



I gConamara Thuaidh, tá an Churach GRP réasúnta láidir agus in úsáid go forleathan le haghaidh na hiascaireachta. Bhí na samplaí den churach chanbháis a fuarthas anseo i ndroch-chaoi agus failí déanta orthu. Taispeánadh iomlán de 79 curach chanbháis ar chósta Chonamara Thuaidh i suirbhé a rinne Meitheal Mara i 1995 ar son na Comhairle Oidhreachta, i gcomparáid le 15 sa lá atá inniu ann.

Tá an scéal níos measa fós ar Inis Meáin agus Inis Oírr áit a bhfuil an Churach Chanbháis gar de bheith imithe agus an Churach GRP i gceannas.

I gConamara Theasní bhfuarthas ach 7 gcurach (Curach Chanbháis nó GRP), i gcomparáid le 13 churach a bhí i mbun oibre, arbh GRP 5 cinn díobh, le linn shuirbhé Mheitheal Mara in 1995.

Tá an Churach Chanbháis thraigisiúnta ag dul i léig i ngach áit. Lena hais sin, tá an churach nua shruthlinithe, an Churach Rásá, le feiceáil ar fud na háite agus dá réir sin tá an traidisiún tógála agus úsáide á thabhairt ar aghaidh chuig ré nua.

Nuair a dhéantar analís ar an mbunachar sonraí taispeántar dlús sa raon 18-19 dtroithe ar fad de bháid oscailte agus sa raon 25-35 troigh ar fad de bháid iascaigh ländeice nó leathdheice.

B'ábhar dóchais an toradh ar analís an reachta ina raibh siad, agus formhór na mbád i ndea-chaoi, nuair a smaoinítéar gur báid os cionn 25 bliain a bhí á n-iniúchadh.

Is acmhainn a d'fhéadfadh a bheith luachmhar do scoláirí, do thaighdeoirí agus do phobal na bádóireachta é bunachar sonraí an iniúchta ar bhealaigh éagsúla: cuideoidh sé le scoláirí léargas a fháil ar chúrsaí na mbád oidhreachta ag túis an 21ú haois; cuirfidh sé ar chumas taighdeoirí analís a dhéanamh ar ghnéithe ar leith den oidhreacht sin; is pointe cóimheasa atá ann do phobal na mbád oidhreachta lenar féidir leo dul chun cinn nó meath a thomhas amach anseo; do staraithe na todhchaí cuirfidh sé taifead ar fáil de ghnéithe dár n-oidhreacht bádóireachta a d'fhéadfadh imeacht i léig.



Sean agus Nua, Roundstone (Cloch na Rón)

# Chapter 4

## Past, Present & Future Questions, Issues and Recommendations

Mar a Bhí, Mar Atá & Mar a Bheidh Amach Anseo  
Ceisteanna, Saincheisteanna agus Moltaí

## Past Present & Future Questions, Issues and Recommendations



Báid Seoil

Past, present and future are all encompassed in the concept of heritage. The past – our inherited traditions and culture – is what comes to mind most readily, but heritage is, unavoidably, a contemporary activity, with far-reaching effects on the most practical aspects of our present and future. Heritage is constantly evolving and, in the process, producing surprising mutations, so that what is overlooked and undervalued in the present may become the prized heritage of a future generation. We owe it to posterity to answer the hard questions: ‘what should we save?’ and ‘what can we afford to forget?’ Otherwise we run the risk of destroying by neglect our future heritage.

These questions are especially relevant in Galway, where the quality, variety and profusion of traditional boats may mean that lesser-known types will be forgotten and neglected. One of the advantages of a comprehensive audit is that boats like the Oyster Dredger Yawls and Shannon Clinker Punts are recorded equally with the well-known Galway Hookers and curachs. The survey may not capture every last boat but it does give a representative cross-section of the boat population in space and time; it shows the richness of the heritage and makes it possible to look at the long-term impact of this resource for the county.

The way heritage evolves is an endlessly fascinating study and especially so in the context of boats. Even where wooden boats are replaced using modern materials local traditional forms will remain in favour. This is clearly seen in the GRP-skinned curachs, still widely used for fishing in North Connemara. In North Connemara only one element of structure – the skin of the boat – is changed and the tradition of building and use remains, otherwise, the same. Even the most ardent traditionalist will be hard put to object to this evolution – does it not mirror the change from cow-hide to canvas that took place in the 19<sup>th</sup> century? True, it has the effect – and a serious one, no doubt – of hastening the decline of the canvas-skinned curach. But this is a separate problem, requiring its own solution. The traditional *curach chanbháis* is no longer acceptable for fishing and a new use will have to be found for it to survive.

## MAR A BHÍ, MAR ATÁ AGUS MAR A BHEIDH AMACH ANSEO

**Ceisteanna, Saincheisteanna agus Moltaí**

Cuimsítear cúrsaí mar a bhí, mar atá agus mar a bheidh i gcoincheap na hoidhreachta. Is é an stair - na traidisiúin agus an cultúr a fuaireamar le hoidhreacht - is mó a thagann chun cuimhne nuair a chloisimid an focal. Ach is gníomhaíocht chomhaimseartha í an oidhreacht nach féidir a sheachaint, a bhfuil tionchar fadréimseach aici ar na gnéithe is praiticiúla don am i láthair agus don todhchaí. Bíonn an oidhreacht ag forbairt go síoraí agus tarlaíonn athruithe gan choinne le linn na forbartha sin. Leis na hathruithe sin, d'fhéadfadh an-luach oidhreachta a bheith ag baint amach anseo le nithe nach bhfuil aon mheas orthu san am i láthair. Tá sé de dhualgas orainn na ceisteanna crua a fhreagairt ar son ár sleachta: 'céard is cóir dúinn a shábháil?' agus 'céard ar féidir linn dearmad a dhéanamh air?' Mura ndéanfaimid sin, tá an baol ann go scriosfaimid ár n-oidhreacht amach anseo trí fhaillí.

Baineann na ceisteanna sin go háirithe le Gaillimh, áit a bhfuil ardchaighdeán, éagsúlacht agus flúirse bád traidisiúnta agus dá bharr sin go bhféadfadh sé go ndéanfaí dearmad agus faillí ar na cineálacha bád nach bhfuil chomh haitheanta sin. Ceann de na buntáistí a bhaineann le hiniúchadh cuimsitheach is ea go ndéantar báid mar an Geolta Dreideála Oisrí agus Punta Clinse na Sionainne a thaifeadadh ar an mbonn céanna le báid aitheanta mar Húicéirí na Gaillimhe agus na Curacha. Níor taifeadadh gach uile bhád oidhreachta sa suirbhé ach tugann sé léargas ar réimse ionadaíoch na mbád maidir le spás agus am; taispeánann sé saibhreas na hoidhreachta agus cuireann sé ar ár geumas tionchar fadtéarmach na hacmhainne sin ar an gcontae a fheiceáil.

Is staidéar suimiúil é an bealach a fhobráíonn oidhreacht, go háirithe i gcomhthéacs na mbád. Bíonn meas ar mhúnlaí traidisiúnta logánta fiú nuair a thagann ábhair nua-aimseartha in áit na mbád adhmaid. Feictear é sin go soiléir i gcás na gcurach GRP, a úsáidtear go forleathan i gConamara Thuaidh le haghaidh na hiascaireachta. Níl ach gné amháin den struchtúr athraithe i gConamara Thuaidh - clúdach an bháid. Seachas sin, tá an



GRP & Wooden Lake Boats at Knock North (Knockferry)

Báid Locha adhmaid agus GRP ag an gCnoc Thuaidh

The evolution of the curach on the Aran Islands goes a step further, with the traditional lathed construction being replaced by a fully-planked base for the GRP skin and existing lathed models having the spaces between laths filled in. This is a more significant change, from a heritage point of view, and can be seen as a homogenising effect, which blurs the distinction between the Aran curach and other types.

The simulated clinker lake angling boats, which have proliferated on Lough Corrib, replicate in shape, if not in other qualities, the traditional wooden types, alongside which they lie at every slip and quayside. This can be seen as a popular development of the tradition of the wooden boats in response to contemporary circumstances and the needs of the large angling-boat fleet on the Corrib. It can also be seen as homage to the beauty and economy of form of the traditional wooden clinker boats. While purists may regret that the sea-keeping and other qualities of the originals are not found in modern boats, it is inevitable that new materials will be used; nothing stands still. However a better understanding of their heritage would ensure that the best aspects are preserved.

The GRP lake-boats can thus be seen to have gained a measure of acceptance alongside the original wooden craft. What would we say, however to a GRP Galway Hooker? Should such a boat be built? Shock and revulsion are probably the first reactions, so integral to the idea of the *Báid Seoil* is their wood construction, in our imaginations – frames of oak and planks of larch. Had they continued as working boats, however, would not such a development have been accepted as natural? Is it their present use, for recreation and not for work, that has made traditional wood construction such a valued feature? Why are some traditional characteristics, like wood construction, protected by the change of use while others, like rig and sail plan, are compromised? Our answers to these questions will tell us a lot about what we mean by heritage.



Last of the curachs on Inis Meáin

Na curachaí deiridh ar Inis Meáin

traidisiún maidir le déanamh agus úsáid an bháid fanta mar a bhí. Bheadh sé deacair ag an dlúth-thraidisiúnaí fiú cur in aghaidh na forbartha sin. Is fíor, áfach, go bhfuil sé de thionchar aige – agus tionchar tromchúiseach gan amhras – dlús a chur le meath na curaí canbháis. Ach, is fadhb ar leithligh í sin, a gcaithfear a réiteach féin a fháil ina leith. Níl an churach chanbháis inghlactha a thuilleadh le haghaidh na hiascaireachta agus caithfear úsáid eile a fháil di má tá sí chun fanacht linn.

Téann forbairt na curaí ar Oileáin Árann céim eile chun cinn agus bonn déanta go hiomlán as cláir don chlúdach GRP tagtha in áit na liúracha traidisiúnta agus na spáis idir na liúracha sna báid sin atá cheana ann líonta isteach. Is athrú suntasach é sin, ó thaobh na hoidhreachta de, agus d'fhéadfaí féachaint air mar thionchar caighdeánaithe, rud a dhéanann an t-idirdhealú idir churach Árann agus cineálacha eile doiléir.

Macasamhláíonn na báid chlinse ionsamhlaithe slatiascaireachta locha a bhfuil a líon méadaithe ar Loch Coirib, ó thaobh crutha de, agus cáilíochtaí eile – na báid thraidisiúnta adhmaid a bhíonn lena dtaoibh ag céanna agus slipeanna. D'fhéadfaí é sin a fheiceáil mar fhorbairt choitianta i dtraigisiún na mbád adhmaid mar fhreagairt ar chuínsí comhaimseartha agus ar riachtanais fhilit mór na mbád slatiascaireachta ar an gCoirib. D'fhéadfaí féachaint air freisin mar umhlóid d'áilleacht agus do thíosúlacht crutha na mbád clinse adhmaid traidisiúnta. Cé go bhféadfadh aiféala a bheith ar thraidisiúnaithe nach bhfuil an mhuiracmhainnn agus eile a bhaineann leis na báid bhunaidh ag na báid nua-aimseartha, tá sé dosheachanta go mbainfear úsáid as ábhair nua; ní fhanann aon rud socair. Mar sin féin, chinnteodh tuiscint níos fearr ar a n-oidhreacht go ndéanfaí na gnéithe is fearr a chaomhnú.



Volunteer's big main-sail

Seol Mór an Volunteer

The cultural history of the Galway Hookers, the *Báid Seoil*, provides what is probably the most interesting case study. The boats, fishing boats out of the Claddagh and trading boats from Connemara, had their heyday as working craft during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. At the end of their working lives, which lasted to the 1960s, they were being left to rot away against piers and rocks all over Connemara. Their reason for existence had been lost; only a few were maintained in use by their owners. Yet, when the handful of enthusiasts who sparked the revival returned with a few restored boats to Connemara and joined a few local families who had maintained their inherited boats, the groundswell of support and esteem – their heritage – reasserted itself again in a gathering wave that keeps rolling. The ‘aiséiri’ saw the old regatta races revived as the main activity of the new, burgeoning fleet.

The years of the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ [1999 – 2008] saw the crest of that wave with a host of re-built and newly-built Galway Hookers. The Údarás na Gaeltachta grants scheme was an important source of finance and encouragement in building up the fleet; it represents one of the better legacies of that era. The Galway Hookers, as a class, in Galway and further afield, are now strong and seem secure for the time being. The success of the movement started by Johnny Healion and others in the 1970s and carried on by the present generation, under the leadership of the Galway Hooker Association, must be called a triumph.

No triumph, of course, is absolute or permanent. The tide of prosperity – public and private – that brought about these great achievements has now receded and a downturn in fleet numbers and condition may follow. Hopefully the strength and critical mass attained during those good years will help them to survive. The impressive standard of maintenance of the present fleet, to be seen at any Galway Hooker regatta, is an optimistic signal.