

GORT INSE GUAIRE TOWN TRAIL

A journey through time

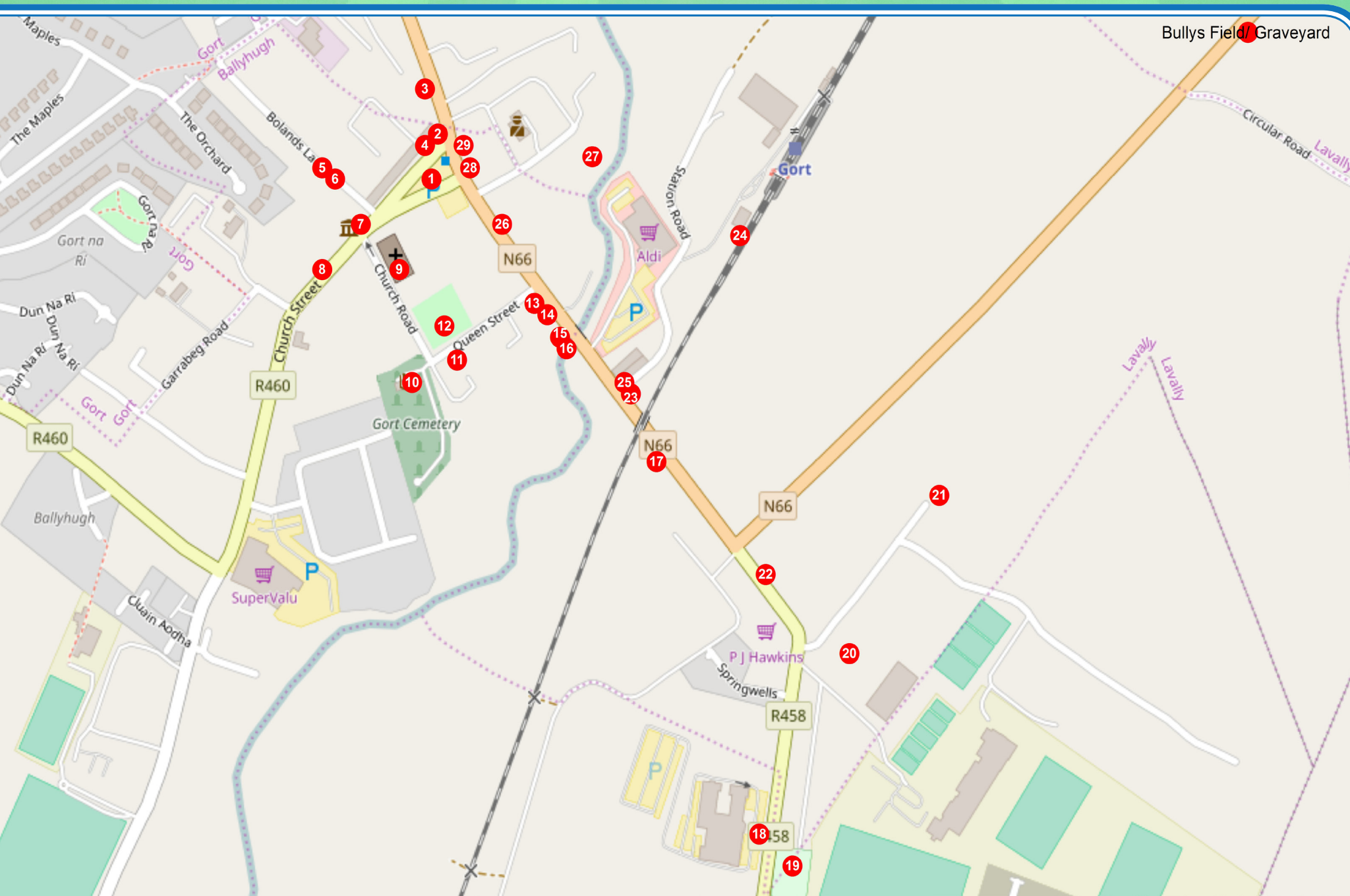
Welcome to Gort, Located 20 miles South of Galway City, Gort lies between the Slieve Aughty Mountains and The Burren. The name Gort comes from 'Gort Inse Guaire', or garden of Guaire's Island. Legend tells us, Gort was home to Guaire, a famous 6th century King of the South Galway Aidhne Tribe, whose palace was located at the curve of the Cannahowna/Gort River. He had a great reputation for generosity. Poets and Bishops were welcome guests at his royal 'fort of lasting flame'. The bards celebrated his generosity in poetic exaggeration by representing his right arm longer than his left. "As generous as Guaire" was an accepted expression of the time.

In the middle ages the O'Shaughnessy family had a stronghold in Gort. In the 17th century their estates were confiscated and given to the Verekers, who became known as the Viscounts of Gort. In the early 19th century, Viscount Gort drew up a plan for a town with wide streets and a spacious square.

While the town can trace its history back to the 6th century, it is its recent literary and cultural history which places Gort high on the tourist trail. This focus is on Gort's associations with W.B. Yeats at Thoor Ballylee, Lady Gregory at nearby Coole Park, Edward Martyn at Tulira and the many famous people of the Celtic Literary Renaissance who visited the area.

Their creative influence is reflected in the Town through the activities of The Wild Swan Theatre Company, The Lady Gregory Yeats Trail, Coole Music, Coole Voices, Gort Vibes Cinema Club, Cooley Collins Traditional Music festival, Comhaltas and a host of visual artists, musicians and craftsmen who work and live in the region.

It is our intention with this walking trail of Gort, to share with you the past and the present influences in the area.



1



WEIGH HOUSE

53.067 -8.8196

This dates from c 1760. The weekly market was held in the Square on Saturday, probably from O'Shaughnessy times, definitely from the 18th century. People came from all over the present Burren Lowlands area. Produce was weighed to make sure that people paid their tolls. In the early 19th cent it would have been 3 pence for a barrel of oats or a penny a stone for potatoes. The Weigh Master would mark the weight of the item on the seller's hat. The weigh house went out of use c 1950 and is now owned by An Taisce and is our tourist office. The square itself is now a triangle and the houses on the Church side once faced the river so what we see today are the backs of the houses.

2

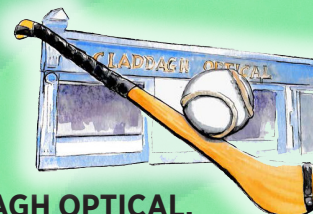


SULLIVANS HOTEL

53.0674 -8.8195

This used to be called the Royal. Its proprietor was John Forrest. There is a local story he was called Bogan (soft shell) Forrest because he came to Gort with just 6 goose eggs and made his fortune. Jack B. Yeats used to sit at the front window and sketch. It is currently family - run and owned by the Sullivan family.

3



CLADDAGH OPTICAL.

53.0678 -8.8197

In the 19th century this was Edward Treiston's saddler's shop. It then became a shoe shop and remained so until about 30 years ago and it was he who made the first sliotar (hurling ball).

4

GALLERY CAFE

53.0673 -8.8197

Situated on the corner of Lowry's Lane it was once a dwelling house owned by David Lowry in 1855, now a restaurant focussing on organic and seasonal ingredients. It has a well, which was discovered during renovations in its basement dating probably from the early 19th century.

5



BOLANDS LANE

53.0671 -8.8213

Named for the merchant family who got the lease for all the houses in 1834. It housed the first official bank in Gort. Harvest Studios - an initiative of the Brothers of Charity which houses a cafe and bookshop which are run by the service users.

6



BOLANDS LANE

53.067 -8.8211

Michael Kennedy Ceramics Studio. Michael Kennedy one of Ireland's leading ceramic artists has worked in the area for 30 years. His work has been described as echoing the themes of the Wild Atlantic Way (Discover Ireland).

7

GORT RESOURCE CENTRE

53.0666 -8.8207

Once the home of the curates of the parish while the house beside housed the parish priest. This is now a community information and aid resource. Many local voluntary groups meet here. The Arch between the two houses led into gardens and stables where their horses were kept.



8



TOWN HALL

53.0662 -8.8213

This was built in 1847 as a National School (an Irish primary school). It must have been effective in its time as the illiteracy rate fell from 53% 1841 to 16% 1890. It is now used by the community including our local drama group the Wild Swans for performances. The front railings are the starting point for our 2 local cycle routes which include the Kilmacduagh Monastic Site and Thoor Ballylee, Yeats home for 10 years. (The map for these is available in the Tourist Office)

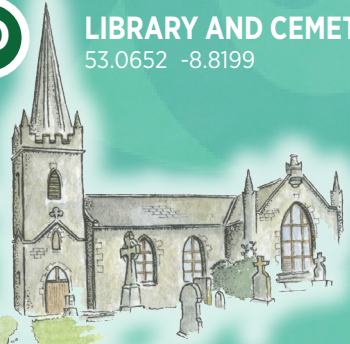
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CATHOLIC CHURCH
53.0662 -8.8201
When the Penal laws were relaxed Lord Gort donated land at a peppercorn rent for the church. This was originally built in 1825 by Pain Bros. and has been modified and enlarged many times since then. The priest historian Monsignor Jerome Fahey joked with Lady Gregory that its spire was higher than the one in the protestant church. "What does it matter", she replied "aren't they both pointing in the same direction!"



10

LIBRARY AND CEMETERY
53.0652 -8.8199



The library was the former local Protestant church built in 1810. The design was attributed to the architect Pain. The 2 galleries were for the Gregorys (the north) and Goughs, (the South). It was presented to the town of Gort in 1972. The cemetery has several 17th century box tombs. In the newer part, donated by the Sisters of Mercy, are beautiful mosaic Stations of the Cross.

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For more information:
www.burrenlowlands.com



11


ORCHARD HOUSE
53.0654 -8.8192
This is a residential facility for Brothers of Charity service users. It is home to adults and is used by others as a day resource. Next to it is our Men's Shed.

12

CANON QUINN PARK
53.0657 -8.8194
This small park used to be once the place where sheep were washed on market day. It has quorn stones from a local mill. It is now a recreational area owned by the catholic church. Local volunteers help the County Council maintain it. All the houses on this square originally faced on to it.

13

GLYNNS HOTEL
53.0659 -8.818
(Kates Cafe) This building saw many interesting guests. Count John McCormack, Prince Rainier and Princess Grace of Monaco all visited here and it was the favourite hotel of Lady Gregory's grand-daughters. The exterior of the building is still the same as it was in the 19th century.




14

BANK OF IRELAND
53.0658 -8.8178
It was opened in 1870 as the National Bank. The upper floors of the building were formerly the manager's residence. Its first manager was George Grubb. It was incorporated into the Bank of Ireland in the 1960's. One part of the building was previously used as a dwelling.

15

CONVENT (BRIDGE HOUSE)
53.0656 -8.8176
Dating from the 1760's. Originally the home of Lord Gort, it is probably the oldest inhabited dwelling in the town. At various stages until 1857 it served as a doctor's residence, a police barracks and an auxiliary workhouse during the Great Famine. The founding sister of the Community served with Florence Nightingale in the Crimea.




16

GORT/CANNAHOWNA/BLACKWATER RIVER
53.0655 -8.8175
It has its source as the Oswendaluleegh River in the Slieve Aughty mountains. It flows into Lough Cutra in the parish of Beagh and becomes The Beagh River. After 3k the river is swallowed in a depression known as the 'Devil's Punchbowl' and then reappears under a naturally formed arch known as 'Pollduagh' a grotto type cave well worth seeing. From here it is called the Cannahowna river and reaches the town of Gort where it is called the Gort River. Leaving Gort it sinks and rises until it reaches Coole Lough and from there makes its way to Kinvara Bay.

17

FORMER POLICE HOUSE
53.0645 -8.8161
The long two storey stone building in George's Street, after the railway bridge going towards Ennis was a 3 then 4 bay house built in 1860 as an RIC barracks. Men who fought with Liam Mellows were held there during the War of Independence. It was a police barracks until 1922 when it became a private house.



18

THE LADY GREGORY HOTEL
53.0612 -8.8145
From 1969 to 1995 this building served as Our Lady's College, a boys' secondary school. Many of its rooms are named after members of the Irish Literary Revival who lived in South Galway. It is run by a local family as part of the Great National Hotel Group.

19

CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND
53.0608 -8.814
A committee was formed in the 1980's to build the playground. It took some time to find suitable land but it was officially opened in 2013 and has remained a popular venue ever since.

20

SOUTH GALWAY EDUCATION CENTRE
53.0628 -8.8131
An adult education centre run by the GRETB it was originally the Technical School. It remained empty for years until the early 2000's when a local group campaigned successfully for its reopening when it was rebuilt and refurbished. It was built on the site of Gort Workhouse.



21

22

THE OLD FEVER HOSPITAL
53.0642 -8.8117
Est 1846. The Tudor style is typical of workhouses designed by architect George Wilkinson. Located adjacent to the Workhouse, the fever hospital was built to deal with the epidemics brought on by the Famine. Built to accommodate approximately 150 people the numbers rose to nearly 450. Fever sheds had to be built to extend accommodation for the sick. A sad reminder of this terrible period in history is this beautiful building which is in very good condition. Today, in the grounds, is the workshop of local stonemason Jethro Sheen. It is well worth a visit to this gifted craftsman's showroom.


22

23

BURKE'S SHOP
53.0651 -8.8165
The Plaque echoes the text of the plaque which W.B. Yeats had erected on his tower house Thoor Ballylee "and smithy work from the Gort forge". This was built c 1800 and was still in operation until the 1960's. W.B. Yeats used to get his horse shod here.

24

RAILWAY STATION
53.0665 -8.8148
This opened in 1869, after a series of financial setbacks. Thomas Lawlor was the first station master. It claims to be the first line in Ireland to carry 3rd class passengers. The first two engines were named 'Drumconora' and 'Lough Cutra', a third was purchased and named 'Gort'. The railway brought prosperity and employment. Railway cottages were built and crossings were manned by tenants. People wishing to cross at night had to obtain the key for the gates from the tenant. Secondary school students used to travel to Gort until late 1970's when the line closed. It reopened in 2010 as part of the Western Rail Corridor.




25

THE BRIDEWELL
53.0652 -8.8166
Built in the early 19th century, it served as a jail. On the wall is a plaque commemorating the hanging of a fighter from the 1798 rebellion. Now it houses the Centra Supermarket and Quinn's Pharmacy.


26

KEANE'S SHOP
53.0666 -8.8185
This is one of the oldest shops in Gort. A Pub/Shop establishment and wool merchant founded c 1812. "Sells everything from a needle to an anchor". W. B. Yeats did his shopping here and has a balance owing on the shop ledger. They still have the ring Yeats used to tie his horse to outside. The Bianconi coaches (Ireland's leading stage coaches of the time) used to change horses in their yard. Many famous people have called to the shop over the years. The Keane family used to have a cinema just down the street where silent movies were shown.



27

OLD MILITARY BARRACKS
53.0672 -8.8171
This now Honan's warehouse. It is built on the site of Gort Castle which was destroyed by Cromwellians c1650. Sir Roger O'Shaughnessy was the last chief to reside in Gort. His only son and heir went to France with the Wild Geese. What you see today was once the Cavalry Barracks, this is 3 floors in height and 10 bays in width. It is in good condition. Over eighty men resided here. Across the road can be seen the remains of the stables where 116 horses were once kept. Today you will find treasures of the past for sale in this Aladdin's cave of antiques. The Garda station H.Q. is located across the road.




28

AIB
53.0671 -8.819
This was once the home of the Glynn's, a well known merchant family whose members include Patrick McMahon Glynn, one of the founders of the Australian Federation. His brother Sir Joseph Glynn, was prominent in legal circles in the first half of the 19th century. One branch of the Glynn's opened a tobacco factory here. It was first opened as a bank, The Munster and Leinster, in 1919 becoming the A.I.B. in 1966.

29

THE COURTHOUSE
53.0673 -8.8191
This was built in 1815 one of the earliest local examples of this class of public building. It has been remodelled over the years so that only the staircase survives in its original form. Many famous meetings were held here, including the Temperance Rallies of Fr Theobald Mathew. It is still a functioning courthouse.



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Useful websites:

www.burrenlowlands.com

www.ladygregoryyeatstrail.com

www.yeatsthoorballylee.org

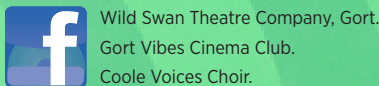
www.woodvillemalledgarden.com

www.kiltartangregorymuseum.org

www.coole-music.com

www.cooleycollintradfest.com

www.kava.ie (Kinvara Area Visual Arts)



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