

Introduction



Púcán, Inisbofin

Púcán, Inis Bó Finne

The Audit of Heritage Boats for Co. Galway was commissioned by Galway County Heritage Forum and the Heritage Office of Galway County Council in 2008, with grant aid from the Heritage Council and Galway County Council. It is the second of such audits, the first having been carried out by Darina Tully, in County Clare, in 2007².

The audit has two principal components, a digital database in which the 506 boats captured in the audit are recorded in up to 35 different fields and a report, which gives the historical background, provides a commentary on the findings, identifies and discusses issues, gives priority listings of boats and makes recommendations for future action. Local knowledge, reconnaissance, methodical searching and luck revealed hundreds of boats, afloat and ashore: working boats, sailing boats, rowing boats; boats with inboard and outboard engines. All were identified, recorded and photographed where possible.

The Audit database and report will be a valuable resource for students and researchers. What this book attempts to do is to present the exciting story of what was found in a more accessible form, for the traditional boat enthusiast and the wider general public.

It is a story asking to be told, as many may not be fully aware of the richness and significance of what Galway has to offer. Most people will be aware of the Galway Hookers but may not appreciate the depth of their history, with boats like An Capall and An Mhaighdean Mhara in the continuous ownership of the Bailey and Mac Donncha families since the 19th century. Likewise they may be aware of the *Púcán* as a type, with its dipping lug rig, but not of boats like Púcán Bharrett, an important example of the type, still in the ownership of the Barrett family, for whom it was built, by Ó Flaithearta of Leitir Mealláin in 1929, and now lying at Fornais island awaiting restoration. They may know of the *Bád Iomartha*, the forgotten cousin of the more glamorous *Báid Seoil*, now under threat because a contemporary use has not been found, except to convert to sail. Everybody will know the curach,

² See Reference 19



Bás Mór

Réamhrá

Chomisiúnaigh Fóram Oidhreachta Chontae na Gaillimhe agus Oifig Oidhreachta Chomhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe Iníúchadh ar Bháid Oidhreachta le haghaidh Chontae na Gaillimhe sa bhliain 2008, le cúnamh deontais ón gComhairle Oidhreachta agus ó Chomháirle Chontae na Gaillimhe. Is é seo an dara hiniúchadh dá leithéid – rinne Darina Tully an chéad cheann i gContae an Chláir sa bhliain 2007².

Baineann dhá phríomhchuid leis an iniúchadh, bunachar sonraí digiteach ina bhfuil taifead de na 506 bád ar tiomsaíodh sonraí ina leith san iniúchadh i suas le 35 réimse éagsúil, agus tuarascáil ina bhfuil cúlra staire agus tráchtairreacht maidir le torthaí, ina ndéantar ceisteanna a aithint agus a phlé, ina bhfuil liostaí tosaíochta báid agus ina ndéantar moltaí maidir le gníomhartha le dul ina mbun amach anseo. Thángthas ar na céadta bád, ar snámh agus ar talamh, a bhuíochas sin don eolas áitiúil, taiscéalaíocht, cuardach críochnúil agus ádh: báid oibre, báid seoil, báid iomartha, báid le hinnill istigh agus le hinnill transaim. Rinneadh iad go léir a shainaithint, a thaifeadadh agus tógadh pictiúir díobh nuair ab fhéidir sin a dhéanamh.

Beidh bunachar sonraí an Iníúchta ina acmhainn luachmhar do mhic léinn agus do lucht taighde araon. Is éard atá mar aidhm leis an leabhar seo ná an scéal spreagúil maidir leis an méid ar thángthas air a chur i láthair ar shlí níos inrochtana, do na daoine sin a bhfuil suim acu i mbáid mar aon leis an bpobal i gcoitinne.

Is scéal é atá le hinsint, go deimhin a chaithfear a insint, mar go bhfuil go leor daoine ann nach bhfuil a fhios acu an saibhreas agus an tábhacht a bhaineann lena bhfuil ar fáil i nGaillimh. Beidh roinnt eolais ag go leor daoine faoi Húicéirí na Gaillimhe, ach d'fhéadfadh nach bhfuil tuiscint ionlán acu ar an stair a bhaineann leo, mar shampla go bhfuil báid ar nós an Capall agus an Mhaighdean Mhara faoi úinéireacht leanúnach mhuintir Uí Bháille agus Mhic Dhonncha faoi seach ón 19ú haois. Ar an dóigh chéanna, d'fhéadfadh go bhfuil a fhios acu gur cineál báid í an Púcán, lena

² Féach Tagairt 19



Curachaí Adhmaid, An Cheathrú Rua

but maybe not the different types to be found across the county of Galway, nor the evolution from canvas skin to GRP, nor the story of the success of the *Curachaí Rásá*, which started at the Tóstal festival in 1954. Many may not notice, amidst the GRP replicas on the Corrib, the splendid wooden angling boats, much less the delicate one-man punts, produced by the talented boat-builders, Philbin, Kinneavy & Mons. The Canal Barges on the Shannon may be known, but not their history and folklore, lovingly recorded by the Heritage Boat Society³. The Shannon cruisers may be seen as modern commercial craft, with little claim on heritage, yet their history, though recent, connects with many strands of the Irish boating scene. The *Curachaí Adhmaid*, everywhere on the shores of Connemara, may earn no more than a passing glance but here is a boat whose use and construction permeates all the maritime life of the region and the county. Visitors and tourists are aware of the fishing boats but maybe not of the succession of fine craft that came from the boatyards of Bord Iascaigh Mhara from the 1950s on: the 26ft. Lobster Boats, the ‘Ard’ and ‘Ros’ trawlers⁴, the Half-Deckers including the 32ft. ‘Béal’ boats, which meant so much to the economic life of those coastal communities.

Then there are the untold stories: the story of the Yawls and Curachs of the oyster fishery, evolved from other types and adapted for oyster dredging, still to be found on the inner coast of Galway Bay, between Kinvara and Oranmore; the story of the amphibious lives of the families that lived on the Shannon callows in living memory and the simple boats they used, clinker punts and cots, the latter now disappeared; the story of the *climíní* of seaweed, still being harvested in rafts and towed into the tiny harbours and piers of Connemara, as it was generations ago.

The story of Galway is one of a immensely rich and varied heritage of boats and their use; of some, like the Lake-boats, which are holding their own against the tide of GRP; of some, like the GRP Curach, that have adapted to technological change; of others like the traditional *Curachaí Canbháis*, one branch of which has mutated into the streamlined *Curach Rásá* while the original, the

³ See References 20 and D2

⁴ See Reference 17

rige tumtha, ach nach bhfuil eolas ar bith acu ar Phúcán Bharrett, sampla tábhachtach den phúcán, fós faoi úinéireacht mhuintir Bhairéid, a ndearna Ó Flaithearta as Leitir Mealláin í dóibh sa bliaín 1929 agus atá suite i bhFhornaisanois ag fanacht go ndéanfar í a athchóiriú. D'fhéadfadh go bhfuil a fhios acu faoin mBád Iomartha, atá gaolta leis an mBád Seoil, ach atá i mbaol mar nach bhfuil úsáid chomhaimseartha ann di seachas báidín seoil a dhéanamh asti. Tá a fhios ag gach uile dhuine faoin gcurach, ach b'fhéidir nach bhfuil a fhios acu faoi na cineálacha éagsúla atá ar fud chontae na Gaillimhe, ná an éabhlóid ón gCraiceann canbháis go GRP, ná scéal ratha na gCurach Rásá, a thosaigh ag an Tóstal sa bliaín 1954. B'fhéidir nach dtabharfaidh go leor daoine faoi deara na báid iontacha slatiascaireachta adhmaid, i measc na macasamhlacha GRP ar an gCoirib, ní áiríم na puntaí aonair eadroma arna ndéanamh ag na saoir bháid chumasacha, Philbin, Kinneavy agus Mons. B'fhéidir go bhfuil eolas ar na Báirsí Canála ar an tSionainn ach ní dóigh go bhfuil eolas ar a stair ná ar an mbéaloideas a bhaineann leo agus atá taifeadta ag Cumann na mBád Oidhreachta³. B'fhéidir go bhféachfaí ar chúrsóirí na Sionainne mar bháid tráchtála nua-aimseartha, le beagbhaint leis an oidhreacht ach fós tá nasc ag a stair, cé gur le déanaí a bunaíodh sin, le go leor snáitheanna de shaol báidóireachta na hÉireann. D'fhéadfadh nach dtabharfaí ach sracfhéachaint ar na Curacha Adhmaid atá i ngach áit ar chladaí Chonamara, ach is bád í sin, lena húsáid agus déanamh, atá le feiceáil i ngach cuid de shaol muirí an réigiúin agus an chontae. Bíonn eolas ag cuairteoirí agus ag turasóirí ar na báid iascaireachta ach b'fhéidir nach mbíonn siad chomh heolach maidir le líon na mbád breá a tháinig as na longchlóis de chuid Bhord Iascaigh Mhara ó na 1950dí ar aghaidh: na Báid Ghliomach 26 troigh, na trálaeir ‘Ard’ agus ‘Ros’⁴, na Báid Leathdheice, lena n-áirítear na báid ‘Béal’ 32 troigh, a bhí an-tábhachtach do shaol eacnamaíochta na bpobal cladaigh sin.

Agus ansin tá na scéalta nár insíodh: scéalta na nGeoltaí agus na gCurach a bhaineann leis na hoisrí, a lean as cineálacha eile agus a cuireadh in oiriúint le haghaidh dreideála oisrí agus atá le fáil fós ar chladach Chuan na Gaillimhe Laistigh, idir Cinn Mhara agus

³ Féach Tagairtí 20 agus D2

⁴ Féach Tagairt 17



The End of Fishing
Deireadh le hlascaireacht

iconic canvas working curach, is facing extinction; finally, of the *Báid Seoil*, which have found a use for leisure and are forging a new era of their history.

These are just a few of the stories of the heritage boats of County Galway. Many more remain to be told – many indeed remain to be discovered.

The boats cannot be appreciated separately from where they are found. So the most important section of the book is based on the landscape and coastline of Galway, which can be thought of as a number of different counties: Oileán Árann, Connemara, Lough Corrib, the Shannon, and Inner Galway Bay. Connemara and its boats deserve a book of their own and the extraordinary region of south Connemara – between Galway and Slyne Head – had to be subdivided into six separate areas, so intense and varied are its maritime life and heritage. The heartland of this region, including Iorras Aithneach, Ros Muc, An Cheathrú Rua and Ceantar na nOileán, may be unique in Europe as an extensive coastline where a traditional boat culture is rooted in the community to the virtual exclusion of modern fibreglass boats. To add to its cultural distinctiveness the region is one of the strongholds of spoken Irish, specifically in relation to the terminology of construction and use of the boats.

The dominant boats of Galway are the *Báid Seoil* and *Curachaí Rásá* for recreation, the Lake-boats for angling, the *Curachaí GRP*, *Curachaí Adhmaid* and Half-Deckers for fishing. Others, though important for heritage, are less in fleet numbers; some are at risk. For many of the latter the problem is that of finding a new use in a changed world, as the *Báid Seoil* and Canal Barges have done so successfully, or adapting to new technology or circumstances, like the GRP-skinned curachs, of mutating to a new type, like the *Curach Rásá*, or evolving a new boat type, which brilliantly satisfied people's needs, like the Curach Adhmaid did a century ago.

Órán Mór; scéal na dteaghlaigh loscánta a bhíodh ina gcónai ar chalaí na Sionainne níos lú ná glúin amháin ó shin agus na báid shimplí, puntaí clinse agus coití, a bhfuil deireadh leo anois, a bhídís ag úsáid; scéal na gclimíní feamainne, atá fós á mbaint agus á dtabhairt i dtír i gcuanta agus céanna beaga Chonamara, mar a bhíodh fadó.

Is ionann scéal na Gaillimhe agus scéal d'oidhreacht atá fíorshaibhir agus an-éagsúil, maidir leis na báid agus an úsáid a bhaintí agus atá á baint astu; tá an fód á sheasamh ag roinnt díobh, mar na Báid Locha, in aghaidh an GRP; tá roinnt, mar an Churach GRP atá curtha in oiriúint don chlaochlú teicneolaíochta; tá roinnt eile, mar na Curacha Canbháis a bhfuil craobh amháin díobh imithe i dtreo na Curaí Rásá agus an ceann bunaidh, an churach chanbháis oibre shainiúil atá i mbaol imeacht i léig; agus ar deireadh tá an Báid Seoil, a bhfuil úsáid nua ann di, úsáid áineasa agus ré nua staire amach roimpi.

Níl iontu sin ach cúpla ceann de na scéalta a bhaineann le báid oidhreachta Chontae na Gaillimhe. Is iomaí scéal eile atá le hinsint - go deimhin is iomaí scéal eile a chaithfear teacht air fós.

Ní féidir léirthuisceint a bheith agat ar na báid gan tuiscint a bheith ar an áit as a dtagann siad. Dá bhrí sin, tá an chuid is tábhachtaí den leabhar bunaithe ar thírdhreach agus ar chósta na Gaillimhe, ar féidir féachaint orthu mar roinnt “contaetha” éagsúla; Árainn, Conamara, Loch Coirib, an tSionainn, agus Cuan na Gaillimhe Laistigh. Tá leabhar dá gcuid féin tuillte ag ceantar Chonamara agus a chuid báid agus b'éisgean réigiún neamhghnách dheisceart Chonamara – idir Gaillimh agus Ceann Léime – a roinnt ina sé cheantar ar leith, mar gheall ar chomh dian agus chomh hilghnéitheach is atá an saol agus an oidhreacht mhuirí ann. D'fhéadfadh go bhfuil croílár an réigiúin seo, lena n-áirítear Iorras Aithneach, Ros Muc, an Cheathrú Rua agus Ceantar na nOileán, uathúil san Eoraip mar cheantar cósta ina bhfuil cultúr bádóireachta traidisiúnta fréamhaithe chomh domhain sa phobal

An analysis of the number and distribution of boats is given in the section MYRIADS OF BOATS and the following section, PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE looks at the evolution of heritage, some of the questions and problems that arise and recommendations for the future.

And the future is bright for heritage boats in County Galway. It is hoped that the success stories in this book will allow Galway men and women to gain a balanced perspective on the problems that remain and will stimulate others to carry on the work. Those who do will find a new and glorious world opening up before them.



Bow of *Bád Seoil*

Bogha Báid Seoil