill school in Trim. We would travel to Meath for a footballing weekend and they would pay us a return visit. The young players stayed with their opposite numbers. This created friendships, which in some cases have lasted to this day. The organisers in Meath were Peadar Lehane and Gort man Cólín Ó Coigligh.



Big welcome for Sam, October 1998
included are: Kelvin Downey, Michael Browne, Robert Piggott, Ronan Loughney, Ciarán Cahill, Noel Stanford, Eoghan Glynn, Tony Finnegan and Peter Naughton

School concerts in the '70s were major events for the boys. They consisted of plays, sketches, music and dance. Play practices took place in our living room in Crowe Street and concerts were staged in the cinema or Sullivan's hotel. Johnny Spelman acted as m.c. on those nights and treated the audience to wit and banter.

To bolster our sports fund we organised annual sponsored walks, starting in the square round by Thoor Ballylee and back. It was a major event in the school calendar at the time. It would hardly be feasible in the modern era because of the volume of traffic.

Other highlights of the school year were the diocesan sports for primary schools (the winning school received the Dr Browne cup) and the school tour. The tour was organised by the station master, Martin Lawlor. Hundreds of children would leave Gort station by train for destinations like Dublin, Tramore, Waterford, Cork and Mosney. Will there ever be excitement like that at Gort station again?

We moved into the new school building on 1st September 1984. We couldn't believe our luck: large classrooms (en-suite), a g.p. hall, a staffroom and our

County champions 2000



front: Aidan Harte, Eric Daly, Peter Naughton, Gary O'Donnell (capt.), Kris Finnegan, Ciarán Cahill, Morgan Kelly and Karl Powell
back: Michael Counihan, Michael Browne, Mark Stanford, Darragh Coen, Eoin Glynn, Noel Stanford, David Hehir, Gerard McGann and Shane McNevin

own playing pitch. The man who had overseen the construction of the new building, Fr Alfie O'Halloran, had just left Gort and was replaced by Canon Christy Walsh. The school was officially opened by junior minister John Donnellan in January 1985. I spent twenty happy years in the new building. I had the support of dedicated teachers, caring parents and progressive Boards of management. Fundraising was never a problem due to the support of the business community and parents.

Gort has changed dramatically, in recent times. New houses have sprung up all over town. In Church Street in the

seventies the local boys played soccer in the street in the evenings, picking up the ball when the odd car passed. Nowadays crossing a street in Gort can be quite hazardous.

But life is about change. Pupils go through the system to be replaced by a new generation. Teachers also inevitably call it a day, as I did last June. *Mar fhocal scoir*, I would like to welcome my successor Francis O'Connor (a past pupil) to Scoil Eoin and wish him many happy years at the helm there.

Go mba fada buan scoláirí, múinteoirí, tuismitheoirí agus lucht bainistíochta Scoil Eoin.



(right) Open air art class June 1971 included are Pearse Piggott, John Counihan, Michael Kilroy and Conor Spelman



(left) Enjoying a school visit to Traught (1969), Rita Waters and Bernie Lally.

2004: a good year for our public speakers and debaters

Gort Community School has a fine and proud tradition in debating and public speaking. This year was no exception, with our debating team and public speakers doing very well in their respective competitions.

Lourda Kennedy, Deirdre Fahy and Michelle Moran, took part in the business professional women's public speaking competition. After winning the regional final in Galway they progressed to the national finals, which were held in Trinity College Dublin. Three other schools also took part, they were Holy Child, Killiney, Kilkenny Community College and Bridgetine College, Mount Rath. Mount Rath went home winners with the Gort girls taking the runners up prize. From there they went on to compete in the north-south final also held in Trinity. Gort and Mount Rath represented the south while Friend's School Lisburn and Rainey endowed school Magerafelt represented the north. After

what was a closely contested final, Gort were announced the winners. Lourda won the best chairperson award. A big thank you to Sr De Lourdes Fahy.

I-r: Michelle Moran, Lourda Kennedy, Deirdre Fahy



Woodturning excellence

Séan McGann (Ardrahan), a student at Gort community school who won first prize for his piece at the national seminar of the Irish Woodturners Guild in Maynooth, being presented with his prize by Mr Felix McCoy, chairman of the guild



Michael Kennedy, potter

by Paddy Cooke

A gift of marla as a young boy from his parents, led Michael Kennedy to his present position as one of the foremost potters in Ireland.

Michael who has his work studio and shop in Bolands Lane, Gort, explains that as a young boy he was forever busy with his hands and this interest in creating and making things, continued into his post-second level schooling in Sligo, where after his leaving certificate, he studied art at Sligo Institute of Technology.

Having graduated from Sligo Institute in the 1970s, he studied fine art and sculpture at the National College of Art and Design in Dublin and the Crawford Municipal School of Art, Cork with the intention of teaching. However, the pottery 'bug' had well and truly taken hold and he returned to NCAD to take a post graduate degree in ceramics, before returning to Sligo to open his first studio in 1979.

Over the next decades his work developed and gained widespread attention not alone in Ireland but overseas. Much of his ideas and inspiration is drawn from celtic era and bronze age patterns and have evolved over the years. Today he has an international reputation and his pottery is highly sought after as collectors items available through prestige shopping outlets in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Hong Kong and Australia and of course at home in Ireland.

In 1996 he opened his present workshop in Gort, having settled here where he is married to local solicitor Mary Larkin. For several years both Sligo and Gort studios were in production, but in 2003 all the output was transferred to Gort, with Sligo continuing as a retail outlet.

Speaking of the actual process, Michael explains that all of the basic clays used are imported in lots of one tonne from the UK and France and

mixed by him with a combination of feldspar and water to produce the basic material used. After mixing, the material is de-aired and left for about a week, before being weighed and cut depending on the size and weight of the finished pottery piece.

At this stage, the clay is ready for shaping into the piece of pottery, this is done on the traditional potter's wheel by Michael or one of his trained staff. The piece is then left to dry out for up to two weeks before being placed in one of the three gas kilns in the workshop for the first firing. The temperature of the kiln is stoked up to 1,000 degrees centigrade rising approximately sixty degrees per hour. On reaching the desired temperature the heat is held for about an hour before being turned off and the fired pieces removed when at normal temperature from the kiln - this first firing procedure normally takes about forty-eight hours.

To get the very unique colours for which the Kennedy pottery is famous, is a lime consuming and intricate operation using all of Michael's expertise and knowledge and involves the pouring and mixing of many varied materials to get the various hues. Many materials are used and combined at this stage, for example copper to bring out green or red, cobalt for blue, iron for brown to name but a few and each of which must be individually poured onto the piece in turn to secure the desired combination of colour. Having completed this, the pieces are again returned to

the kiln which is now raised to a temperature of 1,200 degrees centigrade as quickly as possible and held there for one hour, before being allowed to cool down for twenty-four hours to normal temperature.

At all stages from the initial clay mixing to the finished product, each piece is continuously inspected and examined to ensure that it is of the highest standard and quality expected from the studio.

An increasing portion of his produce are special one-off pieces commissioned by either individual or corporate customers, with quite an amount also being purchased by visitors to Ireland, although he states that during 2004 the reduction in the number of US visitors is quite noticeable.

A member of the crafts council of Ireland, Michael Kennedy is seen as a seminal figure in Irish pottery circles and is widely respected as one of the most influential figures in the industry today, who has definitely put Gort on the international map for quality and excellence.



Michael Kennedy at work in his pottery

The girl of yesteryear and the uniform she wore

by Eilbhe Ni Chonaire

I was in Australia when my father decided after much contemplation that he would retire as principal of *Scoil Eoin*. It brought me great sadness that I could not be there at what would surely be a significant time of change for a very important figure in my life. I returned home after an absence of sixteen months, in which I travelled and worked in Australia and New Zealand and toured extensively in south-east Asia. It was a strange feeling turning the corner in Dublin airport and meeting my two-month-old nephew whose creation had been but a whisper in an empty cave when I left. It was a happy, emotional moment, re-acquainting myself with my family and seeing the old familiar faces and their joy at my return. It was the first time in my life that I met my father not as the master but as a man. After a brief sojourn at my sister's place in Kildare, we travelled back through the unassuming midlands until we reached the rolling fields held loosely by stone walls and as the late afternoon sun spilled all over everything, we arrived in Gort. Never was lush life thrown forth with such a spurt and what our cousins down-under would give for such a sense of history. We turned slowly coming in off the Loughrea road and moved through the long street, until the snout of the car rose slightly as we commanded the bridge, and there, basking in the sun, was my school, sitting behind the river, the second womb. Sometimes when you come back after a long absence, it jolts you, shocks you even with the flood of memories that may drown you in their wistful waters. And I did cry that so much of childhood was gone from me and so long ago and so distant, across a river like the very school itself. It was a combination of this rush of emotion and my father's departure from primary school life that prompted me to gather the rosebuds of my early education and press the flowers to the page until they became words.

My mother tells me I had been eager to go to school two years before I enrolled, carrying an empty school bag while we delivered my brother and sister to their school yards before I went away home again with my mammy. Eventually my day did come and up I went and kissed farewell to my mother who smiled although there was a wet sheen about her eyes. I was terribly excited and took my small chair and crayons with glee. In the following two years I brought all my imaginary friends and dolls to school at some point or another. My first school tour was a big trip to Coole Park on a big bus; everything was big back then, especially the big room upstairs. It was so big it could be divided into two rooms by a sliding door and it was here that we gathered as part of the whole school for big occasions and p.e. I was small and it was very, very big, the big room was. Outside, mounted on the wall in the corridor was a high-hung picture of cherubic angels, an image which has stayed with me ever since as depicting the most beautiful aspects of an afterlife. We ate lunch outdoors when the weather prevailed and *liga* has never tasted as good since. When the older girls were around they asked questions like "What is a hundred and a hundred?" and when I heard the answer I thought how pleasurable a feeling it must be to know such interesting facts. My sister, seven years my senior, kept a caring eye over me in those young vulnerable times, she seemed to be nearly an adult then, such was the strength of her protection. Towards the year end, we crouched on the grass during the school sports, admiring the physical strength of those older while we contented ourselves and the crowd with leap frog and egg and spoon races. Each night I came home and my mother lifted me up to kiss the Du, the head of a deer that I had affectionately re-named where it hung upon our wall. These are some of my oldest

memories and they are all such happy ones.

In first class we grew more robust and our play ranged over the whole yard. There were fixtures in our games, the silver car and the gold car, the line and the shed, the gates and the tinhouse. Sometimes the rain fell because it had nowhere else to go and we rejoiced each time it stopped as though we felt the sun for the first time in our short lives. We played faster games and played them better. We learnt what it meant to confess and we partook of the body of Christ all in the one year. And at Christmas we performed the nativity play, much like the crib in the church, with long sheets of mystery tied with a tie at the forehead.

The next year, we sat at bigger wooden desks with big old tarnished heaters humming beside and behind us. We walked out along the river on nature walks, hand in hand, in pairs, in file, smelling the wood and hearing the river; kicking the leaves and watching the trees; carrying conkers and twigs back into the classroom, to bring nature in amongst us and build her a table, an altar to our growing selves, a stage on which tadpoles performed Life. I ate my sandwiches of cheese or ham at lunch accompanied by a Capri-sun. I learnt to tie my own tie and when you walked in the front gates each day the wind took you nearly all the way to the teachers' entrance. Some of the older girls wore slip-on shoes but mine had laces because they were better for running in and when the wind took you they didn't fall off.

Another year on and I learnt about otters and bulrushes and Brian Boru and Lady Gregory. Although I have not a singing note in my head I learnt a song then that I have loved and hummed ever since:

Land of the silver birch, home of the beaver, Where still the mighty moose wanders at will, Blue lake and rocky

shore, I will return once more, Blue lake and rocky shore, I will return once more.

We sang a lot in those years, never more than at Christmas. We sang as we made our Christmas den. I remember making Chinese lanterns that hung in their swaying majesty the full length and breadth of the room. We put tinsel and decorations everywhere, we drew and painted santas with cotton wool beards and heavy black sacks, full of our own expectancy. I have yet to see a department store at Christmas match the festive beauty of that room. We coloured leaves with silver markers that were all the rage back then, and banned if I recall. We circled crêpe paper into circles and made cards to bring home on that wet cold day when we broke for Christmas. I don't believe we had even noticed the weather until we stepped outside the school, such was the magic within. The following two years brought double figure ages and a greater con-

sciousness of the world at large and the nature of our religion. It shocks people to this day when I tell them that we spent a lot, if not most of our lunchtimes, sitting mesmerised in the nuns' chapel. We went there voluntarily and it seemed a place of great intrigue and mystery, with light falling through the stain glass to touch your very face with its cool heat. Missals were hidden in the wood and stools for kneeling were hidden underneath the chairs and secrets were hidden in the altar somewhere that we would never find or look for. We were perfectly still and enthralled and if the curious went up to look at the grand big heavy printed book then it was a healthy desire for insider knowledge that motivated them. The chairs recalled films of Camelot and an age of understanding we had not yet reached. But my world was expanding, I discovered Tolkien and Lewis and the map on the wall in the classroom showed all the mountains and rivers in Ireland and we knew them all. I

remember a poem of a highwayman by Walter Scott that haunts me still and a photocopied book about the history of our locality and its literary importance that would impress the abbey founders themselves. We learned to write with a fountain pen, a skill that the modern keyboard has robbed from me. Some of us earned the privilege of bellringing or photocopying, the latter an important duty for singing class. Into the Big Room we went, and stood and sang *Peigin Leitir Mór* and the *Gypsy Rover* from our photocopies. My favourite was St Patrick's day, when we would sing Irish songs; old ones about St Patrick himself and who he wanted sitting beside him and in front of him and everywhere about him. We sang "He's got the McCarthy cup in his hands" when the victorious Galway team visited. Even they seemed small in the big room. They were jovial times when the heated debates were over who preferred *Home and Away to Neighbours* and the most



Nativity play 1983
front row l to r: Susan Kenny, Maria Diviney, Jackie Glynn, Eilbhe Ni Chonaire
middle row l to r: Siobhan Gillane, Lorraine Glynn, Joan O'Connor, Hannah Fahy

daring deed was to run Errol Flynn-style down the forbidden teachers' stairs.

And then it was my last year. The map of Ireland became a map of the world and a globe and things were growing and expanding and the world was bigger than Gort and bigger than the school and we knew it. Possibly even bigger than the big room. We stood at the passage to the big girls' school which fed into ours like an umbilical cord and listened to the sound of big important things happening there and tried to understand the nature of the link. The enormity of life was nearly upon us, yet we ran around the table singing songs from the musical *Oliver*, reluctant to accept that we, the big girls of the small

school would soon be small girls in the big girls' school. We did our lessons to the faint sound of the world at work in the town and street, a sound we were unaware of before, perhaps had never heard. We advanced artistically, with a wonderful play called *Babushka* and poems and stories that I loved. I remember our English book had an excerpt from *The Three Musketeers* which inspired me to read the whole novel and which remains one of my very favourites to this day. English and history came to the fore for me that year, I guess I was learning a lot about my interests and what inspired me. I remember repeating the words "In 1169 and the spring of 1170, the Normans invaded Ireland" over and

over and I still do, when my mind is feeling lazy and I wish to concentrate my thoughts. We were athletes now and in our school sports we ran and sprinted amid the cheers of the infants, watching where we once had and thinking they would never be as big or as strong as us. We grew that year, we knew so much that we were accepted by the holy spirit. Confirmation had always been a day of great pride for me, seeing my father there, every child nervous on this important day and this important man calm amongst them. Seeing the intensity with which he worked. Mine was no different. It heralded the end of my time in primary school and by the time of the first frosts that autumn I had gone from it altogether, but the link was never broken.

Plato in *The Republic* argues that the farther back we go, the nearer to perfection we reach. Certainly, I have the most beautiful memories of those years and I hope that kind of childhood is a privilege that has endured. Now that I am bigger, everything seems smaller, but I trust that I will always have a big room to go to, somewhere. I hope that the simpler age has not left us entirely and that our memories anchor us, so that we are not rootless spores. To the school and the teachers and pupils who passed within it, and to my father whose retirement prompted such thought, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Oh and for the record, my father is still a teacher, I learn from him every day.



School tour to Kerry

kneeling: Maria Diviney

front row l to r: Clodagh Hannigan, Eilbhe ni Chonaire, Louise Lawlor and Marion O'Connor

back row l to r: Susan Kenny and Olive Curley

Amsterdam, 'Venice of the north'

by Fabian Mc Grath

I first came to Amsterdam in 1994 for one of those long weekends for which it is famous or, even, infamous. On that occasion I saw the Amsterdam which has become known the world over for its bars, coffee shops and red light district. It was a rather typical young tourist's visit to a city which I now think of as a 'Venice of the north'. While enjoying that trip I didn't really fall in love with the city. However, the following year I returned and, this time, things were very different. It was my starting point for a Europe-wide rail trip as well as the finish line. I spent a week here in total and by the end of that time I knew I would come to live here eventually.

So, what made the second trip so different? Well, this time I stayed with a friend who lived in the city and then I realised just what a small and wonderful city it is. It is in fact a very cosmopolitan village, where policemen and postmen still cycle on bikes, where there is a bakery on every corner and where, when you live here, you cannot pass through the city without meeting someone you know. While at the same time it is not unusual to find yourself at dinner with people from all five continents telling you what it really was like growing up in Kenya or India or wherever. You see, this is a city of foreigners, it has a huge transient population of people who come here to study, like me, or to learn about art or just to experience a piece of Dutch life. They stay for a few years before returning and allowing the next batch of people to arrive and refresh the city, keeping its new and vibrant feel.

I finally moved to here in 2001 to do my PhD at the University of Amsterdam and even after three years I still feel I am only getting to know the place. It is constantly surprising and, at times, breathtakingly beautiful. Not something you can often say about a city. But when you see this city in winter, covered in snow or at night as you cycle home

where you see the lights of the bridges reflected in the perfectly still water of the canals, it really is special. And people cycle here day and night, winter or summer. The flatness of the land and the ubiquitous presence of bike lanes make this a safe and pleasant experience and something I would strongly suggest to anyone visiting the city. It is without doubt the best way to see Amsterdam and there is an unending stream of tourists doing just that whether it is winter or summer. They are usually easily spotted because they are the ones without bikes or with the bright yellow rented bikes. They are as much part of Amsterdam as any Dutch person.

Ask anyone "How big is Amsterdam?" and they will probably guess in the millions. In fact its official population is around 750,000 people, only half that of the greater Dublin area and the city centre is similar in size to Galway, easily walked in a day. So, what's it like to live here? Well, the quality of life is much improved by the fact that there is very little traffic in the city centre and everyone travels by bike. This means that, for most people, getting to work, or just about anywhere in the city, takes less than thirty minutes. Then there are the canals: there are over 100km of them in the city which soak up the noise and clean the air, which gives the illusion that the city is quieter than it is. I say the illusion because this city is never quiet. There is always someone around and that, I think, is what makes the city feel so safe. It is not unusual to see a woman walking home alone at night or even going through the park by bike, something you wouldn't consider in many other cities. Also, there is a considerable police presence, especially in the areas where the crowds of visitors

party at the weekend but trouble is rare.

"So what about all this sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll?" I hear you say. Well it's all here of course, except the rock 'n' roll that is, the Dutch will never produce anything to rival U2. However, it really is a very small part of Amsterdam and what it is to live here. When I do find myself in the red-light area, it's usually because I am showing somebody around and, to be honest, I feel like I am in a different city. It doesn't feel as safe and it is undoubtedly a bit sad whatever you feel about the rights and wrongs of it.

And then there are the drugs, which by the way are not truly legal in the Netherlands but there is a blind-eye turned to it in the case of so called 'soft drugs'. In my experience, I have yet to meet someone who lives in Amsterdam and regularly goes to coffee shops (a café is where you get coffee; a coffee shop is something different). It seems that, like the red-light area, they are a tourist attraction.

So let me bring you back to the city I know, the 'Venice of the north'. Come to see this city but come here for the wonderful markets, for the tulips, for those lovely brown cafés and bars, for the paintings of Rembrandt and Vermeer and van Gogh, come for Anne Frank's house and the history, for those beautiful canals. There is so much more to the big little city of Amsterdam, much, much more.



Amsterdam



Cowboys who danced to the Indians at the Classic

rear l-r: Edmund Treston, Seán Brennan, Gussie Kelly, Mossey Devlin
front l-r: Kieran Murphy, Liam Gillane, Christy McNevin, Joe Cahill

Sonny Mullins was an amazing man; farmer, butcher, builder, auctioneer, motor garage owner, hotelier, undertaker and probably more that I've forgotten; in fact you could say that in his time he covered life's spectrum. Yet there is one activity for which more than anything else he will be remembered and that was his decision to go into the ballroom business. So it was that in the early fifties the Classic ballroom was born. When it was being built, no-one knew for sure what it was—Sonny kept his aces close to his chest. But eventually when the maple floor filled the space provided for it, all the ideas and rumours jelled and we had indeed a classic ballroom, a place of dreams, romance, love and now and then a broken heart (or jaw) after the ball. We won't mention here what went on in Mullins' hay-shed, coffin store, various back gardens, sheds, porches and so on but go on it did.

Picture a balmy summer evening in the mid-fifties on the Ennis Road, long before the Lady Gregory hotel, the factories and all the new houses. It's about 7:30 pm and gradually the cars start to park on both sides of the road, men and women arrive on bicycles complete with lamp and pump, which they park in various gateways and back yards. The road

The Classic ballroom

by T. O. C.

is suddenly full of lads combing their Brylcreemed locks and ladies adjusting their skirts before the grand entrance. Entrance was gained by paying the required tariff at the door to the ever-pleasant, gentle, patient but firm Mattie Kelly, r.i.p. Your ticket you then gave to the 'keeper of the door' John Pa Clarke and suddenly you were in. On to the cloakroom (or on to the toilet for some of the men if they had been to Kelly's pub or Lambert's). Ladies surrendered their coats and bags to Mrs Annie Fahy of Carragh and gents their coats to Joe Pete Hehir or Paddy Hurst (who is now long gone from Gort).

And so to the dances. In the years while Sonny was in control, céilí dancing was much to the fore with the Tulla and Kilfenora bands ruling the roost from a 'local' perspective while Johnny Pickering, Malachy Dorris, Malachy Sweeney and others were welcome 'outsiders'. Bridie Gallagher gave us *The Boys from the County Armagh* on many an occasion. Modern hotpots of those days were Mick Delahunty, Maurice Mulcahy and the Clipper Carlton—all guaranteed to cause major traffic jams on the Gort/Ennis Road and a bumper night for Willie Quinn and his state of the art white chip-van.

On the well sprung maple floor, ladies gathered on the left hand side, while the men 'attacked' from the mineral bar side as they chose their partners for each dance; speed was of the essence and any faintness of heart left you a wallflower. Seán and Esther Fahy, Seán's mother Annie, Mattie and Maureen Coppinger, John Cahill of Coole, Bert and Nora Reeves and Aggie Fahy were all classical ballroom dancers while of course there was Mido Deegan, Seán Regan, John Stoney Callinan, Joe Mahony and Michael Nash from the Loughrea area. Indeed there were many, many more, some sadly gone forward, but many happily still with us.

As time passed Paddy Mullins took over the reins, assisted by brothers Albert and Noel and then in the sixties, Noel took control. During all these changes of 'generals' the support group stayed more or less the same. Angie O'Brien, Rita Doyle and Mrs Mullins snr and Rose Mullins on the teas and sandwiches, Mattie Kelly at the box office and John Pa Clarke on ticket control.

Top bands were the order of the day and the Classic had them all. The Dixies from Cork, Larry Cunningham from lovely Leitrim, The Premier Aces, Des Kelly and the Capital Showband, The Royal Blues, The Indians, Dickie Rock, with today's radio and TV personality Ronan Collins as his drummer. Then there was Johnny Logan, Pat McGeegan (father of wee Barry McGuigan), the Top Four and of course the late great Donie Collins, with Austin on guitar. The Bachelors sang *Diane* and Geraldo and Johnny Dankworth gave us a taste of English big band music. Ned and Julianne Forde (Oyster Manor hotel) played with the Red River Valley Boys on many St Stephen's nights when the Classic would be so packed that you had no need for central heating.

In between dances, guys tried to 'square' their women ('birds') over a 'mineral' or tea and a sandwich. Some guys were past masters of the art, while more of us ended up eating a lot of sandwiches.

Jimmy Higgins, now a d.j. with Galway Bay FM, has great memories of the Classic—playing there with The Millionaires in the sixties and later rehearsing there with The Raindrops, managed for a time by Noel Mullins.

Sadly in the eighties with the advent of licensed discos and a different style of dancing, the Classic like most other ballrooms in Ireland went into decline and today stands deserted on the Ennis Road, a lonely monument to life and loves, wins and losses, after the ball.

The town hall, a place of fond memories

by P D McGrath

No doubt many of you readers will travel back in time with me as I recall many nostalgic memories, of a building, which is today our heritage centre. This noble artifact with its Tudor façade and pinnacled gables was built in 1847 as a school for the children of Lord Gort's tenants. Girls on upper floor, boys underneath. On completion of the Mercy convent in 1859, girls left and in 1910 on completion of boys school, boys left. The latter school since demolished and replaced with three homes and both replaced with present school situated to rear of Topform factory. The town hall then became the temperance hall for Gort and south Galway. Around the mid-1920s the Town hall was used for céilí dances on the upper floor. Joe Mahon, r.i.p. from Seahaun once told me that for half-a-crown he could drink

three pints of Guinness, pay into the dance and have threepence left.

During the '50s and '60s many road show companies ran shows at nominal charges. The McFaddans, Baileys, McCormacks, Vic Loving and last but not least, Agnew McMaster who later became renowned as a Shakespearean performer. The late William Quinn, Church Street, formerly Labane, poet, playwright, publisher and man of many trades once held a concert circa late fifties. On ending the concert he brought on stage his brother Frank's twins and the twins of the Minogue family from Ennis Road, giving presents to all.

In the mid '70s the principal of the Boys' national school, Peter Conroy taught two classes in the card room, for nearly a full year, while waiting for an extra room to be provided by the department of education.

A billiard table presently in the new community centre was erected 1912, presented by Lord Gort. Visiting teams played competitions there, in the mid fifties and sixties. They came from Banagher, Loughrea, Ballinasloe, Portumna and Gort won a county league cup during those years.

The Coen family presented the Berry Coen cup after the sad loss of their young son Berry in 1958. His brothers Rynal and David reside at Gort presently. Many clashes were had to win this cup and sometimes some auction money with it. The auctions were brilliant, people bidding on their favourite player to win. Some pooled together to buy a renowned player and former winner such as Christy McNevin, Liam Gillane and others, as these were sure to reach the semis at least. Occasionally we'd have a turn up for the books, when a complete



Robinson Crusoe practice, town hall late 1950s in front of piano: Cis Considine

front l-r: Johnny Spelman, Toddie Byrne, Ann Fitzgerald, Martin Dolan, Pat Corbett, Mary Carolan, Gerry Heenan, Mai Counihan, Kieran Moylan, Micko Mulcaire, Josie Gallagher, Mick Cahill and Pádraic O'Carroll
second row: Bridie Fennessy, Séan Glynn, Carmel Ryan and Ita Coen
back l-r: Teresa Corbett, John Lally, Carmel Russell, Danny McNamara, Maureen Burke and Flan Considine



outsider would win. One such to mind, would be Bert Reeves r.i.p., then manager of Braids factory, presently Topform. At practice he appeared a poor player, so the handicapper was lenient and Bert romped home. The youngest member I recall to win was John Walsh (presently residing in Boston, Massachusetts), then fifteen years of age, a gifted player whom Pat Fennessy r.i.p., then caretaker of church properties, took every evening after school for coaching. On auction night Pat duly bought John who obliged by winning. One of the biggest pools of money was divided between them.

Across the hallway were two rooms the first being the card room, where many games of poker, 25 and 45 were played. Poker games went on 'till early mornings, with many a few pound at stake, suffice to say, no one became rich and losers got off light. I recall entering the card room one Sunday morning after twelve o'clock mass to find six lads engrossed in a game of poker, behind the iron stove which was the heating source. The timber partition on the inside was on fire and the room filled with smoke. I drew their attention to same, ran out for water, bucket and fire extinguisher to my home, rushed back and prized out the boards, quenched the fire and low and behold the six to a man were still engrossed in their game and oblivious to all happening around them. After a few expletives from yours truly, some muttered their thanks and I left them to their devices.

To the rear of the card room was the meeting room, mostly for Pioneers who were plentiful in those years and other local committees such as the GAA, badminton and Vincent de Paul.

In 1974 after the hall had badly deteriorated a group of eight people mostly from Church Street, formed a structural committee and carried out limited repairs, as funding was scarce. This tided the hall over till 1977 when Howard Konig presently residing in Derrycragg on the Tulla Road, drew a wonderful set of plans, with facilities to accommodate 250 persons seated for a theatre on ground floor, card room, billiard room and meeting room to front on second and third floors and a full sized badminton room to the rear with shower and toilet facilities; the front limestone façade to stay.

Alas, it never came to be and though a cost of £36,000 was proposed, the then powers that were in the church postponed it for a few years and eventually the plans still available to this day, were forgotten.

Not to be outdone those dedicated to the hall formed another structural committee with some sixteen members. Business in the town sponsored windows and doors which are presently there. The hall was renovated completely with new floors put down upstairs and lined for badminton. This game became very popular with divisions one to five being formed in 1977. That same year badminton became popular in the convent

and they reached the senior schools final against Taylor's Hill.

Lastly but by no means least, drama has played a major role. It started circa 1929 under Fr Tarpey, with three act comedies such as *Professor Tim* and *The Gasoon* being staged. After some four years drama ceased and it was again resurrected in 1947 with a musical production of *HMS Pinafore* a once-off musical. Some years later pantomimes were held. Again interest waned after some years and in 1964 Fr Kelly revived the drama interest. The late Paddy Coen of Bridge Street, who at the time was himself a distinguished actor and producer, followed him. Some few years passed before two curates kept drama alive in the town hall.

One year after the hall became a heritage centre, drama was resurrected by our present drama group. Indeed these players are capable of being professional having played in Belfast, Dublin and staged many, many productions.

Unfortunately today the town hall's only shining lights are its drama performances, as the heritage centre is unsuccessful. The Lions club with a few locals, are negotiating with Galway county council to return the hall to the Gort people for functions and games, which gave it its former glory. Negotiations are continuing and it is the wishes of users, past and present, that the day will soon come when this splendid building is returned to the people for their usage and entertainment.

The Connaught Rangers

by Paddy Cooke



Pateen Donoghue's headstone in Kilmacduagh cemetery

One of the most famous of all regiments in the British army was the Connaught Rangers which was raised in September 1793 by Colonel Thomas de Burgh, later Earl of Clanrickarde and was initially known as the eighty-eighth foot regiment. The regiment whose members were almost exclusively from the province of Connaught, had as its motto *Quis Separabit* and was nicknamed the *Devil's Own*, which reflects the fighting spirit which characterized the regiment during its existence.

From its inception to its disbandment the regiment's history reads like a travelogue of the major and minor military engagements throughout the world covering three centuries. Its first engagement was in Flanders as part of the Duke of York's campaign and subsequently embarked for service in the West Indies. In 1799 it was shipped to India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and shortly afterwards continued to the Nile where it remained to 1802. During this period a second battalion was also raised at home in Ireland. In 1806 the first battalion embarked for Buenos Aires and continued to Cadiz and was stationed there taking part in the battles of Talavera and Busaco. It also took part in the battles of Ciudad Rodrigo, at the sieges of Badajos and the battle of Salamanca and also saw action at Nivelles, Orthes and Toulouse.

The second battalion also had its share of the Peninsular Campaign serv-

ing in Gibraltar and Cadiz and was part of Wellington's army at the capture of Badajos.

At the peace the regiment sailed to Quebec and some years afterwards returned to France where it was stationed as part of the army of occupation until 1817. The regiment served in the Ionian Islands from 1825 to 1836 and was again in the Mediterranean, the West Indies and Canada during 1841 to 1851.

In 1854 it was transferred to the East and took part in the Crimean War fighting in the battles of Alma, Inkerman and through the siege of Sevastopol. In 1857 it was shipped to India on the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny and was stationed there until 1870.

Following the reorganization of the British Army under the Caldwell plan in 1881, the 94th Regiment of Foot which had Scottish origins and which had a long and distinguished history in its own right, was amalgamated into the Connaught Rangers under the title 2nd Battalion.

On the outbreak of the Kaffir Wars in 1887, the regiment was dispatched to South Africa and took part in several battles there as well as the Zulu War of 1879 before returning home in 1891 and returned to South Africa again to take part in the Boer War of 1899-1902.

During World War 1, the Connaught Rangers mobilized six battalions in total. The first regular battalion was based in India at the outbreak of the war in August 1914, the second was at Aldershot in England. The 3rd (reserve) and 4th (reserve) were raised in Galway and Roscommon, being based at Renmore Barracks Galway and Boyle respectively. The 5th (service) battalion was raised in Dublin and the 6th (service) battalion was raised at Kilworth Co Cork. All took part in the war, with the different battalions serving in different theatres of battle. Among the major battle honours won by the regiment were Messines 1914, Ypres 1914 and

1915, Gallipoli, Suvla Bay, Scimitar Hill 1915-16, Tigris 1916, Gaza, Jerusalem Megiddo, Palestine 1917, Kut Al Amara 1917, The Somme 1918, The Hindenberg Line 1918 and many others. Numerous awards for gallantry were won by members of the regiment including one Victoria Cross. During the war the regiment suffered a total of over 2000 casualties with large numbers seriously wounded. Older readers will recall many survivors of this Great War who lived in Gort town and surrounding areas, all of whom have now passed on.

After the Great War, the regiment was posted to India. In 1920 following reports of the Black and Tan atrocities at home in Ireland, a mutiny occurred amongst the rank and file soldiers based at Jullunder and Solun. The mutiny was quickly quelled and 61 of the mutineers were court marshalled. 14 of the mutineers were sentenced to death and 47 were sentenced to imprisonment. The death penalty was commuted in all cases except that of Private James Daly, who was executed for his part as ringleader.

In the summer of 1922 the regiment returned to England and were disbanded in common with other Irish regiments such as the Royal Munster Fusiliers, The Royal Dublin Fusiliers, on the establishment of The Irish Free State. The regiment's Colours were laid up at Windsor Castle.

There has been a resurgence of interest in the history of the Connaught Rangers, with a wide range of information available on the internet and other sources. The Military Museum at Renmore Barracks, Galway has a section dealing with the regiment and its history. The museum is open to the public - visitors are asked to ring in advance if they intend visiting. A further very useful source is also King House, Boyle, Co Roscommon, which was originally a base of the regiment and which also is open to the public.

Gort & South Galway Association in London (1971-1991)

by Gerardine Killeen

I remember well the summers of my childhood years and visiting cousins from overseas and how we all ran wild as deer, played cowboys and indians (unheard of now, in this age of the play station) and went in home only when we were hungry or in need of arbitration. With the cousins came the aunts and with them came mention of the Galway Association, the London Irish Centre in Camden and, as I got that little bit older, the Gort and South Galway Association.

My aunt Dymphna O'Neill (née Killeen) in particular was very active in the Gort association and she and her many letters, were full of details of dinner dances, team visits, fundraisers and a phenomenon I never understood until I myself lived overseas, the bacon and cabbage social.

Well, my aunt Dymphna is gone to God these several years, but I wondered what had become of the Gort and South Galway Association she was so active in and fond of. Were there still 'bacon and cabbage' socials somewhere?

Thanks to Finbar Burke, Tony McMahon and Tony Brennan, I was able to piece together some of the history of the Gort association. Finbar, formerly of Ardahan, was drafted into the fledgling Association in 1973 by Fr Paddy Casey (r.i.p.). Fr Casey, whom many will remember, hailed from Fidane and was a missionary with the Columban fathers. He was well known and active in the south Galway community in London and is remembered fondly by all who knew him. Through his involvement with the Legion of Mary, he was a regular figure at Euston in the '50s and '60s,

meeting local girls off the boat train and helping them get established in London. Before anyone ever heard the modern word 'networking', he was one of those who realised the value of a network, of establishing and maintaining a sense of community and connected-ness in days when phoning home, not to mind visiting home, was something that had to be planned for.

Fr Casey set the seed of the Gort and South Galway Association in 1971 along with Wally O'Connor (Crowe St) and my aunt Dymphna. Others from those early days include Brendan Linane (Killimoran), Michael Corless (Kilbeacanty) and Finbar himself.

They were passionate about the communities they came from and about recreating a sense of support, of place and of belonging for themselves and



Gort hurlers and followers at Ruislip GAA grounds 1982
back l-r: Tony Brennan, Micko Corless, Wally O'Connor, Brendan Moloney (Kinvara), Mickey Roche, M L Brennan, John Counihan, Dermot Duffy, Johnny Linnane, Eddie Fennessy, E Fahey, Norman Rochford, Violet Finnegan, Pat Neilan, Matt Murphy, John Finnegan, Michael Fahey Gabriel Piggott, Gabriel Cloonan, ? Delaney (county Offaly), Johnny Sullivan, Colm Sherry, Michael Linnane, Donal Regan
front l-r: Michael Cahill, Gerry Lally, Liam Moriarty, Dessie Kerins, Colie Roche, Sylvie Linnane, Gerry Linnane, Colie Rock, Joe Regan, John Nolan, Josie Harte, Johnny Spelman

their neighbours who were also away from home. Now, in an age when mobile phones, credit cards and reasonably priced travel have made the world so small, it is hard to imagine how 'far away' London actually was in those days and, therefore, how important the association was.

By the time Fr Casey left London in 1974, he had assembled a solid committee, with Wally O'Connor as chairman, Finbar Burke as treasurer and Brendan Linnane as secretary. Membership was swelling at this time. This was the heyday of the socials, with in excess of 400 attending the Gort and South Galway Association annual dinners. Tony McMahon came to the association around 1975 and he remembers the famous 'bacon and cabbage' dinners and booking bands for events in places like the Gresham in Holloway Road.

Others involved were John Roach (Ardahan), Tom Joyce (Kilbeacanty) who was also secretary in his day, Paddy Shaughnessy (Skehanagh), Fr Paddy Gantley (Ardahan), Chris Ford (Shanaglish), Martin Diviney (Cranagh) and Sr Josephine Diviney (Ardahan) a Holy Family sister and intrepid collector for charities, including the Lourdes pilgrimage fund.

There were regular meetings to plan events and respond to requests for support. Indeed, these meetings were often highly entertaining in themselves, with

plenty of friendly banter and animated exchanges of views. The usual location for these meetings was the London Irish Centre in Camden, which is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary this year.

Tony Brennan (Georges St) was an active member for some years in the '80s, serving as secretary for a good portion of his time with the association. He was around for the big celebration visit of the 1980 all-Ireland winning Galway team, complete with MacCarthy cup and the county championship winning Gort side of 1981.

He also remembers the importance of the association as a support network when he joined, even in its second decade. Emigration from south Galway was still high in the eighties and a sense of home away from home was still valuable. This continued on into the late '80s when Ann Gallagher (Georges St) and Antoinette Roche (née Fennessy, Church St) and Michael Fahy (Corker) were involved.

Over the years, functions were supported by a string of loyal regulars with huge numbers turning out from families such as the Heads (Derrybrien), the Linnanes (Tierneven), the Hennellys (Ballyturn), the Shaughnessys (Ardahan) and the Fitzgeralds (Peterswell). Other regulars in the long list include my aunt Peggy McMonagle, the Quinn sisters, Angela and Tecie and their aunt Janey (Prospect), Val Burke (Lakefield) and

his wife Bernie (née Fogerty, Gort a Bhothar), Bernie Moloney (Kinvara) and Paddy O'Loughlin (Balindereen). The proceeds of the social events went to good causes both in London and at home, though they keep the beneficiaries confidential, even now.

By the early '90s, with the advent of cheaper travel and the changing economic climate, membership began to fall away and the remaining active members carried on their work through the Galway County Association. Those I spoke with agreed that, though it was sad to see the era end, it was an indication that, as times changed, the need was less and that was a good thing. That does not take away from how the Association brought people together and how much spirit and commitment there was.

I am very grateful to Finbar Burke, Tony McMahon and Tony Brennan for the trouble they took to meet me and give me information. My thanks also go to my aunt Peggy, to Tony McMahon and my cousin Mary Winter for their photographs. I'm sure I have missed out others who were active in the association and I am very sorry if this causes any disappointment or distress. I assure you none is intended.

Mass will be offered in Gort over the Christmas holiday for the members of the Gort and South Galway Association, living and deceased.

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Rugby: Gort win first Connaught junior cup since 1937

by Noel Ruane

On Sunday morning 16th of May 2004 the Square in Gort looked very different to the normal Sunday morning. Firstly, there was an enormous excavator parked in the Square which was being used for the new water works through the town. Secondly, the Galway senior hurling team were beginning to meet up on their way to the national hurling league final in Limerick and thirdly, and perhaps the most unusual of all, was the sight of the Gort rugby team all dressed in official club shirts gathered on their way to take part in the Connaught junior cup final.

Gort last won the junior cup final in 1937 when the team was captained by Toddy Lahiffe whose grandson Darragh plays on the current team.

Four weeks previous to this anyone who thought the Gort rugby team would contest the junior cup final would have been laughed at. Up to that point

Gort were going through a terrible season having only won one out of eighteen league games. However, for the cup campaign the club pulled out one of the most spectacular transformations in any sport in recent times.

The first step towards this transformation was when Peter Wolfe got involved with the coaching of the team: Peter who played a very high level of rugby during his years with Bath who are one of the top teams in England, brought a level of professionalism to the training and coaching which left nothing to chance. The players responded and put in a huge effort to redeem some pride in the club.

The first outing in the cup was a game against Tuam which Gort won 17 to 14, after being 14 points behind at half time. The next game was against a very strong Corinthians side which Gort won by 14 points to 10. This set up a semi-final at home against Westport who already this

year had won the Cawley cup. Westport came to Gort as very strong favourites and in the end of the day that seemed to weigh heavily upon them, for they met a Gort team who seemed possessed, had nothing to lose and were playing in front of a huge home crowd. Gort won by three points to nil.

As unbelievable as it had seemed a few weeks earlier Gort were in their first junior cup final since 1937. The Junior cup is by far the most prestigious competition in Connaught rugby and has been played for since 1904.

The very large crowd that turned up for the final to support Gort in the Galway Sports Ground were treated to an exhibition of nail biting and exciting cup rugby from start to finish. Sligo were first to score with a penalty after seven minutes, however Gort's Evan Kilroy levelled the scoring with a long distance penalty in the tenth minute. Another penalty from Evan left the half



We've done it...jubilant team members and supporters celebrate a famous victory



Gort panel with the long-awaited cup

time score at six points to three in Gort's favour. The second half was rugby at its pure, attritional best, both teams battling for every yard of territory. Towards the final minutes of the game Sligo's New Zealander coach/player Dwain Russle levelled the scores with a fine penalty. From this point on Sligo were exerting all the pressure and as the public address announced that extra time would be played in the event of a draw pure drama unfolded.

Two minutes into injury time Sligo were in possession in the Gort twenty-two metre area and decided to have an attempt to win the game with a last minute drop goal. The ball was passed from their scrum half to their out half Russle who lined up the kick and seemed to have all the time in the world to score. However, Darragh Lahiffe came through like a train to block the ball. Time seemed to stand still as Darragh gathered the ball and set off towards the Sligo try line with the remaining twenty-nine players in pursuit. As he was about to be tackled he delivered a

perfect pass to Gort player Brian Burke who made it to the try line to score. Few sporting moments will ever equal this, as in the space of a few seconds Sligo were attempting to win the game dramatically at one end but due to a piece of brilliance by Darragh Lahiffe and Brian Burke the tide turned completely.

Evan Kilroy scored the conversion to leave the score Gort 14, Sligo 6. There was just one more minute of injury time left in which Gort secured possession and played down the clock.

When the final whistle went it was unbelievable, after a sixty-seven-year wait Gort had won the junior cup. The pitch was invaded by the emotional and ecstatic supporters. Some time later Mike Gill and Tom Finneran lifted the cup together. The journey home to Gort with the cup was something the team will never forget, the stream of cars behind the bus, the many bonfires and the huge crowd of supporters in the Square. What a night of celebrations lay ahead in Gort as the Galway hurlers had also won the national league title in Limerick.

Gort Rugby Club are back in training for the 2004/2005 season and are fielding teams at all ages from mini rugby right through to senior. Anyone who wants to get involved with the club at any level from beginner to supporter will be made most welcome.

Gort Rugby Club wish to thank all their loyal supporters and sponsors for making 2004 an unforgettable season and look forward to your continued support in the future.

The Gort panel was as follows for the junior cup campaign: Liam Gantley, Kieran Dolan, Tom Finneran, Peter Howley, David Conroy, Enda Stanford, Darragh Lahiffe, Kieran Forde, Evan Kilroy, Barry Kilroy, Jason Glynn, P J McAllen, Brian Burke, John Curley, Tony O'Donnell, Mike Gill, Brian Coppinger, Paul Killalea, Raymond Glynn, Conor Burke, Pat Hayes, David McAllen, Alan Earls, John O'Donnell and Stephen Carey; coach Peter Wolfe and manager Robert Lahiffe. Photographs by David O'Reilly.

Gort Hurling Club development

Gort hurling club development is progressing. The stand structure is now in place. The coming months will see the seating etc put in place.

The extended sewage system has been laid with some ancillary work and percolation to be undertaken.

Provision is now being made for the erection of four additional dressing rooms, showers, medical and referee's room and planning is at an advanced stage.

We are awaiting additional ESB supply to provide flood lighting. Turnstiles will be put in place in coming months with a number of other priorities. The pitches are maturing with time and this is evident by the response under severe climatic conditions over the past twelve months.

All in all the people of Gort and south Galway can feel proud of their valuable contribution and effort and they should be applauded for their continued support.

Geremiah Sheehan, sec.



Stand under construction in September 2004



Presentation to Padraic O'Donnell at Gort GAA clubhouse on his lotto win

back, left to right: Brian Brennan, Dermot Flaherty, Kathleen Quinn, Gerry Sheehan, Paddy Fahey and Martin Kerins
front, left to right: P J Flaherty, Terry McCarty, Kathleen O'Donnell, Padraic O'Donnell, Bríd Quinn and Susanne Quinn

Gort deceased 2003/2004

- Christopher Fennessy Church Street
- Nuala Spelman Crowe Street
- Delia Keane Crannagh
- Anne Gillane Rinerush
- Mary O'Shaughnessy The Square
- Bertie Tozer Crowe Street
- Peggy Rafferty Glenbrack
- Martin McMahon Hawkhill
- Terence Ryan Georges Street
- Vincent Monaghan Ballyhugh
- Colman Finnegan Kilmacduagh
- Sr Mary Larkin Convent
- Bridie Coen Georges Street
- Michael Reddy Ballyhugh
- Mary McNevin Ballyhugh
- Mona Linnane Crannagh
- Maria Cummins Tiernevan
- Kevin Ryan Manchester
- Florence Larkin Glenbrack
- Anne Grealish Hawkhill
- George Brierly Ballyhugh
- Kathleen Fitzgerald Barrack Street
- Margaret Flaherty Garryland
- Bridget McCormack Kiltartan, Tuam
- John Flaherty Tiernevan
- Julia Anne McGrath Seehan
- Josephine Cusack Glenbrack
- John Lydon Crowe Street
- Joan Jordan The Square
- Joan Lally Crowe Street
- Leo Manto Ballyhugh and Ennis

Solas síorraí na bhflaitheas dóibh