



NUI Maynooth

Certificate in Local History

Mark Green

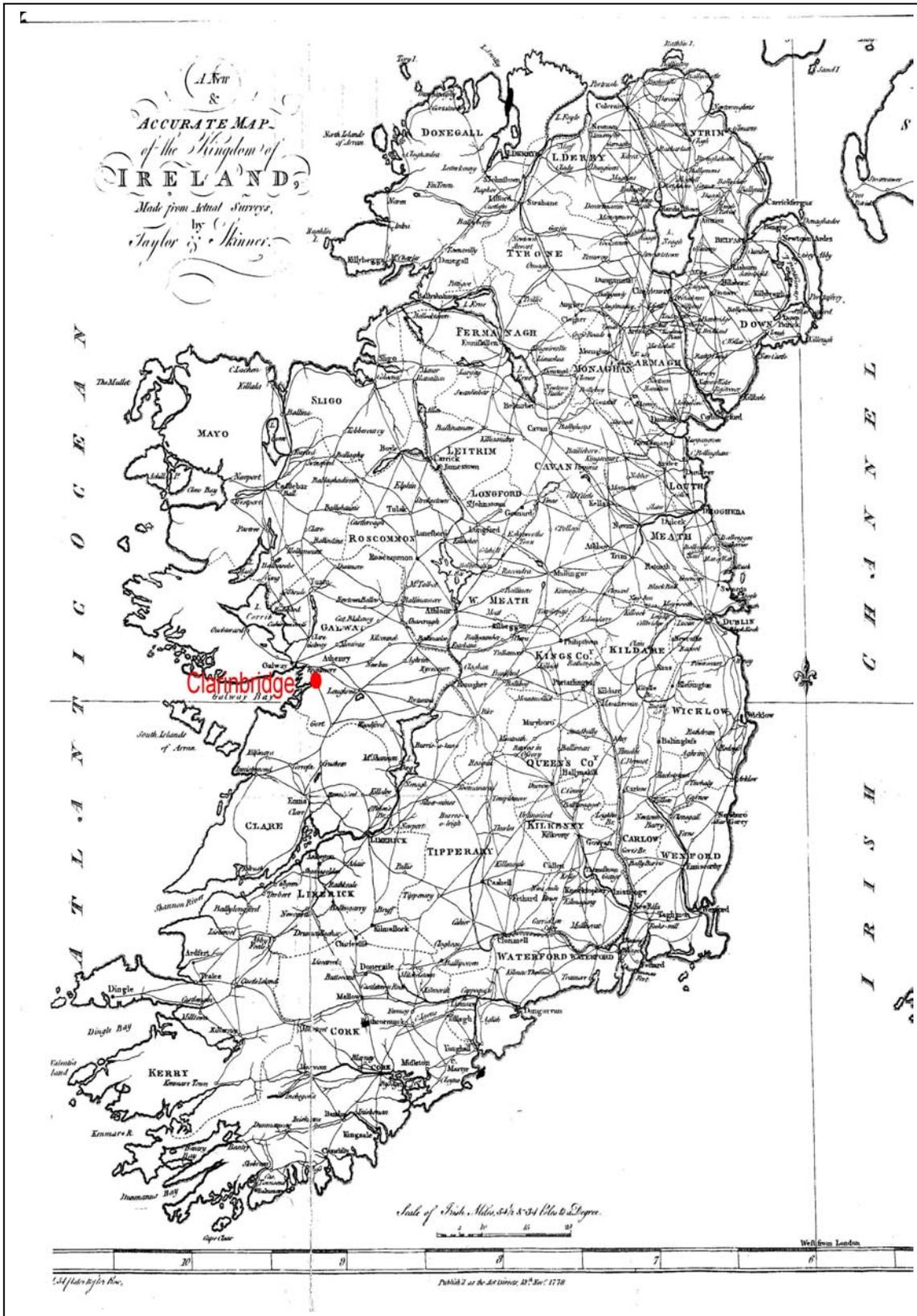
2009-2010

The Lost Village of Gortard

200 years of decline and reinvention in a south Galway townland

Acknowledgements

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Map A. Taylor & Skinner's Road map of Ireland, 2nd Ed., 1783 showing location of study area

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Photographs B & V courtesy of Hannah Mulvihill

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Abbreviations

E.C Established Church

R.C Roman Catholic

O.S Ordnance Survey

H.C House of Commons

PLU Poor Law Union

DED District Electoral Division

JGAHS Journal of the Galway Archaeological & Historical Society

£ s d Pounds Shillings (20 to a pound) Pence (12 to a shilling)

a r p Acres Roods (4 to an acre) Perches (40 to a rood)

m metres

ft feet

sq ft square feet

G.A.A Gaelic Athletic Association

Introduction

In 1837 the field crews of the Ordnance Survey arrived in Clarinbridge as part of the creation of the world's first large scale national mapping project. 170 years later Galway County Council made these maps available on the internet. On the road on which I have lived since 2001, a village of over forty buildings was shown, a village which no longer exists.

This is a brief history of the townland which that village represented. Beginning with the earliest records of habitation in the area, its rapid growth in the early nineteenth century, the catastrophe of the famine followed by gradual decline through the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, to reinvention as a commuter satellite of Galway city in the twenty-first century.

While a number of publications concerning Clarinbridge have emerged in the last twenty years, most notably Joe Murphy's excellent history of the Redingtons, there has been no focus to the level of an individual townland¹. This work is informed by the increasing interest in the townland in local historical studies as a microcosm of larger territorial divisions and as a unit amenable to detailed research on a manageable scale.

What happened to the houses, the people, the community? How did they live? Were they representative of the wider community, the parish, the county or were there unique conditions in the area? The study will attempt to answer some of these questions.

The principal primary sources used in the study will include Griffiths Valuation, The 1901 and 1911 Census, the County Galway Rate revision books, Lewis' Topographical Dictionary, The Parliamentary Gazetteer, The Ordnance Survey Field Name Books, various Ordnance Survey maps and orthophotos, as well as such incidental primary sources as the Depositions relating to the Rebellion of 1641.

¹ Joseph Murphy, *The Redingtons of Clarinbridge* (Galway, 1999)

Landscape

“Nothing remarkable to be noticed” (O.S. Field Name Books)

Gortard is a townland in the civil parish of Stradbally, catholic parish of Clarinbridge, in the Barony of Dunkellin, in the diocese of Kilmacduagh, in south county Galway. As its name, high field, suggests, it is situated on higher ground, less than 800m from the head of Dunbulcaun Bay at Clarinbridge village, the most easterly inlet of Galway Bay². With an area, in 1841, of 378 acres, 3 roods, 11 perches and measuring 2000m north-south and up to 900m east-west, Gortard is at the northern edge of both the civil and catholic parishes and half a kilometre north-east of Clarinbridge village (see Map B). It is bordered by the townlands of Slievaun to the west, Cloughalahard to the east and Kilcornan to the south with Ballynacourty Parish to the North (In 1900 the boundary with Kilcornan was redrawn along the new Athenry Road and the townland area was reduced to 319 acres, 2 roods and 33 perches).

The only road through the townland runs east-west in the southern part of the townland along the top of an esker which is immediately north of the western end of the eisca riada³, a sequence of glacial boulder-clay ridges which extend across the country from Co Meath and terminates at Clarinbridge, opposite Maree⁴. The southern edge of the townland is bounded by the Clarinbridge to Athenry Road, shown on Taylor & Skinner's 1783 Road map (Map I)⁵. In the southern part of the townland, the thickness of the boulder clay is sufficient to provide good tillage while in the northern part the underlying limestone rock lies close to the surface. The land is well-drained through the fractured limestone with no bog and little poorly-drained soil⁶.

From the highest point, at over 33m above sea level, the Burren hills are visible in the west, and the Slieve Aughty mountains to the south-east (Photo A).

² Ordnance Survey Field Name books

³ Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile series 1841, Galway sheet 95

⁴ O'Donovan, Ordnance Survey Letters, Galway 1839, RR14 c.22, p.122 (291)

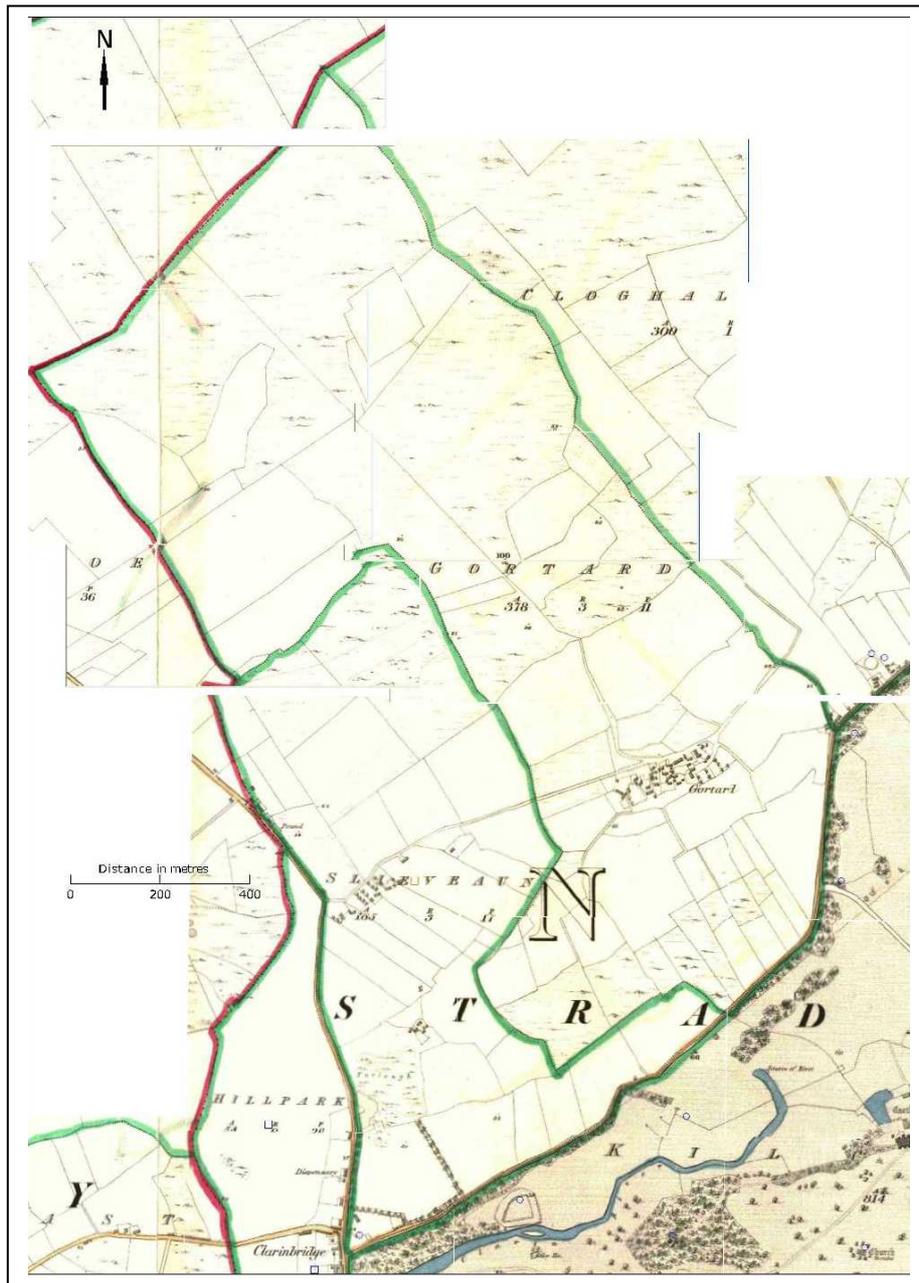
⁵ Taylor & Skinner's maps of the Roads of Ireland, 2nd ed. (London & Dublin 1783)

⁶ Royal Irish Academy, Atlas of Ireland (Dublin 1973)

Note: All dates, areas, distances and monetary values are written as numbers in this study.

North-east the esceir riada continues toward Athenry while 3 miles to the north is Oranmore and a further 6 miles west is Galway city.

The climate, being adjacent to the sea, is mild with little frost, and rainfall is under 39 inches a year, benefitting from the rainshadow effect of the Burren hills and the Connemara mountains to the west ⁷.



Map B. Gortard Townland 1841 (OS 6" Survey)

In common with most of the area, there is no original forest, the land having long been cleared of woodland by earlier inhabitants.

⁷ ibid

While no archaeological remains have been detected in the townland itself, the surrounding areas are rich with traces of past occupation. 35m east of Gortard at the junction of Kilcornan and Cloghalarhard townlands, is Cloghalarhard Fort, a 48m x 38m rectangular earth and small stone enclosure, suggested by H T Knox to be a Gaelic adaptation of a Norman plan (appendix 4) ⁸. 150m north, in Cloghalarhard townland, are an unclassified ringfort and a one-roomed souterrain ⁹. East of Cloghalarhard townland is the well at which it is believed King Art was killed after the battle of Magh Muernimh in 250 ad ¹⁰. 400m south, and 400m east of clarinbridge, is a large, 86m x 75m, ringfort on the north bank of the clarin river which forms the southern edge of the eiscir riada, with ramparts surviving up to 4m high. In Kilcornan Old Wood, 800m south of Gortard is a 20m diameter Cahir with 2m thick walls of medium-sized stones ¹¹.



Photo A. View looking south toward Slieve Aughties from east of Gortard village

The landscape of Gortard bears witness to the effects of geological and climatic activity and of past human habitation, the survival of so much of which is remarkable in such a developed area.

⁸ Matilda Redington. Notes on the Ordnance Survey Letters relating to the barony of Dunkellin JGAHS Vol VII (1911-12) ii, p.171

⁹ Archaeological Survey of Galway, Sites and Monuments record, DoE (Dublin, 2010)

¹⁰ Dr Healy. Turlogh Art JGAHS Vol I (1900-1) i, p.8

¹¹ Redington, op. cit., p.174

Origins of the Townland

According to the Dinnseanchus, Clarinbridge was originally called Ath Cliath Meadh-riaghe (the Hurdle Ford of Maree) from a battle fought at the river pass between Eochy of Munster and the chiefs of Hy Many who were escaping north with the spoils of the cattle raid of Dartry. The Hy Manys unsuccessfully defended the ford with a wall of shields, hurdles and spears. The name subsequently changed to Ath an Chlairin (the ford of the little plank or board) and thence to Droichead a Chlairin (Clarin bridge) ¹.

The earliest written records of the area appear in the Annals of the Four Masters in relation to the landing at nearby Maree in 250 ad. of Lugad Mac Conn with a foreign army. Seven days later, at the battle of Magh Muernimh, fought near Moyveela townland, he defeated King Art, who had marched from Tara along the escair riada to meet him ². A formerly marshy field between Moyveela and Kilcornan is still named Turlough Art. As one of the five highways from Tara, the eiscir riada divided the country between Conn of the hundred fights and Owen Mor, King of Munster, giving Clarinbridge an important frontier position ³.

The same area next appears 800 years later when Hugh O'connor, King of Connacht, was killed in a battle with O'Ruarc of Brefny at Turlough Art in 1067⁴.

The church of Ireland diocese of Kilmacduagh (see Map C), which encompasses the baronies of Kiltartan, Dunkellin and a large part of Loughrea, is considered to be co-extensive with the ancient territory known as Hy Fiachrach Aidhne, of which the O'Heynes were one of the principle chieftains. The inauguration place for the chiefs of Aidhne was at Roevagh, a mile south of Gortard. It would have been a place of considerable importance and strength and probably comprised a circular stone cyclopean wall or 'caisséal' built around the inauguration stone and it's sheltering beech tree (which gave the

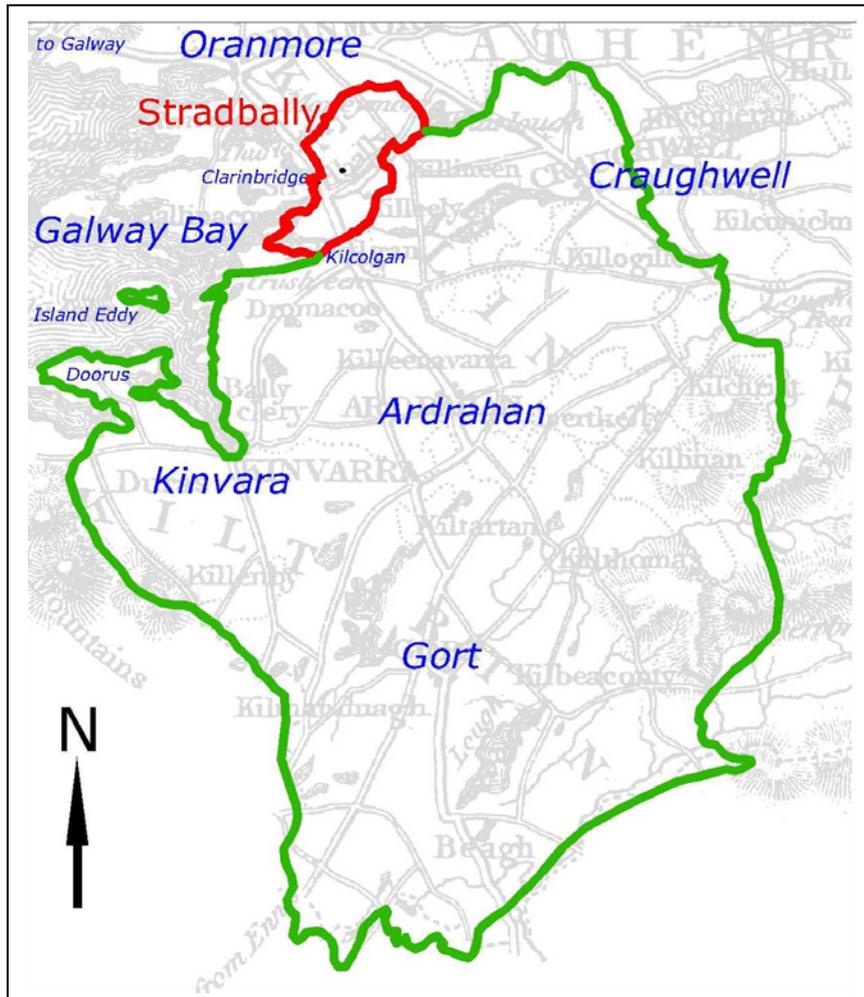
¹ J. Fahy, *The history and Antiquities of the Diocese of Kilmacduagh* (Dublin, 1893), p.7 (also cited in the Annals of the Four Masters)

² Redington, op. cit., p.171

³ Fahy, op. cit., p.8

⁴ Fahy, op. cit., p.36

name to the village of Roveagh). It was attacked, unsuccessfully, in 1116 by Dermot, brother of King Mortagh O'Brien, but in 1133 Turlogh O'Brien, King of Munster, laid seige to Roveagh, seized and levelled the fort, and destroyed the historic red beech ⁵.



Map C. Diocese of Kilmacduagh & Stradbally Parish on Samuel Lewis' Map of Galway 1836

The area is well connected with the spread of christianity in the west of Ireland. In the middle of the 6th century, St Colga, a disciple of St Columba, and grandson of Dathy of Hy Fiachrach, erected a monastery a mile south of Clarinbridge from which the village of Kilcolgan derives it's name ⁶. St Cornan, who has a holy well in Glenina on the south side of Galway Bay ⁷, is associated with the 13th Century church (restored by the brothers of Charity in the 1960s) in the grounds of Kilcornan house.

⁵ Fahy, op. cit., p.198

⁶ Fahy, op. cit., p.198

⁷ Br A. Hassett, 'St Cornan's Church', in Joseph Murphy (ed.), *Oyster Country, A community Journal of Clarinbridge and Surrounding District* (Galway, 2009), pp 13-15

With the arrival of the Normans in Connacht in the thirteenth century, the O'Clerys were expelled from their tribal lands which were granted to the de Burgos, although the southern parts of Hy Fiachrach Aidhne remained in the hands of the O'Heynes and other local chieftains. By the time of the battle of Athenry in 1316 the de Burgos were in effective control of much of Connaught and by 1360 they were claiming the baronies of Clare, Athenry, Leitrim, Loughrea, Dunkellin and Kiltartan under the collective name of Clanricarde. As the MacWilliam (Oughter) Burkes, they consolidated this tenure during the fifteenth century. Richard built the castle and fort at Dunkellin, between Kilcolgan and Roveagh and used the nearby stone seat 'Cahir an Earla' (the Earls chair) as their inauguration place, in imitation of the earlier tradition of the Aidhne chieftains. His son Ulick was made Lord Clanricarde and Baron of Dunkellin by Henry VIII in 1543 in return for the surrender and regrant of his lands (he was also presented with the 'Brian Boru' harp now in Trinity College Dublin). Dunkellin castle was dismantled by Hugh Roe O'Donnell during one of his famous raids into Thomond in 1598. In 1600, on the return march from that year's incursion, his army encamped on 'Knock an Gerrain Bhain', now known as the Hillpark, between Clarinbridge and Gortard ⁸.

Kilcornan castle was built probably in the early part of the sixteenth century and in 1574 belonged to Richard and Thibbet McRedmond Burke ⁹. By the early part of the seventeenth century Edmond de Burgo, brother of the 4th Earl of Clanricarde, was resident at Kilcornan castle and owner of 2700 acres in Kilcornan, Kilcolgan, Kileely and Ardrahan ¹⁰. His son, Redmond, took an active part in the 1641 rebellion and was named in the depositions collected by the English government as being involved with the hanging of 3 English soldiers at Clarinbridge ¹¹. Partly as a result, he was specifically excluded from pardon by the Cromwellian government and executed at Loughrea in 1654. Although his land was confiscated by the Act of Settlement in 1652, 350 acres in Kilcornan was returned to his brother Thomas, on the Restoration in 1660 with a further six quarters (about 720 acres) later restored to his family. In 1763 the Kilcornan

⁸ Fahy, op. cit. p.233

⁹ Redington, op. cit., p.181

¹⁰ Murphy, op. cit., p.8

¹¹ Depositions and Examinations related to the Rebellion of 1641, Trinity College MS, Vol 32, pp 304-322

estate was purchased from Christopher Burke for £6300 by Thomas Redington of Cregana (a family who, it is believed, arrived with Cromwell's troops). As part of the transfer, Thomas' third son, also Thomas, married Christopher Burke's daughter Sarah and moved into Kilcornan ¹². By 1815 Thomas' son Christopher was running the estate after returning from the Napoleonic wars. On his early death in 1825 he was succeeded by his (then 10 year old) son Thomas.

By this time the village of Clarinbridge was well established with a market, church and school provided by the Redingtons, landlords of 12000 acres in the district, covering twenty-eight townlands including Gortard.

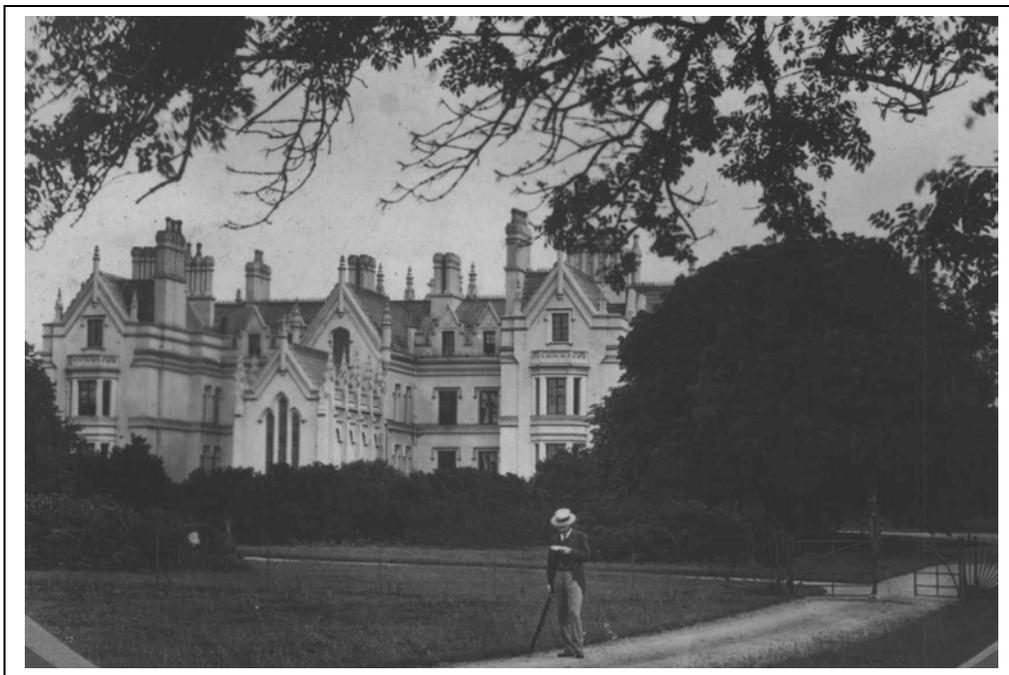
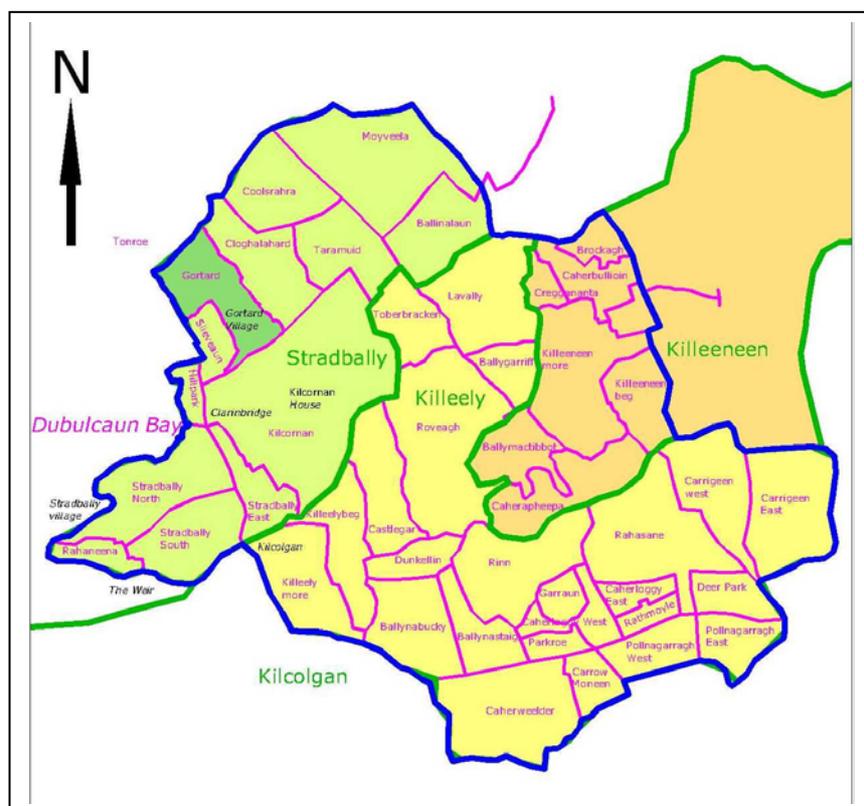


Photo B. Christopher Redington outside Kilcornan House, c.1880.

¹² Murphy, op. cit., p.10

Population & Housing

A number of sources of population statistics exist for Ireland before the nineteenth century but few of these relate to this part of county Galway and no mention seems to have been made of Gortard townland before the 1841 survey. The Tithe Applotment book of 1826 survives for Killeely parish, which is part of the catholic parish of Clarinbridge and immediately south & west of Stradbally parish (see Map D). The tithes were collected from all landholders, whether owners or tenants, and paid to support the established, i.e. protestant, church in Ireland, from the bishop down to the prebend. This was despite the small number of protestants in the area (there was no Church of Ireland church in Stradbally parish and in 1835 only thirty were attending Kilcolgan church). The land was valued on the basis of three quality categories. In Killeely, of the 204 holdings (representing less than 200 owners) on 3775 Irish acres, 43% was quality one land, 28% quality two and 23% quality three (5% being roads). The total valuation of £126 represents an average tithe of 8p per Irish acre ¹.



Map D. R.C Parish (blue) and townlands (purple) of Clarinbridge on E.C Parishes of Stradbally, Killeely & Killeeneen.

¹ Tithe applotment Book, parish of Killeely, diocese of Kilmacduagh, 1826 (also in Murphy, op. cit., p.20)

A census of the barony of Dunkellin in 1813 ² put the population at 16812 living in 2916 houses (and of county Galway 140995 in 21122 houses) although as the 1813 figures are extrapolated from the hearth returns they are likely to be an underestimate. Nevertheless, we may use this data to arrive at a best-fit figure for the Gortard townland and Stradbally parish population in 1813 by using the barony/parish/townland ratios from the 1841 census. As this put the Dunkellin barony population at 28207, Stradbally Parish at 1264 and that of Gortard townland as 108, it may be estimated that the Gortard population in 1813 would be around 65 and that of Stradbally about 755.

The first two national population surveys in 1821 and 1831 were, due to the way the data was collected, considered significantly inaccurate and incomplete.

In 1836 Lewis' Topographical Dictionary gives the population of Clarinbridge village as 450 and of Stradbally parish 1053 ³ although The Parliamentary Gazetteer, published in 1846, gives the population of Stradbally parish as 1063 in 1831 ⁴.

The first population figures for the townland of Gortard (and the first reliable and comprehensive figures for the country) are found in the 1841 census ⁵ which records a population of 108 (49 male, 59 female) living in 17 houses. As the original census returns do not survive we do not know the names of the families living in the townland before the famine. From the Ordnance Survey 6" mapping of 1841 ⁶, however, we have a detailed picture of the physical layout of Gortard village (see map E), described as one of the 4 hamlets of Stradbally parish ⁷.

We also have some information from the Field Name Books, compiled in 1839 by O'Donovan's surveyors, as part of the topographic and valuation survey ⁸. They describe Gortard townland as occupied by 18 families, all tenants at will renting from Thomas Redington of Kilcornnan and all living in the village of

² William Shaw Mason, *A statistical account or parochial survey of Ireland* (Dublin, 1819) vol 3 table III, p. xiiii

³ Samuel Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ireland* (Dublin, 1837), p.329

⁴ The Parliamentary Gazetteer of Ireland 1844-45, (Dublin, 1846), Vol 3, p.283

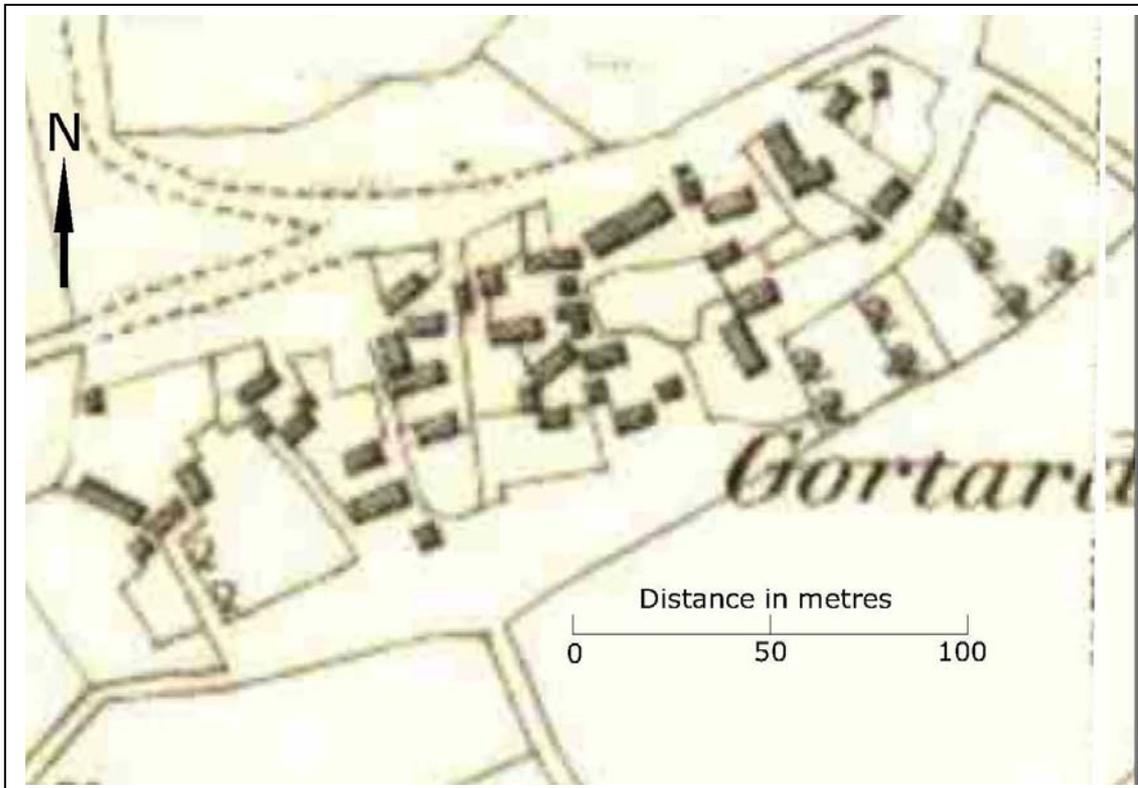
⁵ 1841 Census, County Galway, Galway PLU, Clarinbridge DED, Gortard Townland

⁶ Ordnance Survey 6" to 1 mile series, op. cit.

⁷ The Parliamentary Gazetteer, op. cit., p.283

⁸ O.S. Field name books, op. cit.

Gurtard (Gortard) in the south of the townland. Two buildings on the east edge of the townland, at the junction of the Gortard and Clarinbridge-Athenry roads are probably outbuildings for the adjacent house in Cloughalahard (occupied in 1855 by Edward Archbold).



The soil is described as being “a light clay, in parts rocky” which produces “middling crops of oats, potatoes, wheat” although “about 190a. are uncultivated”. The tenants paid a rent of 10s 2d per acre ⁹. As the average rent for land in Ireland at this time was 26 shillings an acre ¹⁰, this probably reflects the poor quality of the land in Gortard, as in other Redington owned townlands in Clarinbridge rent varied from 8 to 30 shillings with several averaging 16-20 shillings an acre ¹¹.

The houses were made of stone and “many of them badly built” ¹². The forty or so houses and outbuildings are clustered together along a 200m length on the south side of the road with gardens adjoining and orchards (shown by straight

⁹ O.S. Field name books, op. cit.

¹⁰ Murphy, op. cit., p.52

¹¹ O.S. Field name books, op cit.

¹² *ibid*

rows of trees) at the east and west ends of the village, while lanes may be seen extending out into the surrounding fields (e.g. Photo C).

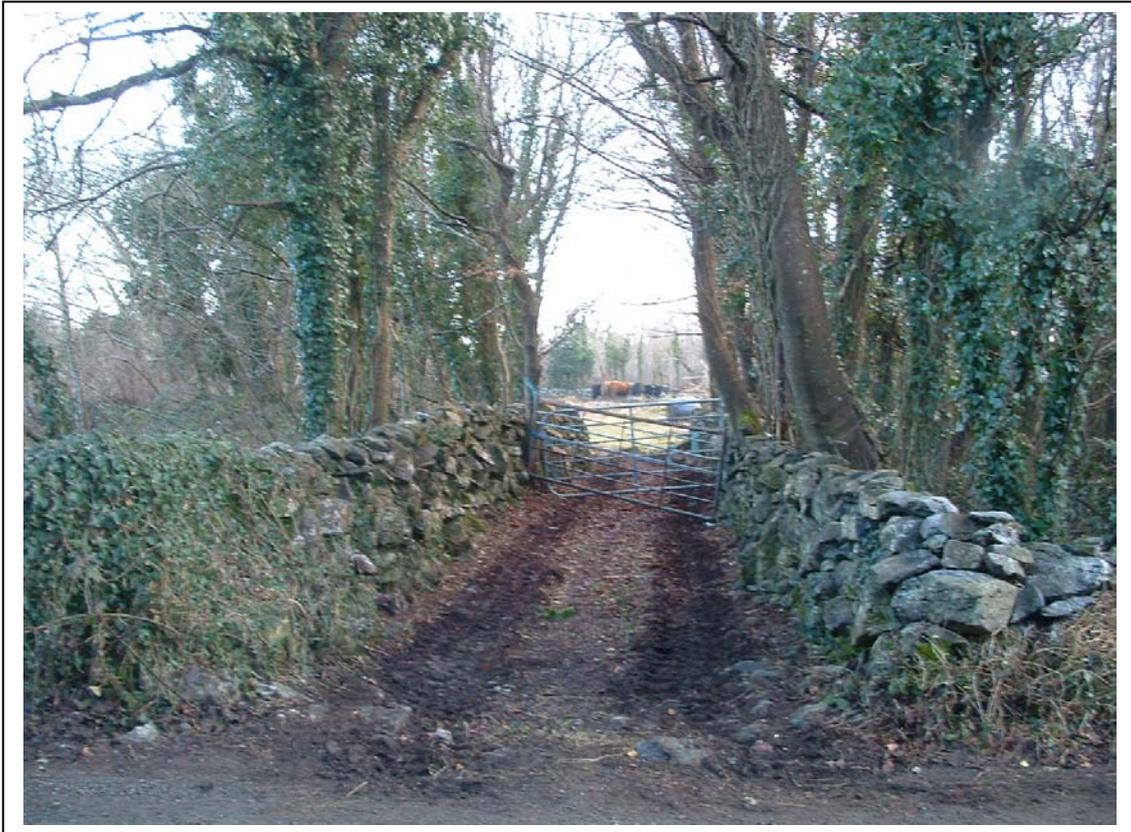


Photo C. Lane (constructed c 1850) leading south at west end of Gortard village towards children's burial ground. Note irregular wall structure and large stone at corner possibly to prevent damage by cartwheels

In an open space at the centre of the village, facing the road, stood the largest building. Measuring 21m (69ft) by 7.5m (24ft) and enclosing 1500 sq ft of single storey floor space this was a substantial building. Was this a communal barn for threshing and storage of wheat and corn, a single linear house with outbuildings or several cottages in a row ? About ten buildings are of proportions 12-14m x 5-6m with the remaining thirty structures (the outbuildings) typically measuring 6m x 4m.

The population of Gortard had probably increased over 65% in twenty-eight years with an average family of six or more living in each 600-800 sq ft house. Given that the space was probably shared with some of the animals, this was a particularly high density of housing. Many houses had six occupants but not usually in such a small space. With only half the townland cultivated and low

crop yields from the poor quality soil it is not surprising that O'Donovan described the tenants as "apparently poor".

Before the next census took place in 1851 the catastrophe of the famine had intervened and the population of Gortard had fallen to sixty-nine people (thirty-five male, thirty-four female) living in eleven houses ¹³. The collapse of the potato crop during 1845-48 (50% of the crop was lost in Stradbally in 1845 ¹⁴) resulted in a 36% fall in population and the presumed loss of six to seven families from the village. As the census reports no unoccupied houses, these were presumably either demolished, rendered uninhabitable or turned into outbuildings. The average number of occupants per house remained the same at 6.2. This decrease was in line with the drop of 39% in the Clarinbridge electoral area (27070 to 2182 persons) but higher than the 27% fall in county Galway.

Although T.P. O'Neill reports that the Redingtons evicted tenants from their estate during the famine ¹⁵ we do not know if this included any families in Gortard (this may refer to a folk memory of evictions from inside the demesne walls at Taramuid). Thomas Redington certainly gave famine relief to his tenants. Between 1st April and 15th May 1846 he gave 1 ton 9 cwt 2 stone of oatmeal, valued at £22 17s 3d, to the fifteen Gortard tenants ¹⁶. This was apart from any poor relief which may have been delivered by Galway Union, in which Gortard was located (as part of Clarinbridge district electoral division).

We therefore know that three tenants had left the townland between 1841 and 1846 with a further four tenants leaving before 1851. The close match between number of buildings, population and family size suggests that the fall in population was due to the removal of entire families rather than a general loss of people from the village. Being tenants at will, i.e. having signed no lease (as was common in most of the Redington townlands), they could be evicted if owing more than six months rent. Thomas Redington, as with other landlords, wanted tenants who could not pay their rent to give up their land and admitted

¹³ 1851 Census, County Galway, Galway PLU, Clarinbridge DED, Gortard Townland

¹⁴ Murphy, op. cit., p.101

¹⁵ T.P.O'Neill, Centenary Lecture to JGAHS, 2000

¹⁶ Murphy, op. cit., p.212

forcibly taking crops from tenants who did not do so ¹⁷ (Redington was normally a resident landlord but from June 1846 was living in Dublin as Under-Secretary of State). The fact that the Poor Law rate was payable by landlords, rather than by tenants, on holdings of less than £4 value (about eight 8 Gortard) encouraged landlords to clear defaulting small tenants, particularly as the poor rate increased rapidly during the famine to cope with the demands on the workhouses. It was also the case that poor relief could only be claimed if tenants gave up their land.

There is no direct evidence that Redington contributed to assisted emigration of tenants during this period, although it is known that he supported this process and there is evidence that the Galway County Grand Jury (of which he was a member) gave grants for this purpose. Death by starvation and a variety of fevers (particularly spread in the workhouses and soup kitchens) carried off large numbers of people. An outpatient dispensary was set up in Slieveaun, the adjacent townland to Gortard, in 1847 as part of the government's response to the increase in such diseases.

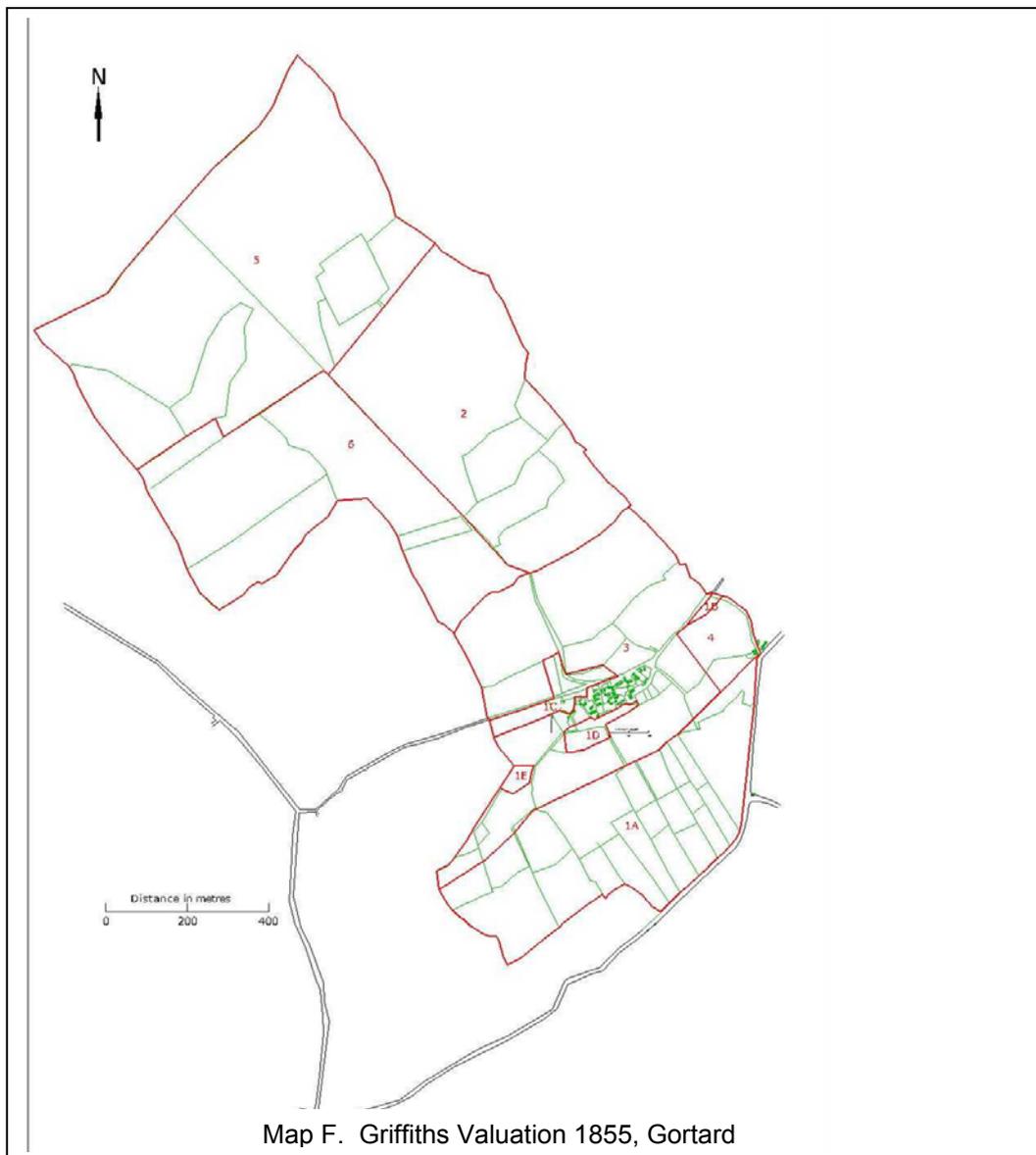
The earliest surviving document listing the names of tenants in Gortard is Griffiths Valuation of Tenements published in 1855 ¹⁸ (Map F). The purpose of the Ordnance Survey mapping of 1841 was to create an accurate basis for this valuation by allowing the measurement and location of land parcels. Organised by county, parish and townland, the valuation shows the name and number (referenced to the OS map) of the occupier, the lessor (immediate landlord), the description (land, house, office, garden), area, and the rateable valuation of land and buildings. Thirteen occupiers are listed of whom two (Thomas Redington and Edward Archbold) have only land. The remaining eleven have a house, five of which also include offices and land, four have land and two have only a garden. All, including Edward Archbold (area 4), are renting from Thomas Redington (by now Sir Thomas).

Of the six houses lost since 1841, one or two at the west end of the village have by now been covered with a mixed coniferous/deciduous plantation which even

¹⁷ Murphy, *op. cit.*, p.131

¹⁸ Griffiths Valuation of Tenements, p.200 (<http://griffiths.askaboutireland.ie/gv4>)

straddles the track leading to the land north of the village (area 1c). Four mixed woodlands, planted by Thomas Redington and totalling nearly 8 acres, surround the village, including a small grove in the east (area 1b) later named Anne's wood (after the wife of one of the Cormicans who died only a week after they married¹⁹). Another stand is next to the children's burial ground in the west (area 1e) the track to which has been rerouted to west of the village. Both the plantations and Archbold's six acre field (carved from two older fields) are presumably taken from the land previously farmed by the seven families who left since 1841.



The nine tenants with a house and land share over 60 acres in and around the village (area 3). In 1841 their land was divided into some twelve fields varying

¹⁹ Mary Burke, Slieveaun, in conversation with the author, April 2010

from 2 to 15 acres but this may have changed by 1855. Their holdings are not separately marked on the valuation map or given individual area measurements in the table. They all had separate land valuations, however, they may have had 'green sod' divisions i.e. their holdings were demarcated by a line of turned-over sods at the edge of each field. The values varied from 15s to £6 10s, so assuming similar land quality, and taking the average valuation for the total of just under 10s per acre, a best-fit estimate of the size of their holdings may be obtained. (Table a). William Burke also had 3 acres of land in Slieveaun, while James Higgins farmed 5 acres in Cloughalahard, where Edward Archbold also rented a house, offices and 33 acres of land from Rev Martin Prendergast (the Redington's chaplain).

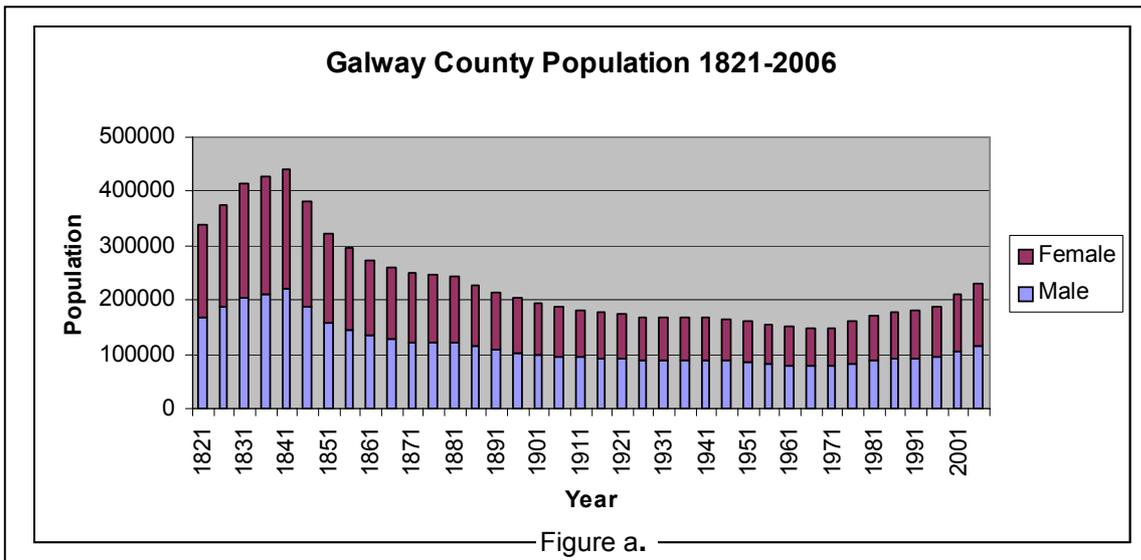
occupier	description	area
edmund burke	house, office & land	9.2
james higgins	house, office & land	13.2
william burke	house, office & land	7.6
thomas flanigan	house, office & land	9.2
william bermingham	house, office & land	9.2
thomas connors	house and land	2.5
james hannify	house and land	2.5
john hines	house and land	5.6
john harman	house and land	1.5
total		60.5

Table a. Tenant farmed areas computed from 1855 valuations

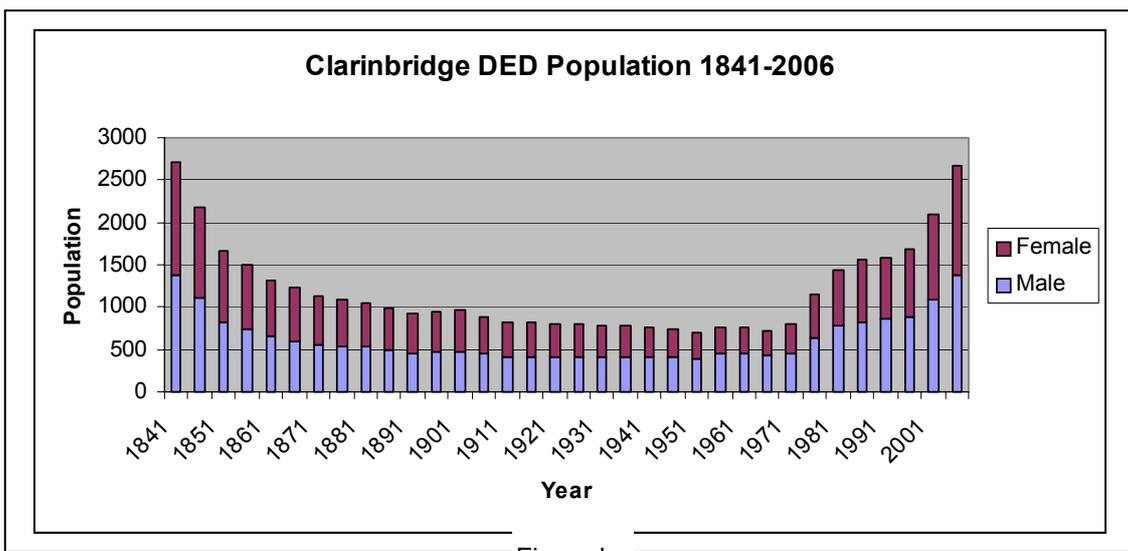
The first five tenants on this list also farmed 65 acres of mountain land (area 2) which although divided into five fields in 1841 was shared equally (i.e. as commonage) as the valuation on each tenant was £1 10s, i.e. 2s 4d per acre. As these tenants were also the only ones with offices (stables, cowsheds etc) and as the land was poor (not only from the valuation and the description as mountain land but as indicated by map symbology for rocks and rough pasture) this was almost certainly, by 1855, primarily grazing for cattle or sheep (although much of it may have been cultivated before the famine). Thomas Redington directly owned a further 178 acres of mountain land (areas 5 & 6), valued at 2s 9d an acre. He also farmed 56 acres in the south of the townland, on lower lying ground, adjacent to the Kilcornan demesne, valued at 7s 2d an acre (probably due to its poorly-drained nature). This was mainly divided into strip fields and cultivated by some of the 188 tenants employed by the estate at

this time²⁰ (unfortunately no Kilcornan estate records survive for the nineteenth century to tell us who they were).

The depopulation of the country, and of the west of Ireland in particular, set in train by the famine, continued throughout the 19th century. In county Galway the population fell from 440,000 in 1841 to 190,000 in 1901²¹ and continued to fall (to 149,000) until 1971²² (Figure a and appendix 3), a decline of 66%.



In Clarinbridge DED (which includes the northern parts of Stradbally and Clarinbridge parishes), the population fell from 2707 in 1841 to 958 in 1901 and to 796 in 1971 (Figure b and appendix 2), a fall of 71%. Thereafter it rose much



²⁰ Murphy, op. cit., p.136

²¹ 1901 Census, County Galway

²² Seorsat Eireann, Census of Population 1971

more rapidly than in the county to the point where the population of the DED is now back to pre-famine levels while the county is still at only 50% of it's 1841 peak (we will suggest reasons for this later in the study) ²³.

The general downward trend of the county and DED is also reflected in Gortard townland By 1911 the population had fallen 77% from its 1841 level (Figure c and appendix 1). Although we do not have census data aggregated to townland level after 1911, we do know that the six inhabited houses listed in the 1911 census all remained occupied until the early 1970s ²⁴ so that the population of the townland declined only slowly during this period.

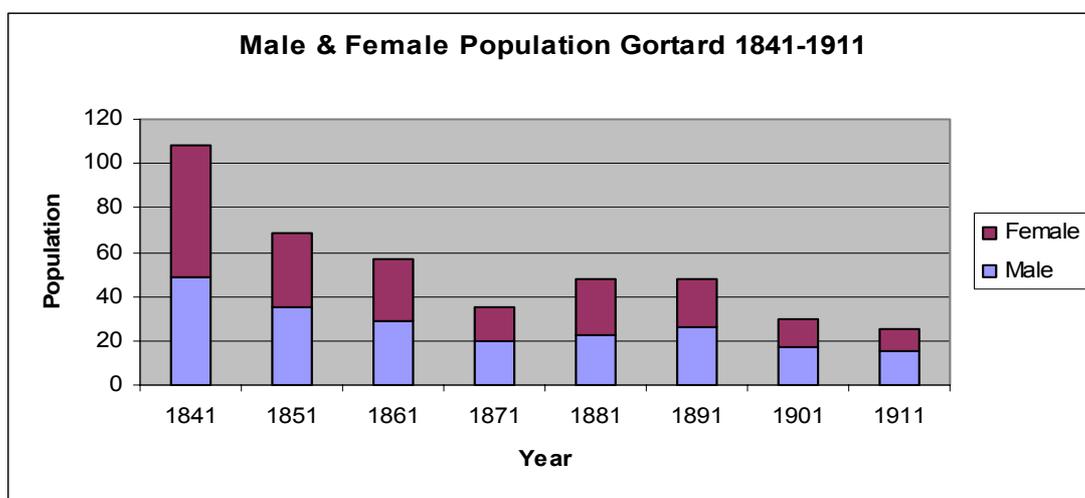


Figure c.

The exception to this trend is an increase of thirteen people in the 1870s which was maintained through the 1880s and which resulted in the only new house to be built in the townland between 1841 and 1970 (appendix 1). The decline in Clarinbridge and the county slowed significantly in the 1870s also, due to the better economic conditions in that decade. The 1880s, on the other hand, were a period of economic difficulty and instability, prompting the Land War between 1879-82 which was particularly intense in the Clarinbridge-Craughwell area. The stability of the population of Gortard (and to a lesser extent of Clarinbridge) at this time is the result of the support of Christopher Redington (who had inherited Kilcornan on his father Thomas' death in 1862) for the right of tenant land ownership. The Land Act of 1880 gave all tenants the right to a fixed rent for fifteen years and Redington settled with all his 142 tenants out of court, giving substantial reductions in many cases ²⁵. By the mid-1880s he was selling

²³ Seorsat Eireann, Census of Population 2006

²⁴ Mary Burke, op. cit.

²⁵ Murphy, op cit., p.245

large parts of the estate to tenants (paid by instalments to the Land Commission) although the Gortard tenants did not become freeholders until the 1903 Land Act made it compulsory for Landlords to sell ²⁶.

A number of factors contributed to the declining population including the low marriage rate. In 1871 Ireland had twice as many unmarried men aged twenty-five to forty as England ²⁷. The decline in land division after the famine meant that children lived at home much longer as they couldn't afford to move out. The eldest son, working the farm, couldn't bring in a wife until the parents had died and so often married late, and typically to much younger women. Emigration was one of the options for tenants, cottiers and labourers leaving the land although emigration from Galway in the second half of the nineteenth century was less than in many counties, averaging 1.3% of the population (the highest being 2% in Longford and the lowest 0.6% in Dublin). There was also little immigration with 94% of the population in 1871 being born in the county ²⁸. While emigration fluctuated greatly over the period (figure d), the effects of the 1870s boom (low emigration) and 1880s slump (high emigration) are clearly reflected.

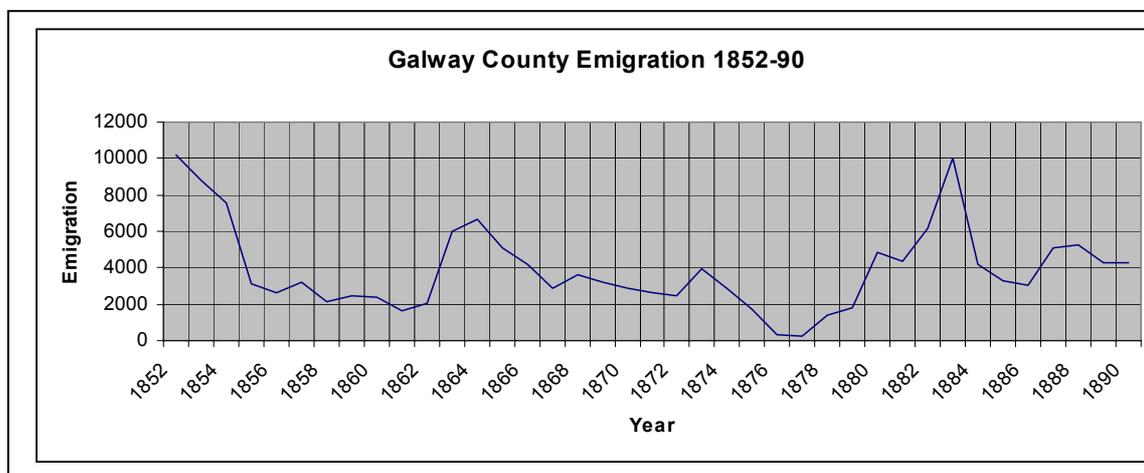


Figure d.

The loss of two more families from Gortard in the 1890s reduced the population to thirty by 1901 and to twenty-five by 1911. By 2006, however, the population of Gortard had risen to 106 ²⁹ and has since passed it's pre-famine maximum.

²⁶ Gaway County Rates Revision books, Galway Union, Gortard Townland 1900-1976

²⁷ 1871 Census, General Report, p.54

²⁸ 1871 Census, op.cit., p.94

²⁹ Murphy, op. cit., p.333

Who were the families and individuals making up the townland of Gortard in the nineteenth century? The valuation of 1855 gives us the first glimpse of the people living in the village shortly after the famine with it's list of the names of the head of household of the eleven remaining families of the eighteen who were present in 1841 (Table b).

All the surnames are different except for two Burke families. This doesn't mean that many of the families are not related but we do not currently have the evidence to prove or disprove this. From the building and land valuations it appears that William Bermingham and James Higgins had the most valuable holdings with William Burke and Thomas Flanagan close behind. These, and Edmund Burke, were the five who shared part of the commonage. They would have grazed cattle, and possibly sheep, on the commonage, and some may have had a horse.

Of the four landholders without outbuildings, James Haniffy and John Hines had the more valuable houses while Thomas Connors and John Harman (as well as Edmund Burke) lived in smaller properties. Their plots of 2 to 5 acres would have been sufficient to grow enough potatoes and vegetables for their own use (an acre and a half of potatoes would feed a family of six for six months), with room for a pig, chickens and geese.

Patrick Shaughnessy and Michael Gormley, on the other hand, with a small house on a quarter of an acre of ground, would have been able to grow a small amount of potatoes and vegetables, not sufficient to feed a family. Although not classified as cottiers or labourers (as they were full-time tenants), they may have rented other land on an annual basis and would probably have had to work, possibly for Kilcornan estate, to sustain a living and pay their rent.

Edward Archbold was the only tenant not living in the townland but his house was very close, about half a mile east in Cloughalahard and he farmed 39 acres in the two townlands plus 48 acres in Stradbally North. A presbyterian, and a

progressive farmer, he had previously been a steward for a neighbouring landlord and acted as an agricultural advisor to Thomas Redington³⁰.

occupier	description	area			land value		building value		total value	
		A	R	P	£	s	£	s	£	s
T Redington	land	178	1	24	25	0			25	0
T Redington	land (plantation)	0	2	0	0	5			0	5
T Redington	land (plantation)	4	2	6	0	15			0	15
T Redington	land (plantation)	1	3	32	0	5			0	5
T Redington	land (plantation)	0	3	21	0	5			0	5
T Redington	land	56	0	37	20	0			20	0
Edmund Burke	land (mountain)	65	2	16	1	10			1	10
James Higgins	land (mountain)				1	10			1	10
William Burke	land (mountain)				1	10			1	10
Thomas Flanigan	land (mountain)				1	10			1	10
William Bermingham	land (mountain)				1	10			1	10
Edmund Burke	house, office & land	60	2	6	4	10	0	5	4	15
James Higgins	house, office & land				6	10	1	5	7	15
William Burke	house, office & land				3	15	1	0	4	15
Thomas Flanigan	house, office & land				4	10	0	15	4	25
William Bermingham	house, office & land				4	10	1	5	5	15
Thomas Connors	house and land				1	5	0	10	1	15
James Hannify	house and land				1	5	1	0	2	5
John Hines	house and land				2	15	0	15	2	30
John Harman	house and land				0	15	0	5	0	20
Patrick Shaughnessy	house and garden	0	1	0	0	3	0	5	0	8
Michael Gormly	house and garden	0	1	0	0	3	0	5	0	8
Edward Archbold	land	6	2	20	3	15			3	15
total		378	3	8	87	16	7	10	95	6

Table b. Griffiths Valuation 1885, Gortard

The next time we see a list of the occupants of Gortard is in the 1901 census³¹. The only names remaining from 1855 are Martin Bermingham, William Burke, Patrick Higgins and Patrick Shaughnessy. All the tenants without outbuildings (Connors, Hannify, Hynes, and Harman) plus one of the non-landholders (Gormly) have gone. By comparing the valuations and areas in the Galway county rates revision book of 1900-03 with the valuations and areas in 1855, it is possible to make a best-fit estimate of the transfer of land to the remaining, and new, tenants over this period.

From the name and from the building valuation it is probable that William Burke is the son of the William Burke from 1855. Edmund Burke's land (including his fifth share of the 65 acres of commonage) was almost certainly inherited by

³⁰ Murphy, op. cit., p.174

³¹ 1901 Census returns, County Galway, Galway PLU, Clarinbridge DED, Gortard Townland

Martin Fahy whose holding covered eight small plots totalling over 14 acres, possibly also including Connors and Hannify's land. Thomas Flanigan's land (including his share of the commonage) and Harman's land, was probably taken over by Martin Bermingham while Patrick Higgins most likely took over Hynes' land. Patrick Mullin probably came into Gortard by marrying Michael Gormley's daughter as he has a house on a quarter acre of land in 1900. Mary Shaughnessy, Patrick's seventy-seven year-old widow, still occupied the house and garden on it's quarter acre that she had lived in since at least 1855. The six acre field rented by Anne Archbold (presumably the wife of Edward Archbold) was taken by Patrick Cormican from Cloughalahard in 1900.

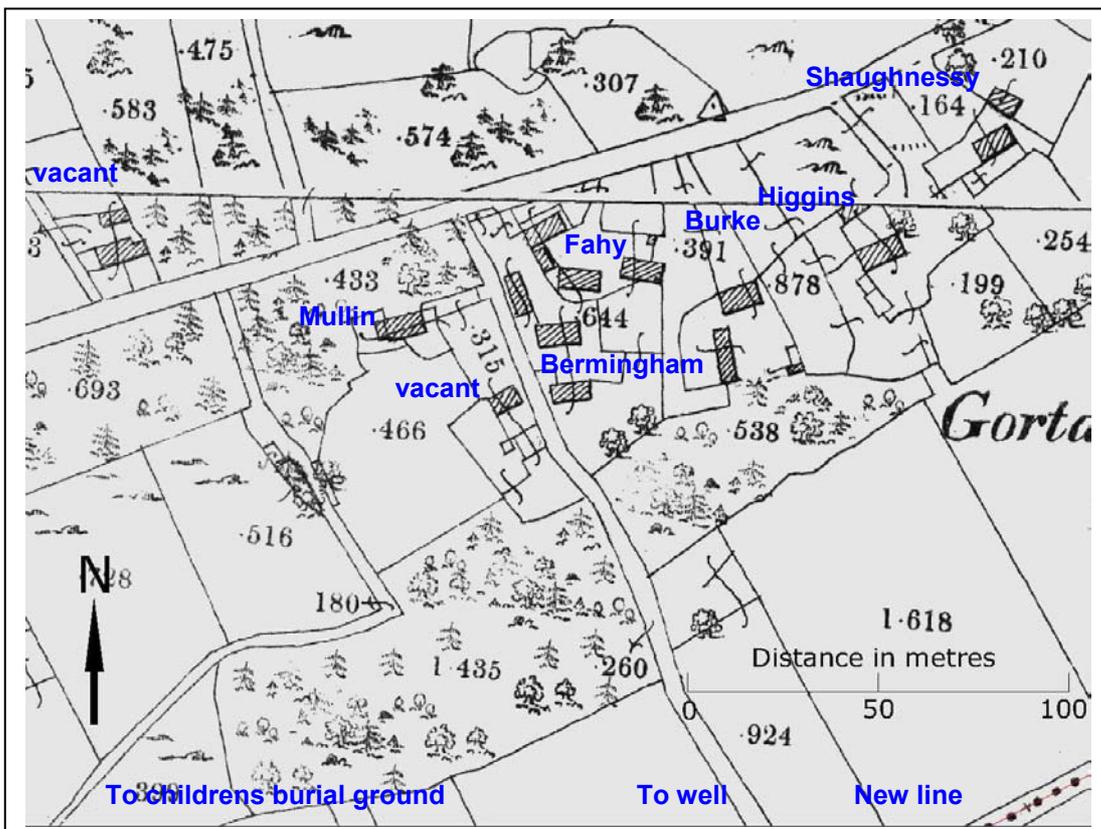
Of the other land in the townland, 58 acres was now in plantation, 109 acres was rented to John O'Dea from Kilcornan townland (taken over by Patrick O'Dea in 1901) while 61 acres was rented to Patrick Mullin and John Burke. This latter area, however, was transferred to Kilcornan townland in 1901 so that the new townland boundary ran along the centre of "the new line". This new section of road, built in the 1890s, joined the Galway road north of Clarinbridge to the Athenry road at the junction of the Gortard road and thereby created a cul-de-sac of the old Athenry road in Clarinbridge village. The road was built along the boundary of the Redington and tenanted lands (as shown in the 18855 valuation map). As no new houses were built south of Gortard village before the 1970s, this reduction of the townland's area to 319 acres had no effect on the population numbers.

In 1903 all the tenants took advantage of the Land Act of that year to buy their freehold and, for the first time in two hundred years, land in Gortard townland was owned by someone other than a Redington. With the death of Christopher Redington in 1899, Anne Redington, his elder sister inherited the estate. She continued as freeholder of the plantation and of the commonage which were still rented by Higgins, Burke, Fahy and Bermingham. In 1910 she took back the lease of the 109 acres of mountain land from Patrick O'Dea but it was subsequently bought by him and in 1922 Mrs O'Dea sold the freehold of the land ³². Thomas Nestor from Stradbally sold on the land to James Brett from

³² Connacht Tribune, 15th April 1922

Dunmore in 1931³³. The last of the plantations (nearly 14 acres of “scrub” in Gortard and Slieveaun) were finally sold in April 1943 as part of the sale of the last remnant of the Redington estate. This sale also included a “two-fifth share of undivided commonage containing 65 acres, 1 rood, 25 perches, ... suitable for rough grazing” as well as plantations, winterage and cutaway wood in Cloghahard and Taramuid³⁴. On the death of Mary Shaughnessy in 1908 at the age of eight-four, her house was inherited by William Corcoran.

The Ordnance Survey undertook a new 25” to 1 mile survey of the area in 1892 (Map G)³⁵. The areas planted by Thomas Redington before 1855 are still extant at this time. The track leading north to the mountain land has been straightened at the junction and the track leading south to the fields (and to the southern village well) now connects to the “new line”. The track from the village to the children’s burial ground has been blocked by an extension of plantation 1e and is now accessed from the new road. There are eight roofed houses (shown hatched) but two are unoccupied.



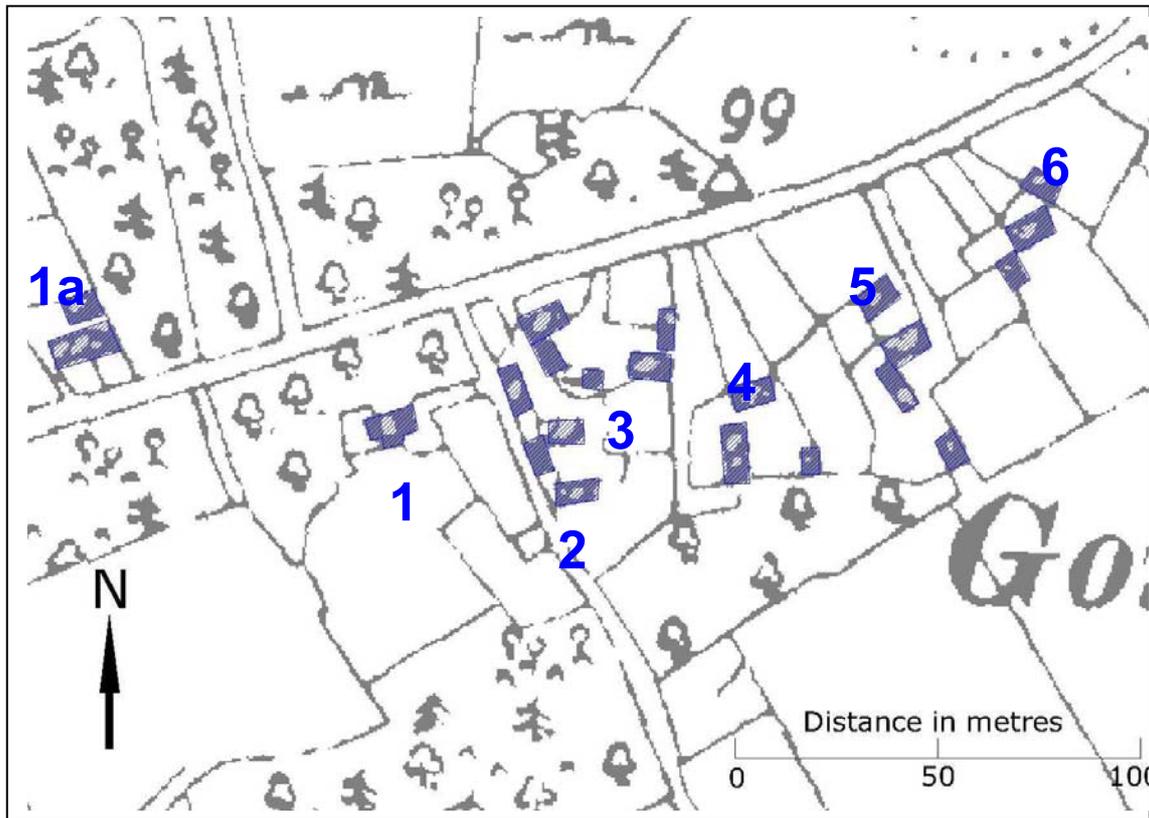
Map G. Gortard Village 1892 (OS 25” to 1 mile)

³³ Connacht Tribune, 26th Sept 1931

³⁴ Connacht Tribune, 3rd April 1943

³⁵ Ordnance Survey Map 25” to 1 mile series 1892 , Galway sheet 95

The survey was revised in 1915 (Map H) and printed as both a 25" to 1 mile and 6" to 1 mile edition ³⁶. There has been little change since 1892 with one unoccupied house demolished and a field enlarged by the removal of a wall and more of the former track to the childrens burial ground.



Map H. Gortard Village 1915 (OS 6" to 1 mile)

³⁶ Ordnance Survey Map 25" to 1 mile series 1915 revision, Galway sheet 95

The People

The 1901 census (and that of 1911 ¹) offers the only complete snapshot we have of the families living in the village including, in several cases, a direct link to the pre-famine population.(Table c). With the addition of the rates books for Galway Union (now digitised and available at the County Library, Nuns Island) ² and oral and media sources, it is possible to piece together a partial history of the families over the period 1870-1970. Maps G & K show the location of the families' houses at this time.

House No	1		2		3		4		5		6	
Family	Mullin	age	Bermingham	age	Fahy	age	Burke	age	Higgins	age	Shaughnessy	age
Head of house	Patrick	56	Martin	59	Martin	55	William	49	Patrick	66	Mary	77
Education	RW		RW		RW		Read		RW		N	
Spouse	Mary	62	Bridget	52	Mary	53	Honor	48	Bridget	60		
education	RW		RW		RW		Read		RW			
child	John	28	John	26	Maria	20	William	15	Mary	23		
child	Patrick	17	Mary	22	Willie	14	Bridget	12	Patrick	21		
child			Martin	16	Martin	12			John	19		
child			Patrick	11	Burke stepchildren							
stepchild					Margaret	26						
stepchild					Edward	25						
stepchild					John	23						
grandchild	Mary A.	6										
Mother							Bridget	78				

The Higgins family

Patrick Higgins, son of James (who died before 1901), was born in 1835. In 1871 he married Bridget, who was some five years younger and they had four children. Mary was born in 1878, Patrick in 1880, John 1882 and they had a fourth child who died sometime before 1901. They lived in a three-roomed thatched stone cottage with two front windows and had a stable, cowhouse, piggery, barn and shed (although by 1911 these last three buildings had gone). Patrick (Pateen), who never married, inherited the land from his father after 1911 and was known for repairing bicycles. In 1945 he sold the lease on the mountain land (which was still owned by Mrs Wilson Lynch, who had inherited Kilcornan from her mother Fanny Joyce, nee Redington) to Joseph Rooney.

¹ 1911 Census returns, County Galway, Galway PLU, Clarinbridge DED, Gortard Townland

² Gaway County Rates Revision books, op.cit.

Patrick's son Edward (Bob) inherited the farm in the early 1960s but spent the last thirty years of his life in hospital in Ballinasloe and died around 2000. As he had no relations and made no will, the land, which had been rented out all this time, was acquired by the various tenants. The house is now a ruin with only an ivy-covered gable remaining but the original cut stone farmyard gate pillars were moved to Tom Brett's house (Photo D).

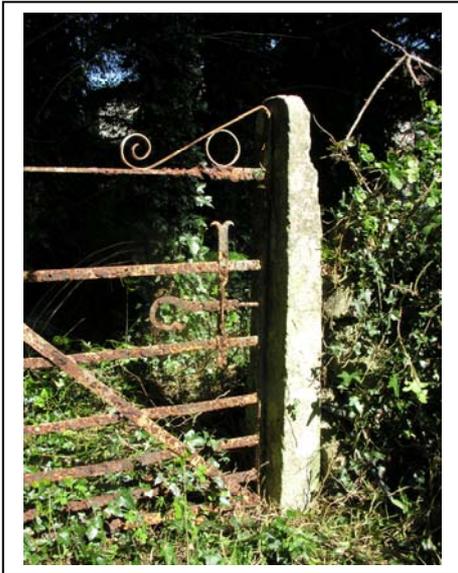


Photo D. Higgins Gate pillar (at Tom Brett's) Photo E. Higgins entrance 2010 (house ruin on right)

The Burke family

William Burke married Bridget (born 1823) and their son William was born in 1851. He married Honor (born 1853) and they had three children. William was born 1886, Bridget in 1889 while a third child died before 1901. They lived, with William senior's widow, in a four-roomed house with three front windows, and had the same five outhouses as Higgins (though the barn and shed had gone by 1911). By 1911 Bridget (William's mother) had died as probably had Honor as William's wife is now Sarah (born 1848). In 1949, possibly on William's death at age sixty-five, the land, house and commonage lease were transferred to Patrick Hynes (is he related to Hynes who lived in Gortard in 1855 ?). Michael Murphy acquired the land in 1967 and the house and outbuildings seem to have been demolished on the transfer to Richard Murphy in 1975 when he also acquired the commonage lease.

The Bermingham family

Martin Bermingham was born before the famine in 1842 and inherited the farm from his father William. He married Bridget, seven years his junior, in 1871 and they had eight children, of whom only four were alive in 1901. John, born 1875, Mary, born 1879, Martin, born 1885 and Patrick, born 1889. Martin was tall, like most of the Berminghams and seems to have been a good hurler, playing regularly for Clarinbridge, and was a founder of the short-lived Eire Og club in 1908³. He was listed in the Clarinbridge team against Castlegar in August 1907 and against Kilconieron in May 1910 but may have died, aged twenty-five, shortly after this. Neither he, nor his brother John, appear in the 1911 census which lists only two children living, Mary and Patrick, both of whom were still at home. Their house had four rooms and two front windows plus a stable, cowhouse and barn. Patrick married Delia and had three children, Eileen, Donal and Mathew (born 1926). In 1927 he was still repaying the Land Commission annuity for the 1903 purchase as he was, like many people, in arrears at that stage⁴. In 1923 he sold 14 Irish acres in the adjacent townland of Caherdevane⁵. When Patrick died in 1945 the farm was left to his wife. Mathew (Mattie) took over running the farm and continued living, unmarried, in the house with his mother until he was killed in a car accident walking home from Clarinbridge village one evening in 1966. His mother rented out the land and on her death in the mid 1970s it passed to Bridget Bermingham and in 1974 to William (Willie) Bermingham in Roveagh whose son, Pat, still farms the land. The house was sold in the early 1980s and demolished to make way for a new bungalow.

³ Michael de Brun, *Up the Bridge* (Galway 1982), p.42

⁴ Connacht Tribune 10th Dec 1927

⁵ Connacht Tribune 19th May 1923



Photo F. Clarinbridge Hurling team, early 1900s. Martin Bermingham, back row 2nd from left

The Fahy family

Martin Fahy was born in 1846 and probably arrived in Gortard in 1881 when he married Mary Burke (born 1848), presumably the widow of the son of Edmund Burke. Mary had three young children at this time - Margaret (born 1875), Edward (born 1876) and John (born 1878). She had a further 5 children with Martin - two who had already left home by 1901, Maria (born 1881), Willie (born 1887) and Martin (born 1889) With at least eight of them living in a four-roomed, three-windowed cottage, this was the most populous house in Gortard in the 1890s. By 1911 there were only three children in the house, Margaret and John having left and Maria having died. The family was supported on 14 acres of land and their one-fifth share of the commonage and the six outhouses (including a rates-exempt piggery, stable, cowhouse, potato, turf and fowl sheds) testify to the intense agricultural activity. In November 1896 a John Burke was one of sixty one men working for Kilcornan estate and being paid 5 shillings for a 5-day week ⁶. As this was the top rate of pay, however, it is unlikely to be the then 18 year old son of Mary Burke. In 1932 the house, land and commonage were inherited by Matt Finn, who lived in Cloughalahard, presumably on the death of Martin. The house may then have been rented to James Brett while he was building his house (see below). In 1973, on the death

⁶ Murphy, op. cit., p.328 (from original records held by Brothers of Charity, Kilcornan)

of Matt Finn, all the land transferred to Richard Murphy who had moved down from Dublin to live with his uncle some years previously. He appears to have immediately demolished the house and sold it's site and 3 acres to a Mr Thornycroft. A new bungalow was subsequently built on the site.

The Shaughnessy/Corcoran families

Patrick Shaughnessy had a house and garden on a quarter acre at the top end of the village in 1855. In 1901 his widow Mary was still living in the house but on her death in 1908, at the age of 84, William Corcoran from Kilcornan inherited the cottage and one acre of land. In the 1911 census it was let to John Flynn, a 47 year old army pensioner, his wife Bridget (age 40) who he married in 1905, and their children Christina (4) and Martin (2). John worked for the Redington estate, earning 1s 8d per day in August 1917 (one of fifteen workes paid that week) and 3s 4d per day for a six day week in August 1921 when he was one of only seven workers⁷. In 1931 the land passed to John Corcoran who, in 1973 leased the house to Galway County Council whose tenant, John Tierney lived in it until he moved to a new council house 200 m away on the Athenry road. In 1980 the house was demolished and a new bungalow built by Roseleen Corcoran and her husband Andy Murphy, thus continuing the family connection.

The Mullin family

Patrick Mullin appears in the 1901 census occupying the cottage across the lane west of Berminghams on a quarter acre of land and farming a third share of the 61 acre Redington lands south of the new Athenry road (which transferred to Kilcornan townland in 1900). Born between 1841 and 1845, he married Mary (b1839) and had two children – John (b1872) and Patrick (b1884). John married when he was about 21 and had one daughter, Mary, born in 1894 but by 1901 was a widower. John may have worked for the Redingtons as his name appears on the accounts list for 1896 when he would have been 24. By 1911 Patrick too was a widower. In 1910 he bought 13 acres around the cottage from Anne Redington, including a two-storey slate-roofed farmhouse on the north side of the road which had been built as a 'land commision' house in the

⁷ Murphy, op. cit., p.330

1880s. The 1881 census shows the new house built but it was unoccupied at the 1901 and 1911 censuses as all families were then still living in single-storey thatched cottages. The house is also shown on the 1892 OS 25" to a mile map). The family must therefore have moved in after 1911.



Photo G. Mullin second house, built 1880s



Photo H. Mullin cottage ruin, 2010

By that time Patrick had left the family home but seems to have returned by 1928 (perhaps after the death of his father) as on 30th June that year the Land Commission has a civil bill in Galway district court seeking payment from him of outstanding arrears of £1 4s 4d for the purchase of the freehold of the farm in 1903⁸. In 1949 Patrick died, leaving the farm to (presumably his wife) Julia. She in turn left it to her son Cornelius (Con) in 1973 whose small grey tractor was a familiar sight cutting hay for many people in Clarinbridge. The original cottage was rented for much of the time, John Currine being a more recent long-term tenant. In 1985 Con Mullins died⁹ leaving his sisters Nora and Angela in the house. but neither Con nor Angela married and although Nora married Patrick Nestor they had no children and so, on their deaths, the farm passed to the Neilans of Kilcolgan, relations of the Nestors. In 1994 the farmhouse on 12 acres, the fifth share of the commonage plus a further 13 acres at Kilcornan (the remnant of the third share of 61 acres) were put up for auction in Athenry with the 12 acres and commonage being bought by Martin Brett¹⁰. The farmhouse was sold in 2010 and may be demolished while the original cottage is a tumbled ruin barely visible in the field.

⁸ Connacht Tribune 30th June 1928

⁹ Connacht Tribune 9th Dec. 1998

¹⁰ Connacht Tribune 22nd April 1994

The Brett family

On Saturday 17th October 1931, James Brett, with money from the sale of his family's farm in Dunmore in north Galway, paid £320 to buy the 109a 2r 30p of mountain land from Thomas Nestor of Kilcolgan at auction in Galway ¹¹.

Thomas had bought the land, which is shown as areas 5 and 6 in the Griffiths valuation map, from Mrs O'Dea. Comparing the 1841 and 1915 OS maps it is clear that very little improvement of this land had taken place in the 19th century, with the same fields shown as free of rock and scrub in both maps.

James, with the help of his brother, and using 30 cartloads of stone, built a substantial two-storey farmhouse and outbuildings at the northwest corner of the townland, accessed from a narrow track off the Galway road. After renting one of the cottages in Gortard village he moved in with his mother and sister, becoming the first completely new resident family to lease or purchase in Gortard since the famine . In 1959, using a government grant, he cleared much of the land of rock and scrub as may be seen on the 1975 OS aerial photography of the area. Following his death in 1982 the farm passed to his son Martin who added Con Mullin's 12 acres and one-fifth share of the 65 acre commonage in 1994 (Incorrectly shown as 45 acres in the auction notice) ¹². At a total of 135 acres, Martin is owner of 42% of the townland.



Photo I. Brett family house, built c.1932

¹¹ Connacht Tribune 26th Sept. 1931

¹² Tom Brett, in conversation with the author, May 2010

Society

Education

In the early nineteenth century the tenants of the Redington estate were uniquely fortunate in south Galway to have a landlord who was not only resident, wealthy and benevolent, but also particularly interested in education.

Prior to the 1820s the only locally available education was at hedge schools, such as that run by Margaret Mannion in 1826, on an income of £3-£15 a year, for 15 girls in a poor cabin near Killeeneen, or Church of Ireland parish schools such as that in Kilcolgan, "a room in a well-built cottage", run by James Galbraith who was paid £2 a year (£8 a year after 1824) by the London Hibernian Society to teach, for free, ten protestants and three catholics (eight boys and five girls). Hedge schools continued into perhaps the 1850s in this area, such as that kept by James Hilton at Kilcolgan Bridge in 1835 where twelve children paid for reading, writing, arithmetic and catechism ¹.

In 1823 Christopher Redington brought the Patrician Brothers to Clarinbridge, their first foundation outside the diocese of Kildare & Leighlin, building and furnishing a monastery on the Athenry Road and granting 7 acres of land rent free. In addition to the four brothers, Rev. Fr. Prendergast acted as chaplain to the Redingtons (who later gave him land in Cloghalahard which he let to Edward Archbold) . They were required to educate the sons of his tenants for free but charged 1s 3d to 5s a quarter for other pupils (depending on subjects selected). The parochial returns of 1824 list seventy boys being educated under the superintendance of Brother Patrick Dawson in "an excellent large house" and being taught grammar, spelling, reading, writing, arithmetic, politeness and catechism. They also ran a Sunday School teaching christian doctrine to the local people. By 1835 there were one hundred and sixty-five boys enrolled including boarders, who paid £16 a year (fees for day pupils had increased to 1s 6d to 8s a quarter). The curriculum had expanded to include mathematics,

¹ Sr de Lourdes Fahy, *Education in the Dioces of Kilmacduagh in the 19th century* (Galway, 1972), p.130

classics and geography - a very early example of intermediate level education ². In 1840 the Brothers left Clarinbridge, probably due to opposition from local people whose income they were undermining by setting up in trade and selling produce from their farm.



Photo J. Christian Brothers School, 2010 (now village hall)

In 1844 the land and buildings were occupied by the Christian Brothers who taught english, euclid, mensuration, book-keeping and religious instruction in a large, well-conducted school. Although instruction was free (financed by Thomas Redington and income from their land), of 141 boys enrolled in 1855, only eighty were present at the school inspection that year. This was a common problem in rural schools where the teaching of anything not purely practical was often considered useless by parents, who frequently took their children out of school to help on the land. In 1881 the school was placed under the national education board, the last in the diocese to do so. The Christian Brothers closed the school in June 1889 due to financial difficulties and in 1892 a new boys national school was built on the Galway Road under the patronage of Christopher Redington and managed by Rev. Fr. Patrick McDonagh ³. The Principal, and local postmaster, was John Savage, grandfather of the current postmaster James Kelly ⁴.

² Ibid. p.100

³ Ibid. P.104

⁴ 'Mrs Kelly, memories of a post-mistress', in Joseph Murphy (ed.), *Oyster Country, A community Journal of Clarinbridge and Surrounding District* (Galway, 2009), pp 5-8

Education for girls was also funded by the Redingtons from an early date with Mrs Frances Redington providing a house, books and £25 a year for a free school for sixty-six girls in Stradbally run by Margaret Doyle ⁵. In 1844 a Convent for the Sisters of Charity was built opposite the current entrance to Kilcornan, with 12 acres of land later added.



Photo K. Clarinbridge Convent, c.1960 (now vacant hotel)

Four sisters, led by Sr Baptist Griffin, ran the 200 pupil school while a further eighty adults and children attended a Sunday School. Thomas Redington's wife established a sewing, and later a lace, school at the convent, the work being sold in London. The convent school came under the board of national education in 1881 and by 1886 the 120 children were being taught cookery, french and the use of the sowing machine in addition to the three R's. By the 1920s mathematics, nature and geography had been added ⁶. In 1959 a new girls primary school, Scoil Mhuire, was built adjacent to, and on the land of, the convent. 1966 saw the end of secondary education in Clarinbridge as the school could not offer the new curriculum and in 1991 the boys and girls primary schools were merged. In 1996 the nuns moved to a smaller house and the convent, now a listed building, became a hotel (currently vacant) while the boys national school became a restaurant (also currently vacant).

⁵ Sr de Lourdes Fahy , op.cit.. p..130

⁶ Mrs Kelly, op. cit.



Photo L. Pupils at Clarinbridge Convent School, c.1960

Adult education included a small subscription library (although most books were circulated gratis as people were too poor to pay), an evening class for men and a society for teaching mothers and grandmothers to 'sanctify their home life' ⁷.

The effect of the Redingtons endowment of education in Clarinbridge may be clearly seen in the literacy levels in the area in the nineteenth century compared to that in Galway and the surrounding parishes. In 1841, when the level of illiteracy ran at 80% in the diocese of Kilmacduagh as a whole, it was only 52% in Clarinbridge and 64% in Stradbally parish. By 1901 only 17% in Stradbally could neither read or write but by that time the national education system had spread sufficiently across the county to allow the average illiteracy in the diocese to fall to 22%. In the 1901 census for Gortard only one person, seventy-seven year old Mary Shaughnessy, could neither read nor write (her form being completed and signed by the enumerator, Constable James Monaghan), while only one other house, Burkes, contained occupants who could only read (the head of the family, his wife and his mother) ⁸. However, in the 1911 census a number of people who could read and write in 1901 could only read, or could not even read. This may be due to confusion over whether they could read or write Irish rather than English. Equally striking was the transformation of spoken language. When the Patrician Brothers arrived in 1823, Thomas Redington, in his diary, estimated that hardly one of his tenants

⁷ Sr de Lourdes Fahy , op.cit.. p..104

⁸ 1901 Census , op. cit.

could speak English⁹. All the residents of Gortard in 1901, including those born before the famine, spoke both Irish and English and in fact Irish had so declined by the 1920's that it was mainly spoken only by those in contact with the connemara 'badoirs'¹⁰.

Religion

In common with most of the west of Ireland, Clarinbridge, and Gortard, remained predominantly Roman Catholic despite the best efforts of the English state. In 1841 the field name books list all the inhabitants of Gortard as Roman Catholic and the 1901 census lists all the inhabitants of Gortard, and of Clarinbridge, as Roman Catholic.

The medieval parish church of Stradbally, of which only the west gable survives, was at the Weir and the graveyard continues in use today. A thirteenth century church in the grounds of Kilcornan House was restored by the Brothers of Charity in the 1950s while the twelfth century Coolratagh church in the north of the parish probably sits on an earlier building¹¹. In the south of the parish are the ruins of a catholic church dating to 1763 (according to a tone above the door) and at the east edge of Kilcornan demesne the foundations of a building which was said to have been used for Mass during the penal times. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, there was no parish church in Stradbally although in 1834 there were fifteen protestants living in the parish (compared to 1124 catholics)¹². The tithes at this time amounted to £115 9s 10d, of which £28 17s was payable to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, £55 2s 10d to the archdeacon, and £31 10s to the vicar at Kilcolgan, which was the nearest protestant church. In 1835 this church had only 30 attendees¹³ while the Roman Catholic chapel in Clarinbridge had an attendance of 800

The Redingtons were one of the few large catholic landlords in south Galway and in 1817 Christopher Redington paid for the erection of a stone-walled,

⁹ Thomas Redington Diary, Wilson-Lynch Papers, James Hardiman Library

¹⁰ Michael Moran, 'Recollections' in Joseph Murphy (ed.), *Oyster Country, A community Journal of Clarinbridge and Surrounding District* (Galway, 2009), pp 33-35

¹¹ Redington, op. cit., p.177

¹² Parliamentary Gazetteer, op. cit., Vol 3, P.283

¹³ Murphy, op. cit., p.19

slate-roof chapel adjacent to the bridge. This was a substantial building by comparison with the typical thatched structures used as catholic chapels in the diocese at this time ¹⁴. Josephine Kelly, postmistress, and mother of the present postmaster James Kelly, recalls her mother telling her that In the 1880s the Redingtons, The Burkes (of Paddy Burke’s pub) and the Faheys (her mother’s family) had their own pews in this church ¹⁵. In 1892 the church moved to the Christian Brothers school when this became vacant and in 1935 a new church was built, in grecian style, south of the village green. In 1960 a graveyard was opened for the first time in Clarinbridge village, on land east of the church, adjacent to the Cowpark.



Photo M. Clarinbridge Chapel 1817-40, now pharmacy

For children who died before baptism, however, the nineteenth century church had no place and in Gortard a childrens burial ground at the south-west corner of Gortard was in use until the end of that century ¹⁶. Originally accessed by a lane from the village (photo C), the lane disappeared when it became adjacent to the ‘new line’. Although a listed monument, a house is currently being built on the site. A much older childrens’s burial place was identified in the north-west of Gortard in 2008 by archaeologist Marcus Casey (Map J & Photo N) ¹⁷.



Photo N. Childrens’s burial place, NW Gortard

¹⁴ Fahy, op. cit., p.419

¹⁵ Mrs Kelly, op. cit.

¹⁶ Archaeological Survey of Galway, op. cit.

¹⁷ Tom Brett, op. cit.

Agriculture

In 1841 about 188 acres, i.e. 49% of the land, in Gortard was cultivated, producing “middling crops of oats, potatoes, wheat”, from the light clay soil ¹⁸. The remaining 190 acres of “light limestone land much encumbered with native rock” ¹⁹ was used either as rough grazing or comprised hazel and blackthorn scrub. Manure for the land was provided principally by sea-weed collected around the local shores, considerable quantities of which “are landed near the village as the tidal estuary is navigable for small craft up to the bridge” ²⁰. In 1820 sea-weed was costing 10s a ton in Galway and 12 tons was required to manure an acre of potatoes ²¹. Peat from Connemara for fuel was also landed here, continuing at least into the 1930s when a boatload (equivalent to a lorryload) of turf cost Frank Mulvey £3 10s after bargaining with the badoirs ²². Peat, and seaweed from Island Eddy, were also landed at the Weir where Michael Moran recalled up to fifteen turf boats alongside in the 1920s and a boatload costing £2 ²³.



Photo O. Turf cart at the Weir, c.1950

Potatoes were sown in April and May, the ground being pared, skinned and scrawed using sharp broad spades, the earth piled into 6 ft wide “lazy beds” separated by 3 ft furrows and the seed potatoes planted on dried seaweed. For the tenants of Gortard, working on their own land, a days work would see four

¹⁸ O’Donovan, op. cit.

¹⁹ Parliamentary Gazetteer, op. cit., Vol 3, p.283

²⁰ Lewis, op.cit. p. 577

²¹ Hely Dutton, op.cit. p. 186

²² Up the Bridge, op. cit., p.117

²³ Michael Moran, op. cit.

men skin a quarter acre of ground. The crop, perhaps 1200 stone per acre, was harvested between August and October and put into storage pits for consumption over the following ten months. Wheat was typically then sown in December (or in spring if the winter was wet) and oats the following year, the land then being left fallow to recover for several years. Crop yields were typically 20 stone per acre for wheat and 28 stone per acre for oats.

Hely Dutton, in 1820, notes that tartarian oats were generally cultivated in the Parish of Kilcolgan (and therefore probably Stradbally also) as they were better for light impoverished soils and give nearly half meal. He also states that in the Barony of Dunkellin (in which Stradbally is situated) “a considerable quantity of fine wheat is produced” which was sent to flour mills in Gort or Galway (twenty-three of them in 1835 ²⁴) for home consumption and exportation by land carriage to Dublin (as sea and canal arrival times were uncertain) ²⁵.

It is easy to see why the potato, and increasingly by the 1840s the Lumper variety which required less manure, became such a staple food as the potato could feed six times as many people per acre as wheat. An acre of land was sufficient to feed a six person family for a year (based on a consumption of twenty-two stone of potatoes a week, and allowing for 170 stone per acre for next spring’s planting and a quantity for beggars and animals) ²⁶.

Most families kept a pig (which was often an important contributor to the rent payment), chickens, ducks and geese, and usually a cow which, like the pig, would be fed on potatoes and kept in during the winter. Butter was made (but not cheese) and often sold to pay the rent. The five commonage owners in Gortard would have grazed black, long-horned cattle, and possibly sheep, on the mountain land. Some of them may have had a horse (by 1901 five of the six families had stables) and a cart, for carrying goods and ploughing wheat and oats (using either a wooden or iron plough). Hay, originally cut by two-hand scythe, was, by the 1880s, being cut by two horse haycutters (photo P). Next to the houses, gardens of Dutch cabbage were grown. It is unlikely that green crops were grown in the area before the famine (Hely Dutton does not list

²⁴ Lewis, op.cit., p. ?

²⁵ Hely Dutton, op.cit., p. 73

²⁶ Hely Dutton, op.cit., p.351

Christopher Redington a such as grower²⁷) but by 1850 Thomas Redington, with the help of Edward Archbold, was growing rape, turnip and mangle on land vacted by tenants who emigrated to America and on land previously uncultivated²⁸. While turnips continue to be grown for cattle fodder, sugar beet, which was extensively grown from the 1930s, disappeared in 1987 when the sugar beet factory in Tuam closed.

Being at the head of Galway Bay, fishing would have supplemented the diet. Salmon was fished from 1st February to mid-August. Herring was fished to 1st December and up to 140 oyster boats, with two to four men per boat, dredged for the ten days of the season from 8th December. Special flat-bottom boats were made for this work by carpenters such as Patsey Connel of Milestone (an area between Kilcolgan and Kicornan named after the forty-first milestone on the Ennis to Galway road – see Map I)²⁹. Oysters were mostly loaded in barrels onto the train at Oranmore for sale to Dublin fish merchants. Mussels and periwinkles were also picked but not crabs. Fishing gave a reasonable livelihood to many people in Clarinbridge³⁰.

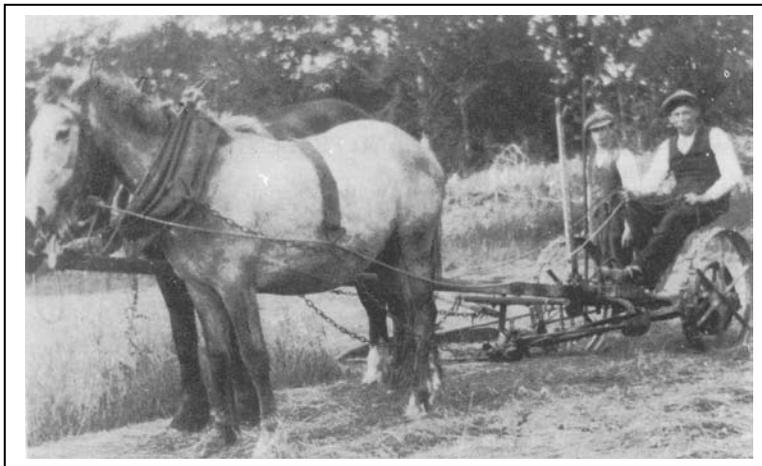


Photo P. Cutting Hay, Taramuid, c.1920

²⁷ Hely Dutton, op.cit., p.101

²⁸ Murphy, op. cit., p.174 (from The Galway Vindicator, January 1850)

²⁹ Matty Murray, 'Memories of a Fisherman' in Joseph Murphy (ed.), *Oyster Country, A community Journal of Clarinbridge and Surrounding District* (Galway, 2009), pp 47-8

³⁰ Michael Moran, op. cit.

Markets & Fairs

The Gortard tenants had only a short distance to travel to buy and sell their produce. In 1817 Christopher Redington was granted a patent to hold a fair in Clarinbridge four times a year - on the first Thursday after 11th February, 11th May, 11th August and 11th November³¹. A patent to hold a weekly market on Tuesdays was granted on 25th September 1820 (1 Geo, 4) and in 1837 Lewis notes that this was chiefly for the sale of oats and wheat while the quarterly fair was chiefly for horses and pigs 'which last are bought up by the agents of the provision merchants'.



Photo Q. Clarinbridge Main Street c.1960 – Fairgreen on left, Jordan's on right

There was also a fair at Tubberbracken, a mile east of Clarinbridge, in May and October, the latter chiefly for turkeys³². This fair also sold a considerable quantity of locally made white frizes and calow blankets³³ as well as cattle, sheep and horses. It had a famous well with ogham stones but was more notorious for the regular faction fights in the evening which probably contributed to it's demise in the 1880s³⁴. By 1853 the Clarinbridge weekly market was no longer being held³⁵, probably because of the decline in the population and the move from cultivation of wheat and oats to grazing. The quarterly fair continued, selling mainly horses, cattle and sheep in February and November with smaller sheep fairs in May and August. In the 1950s a September fair was added and

³¹ Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the state of the fairs and markets in Ireland, 1854-1855 [1910] H.C.1855,ii,xix Appendix (Dublin, 1853)

³² Lewis, op. cit., p. 577

³³ Hely Dutton, op.cit., p.426

³⁴ Folklore Commission Archives, Cill Fhingin, 1938, p.256

³⁵ Report on Fairs and Markets, op. cit., Appendix p.132

pig markets were held every Friday in Sherry's and Jordan's yards ³⁶. The fair was replaced by the marts (particularly Athenry) in the late 1960s ³⁷.

Food & clothing

Food in the Gortard cottages was cooked on an open fire in a large, stone-lintelled hearth in the main room onto which the only door opened. Although the original cottages in Gortard have now all gone, the iron crane and cooking implements from one of them has survived and is still in the Townland (photo R) ³⁸.



Photo R. Fire crane from Gortard cottage (now at Tom Brett's house)

The dominance of potatoes in the diet is clear from the typical daily menu of the 1870s listed by William Hynes of Taramuid:—

Breakfast – potatoes, milk, butter, bread & butter

Dinner – potatoes, herrings, butter, sometimes meat.

Supper – Bread & buttermilk

Bedtime – pot of potatoes and buttermilk between whole family.

³⁶ Pat Jordan 'Botharin na Smaointe' in Joseph Murphy (ed), *Oyster Country, A community Journal of Clarinbridge and Surrounding District* (Galway, 2009), pp 69-74

³⁷ Mary Burke, op.cit.

³⁸ Tom Brett collection 2010

Bread was made from oats, wholemeal or potatoes, while potato and wild wheat cakes were common. Fish could also be eels, mackerel or ling. Meat was salted to preserve it. Everyone killed at least one pig a year while better-off farmers would kill a sheep at Christmas and Easter ³⁹. The pig was killed at twelve weeks by a local butcher who came to the house and distributed among the neighbours. The meat would keep for a year in a salted barrel or longer if put in the chimney. The bonhams were sold at Clarinbridge fair. In the 1940s John Burke's father snared rabbits in the Hillpark and sold them to John Jordan's shop adjacent to the present pub while his wife made and sold country butter. This went on the slate, bread usually being taken in exchange ⁴⁰.

In the 1820s most people were clothed in frize, which were either made at home by women (using home-made dyes) or purchased at fairs. Stockings were home-made and hats were of wool felt. ⁴¹. In 1938 Thomas MacDonnell of Clarinbridge, then aged 86, recalled that shoes or clogs weren't worn until people were about twenty years old. Men always wore shoes and stockings in winter (two pairs of 10s shoes and two pairs of 2s soles lasting a year), but women walked to the fair barefoot, washing their feet and putting on shoes and stockings before entering the market. He remembered five shoemakers in Clarinbridge parish in the 1870s but none by the 1930s ⁴². Clothes were washed by beetling, the women standing up to their knees in water, for hours and in winter, beating the article on a large smooth stone.

Most people, including women, smoked clay pipes (dugeens), a practice which only disappeared in Gortard in the 1940s ⁴³. Pipes were made in Galway and Knockrockery (where they recently recommenced manufacture). A pipe bowl made by a Galway company was found by the author at Slieveaun in 2002.

Water in Gortard village came from two wells, one south of the village (photo S), the other to the north ⁴⁴. The former was still in use in the 1950s before the

³⁹ Folklore Commission, op. cit., p.210

⁴⁰ John Burke Slieveaun, in conversation with the author, April 2010

⁴¹ Hely Dutton, op. cit., p.?

⁴² Folklore Commission, op. cit., p.212

⁴³ Mary Burke, op.cit.

⁴⁴ Ordnance Survey 25" to 1 mile series 1896 revision, Galway sheet 95

group water scheme brought piped water from the well at Kilcornan House to the whole of Clarinbridge via the landmark water tower on the Hillpark ⁴⁵.



Photo S. Gortard southern well looking north toward village

Like most cottages, those in Gortard had their (mortared) floors below ground level which would have made them damp for much of the year. Stone built and thatched with locally grown wheaten straw covered with bobbens, the few small windows couldn't be opened, the only air entering through the half-door. The darkness inside the cottages was often exacerbated by the hay bales blocking up broken windows ⁴⁶.



Photo T. Early nineteenth century thatched cottage Stradbally North, 2010

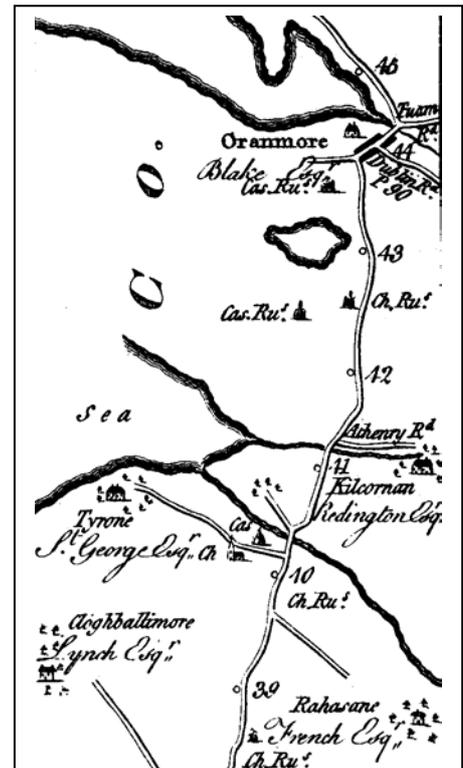
Transport

Clarinbridge was an important transport focus from pre-Christian times, located as it was at the western end of the *eisca riada* and an accessible waterside crossing between the northern and southern kingdoms. All traffic between Munster, Galway, Mayo, Sligo and Donegal passed through the ford and over

⁴⁵ John Burke, *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ Folklore Commission Archives, *An Chlochar Droichead A Chiarin*, 1938, p.229

the bridge. By the time Taylor and Skinner created the second edition of their Road Map of Ireland in 1783, travellers on the Ennis to Galway road would have passed milestone forty-one at Kilcornan House and the right turn to Athenry in Clarinbridge village (Map I) ⁴⁷. There seems to have been no passenger coach service in 1824 and no mail service on the Gort to Galway route either ⁴⁸ but by 1846 the Royal Mail coach from Galway to Limerick was passing through at 9am while the Galway bound coach arrived from Gort around 4pm⁴⁹. In the 1840s Clarinbridge became the location for one of Bianconi's coach stops which was adjacent to the Redington's gate lodge on the old Athenry road at the south end of Gortard. His nationwide network of long-cars made travel more accessible ⁵⁰. In 1836 Lewis noted that the roads in south Galway were numerous and in excellent repair.



MAP I. Taylor & Skinner's Map, Clarinbridge



Photo U. The old (left) and new (right) quays, Clarinbridge

The arrival of the Midland Great Western Railway in Galway in 1845 had no direct effect on Clarinbridge, the nearest station being Oranmore, 3 miles north. Although the sea came up to Clarinbridge village, the fact that shallow draft boats could only navigate that far at high tide limited it's use as a transport route

⁴⁷ Taylor and Skinner, op.cit.

⁴⁸ Pigot & Co's Provincial Directory of Ireland 1824, p.208

⁴⁹ Slater's Commercial Directory, 1846, p.128

⁵⁰ Murphy, op. cit., p.181

although boats brought seaweed and, up to the 1940s, turf from connemara. A pier (the old quay) downstream from the bridge appears on the 1841 map although in 1836 there was no pier as Lewis noted that “great benefit would result from the erection of a small pier”⁵¹. A more substantial pier (the new quay) was later constructed by the Redingtons a quarter mile downstream of the old pier but the shallow water meant this was never well used (photo U).

For the inhabitants of Gortard in the nineteenth century, shank’s mare was the predominant mode of transport. In 1900 the post took two hours to come from Galway to Clarinbridge by horse and common car⁵² but within a few years the motor car had reached Clarinbridge (photo V) eventually spelling the end of horse-drawn transport. In 1965 John Burke’s wheelwright father built the last cart in Slievaun⁵³.



Photo V. The Redington sisters at Letterfrack c. 1915

Entertainment & Customs

In an era before travel and mass communication, religious festivals, often with pre-Christian origins, were important social events in Gortard as well as markers of the agricultural year. Halloween, the beginning of winter, was celebrated with bread and water left on the hearth for the souls in purgatory. Bonfires warded off evil spirits and games included apples on strings. St Bridget's Eve, celebrating the end of winter, was also an important festival while at Christmas the Wren Boys went from house to house from St Stephens day to Twelfth night, providing music, dance, songs and stories. St John's night

⁵¹ Lewis, op. cit. p.329

⁵² Mrs Kelly, op. cit.

⁵³ John Burke, op. cit.

marked midsummer with bonfires. On Sunday evenings in the summer of 1910 a melodeon and fiddle played eight and four-hand reels, half-sets, barndances and flings for road dances. Shrove, the feast before Lent, was a common time for marriages, often matches arranged at Clarinbridge fair, the bride riding behind her father-in-law to the church and behind her husband on the return trip, with the Straw Boys providing entertainment at the feast ⁵⁴.

Sport, particularly hurling, was played in Clarinbridge from the early days of the G.A.A, with over 7000 attending a match in the Hill Park in 1885 ⁵⁵ and we have seen the involvement of Gortard in the local team in 1900. The girls were not left out either as a Convent school camogie team existed in 1920 ⁵⁶.



Photo W. Clarinbridge Convent school camogie team 1920

The weather was all important to a community which relied on agriculture and who spent most of their time outdoors. The Big Wind, on a February night in 1903, which took the roofs off thatched houses, blew down haycocks and walls and left people homeless, was widely remembered in Clarinbridge in the 1930s as was a violent thunderstorm of June 1890 ⁵⁷.

In most other ways a typical south Galway bay village - Roman Catholic, with an economy based on agriculture and fishing, and a range of cultural, sporting and social activities - the people of Clarinbridge's benevolent landlords and early access to free primary education differentiated them from the surrounding area.

⁵⁴ Folklore Commission, op. cit., p.239

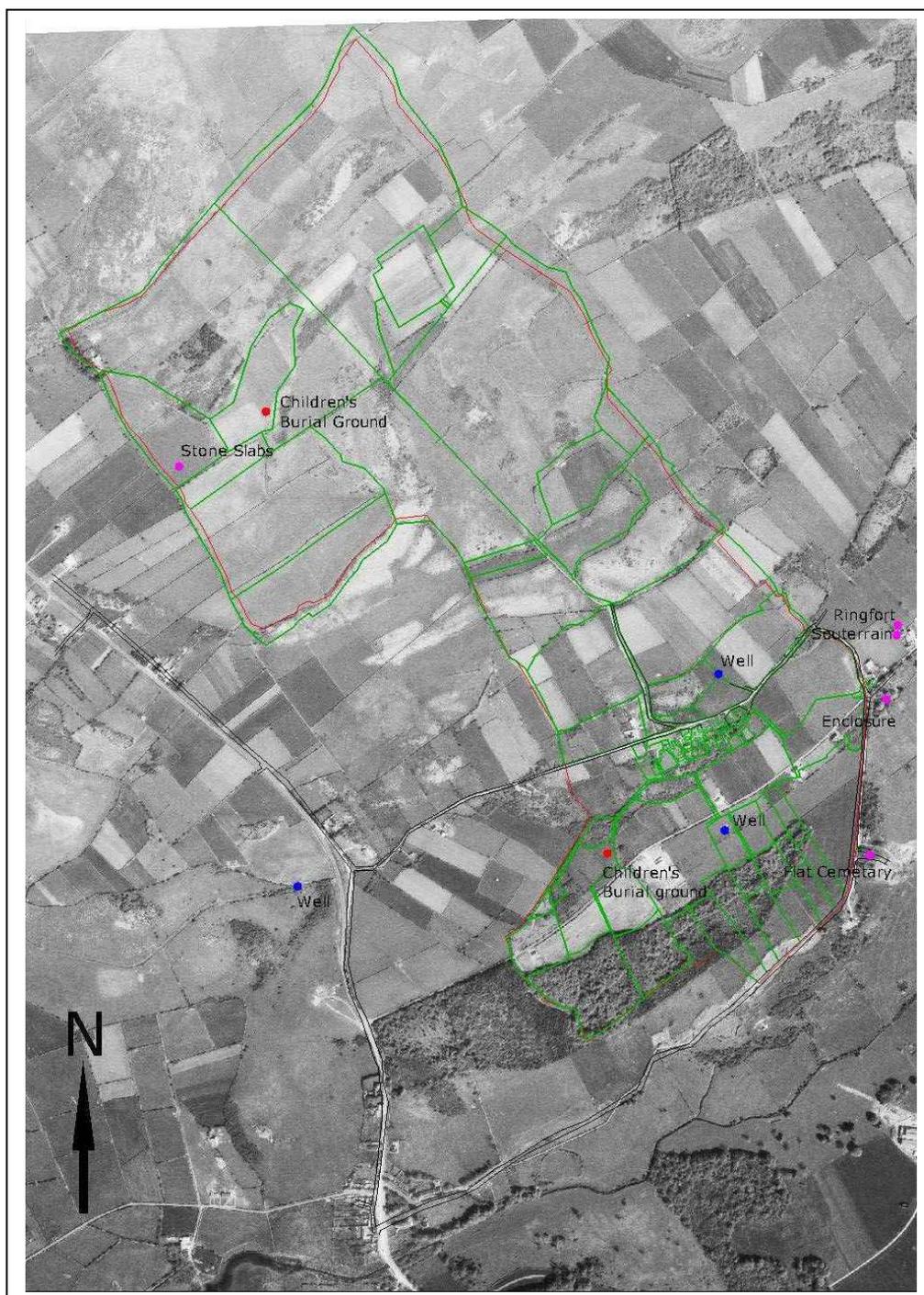
⁵⁵ de Brun, op.cit., p.31

⁵⁶ de Brun, op.cit., p.222

⁵⁷ Folklore Commission, op. cit., p.281

Epilogue

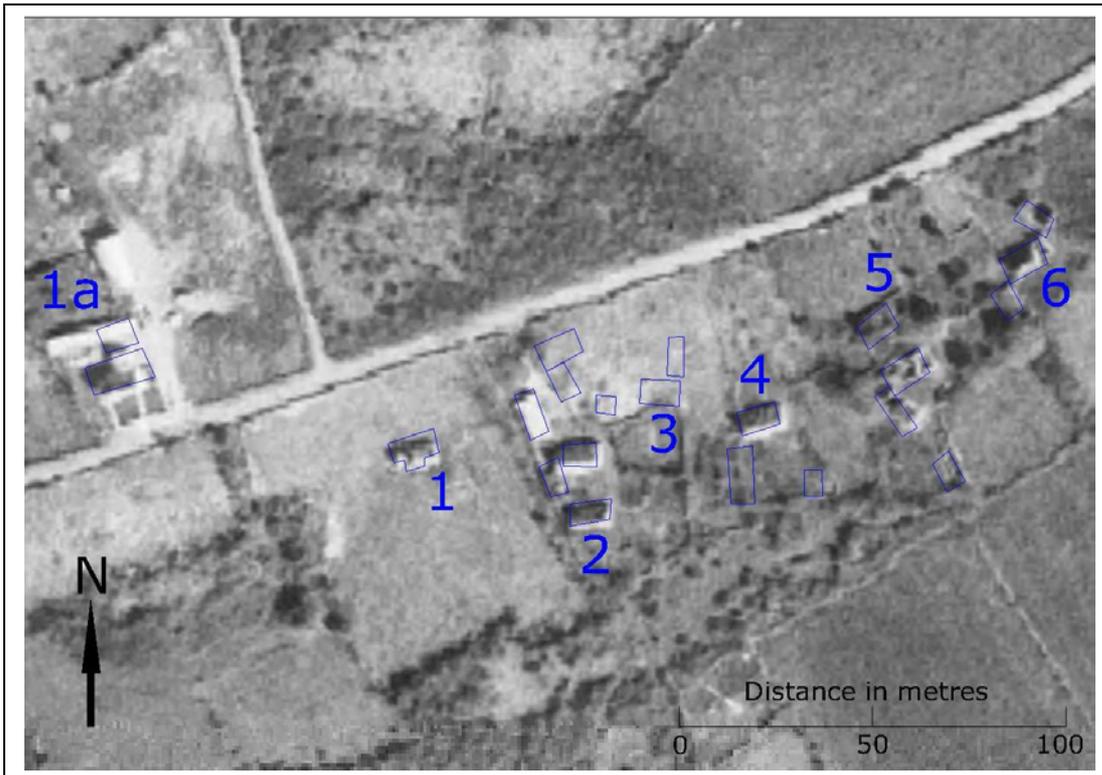
In 1973 the Ordnance Survey carried out the first complete aerial photographic survey of the country. Flying over Gortard on 14th April that year, as over much of rural Ireland, they gazed down on a landscape little changed for 100 years (Map J) ¹. Many of the nineteenth century field boundaries are still visible, areas of the mountain land still uncultivated, the plantations of the Redingtons largely intact, and, most remarkably, only three new houses built (1880s, 1932, 1973).



Map J. Gortard 1973 OS Aerial Photography with 1841 fields in green

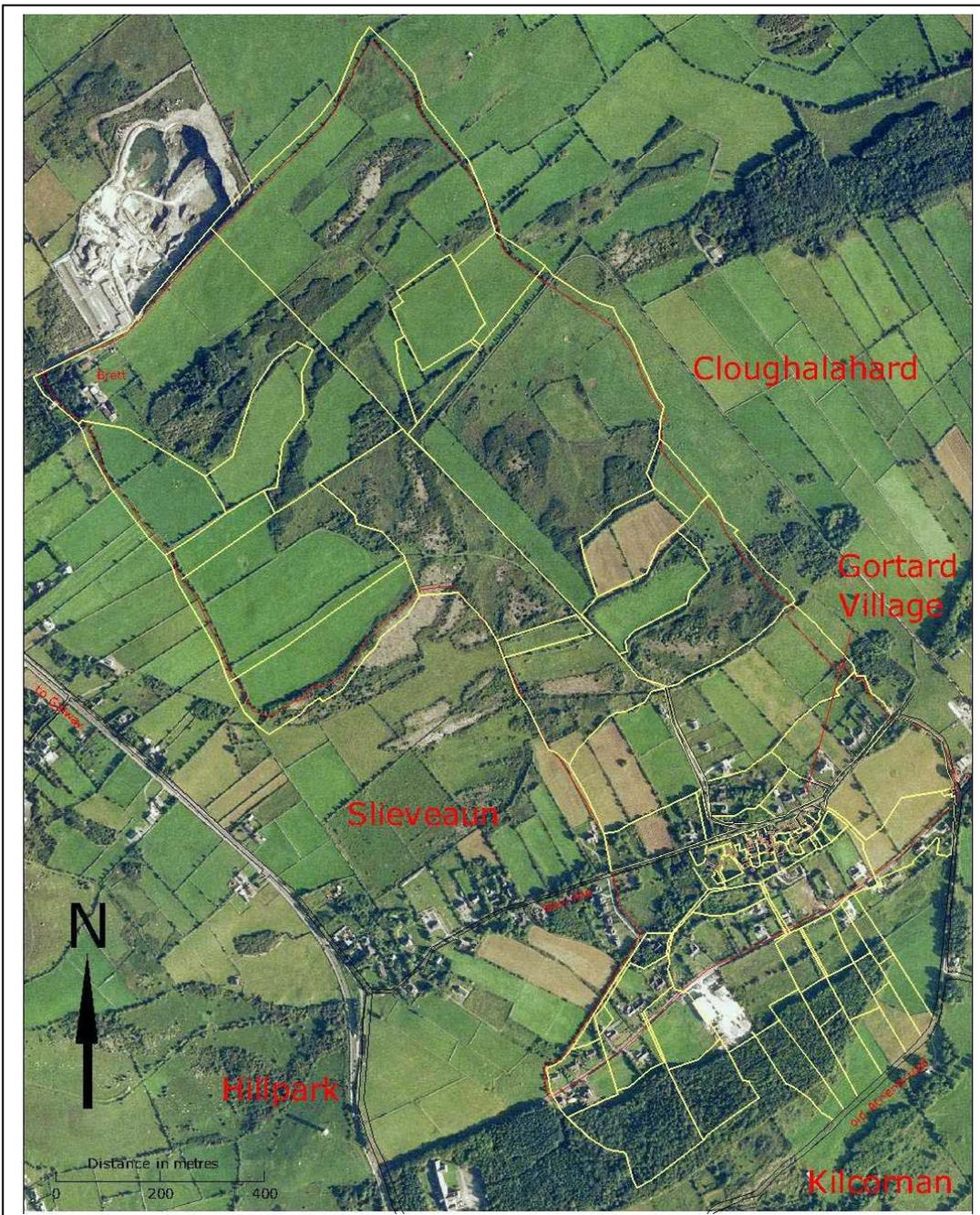
¹ Ordnance Survey of Ireland IGN orthophoto 14/4/1973

In Gortard Village itself, seven buildings are still roofed, half of these occupied by the families who had been there 100 years before. However, comparison with the 1915 mapping shows how many of the outbuildings in particular are gone or in ruins, indicating the decline in active farming in the village (Map K). Mullin's 1880s farm (1a) is the only new house built since 1841. The community, which had survived the famine, the disappearance of the Landlord system and the creation of the new Irish state had run out of people.



Map K. Gortard Village 1973 OS Aerial Photography with 1915 buildings in blue

Within a decade of this photograph all the cottages had gone, to be replaced by new bungalows and two-storey houses, only the Mullin two-storey farm and some overgrown walls remaining as a reminder that there had once been a thriving farming community had once lived here. The arrival of American and European multinational manufacturing companies in Galway in the 1970s led to the first net migration into Galway since the the famine and Clarinbridge, only nine miles from the city, was a popular building location. While development stalled in the 1980s the arrival of the celtic tiger in the early 1990s prompted further expansion so that by 2005, when the most recently available OS aerial photography was flown (Map L) there were forty-three houses in the townland, spread along the Athenry and Gortard roads and the former mountain and village tracks, with another 6 houses built since then.



Map L. Gortard 2005 OS Aerial Photography with 1841 fields (yellow) and houses (pink)

So while the population of county Galway, and of the country, is still only 60% of its pre-famine level, in Gortard (and in Clarinbridge) the population has exceeded the pre-famine maximum with some 120 people, of all ages, now living in the townland. In the twenty-first century, a new community of affluent, independent, dispersed, car-dependant families, economically wedded to Galway and (mainly biomedical and Information Technology) industry, has replaced the tight-knit, interdependent small-farming community of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Perversely, however, while agriculture is no longer the economic mainstay, Gortard has more farmed land than before

the famine, including, in 2009, the establishment by Sylvia Moss of a small market garden. Much of the mountain land has been recovered but it is with cattle and sheep, not wheat and oats, that the Bretts, Murphys, Berminghams and others derive income from the fields. Similarly, on the coast, the farming of oysters has continued, making Clarinbridge internationally known, and constituting a significant local industry, employing sixty people. The annual oyster festival, established in 1954 by Paddy Burke, and the market day, revived in 1985 by Rev Keogh, maintain a cultural link between both the past and present communities.

Conclusion

In 1841 a small closely-packed village of forty thatched buildings housed 108 people in eighteen families who farmed the limestone soils of Gortard in Clarinbridge, As tenants at will of the resident catholic Redington family of Kilcornan, they leased, and probably cultivated, the land near the village in common, and shared grazing on the mountain land. Nevertheless, the fact that their holdings were separately valued and the variety of surnames in the village suggests that this may not have been a clachan, of the type defined by Estyn Evans. It would require further research into the families and evidence of an infield/outfield system to establish this.

The effect of the famine was similar in Gortard to much of south Galway and the decline in population over the following 120 years mirrored that in the surrounding areas. A full knowledge of the reasons for the loss of individuals from the townland would require further research into the families (particularly births, marriages and deaths and emigration records), which, given the small numbers, would be feasible. Despite the differing surnames this appears, in the nineteenth century, to have been a largely closed community (at least within Clarinbridge), everyone in the 1901 and 1911 census being born in Galway and only one new surname appearing between 1841 and 1908. (When looking at such a small group of people, however, statistics may be misleading as, for example, a difference of five between the numbers of men and women in 1871 created a 25% gender gap.) A comparative study of Gortard with other townlands, both locally and more distant, to establish the typicality of these patterns may be a useful area for future research.

The reason for this static situation may be more related to the economic situation as most land changed hands by inheritance rather than purchase, the family names gradually disappearing over the twentieth century as families, or at least the direct male line, died out. By 1973 there were about twelve people in the village, only two being pre-famine names and within a decade all these, and their houses, had gone. This complete elimination of the village's buildings is in contrast to the adjacent townland of Slieveaun which had only three resident

families in 1841 but where all three buildings have survived largely intact, one still used as a home.

Perhaps it was Gortard's convenient situation, close to Clarinbridge, the quiet rural nature and attractive wooded setting of this narrow country road which hastened the demise of the thatched village. In an era when grants for housebuilding required the roof of the old cottage to be removed, the depressed economy and looser planning regulations of the 1970s and 1980s plus a lack of awareness of the importance of both the built and natural heritage increased the odds against preservation.

The complete reversal of this apparent desertion of Gortard, with the arrival, since 1975, of over forty new families and in excess of 120 people, has far outstripped the increase in county Galway and Ireland, sending the population of the townland to its highest ever level. A new community has emerged, drawn to the area by the very features (woodland, ridge, the sea) which made it attractive to the original settlers. Although more spread out than the original houses the old village crossroads retains a focal position, demonstrating that man's historic impact on the landscape continues to influence settlement patterns even when the old community has vanished - a reinvention of Gortard in the twenty-first century.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Gortard population statistics from the Census reports 1841-1911

year	pop	male	female	% change	male %	female %	m/f diff %	houses	occ	p/house
1841	108	49	59		45.4%	54.6%	-9.3%	17	17	6.4
1851	69	35	34	-36.1%	50.7%	49.3%	1.4%	11	11	6.3
1861	57	29	28	-17.4%	50.9%	49.1%	1.8%	10	10	5.7
1871	35	20	15	-38.6%	57.1%	42.9%	14.3%	7	7	5.0
1881	48	23	25	37.1%	47.9%	52.1%	-4.2%	8	8	6.0
1891	48	26	22	0.0%	54.2%	45.8%	8.3%	9	8	6.0
1901	30	17	13	-37.5%	56.7%	43.3%	13.3%	8	6	5.0
1911	25	15	10	-16.7%	60.0%	40.0%	20.0%	6	6	4.2

Appendix 2 – Clarinbridge DED population statistics from the Census reports 1841-2006

year	pop	male	female	% change	male %	female %	m/f %
1841	2707	1379	1328		50.9%	49.1%	1.9%
1846	2182	1101	1082		50.4%	49.6%	0.9%
1851	1657	822	835	-38.8%	49.6%	50.4%	-0.8%
1856	1490	740	751		49.6%	50.4%	-0.7%
1861	1323	657	666	-20.2%	49.7%	50.3%	-0.7%
1866	1223	606	617		49.6%	50.4%	-0.9%
1871	1123	555	568	-15.1%	49.4%	50.6%	-1.2%
1876	1085	541	545		49.9%	50.2%	-0.4%
1881	1047	527	522	-6.8%	50.3%	49.9%	0.5%
1886	988	489	500		49.5%	50.6%	-1.2%
1891	928	450	478	-11.4%	48.5%	51.5%	-3.0%
1896	943	464	480		49.2%	50.8%	-1.7%
1901	958	477	481	3.2%	49.8%	50.2%	-0.4%
1906	889	446	443		50.2%	49.8%	0.3%
1911	820	415	405	-14.4%	50.6%	49.4%	1.2%
1916	812	411	401	-1.0%	50.7%	49.3%	1.3%
1921	804	408	396	-1.0%	50.7%	49.3%	1.4%
1926	796	404	392	-1.0%	50.8%	49.2%	1.5%
1931	796	409	379	0.0%	51.4%	47.6%	3.8%
1936	796	414	366	0.0%	52.0%	46.0%	6.0%
1941	788	409	353	-1.0%	51.9%	44.8%	7.1%
1946	780	404	340	-2.0%	51.8%	43.6%	8.2%
1951	697	384	313	-10.6%	55.1%	44.9%	10.2%
1956	766	442	324	9.9%	57.7%	42.3%	15.4%
1961	752	447	305	-1.8%	59.4%	40.6%	18.9%
1966	725	433	292	-3.6%	59.7%	40.3%	19.4%
1971	796	442	354	9.8%	55.5%	44.5%	11.1%
1976	1155	634	521	45.1%	54.9%	45.1%	9.8%
1981	1443	783	660	5.3%	54.3%	45.7%	8.5%
1986	1564	827	737	8.4%	52.9%	47.1%	5.8%
1991	1588	855	733	1.5%	53.8%	46.2%	7.7%
1996	1680	889	791	5.8%	52.9%	47.1%	5.8%
2001	2092	1098	994	24.5%	52.5%	47.5%	5.0%
2006	2666	1372	1294	27.4%	51.5%	48.5%	2.9%

Appendix 3 – Galway County population statistics from the Census reports 1821-2001

year	total	male	female	%change	male %	female %	m/f diff %
1821	337374	169303	167871		50.2%	49.8%	0.4%
1831	414684	204691	209993	22.9%	49.4%	50.6%	-1.3%
1841	440198	219564	220634	6.2%	49.9%	50.1%	-0.2%
1851	321684	157135	164549	-26.9%	48.8%	51.2%	-2.3%
1861	271478	134057	137421	-15.6%	49.4%	50.6%	-1.2%
1871	248458	122496	125962	-8.5%	49.3%	50.7%	-1.4%
1881	242005	120609	121396	-2.6%	49.8%	50.2%	-0.3%
1891	214712	108283	106429	-11.3%	50.4%	49.6%	0.9%
1901	192549	97923	94626	-10.3%	50.9%	49.1%	1.7%
1911	182224	94403	87821	-5.4%	51.8%	48.2%	3.6%
1921	175795	91442	84353	-3.5%	52.0%	48.0%	4.0%
1931	169282	88825	79956	-3.7%	52.5%	47.2%	5.2%
1941	167199	88302	78397	-1.2%	52.8%	46.9%	5.9%
1951	160204	85141	75063	-4.2%	53.1%	46.9%	6.3%
1961	149887	78993	70894	-6.4%	52.7%	47.3%	5.4%
1971	149223	77842	71381	-0.4%	52.2%	47.8%	4.3%
1981	172018	88330	83688	15.3%	51.3%	48.7%	2.7%
1991	180364	91005	89359	4.9%	50.5%	49.5%	0.9%
2001	209077	104367	104710	15.9%	49.9%	50.1%	-0.2%
2011	254263	128585	125678	21.6%	50.6%	49.4%	1.1%

Appendix 4 – Plan of Cloughalahard Fort by M Redington

