

## An tSionainn – An tSuca

[Ceantair 10, 11 agus 12]

### Tuaisceart na Gaillimhe / Tuaim agus an tSuca Uachtair

Is é seo ‘an ceantar folamh’ de Chontae na Gaillimhe, chomh fada is a bhaineann sé le báid; níor thángthas ar aon bháid oidhreachta in úsáid sa lá atá inniu ann. Gan amhras, san am atá caite bhíodh báid ag úsáid Abhainn an Chláir, abhainn mhall a théann isteach i Loch Coirib agus sa tSuca Uachtair, agus tá go leor lochanna beaga ann. Sampla den saghas báid a bhíodh á usáid is ea an Coite Móna as Áth Cinn.

### Báid Lomáin

Is í Báid Lomáin an Lorgain, atá san Ard-Mhúsaem, Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath, an soitheach Gaelach slán is sine dá bhfuil againn agus luaitear dáta tuairim is 2500 BC leis. Is soitheach ollmhór atá ann – os cionn 15 m ar fad agus 1 m ar leithead – cuasaithe amach as tamhan chrann darach. Thángthas ar an mbáid i bPortach Eadargúil, An Lorgain, in aice le Tuaim, Co. na Gaillimhe i 1902. Tógadh deireadh soithigh mar é i gCeathrú an Éadain, níos lú ná 20 km ó thuaidh ó shuíomh bháid An Lorgain i 1996. Tá sampla níos lú, Báid Lomáin *Summerville*, 15½ troigh ar fad agus 15½ orlach ar leithead – a fuarthas 40 bliain ó shin i Loch Mhaigh Locha, in abhantrach na Suca – ar taispeáint sa *Mountbellew Forge Museum*. Léiríonn sé sin seasmhacht agus éagsúlacht shuntasach an chineáil sin sa ré stairiúil, agus dáta luaite leis, trí dheindreacnoineolaíocht, suas go dtí 1001 AD.

Thángthas ar cheithre bháid lomáin sa Choirib taobh thus de Chaisleán Mhionlaigh i 1983 agus tuairiscíodh i nuachtán in earrach na bliana 2010 go bhfuair an duine céanna ceann eile i ngar don áit a bhfuair sé ceann deich mbliana roimhe sin. Tá Báid Scaobtha Bhearna – 4,800 bliain d’aois – a d’aimsigh Brian Ó Carra in 2002, ar taispeáint in Uisceadán na Gaillimhe i mBóthar na Trá.

### The Cliath Thulca

This very primitive type of craft [lit. flood raft], depending on bundles of rushes for flotation, was in use on the upper reaches of the River Suck well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A number of versions were used, ranging from the very simplest – a rectangular raft of rushes, sufficient to support one man, lashed together and propelled by a punting pole – to the more sophisticated type represented by the reconstruction in the National Museum store in Daingean, Co. Offaly. The replica in the accompanying illustration was built, in the 1960s, by Patrick Gately and others, based on a type used in Feevagh and Derrycahill, – on the Roscommon bank of the River Suck – at the instigation of James Delaney of the Irish Folklore Commission<sup>35</sup>. The resulting craft, as can be seen, is in the form of a timber crib or frame, roughly boat-shaped and infilled with rush bundles, which provide the flotation. It was rowed and used for river-crossing, fishing, fowling and light transport. A variant on this design, using willow and hazel rods, was built by Meitheal Mara in 2000<sup>36</sup>.

### The River Shannon, Lough Derg & The River Suck

The eastern boundary of the county is the mighty, slow-flowing Shannon, and its tributary, the River Suck. The flat plain of east Galway dips its toes in the water here, in places as bog land and elsewhere in offlying islands and flooding callows. These last had their own distinctive community and culture, heavily dependent on boats, until the population moved back onto dry land in the mid-20th century. Present-day boat use is almost wholly for leisure and tourism.

With bog-land and callows occupying large portions of the Galway shore the larger settlements are found mainly on the eastern bank. Portumna, at the head of Lough Derg, and Ballinasloe, at the upper limit of navigation on the Suck, are the principal towns on the Co. Galway side. Between these centres, in places like the Clonfert callows and Meelick, the riverside population is very sparse with a disappearing memory of boats and their culture.

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<sup>35</sup> See References 2 & 22

<sup>36</sup> See Reference 2



An Chliath Thulca

### An Chliath Thulca

Is cineál soithigh an-seanársa é sin [a chiallaíonn rafta tulite], ina rabhthas ag brath ar bhearta luachra le snámh, a d'úsáidtí ar an tSuca Uachtair isteach go maith san 20<sup>ú</sup> haois. Baineadh úsáid as roinnt leaganacha, ón gceann is simplí – rafta dronuilleogach luachra, sách ládir le fear amháin a iompar, coinnithe le chéile agus á thiomáint ag crann saíteoireachta – go dtí an cineál is casta mar a léiríonn an ceann athdhéanta i stóras an Ard-Mhúsaeim sa Daingean, Co. Uíbh Fhailí. Rinne Patrick Gatley agus daoine eile an mhacasamhail sa léaráid sna 1960í, bunaithe ar chineál a bhí in úsáid i bhFíodhbhach agus Doire Chathail, – ar bhruach Ros Comáin den tSuca – le spreagadh ó James Delaney ó Choimisiún Bhéaloidis na hÉireann<sup>35</sup>. Tá an soitheach, mar is léir ón léaráid, i bhfoirm fráma nó cliabhán adhmaid, ar chruth garbh báid, agus líonta isteach le bearta luachra, a ligéann dó snámh. Dhéantáí é a iomramh agus a úsáid chun dul trasna na habhann, chun iascaireachta, chun foghlacireachta agus chun luchtanna éadroma a iompar. Rinne Meitheal Mara leagan eagsúil ón dearadh sin as slata saileach agus coill sa bliaín 2000<sup>36</sup>.

### An tSionainn, Loch Deirgeirt agus an tSuca

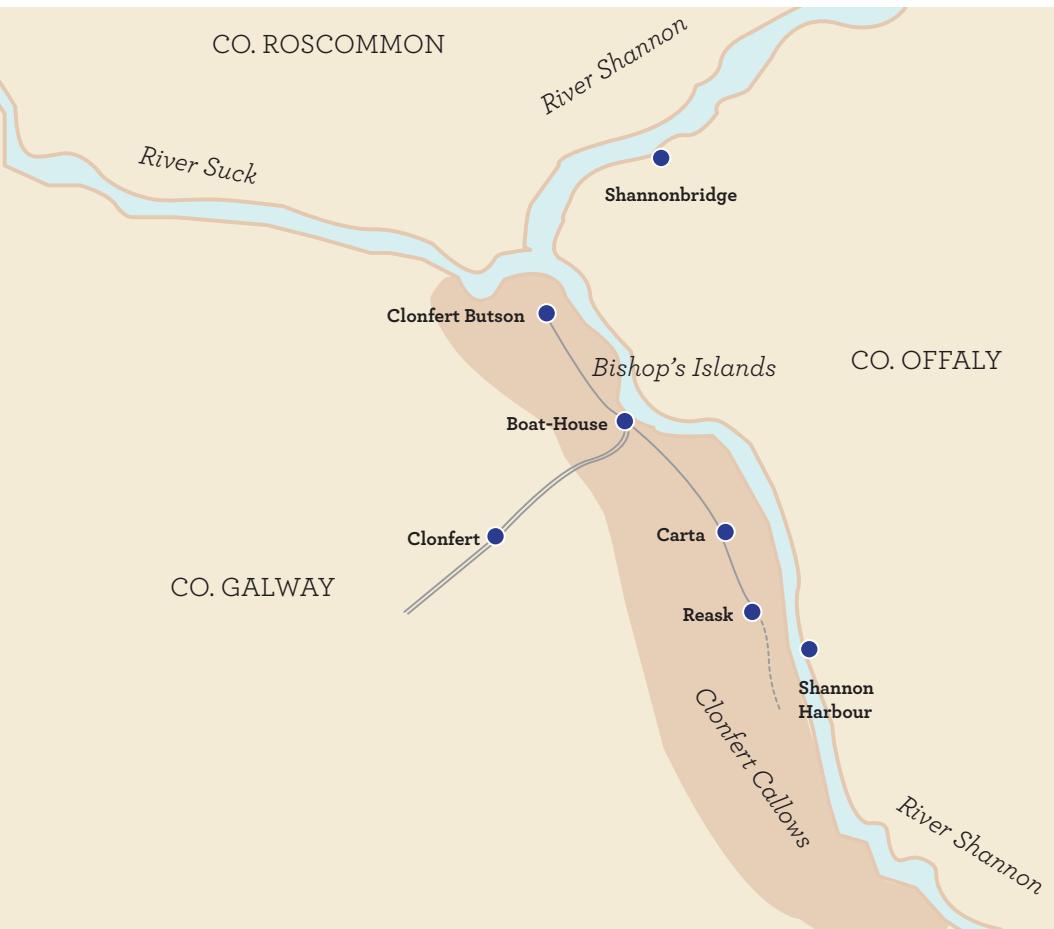
Is í an tSionainn mhall mhórchumhachtach agus a fo-abhainn, an tSuca, teorainn thoir an chontae. Tagann má chothrom Ghaillimh thoir go dtí an t-uisce anseo mar phortaigh in áiteanna agus mar oiléain agus calaí tulcacha in áiteanna eile. Bhí a bpobail agus a gcultúr féin ar na hoileáin agus sna calaí sin a bhíodh ag brath go mór ar bháid nó gur bhog na daoine ar ais ar thalamh tirim i lár an 20<sup>ú</sup> haois. Ní bhaintear úsáid as báid sa lá atá inniu ann ach le haghaidh áineasa agus turasóireachta den chuid is mó.

Ó tharla gur portach agus calaí atá i gcuid mhaith de bhruach na Gaillimhe tá na háiteanna lonnaithe móra ar an mbruach thoir den chuid is mó. Is iad Port Omna ag ceann Loch Deirgeirt, agus Béal Átha na Sluaighe, ag teorainn uachtair loingseoireachta na Suca, na príomhbhailte ar thaobh Cho. na Gaillimhe. Idir na lárionaid sin i gceantair mar chalaí Chluain Fearta agus Míleac tá an daonra cois abhann tearc, agus tá cuimhní cinn maidir le báid agus a gcultúr ag imeacht as cuimhne.

<sup>35</sup> Féach Tagairtí 2 & 22

<sup>36</sup> Féach Tagairt 2

## The Clonfert Callows



The Clonfert Callows

Calaí Chluain Fearta

The Clonfert Callows offer a glimpse into a way of life that ceased to exist in the mid-1950s. The dominant families, the Butsons, who provided bishops and clergymen to the established church, were landlords of Clonfert Demesne. They owned the callows, which extended along six miles of the river, stretching from the townland of Clonfert (Butson) in the north, at the confluence of the River Suck, through Bishop's Island and the place known as 'The Boathouse', opposite Clonfert village, and southwards to the townlands of Carta and Reask (see map). Banagher and Shannonbridge were connected by foot-tracks but could more easily be reached by boat.

The callows supported in the region of 60 families, who lived in semi-aquatic conditions and subsisted by farming, fishing and wild-fowling. The Shannon often flooded their homes, notably in 1928 – when there was a temporary exodus because of the fear that the surface of the bog might move and swamp them – and again in 1956. The people moved back onto dry land after that. Many had employment with Bord na Móna on the vast peat bogs supplying Shannonbridge power station. While their life was clearly harsh, the older people who remember it look back with affection and nostalgia. The callows was a place apart and their close-knit community had concerns that placed them at a remove from many of the restrictions of everyday life in the wider community. Their story deserves to be recorded before it passes into oblivion.



Brendan Spellman (1937 – 2006) on the left symbolised the romantic side of life on the callows. He literally 'lived off the land' being an expert fisherman and shot. He moved onto dry land between 1952 and 1963, but the call of the callows proved too strong and with his wife Josie, he moved back to his beloved fishing, wildfowling and callows farming, so dependent on the changing moods of the river. He is seen here with a friend, Michael Galvin.

Ba chomhartha é Brendan Spellman (1937 – 2006), ar clé, den saol rómánsach sna calaí. Mhair sé ar an talamh, é ina iascaire agus lámhachór den scoth. Bhog sé go talamh tirim idir 1952 agus 1963, ach bhí an saol sna calaí go smior ann agus bhog sé ar ais lena bhean chéile Josie, go dtí an iascaireacht, an fhoghlaeireacht agus an fheirmeoireacht sna calaí a bhí ag brath chomh mór ar an abhainn. Tá sé le feiceáil anseo lena chara Michael Galvin.

## Calaí Chluain Fearta

Le Calaí Chluain Fearta, is féidir sracfhéachaint a fháil ar chultúr agus ar shaol ar tháinig deireadh leo i lár na 1950dí. Tiarnaí talún ar Diméin Chluain Fearta ab iad na teaghlaigh cheannais, muintir Butson, a raibh cuid díobh ina n-easpaig agus ina gcléir san eaglais bhunaithe. Ba leo na calaí, a shín ar feadh sé mhíle den abhainn, ó bhaile fearann Chluain Fearta ó thuaidh, ag cumar na Suca, trí Oileáin an Easpaig agus an áit ar a dtugtar '*The Boathouse*', os comhair sráidbhaile Chluain Fearta, agus síos ó dheas i dtreo bhailte fearainn na Céarta agus an Réisc (féach an léarscáil). Bhí Beannachar agus Droichead na Sionainne nasctha ag cosáin ach bhí sé i bhfad níos éasca dul chomh fada leo i mbád.

Bhí na calaí in ann suas le 60 teaghlaigh a chothú, teaghlaigh a bhí ag maireachtáil faoi chuínsí riascacha trí fheirmeoireacht, iascaireacht agus fhoghlaeireacht. Ba mhinic leis an tSionainn a bruacha a bhriseadh agus a dtithe a chur faoi uisce, go háirithe mar a tharla i 1928 – nuair a d'fhág na daoine a mbaile go sealadach mar go raibh eagla go mbogfadh dromchla an phortaigh agus go ndéanfaí iad a iombhá – agus arís in 1956. Bhog daoine ar ais go dtí talamh tirim ina dhiaidh sin. Bhí go leor díobh ag obair do Bhord na Móna ar na portaigh móra móna a bhí ag soláthar stáisiún cumhachta Dhroichead na Sionainne. Cé go mba léir go raibh saol crua acu, ní chuireann sé isteach ar na daoine scothaosta a bhfuil cuimhne fós acu air. B'áit ann féin a bhí i gceantar na gcaláí agus bhí an pobal an-dlúth agus in ainneoin na n-ábhar imní bhí siad scoite ó na srianta a bhí ar go leor daoine i bpobail eile i gcoitinne. Is fiú go mór a scéal a thaifeadadh sula ndéanfar dearmad go huile agus go hiomlán air.

## Shannon Clinker punts



The 18' clinker punt is the principal indigenous craft of the Shannon, between the lakes of Ree and Derg. These were used for everyday fetching and carrying, cross-river journeys for shopping, church-going, funerals and weddings and for fishing. The boats show family similarities with the lake fishing boats but are generally less refined in build. The very pronounced skeg is a common feature. There is a marked similarity to the boat measured by Michael Tyrrell in Mountshannon, on Lough Derg in 1998 for the Traditional Boats of Ireland project. Boat builders for the Clonfert callows were Colahan, Dolan and Nevin. One of the callows boat builders, Albert Nevin, now lives near Shannon Harbour, where his son has a hurley-making factory. Few of their clinker punts survive and those that do are in poor condition.

Clinker punt, typically 18ft. long, with 3 thwarts, hanging knees and pronounced skeg; similar to lake fishing boat but not as finely built; oar-block and thole pin, like Lough Corrib boats.

Punta clinse, 18 troigh ar fad de ghnáth, le 3 sheas, glúine crochta agus sceig ardaithe; cosúil le bád iascaireachta locha ach nach bhfuil déanta chomh dealslámhach; glamba agus cnoga, cosúil le báid Loch Corrib.



Shannon Cots

These were simple, flat-bottomed boats, typically 20' long, but some were bigger. They were used for the transport of cargoes of turf, hay and other cargo, but also for ferrying livestock, to the islands or cross-river. This picture, from the callows, shows a donkey being carried in the cot. Cattle normally swam across the short channels connecting to the islands. Another picture (not illustrated) shows a funeral party of almost 20, with the coffin, on its way to Clonmacnoise, all aboard a cot on the river. No cots survive on this section of the Shannon.

#### Coití na Sionainne

Báid shimplí réthónacha a bhí iontu sin a bhí 20 troigh ar fad de ghnáth, ach bhí roinnt díobh níos mó. D'úsáidtí iad le haghaidh móin, féar agus lastas eile a iompar agus freisin le haghaidh beostoc a iompar chuiig na hoileáin nó trasna na habhann. Léiríonn an grianghraif seo, ó na calaí, asal á iompar sa choite. Ba ghnách le heallach snámh trasna na seolbhealaí gearra a nascann na hoileáin. Léiríonn grianghraif eile (nach dtaispeántar) sochraíd de bheagnach 20 duine, agus córra ar a mbealach go Cluain Mhic Nóis, agus iad ar fad ar bord coite ar an abhainn. Níl aon choite ar an gcuid seo den tSionainn sa lá atá inniu ann.

#### Puntaí Clinse na Sionainne

Is é an punta clinse 18 troigh príomhshoitheach dúchais na Sionainne, idir Loch Riach agus Loch Deirgeirt. Baineadh úsáid as le haghaidh rudaí a bhailiú agus a iompar gach lá, turais siopadóireachta ar an abhainn, dul chuig an séipéal, chuig sochraídí, bainiseacha agus le haghaidh na hiascaireachta. Tá cosúlachtaí idir na báid agus na báid iascaireachta locha ach de ghnáth níl siad déanta chomh deaslámhach. Is gné choitianta í an sceig an-ard. Tá cosúlacht mhór idir iad agus an bád a thomhas Michael Tyrell i mBaile Uí Bheoláin, ar Loch Deirgeirt i 1998 le haghaidh tionscadal *Traditional Boats of Ireland*. Ba iad muintir Colahan, Dolan agus Nevin na saoir bháid do chalaí Chluain Fearta. Tá duine de shaoir báid na gcaláí, Albert Nevin, ina chónaíanois in aice le Caladh na Sionainne, áit a bhfuil monarcha déanta camán ag a mhac. Is beag punta clinse dá gcuid atá ann fós agus tá na cinn atá fós ann i ndroch-chaoi.

## The Shannon Navigation



Steamboat at Banagher Bridge

Bád gaile ag Droichead Bheannchair

The Shannon has been a navigable river from early historic times, as evidenced by the important 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> century monastic foundations of Clonmacnoise, on the east bank of the river, and Clonfert, at a short distance, on the Galway side. Clonfert, indeed, is the burial place of St. Brendan, Ireland's most renowned navigator, who was brought there to be buried, from the monastery of Eanach Dhúin on the Corrib. Over a thousand years later, after the defeat of Kinsale, O'Sullivan Bere, on his great retreat northwards, crossed the Shannon at Port Tulcháin (Portland), between Portumna and Meelick. To ferry his men across the river he built large hide boats from the skins of twelve horses, on a framework of osiers.

The improvement of the Shannon navigation falls into two distinct phases<sup>37</sup>. The first, in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the long navigable sections connected by canals and locks, such as those at Athlone, Shannonbridge and Meelick. The 19th century saw a more comprehensive development following the appointment of the Shannon Commissioners in 1834, under the energetic engineer John Fox Burgoyne, who was also chairman of the recently established Board of Works. Together with his fellow commissioners, Griffith, Rhodes, Cubitt & Jones, Bourgoyn embarked on an extensive programme of civil engineering works in the dredging of rapids and shallows, the removal of eel weirs and the construction of new bridges, weirs and locks, leaving as his legacy the Shannon navigation largely as we know it today. The Royal Canal was extended to the Shannon at Dromod and the Grand Canal to Shannon Harbour in this period also, providing a navigable waterways network connecting Dublin with the Shannon and Limerick. This development saw water-borne cargo tonnages peak for a short period before competition from the railways began to have an effect from the 1850s onward. However the waterway system comprising the River Shannon and canals continued to carry significant tonnages of cargo, Guinness porter, malt – and turf during the period of the Second World War – until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> See Reference 18

<sup>38</sup> See Reference 18 & 26