



Pat Pheaide sowing a sail to the bolt-rope in Lettermullen.

Pat Pheaide ag cur seoil le haighre i Leitir Mealláin

Dá bhrí sin, is léir go bhfuil sórt inghlacthacht ag baint le báid locha GRP in éineacht leis na báid adhmaid bhunaidh. Ach, cad a déarfaí le Húicéir GRP? Ar chóir a leithéid de bhád a dhéanamh? Is dócha go gcuirfí altacht agus déistin ar dhaoine ar dtús, mar gur dlúthchuid de na Báid Seoil inár n-intinn é go ndéanfaí as adhmad iad – frámaí darach agus cláirlearóige. Nach nglacfaí lena leithéid d'fhorbairt mar chéim nádúrtha dá mba rud é gur leanadh ar aghaidh á n-úsáid mar bháid oibre? An é an úsáid a bhaintear astuanois, mar bháid áineasa, seachas mar bháid oibre, an chúis go bhfuil an oiread sin measa ar an déantús traidisiúnta as adhmad? Cén fáth a ndéantar roinnt tréithe traidisiúnta, mar dhéantús as adhmad, a chosaint agus go ndéantar comhghéilleadh i gcás tréithe eile mar phlean rige agus seoil? Inseoidh na freagraí ar na ceisteanna sin go leor dúinn maidir le cén chiall a bhainimid as oidhreacht.

Dá bhrí sin, is cás-staidéar an-suimiúil é stair chultúrtha Húicéirí na Gaillimhe, stair na mbÁid Seoil. Bhí na báid, báid iascaireachta amach as an gCladach agus báid trádála as Conamara, i mbarr a réime mar bháid oibre sa chuid deiridh den 19^ú haois agus sa chéad leath den 20^ú haois. Fágadh iad ag deireadh a ré oibre, a mhair go dtí na 1960dí, ag lobhadh ag céanna agus in aghaidh charraigeacha ar fud Chonamara. Ní raibh aon úsáid ann dóibh níos mó agus ní raibh ach cúpla ceann á gcoinneáil ag a gcuind úinéirí. Ach, nuair a tháinig roinnt díograiseoirí, a spreag an t-athbheochan, ar ais le roinnt báid athchóirithe go Conamara, agus chuaigh i gcomhar le muintir Chonamara a raibh a mbáid oidhreachta coinnithe i ndeachaoi acu, tháinig borradh arís ó thaobh tacaíochta agus measa ar an oidhreacht atá fós inniu ann. Leis an ‘aiséiri’ sin, tosaíodh na geallta bád arís mar phríomhghníomhaíocht don fhliút nua a bhí ag dul i méid.



Gleoiteog at quayside

Gleoiteog i gcéibh

There is another concern: in the past heritage characteristics may not have been given sufficient weight, in some boat reconstructions, compared with other factors. Rigs were increased, planks were added and waterlines lengthened, all in the interests of racing performance. Looking to the future it is important that any work undertaken on important heritage boats should be carried out carefully and underpinned by respect for best heritage practice. The original objectives of the Galway Hooker Association state it well in calling for the ...restoration and preservation of traditional boats, especially the Galway hooker”...as does the Galway County Heritage Plan⁴⁷ in aiming for ...an increased awareness... of our shared heritage.... leading to proper management and protection and safeguarding it for future generations.

Notwithstanding the robust examples presented by the *Báid Seoil* and the Shannon Barges heritage boats in general and their culture are fragile and require careful management if they are to thrive. Boats cannot possibly survive without the involvement of motivated individuals. Competition, as a motivating factor, can be dominant in human nature and can over-ride other interests, such as the appreciation of the authentic features of these boats. It seems, then, that the influence of agencies with responsibility for heritage should act as a counterbalance to these tendencies. As an example, prizes and awards for authenticity and heritage value in boats would help in raising awareness of heritage among boat users and the general public alike.

In order to thrive the traditional boat community needs a combination of resources which include boat-building skills, suitable materials, adequate finance and infrastructure. These are present in various degrees for different areas and boat types.

Owners of wooden boats in County Galway are lucky to be served by a group of excellent boat-builders and many of the owners themselves have boat-building skills. Both these factors contribute to the healthy numbers of wooden boats in good condition in the county.

⁴⁷ Galway County Development Plan 2009-2015

Le linn ré an ‘Tíogair Cheiltigh’ [1999 – 2008], mar a thugtar air, sroicheadh buaicphointe le Húicéirí a rinneadh as an nua agus a rinneadh a athchóiriú. Bhí scéim deontas Údarás na Gaeltachta ina foinse airgeadais thábhachtach agus ina hábhar spreagtha tábhachtach ó thaobh an flít a mhéadú, agus tá an scéim ar cheann de na gnéithe is dearfaí atá againn ón ré sin. De réir dealraimh, tá Húicéirí na Gaillimhe, mar aicme, láidir agus buan go fóill, i nGaillimh agus níos faide ó bhaile. Caithfear a rá gur cathréim é chomh maith is a d’éisigh leis an ngluaiseacht a thosaigh Johnny Healion agus daoine eile sna 1970dí agus ar lean an ghlúin seo leis, faoi cheannaireacht Chumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe.

Ar ndóigh níl aon chathréim foirfe ná gan locht. Tá deireadh tagtha leis an rathúlacht – idir phoiblí agus phríobháideach – a cheadaigh na héacthaí sin a bhaint amach agus caithfear a bheith ag súil go dtitfidh líon na mbád sa fhlít agus riocht na mbád dá bharr sin. Caithfear a bheith dóchasach go gcuideoidh neart agus líon na mbád a baineadh amach sna blianta rathúla leo an fód a sheasamh in aon chruchás sna blianta atá romhainn. Is tuar dóchais dúinn caighdeán cothabhála iontach an fhlít atá ann faoi láthair agus a fheictear ag aon fhéile Húicéirí.

Tá ábhar imní eile ann: san am a caitheadh, d’fhéadfadh sé nár tugadh a dhóthain aitheantais do thréithe oidhreachta nuair a bhí báid á n-atógáil, i gcomparáid le gnéithe eile. Rinneadh na rigí a mhéadú, cuireadh cláir bhreise leis na báid agus cuireadh fad ar a snámh, é sin uile ar mhaithe le rásaíocht. Sa todhcháitá sé tábhachtach go gcuirfí i gcrích aon obair ar bháid oidhreachta go cúramach agus go mbeadh meas ar dheachleachtas na hoidhreachta mar bhonn agus thaca ag an obair sin. Tá sin sonraithe i mbunaidhmeanna Chumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe ina n-éilítear “...restoration and preservation of traditional boats, especially the Galway hooker”...chomh maith le Plean Oidhreachta Chontae na Gaillimhe⁴⁷ ina ndeirtear gurb é a aidhm “an increased awareness... of our shared heritage.... leading to proper management and protection and safeguarding it for future generations.”

⁴⁷ Phlean Forbartha do Chontae Na Gaillimhe 2009-2015



Boat-builder Joe Reaney at Leitir Calaighd

Saor Báid Joe Ó Ráinne i Leitir Calaighd

One of the pleasures of getting to know the boats better comes with recognising the quirks and trademarks of individual boats and builders; the subtly curved stem and split gunwale of a Mons lake-boat; the distinctive stem head detail of a Philbin; the flat-topped transoms of the earlier boats, built for rowing. And when we come to the *Báid Seoil* the old builders – the *Saoir Bháid* – can be recognised by their individual styles. The accentuated sheer and tumblehome that were the hallmarks of a Rainey boat can be seen in the extraordinary shape of the forward sections of the *Báid Mór*, *Naomh Máirtín*, built to the lines of the original Truelight, from 1920. When looking at it it is easy to believe the boat-builders' lore that there is not one straight plank in a Galway Hooker.

The historical dominance of South Connemara, as described in the section Boat Builders and Boat-building in South Connemara [p. 64 et seq.], continues to the present day. All of the builders listed there – Davis, Ó Cualáin [Folan], McDonagh, Connolly, Mullins, Ó Flatharta, Greene & Reaney – inhabit the relatively short stretch of coast between Roundstone and An Spidéal.

Builders of the timber Lake Boats of Lough Corrib include the versatile Jackie Mons of Oughterard, who builds other types also, including the *Curach Adhmaid* and Oyster Dredger Yawl, Stephen Kinneavy, also of Oughterard and Tony Philbin of An Fhairche (Clonbur), at the northern end of the lake.

As well as Pat Folan, mentioned above, Curach builders include Johnny Jimí MacDonnacha, from An Cheathrú Rua and Ruairí Roger Concannon of Inis Meáin.



Stem Detail (Mons)

Mionsonra an bhaill (Mons)

In ainneoin na samplaí folláine atá curtha ar fáil ag na Báid Seoil agus ag Báirsí na Sionainne, tá na báid oidhreachta i gcoitinne agus a gcultúr leochaileach agus teastaíonn bainistíocht chúramach uathu má tá rathú i ndán dóibh. Ní mhairfidh báid gan daoine spreagtha a bheith ag plé leo. Is féidir leis an gcomórtas, mar thoisc spreagtha, an lámh in uachtar a fháil ar an duine daonna, agus an ceann is fearr a fháil ar thosca eile, leithéid ómós d'fhíorghnéithe oidhreachtúla na mbád sin. Is léir, mar sin, gur cheart go ndéanfadh na háisíneachtaí sin a bhfuil freagrácht na hoidhreachta orthu, cothromú ar an gclaoindh sin. Mar shampla, chuirfí le feasacht na hoidhreachta i measc na n-úinéirí bád agus an phobail i gcoitinne dá dtabharfaí aitheantas do bháid, i bhfoirm duaiseanna agus gradam, bunaithe ar luach na hoidhreachta agus na fíre.

Chun go mbeadh rath ar phobal na mbád traidisiúnta, teastaíonn teaglam d'acmhainní lena n-áirítear scileanna saoirseachta, ábhair chuí, dóthain airgid agus infreastruchtúr. Tá siad seo ar fáil, a bheag nó a mhór, i gceantair éagsúla agus i dtaca le cineálacha báid faoi leith.

Tá sé d'ádh ar úinéirí na mbád adhmaid i gContae na Gaillimhe go bhfuil grúpa saor den scoth ag freastal orthu agus go bhfuil scileanna saoirseachta ag cuid mhaith de na húinéirí iad féin. Cuidíonn an dá thoisc sin le líon maith de bháid adhmaid a bheith i ndea-chaoi sa chontae.

Ceann de na pléisiúir a bhaineann le haithne níos fearr a chur ar na báid is ea leithleachas agus tréithe aitheantaí na saor agus na mbád indibhidiúil a aithint; ball cuartha fíneálta agus gunail dhúbailte bhád locha Mons; mionpháirt shainiúil i gceann an bhaill i mbád Philbin; transaim mhaola na chéad bhád a tógadh le haghaidh an iomraimh. Maidir leis na Báid Seoil is féidir obair na saor ar leith a aithint as a gcuid stíleanna. Is féidir an lagbhord agus an bhoilsc aiceanta arbh iad tréithe bhád Ráinnigh a fheiceáil sa chruth suaithní i dtosach an Bháid Mhór an Naomh Máirtín, a tógadh ar mhúnla an Truelight a rinneadh in 1920. Agus tú ag breathnú uirthi, is furasta seanchas na saor a chreidiúint nuair a deirtear nach bhfuil oiread agus clár amháin díreach i Húicéir na Gaillimhe.



Stem Detail (Philbin)

Mionsonra an bhaill (Philbin)

The Udarás na Gaeltachta scheme for the Báid Seoil⁴⁸ during the Celtic Tiger years, was a welcome injection of finance for that fleet but may not recur at the same scale again. Finance for traditional boats has primarily come from owners. However some level of support from public bodies and agencies is important, if only to re-affirm the significance of heritage to the boating community and funders alike.

For physical infrastructure County Galway is better served than many other counties. A programme of pier improvement, particularly in Gaeltacht areas, has provided a network of piers and slips reaching into the remotest corners of the coastline⁴⁹.

The Heritage Boat Association and the Galway Hooker Association show what can be achieved with the back-up of a representative organisation, providing an infrastructure of events and administration. The *Báid Seoil* enjoy a programme of regattas and other supports that are not available to other boat types, such as the *Báid Iomartha*, Nobbies, Lake Boats, *Curachaí Adhmaid*, *Curachaí Canbháis* or Oyster Dredgers. Likewise the Canal Barges and related craft benefit from the social and historical input of The Heritage Boat Association.

There are a number of other issues relating to the preservation of County Galway's heritage that deserve discussion:

The working *Curach Chanbháis* of Oileán Árann is an iconic type, in danger of disappearing, not for want of the skills to construct them, which are readily available, but because it has no sustainable, contemporary use. Nobody would question the heritage value of these skin-boats. Scenes showing three men carrying an upturned curach up a beach and curachs riding through the breakers in 'Man of Aran' are icons of heritage. Incredibly, the central object in all this, the canvas curach, may be on the point of disappearing. Yet new uses have been found for similar craft elsewhere, for example: on the coast of Co. Clare and on the River Lee in Cork. The prescriptions that worked there may not be exactly the right medicine for Aran and Connemara but those examples show that an effort of will and imagination can help find a formula that allows such craft to survive.

⁴⁸ See Reference 21

⁴⁹ See Digital Reference D3



Boat-builder Jackie Mons at Oughterard

Saor Báid Jackie Mons in Uachtar Ard

Tá ceannas stairiúil ag Conamara Theas mar lárionad saoirseachta go dtí an lá atá inniu ann, mar atá cur síos air in Saoir Bháid agus Saoirseacht Bád in nDeisceart Chonamara [l. 65 7rl.]. Is ar feadh an chósta idir Cloch na Rón agus An Spidéal atá na saoir sin lonnaithe - Dáibhéis, Ó Cualáin, Mac Donncha, Connolly, Ó Maoláin, Ó Flatharta, Ó Ráinne, Ó hUaithnín – achar sách gearr i ndáiríre.

I measc na saor a thógann Báid Locha Loch Coirib tá an saor ildánach Jackie Mons in Uachtar Ard, a thógann cineálacha eile chomh maith, lena n-áirítear an Churach Adhmaid agus an Geolta Dreideála Oisrí, Stephen Kinneavy, in Uachtar Ard chomh maith agus Tony Philbin san Fhairche, ag ceann thuaidh an locha.

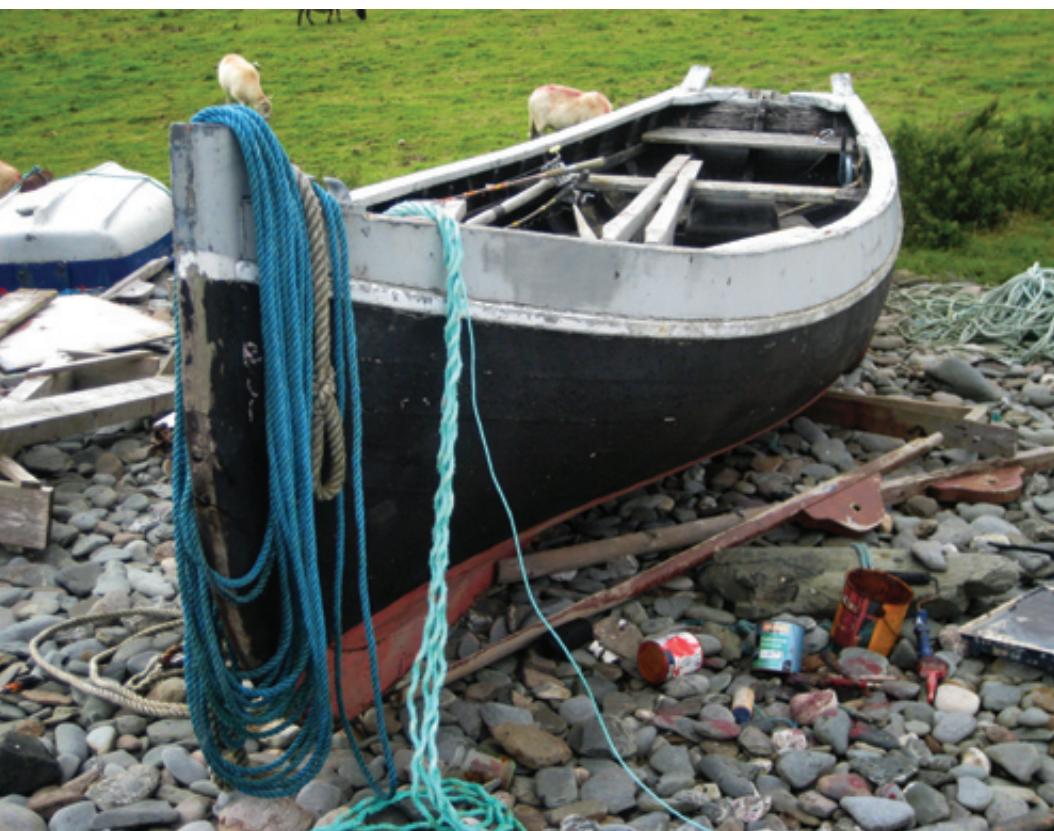
I measc na dtóigálaithe curach tá Johnny Jimí Mac Donncha as An gCeathrú Rua agus Ruairí Roger Ó Conceannain as Inis Meáin, chomh maith le Pat Mhichael Ó Cualáin a luaitear thusa.

Bhí fáilte roimh scéim maoinithe Údarás na Gaeltachta do na Báid Seoil⁴⁸ le linn blianta an Tíogair Cheiltigh ach ní fios a bhfeicfear an leibhéal céanna maoinithe arís. Is ó na húinéirí iad féin is mó a thagann an infheistíocht airgid. Tá sé tábhachtach, mar sin féin, go mbeadh leibhéal éigin tacaíochta ann ó fhoraí agus ó áisíneachtaí poiblí, mura bhfuil ann ach go n-athdhearbhaítear tábhacht na hoidhreachta do phobal na mbádóirí agus do lucht an mhaoinithe araon.

Tá Contae na Gaillimhe níos fearr as ná cuid mhaith contaeth eile maidir le bonneagar fisiceach. Tá gréasán de chéanna agus slipeanna i ngach cearn den chósta dá iargúltacht é de thoradh ar obair fheabhsúcháin⁴⁹.

⁴⁸ Féach Tagairt 21

⁴⁹ Féach Tagairt D3



Bád Iomartha on Inisboffin

Bád Iomartha ar Inis Bó Finne

The survival of the lake-boats present a different problem, as no significant competitive scene exists for them; their primary function is still as angling boats. Some scheme, whether by awards or otherwise, to spotlight the beauty and value of the traditional wooden lake-boats and the talent of their builders would be welcome.

When we come to a boat like the *Curach Adhmaid* it is hard to know where to begin. One way to look at it is from the perspective of the early 1900s. Then it was a radical ‘modern’ development, and a departure from traditional models, but all happening 100 years ago, at the start of the 20th century. Now, the *Curach Adhmaid* is an important element of the boating heritage of Co. Galway, so numerous and all-pervading that it is scarcely seen as the treasure that it is; a small, wholly distinctive wooden boat of Connemara, with local builders and owners, a blood-line coming from the *Curach Chanbháis*, totally indigenous; terms like ‘numerous’, ‘ubiquitous’ and ‘small boat of choice’ recur in every description. Just because it is not in danger, however, is no reason for not celebrating it and raising appreciation of its value, and not just the general public, but also the owners and builders, who may be equally guilty of taking the boat for granted.

The inner coast of Galway Bay, Kinvara to Oranmore, is at the tail-end of another story, a rich and fascinating culture of boats adapted for oyster dredging but now being supplanted by larger, mechanised craft. The original boats include: the Galway Bay Flat, a simple boat, unique to the area, now almost totally disappeared, with the few surviving examples only suitable for a museum; and the Yawl, adapted from the *Bád Iomartha* and the *Curach*, adapted from the *Curach Adhmaid*. These craft show, sequentially, a very clear evolution of form in response to function, something that students of material culture often propound but can seldom enough demonstrate – at least in the case of boats. The boats do not have regattas or competitions. However, one of the best-known traditional boat festivals, *Cruinniú na mBád*, is held in Kinvara, right in the heart of the oyster-dredging region. It celebrates the