



Boatbuilders' Memorial, Leitir Meallán

Leacht Cuimhneacháin, Leitir Meallán

Seoighe, Maoilchiaráin, Conphaola agus Ó Dómhnaill; taobh thiar de Charna ar Oileán Mhaínse bhí Seán Ó Laoide agus trí ghlúin den teaghlach mór le rá, na Cathasaigh; na Clochartaigh, na Maoilchiaráin, na hUaithní i nDamhros; Maitias Guairim agus Pádraig Davis ar Inis Ní agus na Clochartaigh arís i gCloch na Rón.

Áirítear iad seo a leanas ar na daoine sin a raibh Báid Mhóra nó Curacha Adhmaid á ndéanamh acu in 2010: Pádraig Davis, Inis Ní, Pádraig Ó Cualáin agus Mícheál Mac Donncha - céimí de chuid na scéime *Horizon* - as an gCeathrú Rua, Patrick Ó Conghaile, an Spidéal, Máirtín Ó Maoláin, Leitir Meallán, Mícheál Willie Ó Flaithearta, Droim, Garmna, Dónal Green, Damhros agus Joe Ó Ráinne, Leitir Calaidh. Bhásáigh Colm Ó Maoilchiaráin as Maínis, duine de shaoir báid mór le rá na linne seo ag deireadh na bliana 2009.

Reáchtáil Cumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe, le cabhair ó Shannon Baker, scéim oiliúna *Horizon* de chuid an AE sna 1990dí chun oiliúint a chur ar roinnt saor báid óg i nGaeltacht Chonamara. De thoradh an tionscnamh sin, thug Údarás na Gaeltachta, tar éis comhchomhairle leis an gCumann, scéim deontais isteach le haghaidh Húicéirí na Gaillimhe a athchóiriú. D'éirigh go han-mhaith leis an scéim sin maidir le méid an fhlít a mhéadú, atá dírithe go hiomlánanois beagnach ar úsaíd áineasa. Is scil atá sa tsaoirseacht bád atá go smior i gcultúr an chósta agus is iomaí iascaire agus úinéir bád atá in ann a mbád féin a dheisiú nó fiú a dhéanamh. Is sampla den scoth de sin é athchóiriú Chóilín Uí híarnáin den *Nóra Bheag* agus chomh críochnaithe agus is atá an churach adhmaid, a bád freastail chomh maith. Tá borradh curtha faoin treocht sin le foilsíú leabhar Chian de Buitléar²⁵ faoi shaoirseacht báid, na báid thraigisiúnta go háirithe. Ní féidir le miontuairisc mar seo fírinne an scéil maidir le saoirseacht báid i gConamara a insint. Tá staidéar mionsonraithe ar leith tuillte ag an gceantar.

²⁵ Féach Tagairt 7



Curachaí Adhmaid dried out alongside stone pier
Curachaí Adhmaid triomaithe le hais ché chloiche

The traditional *Curach Chanbháis* of the coast of South Connemara – as in Oileáin Árann – is in danger of extinction. It has been supplanted in its working function by the *Curach Adhmaid*, which is seen as more suitable for the generally rocky coastline. Two types of *Curach Chanbháis* were common in the past: the two-hand, used for work in shallow inlets, cutting and collecting seaweed and the larger, three-hand model. The traditional *Curach Chanbháis* is a graceful, streamlined craft, with a less pronounced rise to the bow than the Aran curach and a distinctive rounded transom. Its influence can be clearly seen in the racing curach, the *Curach Rásá*. Authentic old canvas working curachs from this coast are very rare; the survey team succeeded in finding only seven. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some were bought up and shipped abroad for use in themed Irish pubs.

The Galway Hookers, in contrast, present a picture of rude good health, with a large, active and, for the most part, well-maintained fleet. Their association, Cumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe, organises a full programme of events for a group of energetic and committed owners. Boat-building and sail-making courses have been organised and a grant scheme – from Udarás na Gaeltachta – availed of to repair old boats and build new ones. The *Báid Iomartha*, which does not have a regatta programme, is suffering, in comparison, with many boats neglected. A number of the *Báid Iomartha* have been converted to sail, as *Gleoiteoga* or *Púcáin*.

One of the abiding impressions that any visitor to South Connemara with an eye for a boat will bring away is the dominance of the *Curach Adhmaid*. This small boat is found in numbers in every harbour and at every pier. Their black hulls, acknowledging the ancestry of the *Curach Chanbháis*, are set off with colourfully painted gunwales and upper strakes. In its own way the *Curach Adhmaid* has become an icon for coastal Connemara, alongside the Galway Hooker, which it complements.



Curachs at moorings

Curachaí feistithe

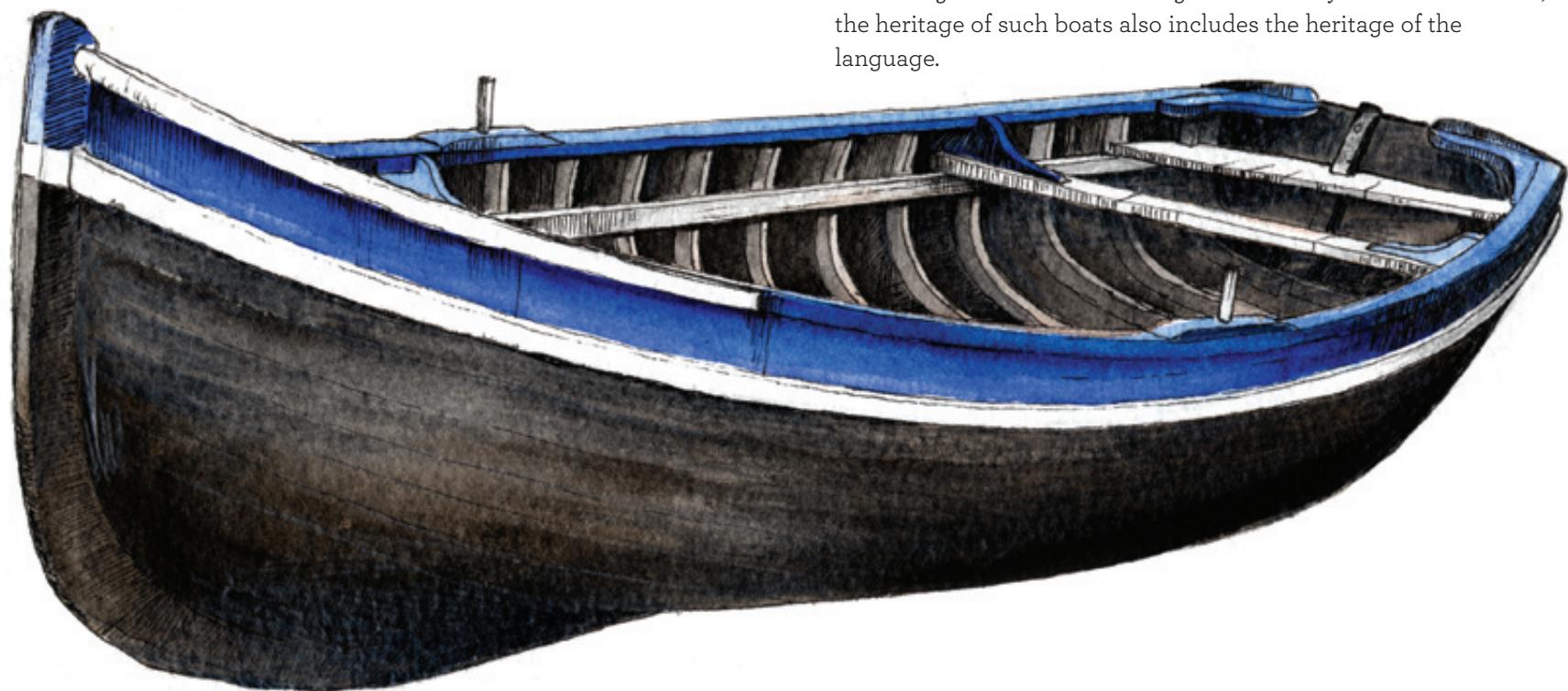
Tá an-bhaol ann go dtiocfaidh deireadh le Curach Chanbháis thraigisiúnta Chonamara Theas – mar a tharla ar Oileán Árann. Is sa Churach Adhmaid a dhéantar obair ina háit, agus meastar í a bheith níos oriúnaí don chósta carraigeach. Bhí dhá chineál Curaí Canbháis coitianta san am a caitheadh: curach dhá sheas, a d'úsáidtí le hobair a dhéanamh i ngóilíní éadoimhne ag baint agus ag bailiú feamainne agus curach níos mó, trí sheas. Is bád galánta sruthlínéach í an Churach Chanbháis thraigisiúnta, le ceann níos ísle ná curach Árann agus transam cruinn ar leith. Tá a tionchar le feiceáil go soiléir ar an gCurach Rásá. Ní minic a thagtar ar fhíor-churacha canbháis ón gcósta seo; níor éirigh le foireann an tsuirbhé teacht ach ar seacht gcinn díobh. Is cosúil, de réir na fianaise starógaí, gur ceannaíodh roinnt díobh agus seoladh thar lear iad le húsáid i dtithe tábhairne “Gaelacha”.

Mar mhalaир air sin, is iomaí Báid Mór atá le feiceáil agus tá flít mór, gníomhach agus deá-chothabháilte den chuid is mó le sonrú. Eagraíonn Cumann Húicéirí na Gaillimhe clár iomlán imeachtaí le haghaidh grúpa úinéirí fuinniúla agus díograiseachá. Eagraíodh cúrsaí saoirseacht bád agus déanta seolta agus baineadh leas as scéim deontais – de chuid Údarás na Gaeltachta – le seanbháid a dheisiú agus báid nua a dhéanamh. Ach ar an taobh eile den scéal, níl aon chlár geallta ann do na Báid Iomartha agus tá siad ag fulaingt dá réir agus cuid mhaith díobh ligthe i bhfaillí. Tá go leor de na Báid Iomartha athraithe le gur féidir iad a sheoladh ina nGleoiteoga nó ina bPúcáin.

Íomhá amháin a fhanfaidh le haon duine a thabharfaidh cuairt ar Chonamara Theas a bhfuil suim aige i mbáid is ea ceannas na Curaí Adhmaid. Tá go leor de na báid bheaga seo le fáil i ngach cuan agus ag gach cé. Tá a gcabhlacha dubha, a léiríonn sinsearacht na Curaí Canbháis, á n-aibhsíú le gunailí agus strácaí uachtair dathannacha. Ar a bealach féin, is siombail í an Churach Adhmaid de chósta Chonamara, ach an oiread leis an mBáid Mór, a chomhlánaíonn sí.

It is notable that this coastline is almost devoid of modern glass-fibre boats, the traditional timber types being the vessels of choice for local sailors, whether for work or recreation. The dominance of traditional wooden boats, to the virtual exclusion of modern types and materials, may be a uniquely distinctive aspect of this coastline. Parts of the coast of Holland – the Waddenzee and IJsselmeer – appear to be the only other places in Europe where indigenous traditional boat types are dominant, and even there modern GRP production boats are also present in great numbers.

To add to the cultural distinctiveness of South Connemara, the region is one of the strongholds of spoken Irish, specifically in relation to the terminology of construction and use of the boats. Sociolinguists suggest that the preservation, revival and maintenance of a minority language that is under threat is helped greatly by its integration with social activities that are unique or specific to the language community. There is no better example of such integration than the sailing of the Galway Hooker. Therefore, the heritage of such boats also includes the heritage of the language.



CURACH ADHNAID

Máire Polui '10



An abandoned *Báid lomartha*

Báid lomartha tréigthe

Is fiú a thabhairt ar aird go bhfuil an cósta seo beagnach saor go hiomlán ó bháid nua-aimseartha déanta as snáithín gloine. Is iad na cineálacha adhmaid traidisiúnta is fearr leis na bádóirí áitiúla, le haghaidh oibre nó áineasa. D'fhéadfadh gur gné shainiúil ar leith a bhaineann leis an gcósta seo é ceannas na mbád adhmaid traidisiúnta, a mhéad sin is go bhfuil báid agus ábhair nua-aimseartha beagnach eisiata go hiomlán. De réir dealraimh, is codanna de chósta na hÍsiltíre – an Waddenzee agus Ijsselmeer – an t-aon dá áit eile san Eoraip a bhfuil cineálacha bád traidisiúnta agus dúchais chun cinn agus fiú ansin tá go leor bád táirgthe GRP nua-aimseartha le feiceáil freisin.

Tá Conamara Theas ar cheann de na háiteanna is mó ina labhraítear Gaeilge, go háirithe i ndáil leis an téarmaíocht a bhaineann le báid a dhéanamh agus a úsáid, rud a chuireann le sainiúlacht chultúrtha an réigiúin. Deir sochtheangeolaithe go gcuidíonn sé go mór le mionteanga atá i mbaol a chaomhnú, a athbheochan agus a chothú nuair a dhéantar í a chomtháthú le gníomhaíochtaí sóisialta a bhaineann, go huathúil nó go sainiúil, le pobal na teanga. Níl aon sampla níos fearr ar fáil de chomhtháthú den sórt sin ná seoltóireacht Húicéirí na Gaillimhe. Dá bhrí sin, tá oidhreacht na teanga san áireamh freisin in oidhreacht bád den sórt sin.

North Connemara – Slyne Head to Killary Harbour

[Area 8]



Killary Harbour

An Caoláire Rua

The coast north of Slyne Head changes dramatically, reflecting North Connemara's majestic scenery of mountain and valley. The west-facing shore is exposed to Atlantic gales. Islands are rocky and inaccessible, with the exception of Omey Island, which is connected to the mainland near Claddaghduff by a sand tombola, and Inishbofin with its fine natural harbour. Long, deep inlets – like Clifden, Streamstown Bay, Kingstown, Ballynakill and Killary – penetrating far inland, provide shelter and calm waters. These provide ideal sites for the harbours and piers that are home to the boats of the local fishing fleet, which is principally engaged in inshore fishing. Population densities are lower than in South Connemara. Culturally the area is predominantly English-speaking²⁶.

It is arguable that the assistance of the Dublin Castle Commission and the civil engineering works directed by Alexander Nimmo²⁷, in the early part of the 19th century, had their greatest effect in North Connemara, which was severely affected by hardship and near-famine in the 1820s. The establishment of sheltered piers at Clifden, Cleggan and Inishbofin, and particularly the improvement of the main road artery to Clifden and the west, are elements of infrastructure that continue to provide service to the present day. Markets for fish, as well as other products, opened up as road transport to the main harbours (e.g. Clifden and Cleggan) was improved from the 1820s on, followed by the arrival of the railway later in the 19th century. Population decreased following the famine years and the Congested Districts Board (CDB) influence on boat-building was not as evident as in South Connemara as no shipyards were established in the area.

The population of people and boats in this region was always more sparse than in South Connemara with 308 boats and 1,300 fishermen reported in 1836²⁸, being only a fraction (~22%) of the numbers in South Connemara (1,399 and 5,985 respectively). The present survey shows a similar pattern, with the number of heritage boats recorded in North Connemara being 32% of the number in the south (see Appendix 2: Distribution by Areas and Ports).

²⁶ See References 5 & 11

²⁷ See References 3 & 4

²⁸ See Reference 15



GRP Curach at mooring in Fahy

Curach GRP feistithe san Fhaiche

Conamara Thuaidh

- Ceann Léime go dtí an Caoláire Rua

[Ceantar 8]

Athraíonn an cósta go mór ó thuaidh de Cheann Léime, rud a léiríonn radharcra mórga Chonamara Thuaidh, idir shléibhte agus ghleannta. Bíonn an cladach a bhfuil a aghaidh ar an iarthar buailte ag gálaí an Atlantaigh. Tá na hoileáin carraigeach agus doshroichte, seachas Iomaí, atá nasctha leis an mórhír ag tambaló gainimh in aice an Chladaigh Dhuibh, agus Inis Bó Finne, áit a bhfuil cuan nádúrtha breá ann. Tá foscadh agus támhall sna góilíní fada, doimhne – mar atá sa Chlochán, i mBarr an tSrutha, i mBaile Conraoi, i mBaile na Cille agus sa Chaoláire Rua a théann i bhfad intíre. Is suímh iontacha iad do na calafoirt agus na céanna ina mbíonn báid an fhlít iascaireachta áitiúil a bhíonn i mbun iascaireacht chladaigh den chuid is mó. Tá an daonra níos lú ná mar atá i gConamara Theas. Ó thaobh an chultúir de, is Béarla is mó a labhraítear sa cheantar²⁶.

Is féidir an cás a chur gur i gConamara Thuaidh, áit a raibh fíordhrochtionchar ag cruatan agus neasghorta air sna 1820dí, is mó a bhí tionchar ag cabhair Choimisiún Chaisleán Bhaile Átha Cliath agus ag na hoibreacha innealtóireachta sibhialta faoi stiúir Alexander Nimmo²⁷. Is gnéithe den infreastruchtúr, lena gcuirtear seirbhís ar fáil go dtí an lá atá inniu ann, iad tógáil na gcéanna foscúla sa Chlochán, sa Chloigeann agus ar Inis Bó Finne agus go háirithe an feabhas a cuireadh ar líonra na bpriomhbhóithre chuig an gClochán agus an iarthar. Osclaíodh suas margai éisc nuair a feabhsaíodh iompar bóthair chuig na príomhchalafoirt (m.sh. an Clochán agus an Cloigeann) ó na 1820dí ar aghaidh, agus le teacht an iarnróid níos déanaí sa 19^ú haois. Laghdaigh an daonra i ndiaidh blianta an ghorta agus ní raibh lorg chomh mór ag Bord na gCeantar Cúng (BCC) ar dhéanamh bád is a bhí i gConamara Theas mar nár bunaíodh aon longchlóis sa cheantar.

²⁶ Féach Tagairtí 5 & 11

²⁷ Féach Tagairtí 3 & 4

The Cleggan Disaster

The Cleggan disaster of 28th October 1927 occurred when a sudden fierce storm surprised the fleet of fishermen in open boats off the north Galway and south Mayo coasts. Sixteen fishermen from Cleggan and nearby Rossadilisk lost their lives, as well as nine from Inishbofin, and a further 19 from Iniskea Co. Mayo. A relief fund set up after the disaster provided a number of small boats, but also six motor fishing vessels. The disaster appears to mark a turning point in the change to inshore fishing, encouraged also by the setting up of shellfish tanks in Damhros by a Breton firm in the 1920s²⁹. The tragic loss of two Claddaghduff fishermen, from a locally-built GRP curach in April 2009, provides a poignant reminder of the continuity of tradition and life-style on the North Connemara coast.

The Boats

The dominant boats on this coast are half-deckers and GRP Curachs, which have supplanted the traditional *Curach Chanbháis*. Galway Hookers and *Curachaí Adhmaid* are also found, although in considerably less numbers than in South Connemara. A number of half-deckers and trawlers fish out of the larger harbours, e.g. Cleggan, Clifden and Derryinver. The less-developed piers and strands at Fahy, Kingstown, Claddaghduff, Renvyle, Tully Pier, Rosroe and Killary are home to smaller boats, mainly GRP curachs.

The Hookers and *Curachaí Adhmaid* found in North Connemara show no regional differences when compared to other areas, particularly South Connemara, which is the heartland for those boat types. The curachs, on the other hand, whether the *Curach Chanbháis* or the now more popular GRP curach, differ from both the Aran and South Connemara models. As Hornell has shown, in his seminal work on Irish skin boats, they have more in common with the close-boarded curachs of Co. Mayo. This type of structure is more suitable for the application of the GRP skin – now almost universal – which needs a close-boarded base. These GRP curachs are more commonly used for inshore fishing than the *Curachaí Adhmaid* favoured in South Connemara, although the latter are also to be found in numbers at sheltered piers.

²⁹ See Reference 11