



## **Loughs Carra, Mask and Corrib; resources, borders and passageways**

*A National Heritage Week 2020 Project by  
the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Heritage Network*



## Introduction:

Loughs Carra, Mask and Corrib are all connected with all their waters draining into the Atlantic Ocean. Their origins lie in the surrounding bedrock and the moving ice that dominated the Irish landscape. Today they are landscape icons, angling paradise and drinking water reservoirs but they have also shaped the communities on their shores. This project, the first of the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Heritage Network, explores the relationships that the people from the local towns and villages have had with these lakes, how they were perceived, how they were used and how they have been embedded in their history.

The project consists of a series of short articles on various subjects that were composed by heritage officers of the local community councils and members of the local historical societies. They will dwell on the geological origin of the lakes, evidence of the first people living on their shores, local traditions and historical events and the inspiration that they offered to artists over the years.

These articles are collated in this document for online publication on the Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark Project website ([www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie](http://www.joycecountrygeoparkproject.ie)) as well as on the website of the various heritage societies and initiatives of the local communities. Individual articles – some bilingual as a large part of the area is in the Gaeltacht – will be shared over social media on a daily basis for the duration of National Heritage Week. Further contributions are encouraged for future editions of the document.



**Joyce Country &  
Western Lakes  
Geo Heritage**

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## Geological origin of the western lakes

Benjamin Thébaudeau: Geopark geologist

*Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark Project*



### Lough Mask and the lowlands of Ireland in the background

It could be argued that the region of the Corrib system of lakes, comprising loughs Carra, Mask and Corrib, is the clearest expression in Ireland of a change in bedrock at the landscape level. This change is evident in the contrast between uplands of peaks and glacial valleys to the west and undulating plains stretching as far as the eye can see to the east. The 3 lakes are quite different but all linked hydrologically with the waters of Lough Carra flowing into Lough Mask by the Keel river and Lough Mask famously connected to Lough Corrib 15m lower in altitude by the underground karst complex of the Cong isthmus. Lough Carra is a unique 16km<sup>2</sup> marl lake, a result of its catchment lying entirely over limestone bedrock, saturating its waters of the mineral Calcium Carbonate. Lough Mask covers an area of over 81km<sup>2</sup> (6<sup>th</sup> largest in the state) with a maximum depth of 58m making it one of the deepest. It is known as an oligotrophic lake, meaning that its water contains a low amount of nutrient resulting in a limited growth of algae, allowing its use as a major source of drinking water in county Mayo. With 180km<sup>2</sup>, Lough Corrib is the second largest lake in Ireland and is roughly divided in two basins, a relatively shallow basin underlain by limestone to the south and a larger, deeper basin to the north underlain by a variety of bedrocks of various ages and origins. It drains into Galway Bay through the river Corrib although medieval annals recount it running dry on occasions; an indication that underground passageways also link the lake to the bay, in a similar fashion to the Cong spring complex.



The bedrock to the west of the lakes tells a long and complex history that saw the opening and subsequent closing of an ancient Ocean called Iapetus that separated Ireland in two. In a subsequent time period called the Carboniferous, from about 355 million years ago, Ireland was then located at the Equator. In a warm climate, coastal and shallow tropical water conditions similar to the modern Great Barrier Reef both in terms of temperature and biodiversity existed over much of the region, east and west of the lakes. Geologically, this is recognized by the deposition of limestone which is composed of the skeletal and shelly remains of shallow marine living organisms. The hard part of these organisms, such as their shells, were in large part fossilized (i.e. buried and turned into minerals) and are still visible today in the limestone. Limestone appears in blue in the geological map in the next page.

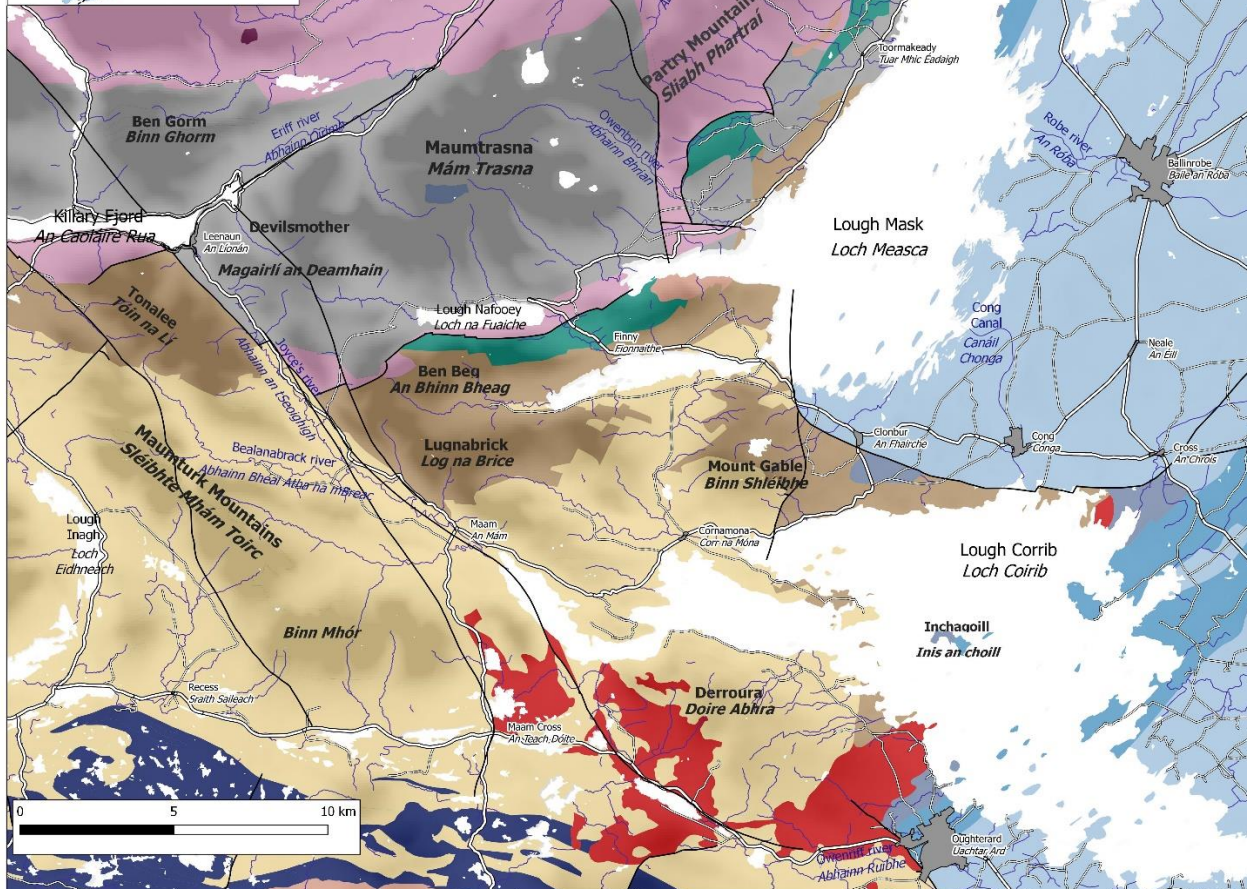
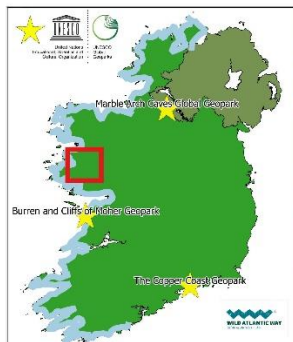
Following the Carboniferous, Ireland moved north to its current position on the globe. The Atlantic Ocean that now separates us from Greenland and North America only started opening about 65 million years ago, an event also responsible for the creation of the uplands of the Irish west coast visible today, including the ones to the west of the lakes in our region. Limestone was exposed for a long period of time since, which saw the creation of a significant karst landscape; characterised by holes, caves and underground river systems created by the dissolution of the bedrock by rainwater. The Ice Ages had a dramatic influence on the Irish landscape and arguably nowhere more clearly than in the region of the 3 lakes, with many examples of U-shaped valleys, glacier corries and moraines in the uplands and drumlins in the lowlands. The extensive erosive action of the moving Ice sheet that covered Ireland during the last Ice Age that ended only 11,700 years ago resulted in the flattening of the limestone in contrast to the harder bedrock which constitute the uplands to the west of the lakes.



Loughs Mask and Corrib now stand at the western edge of the extensive karstic lowland of Ireland as they both lie on the boundary between the limestone and the non-calcareous rocks (meaning not made of calcium carbonate or calcite) of western Connacht. A karst landscape allows the interconnection of groundwater and surface water over a large area and as such Lough Mask and Lough Corrib act as base levels for the water drainage of the wider landscape to the east.

### **Limestone pavement on the shores of Lough Mask**

As such their level vary significantly over the seasons with over 3m variation still recorded for Lough Mask. This variation used to be twice as high before the opening of the Cong Canal in the 1840s which now captures much of the flood flow in the winter time; however it is sometimes possible to walk the full length of the canal bed in dry summers. The limestone pavement (i.e. exposed bedrock of limestone) on the shores of the lakes display very interesting and sometime unique features known as epikarst and related to further dissolution of the bedrock by rain or splash water. The region tells a remarkable story that is embedded in its geology and the various habitats resulting from its geological landscape. They are all recognised as refuge for a number of protected species of birds and other fauna and flora as well.



## Geophaire Dhúiche Sheoigeach agus Lochanna an Iarthair Joyce Country and Western Lakes Geopark

### Mapa Geolaíochta simplithe Simplified Geology Map

Scála/Scale 1:150,000  
Teilgean/Projection: Irish Transverse Mercator

#### Legend/Eochair Eolais

- Lower Carboniferous (Viséan) sandstone, mudstone & evaporite  
Gaimeamhloch, láibhloch agus gallt ón Treimhse Charbónmhar Iochtarach (Viséach)
- Lower Carboniferous (Viséan) limestone & calcareous mudstone  
Aolchloch agus láibhloch chailcreach ón Treimhse Charbónmhar Iochtarach (Viséach)
- Lower Carboniferous (Tournaisian) limestone  
Aolchloch ón Treimhse Charbónmhar Iochtarach (Thúmaiseach)
- Lower Carboniferous (Tournaisian) sandstone, mudstone, limestone  
Gaimeamhloch, láibhloch, aolchloch ón Treimhse Charbónmhar Iochtarach (Thúmaiseach)
- Silurian sandstone, siltstone, conglomerate  
Gaimeamhloch, siltit, comhcheirtéan Siolúrach
- Middle to Upper Ordovician slate, sandstone, greywacke, conglomerate  
Slinn, gaimeamhloch, gréabha, comhcheirtéan ón Treimhse Ordaiviseach Láir go hUachtarach
- Lower to Middle Ordovician slate, sandstone, greywacke, conglomerate  
Slinn, gaimeamhloch, gréabha, comhcheirtéan ón Treimhse Ordaiviseach Iochtarach go Láir
- Ordovician volcanic rocks  
Carrageacha bolcánacha Ordaiviseacha
- Precambrian metamorphic rocks - Dalriadan quartzite, marble, schist  
Carrageacha meiteamorfach ón Réamhchaimbríach - Dálriadach grianchloichit, marmar, siosta

#### Igneous Intrusive / Bruth-Ionsánna

- Palaeogene gabbro, dolerite  
Gabró, dolairit: Pailéigéineacha
- Siluro-Devonian granite  
Eibhear Shiolúrach-Deavónach
- Lower Palaeozoic gabbro, diorite  
Gabró, dióirit ón Treimhse Phailéasóch Iochtarach
- Ordovician granitic rocks  
Carrageacha eibheacha Ordaiviseacha
- Fault  
Easc
- Rivers  
Aibheacha





## Beachcombers and River Explorers, The Mesolithic Prehistory of Oughterard and Lough Corrib

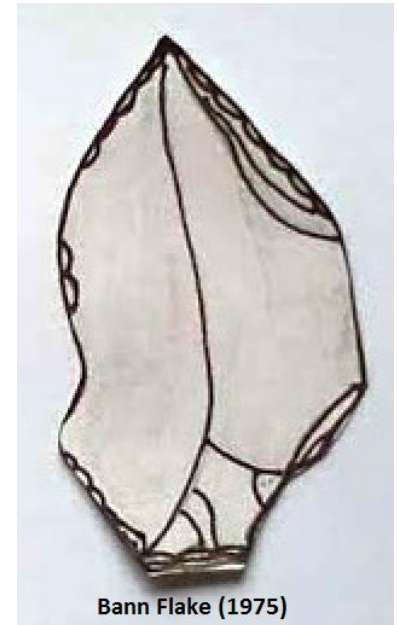
Bill Daly

*Oughterard Culture and Heritage Group*

On account of the Bann Flakes (small stone tools) which were found in 1975 and again in 1984 at River Island, where the Owenriff River flows into Lough Corrib, Oughterard can claim a pedigree to be amongst a very small number of places in Ireland where the first settlers to this country came to live and build their homes, almost 7,000 years ago.

The Bann Flake was found by Jim Higgins, now Galway City Heritage Officer, in 1975 where the Owenriff River enters Lough Corrib just outside Oughterard. Jim also found a scraper and a piece of discarded flint in the same location in 1984. This provides us with evidence that there was a Mesolithic fishing community on the shores of the Owenriff or along the banks of Lough Corrib in Oughterard. Evidence for the Mesolithic is very hard to find because of the perishable nature of what they were using.

The Bann Flake from 1975 does not show much evidence of having been 'rolled' around in the Lake for a long period of time and may have been dislodged from the banks of the Owenriff River in times of storm and high flooding.



**Bann Flake (1975)**

14,000 years ago marked the end of the last Ice Age. The era between the retreat of the ice and the development of farming is called the Mesolithic, or the Middle Stone Age. This phase lasted from 8,000BC to 4,000BC, which is over 40% of our recorded time on this Island. Ireland at that time was completely different than it is now and everywhere was covered in a thick canopy of trees. The new settlers could move more easily on rivers and lakes, and sought out these places for their refuge. A good supply of water was very important, for drinking purposes and also to attract wild game.

They were the last of the Hunter-Gatherer people, before humans were to become involved in farming (Neolithic) or metal-working (Bronze Age), but they were also very creative and inventive. Because they did not grow any crops, or have the ability to store their produce, they had to become very skilled at hunting and fishing. The main animals at the time in Ireland were the wild pig and hare, along with fowl, and the rivers and seas yielded salmon, trout, eels, oysters and mussels. They always had to be on top of their hunting and fishing game, or they did not eat.

From flints and sharp stones, they made sharp blades, creating tools and knives for cutting, and they were the first humans to create a vital new weapon – the bow and arrow. Long before there was any hint of farming practices in Ireland, they would have been hunting wild boar, also collecting hazelnuts and berries that would have been available seasonally. They would have known their landscape very intimately, and developed knowledge of what was available in certain areas at different times of the year.

Where did our early settlers come from? It has been determined over the years that the exit point was possibly Scotland, Wales or the Isle of Man. Over the past number of decades the Isle Of Man has emerged as the strongest contender, as the people on the small islands off the coast of the Isle Of Man would have been forced westwards due to the rising sea levels after the last Ice Age. If this is indeed the case, it brings us to another interesting piece of information in relation to our locality. The ancient name for Lough Corrib was Lough Orbsen, called after an expert navigator and merchant trader named Orbsen Mac Alloid, who was commonly called Manannán Mac Lir. Now, the proper name of the Isle of Man is the Isle Of Manannán, and this opens up some interesting discussions for future years.



**Artist's impression of Mesolithic life on the shores of Lough Corrib**

[www.oughterardheritage.org](http://www.oughterardheritage.org)



# Lough Mask and Baile Nonagh Castle

Trish Walsh

*Clonbur Community Council*

The ruin of Ballynonagh Castle is situated on the southern shore of Lough Mask on the grounds of the Petersburg Estate, now an outdoor education and training facility, operating under Galway Roscommon Education and Training Board. The estate was originally home to a branch of the Lynch Family of Galway. They were part of the Galway merchant families who were dispossessed in Galway city and granted less profitable lands around the shores of Lough Mask in the late 1600s. The Lynch family are believed to have lived in the castle for a period before building the 'Big House' and other buildings that are now converted to the outdoor education centre.



**Location of Ballynonagh Castle at Petersburg, Clonbur**

There are two potential meanings of the place name Baile Nonagh. It could be either a descriptive landscape name as the landscape is shaped like an anvil ('inneoin' in Irish). Or alternatively it could describe a landing creek as this is a very sheltered bay and river inlet. The castle was built sometime in the 13th or early 14th century. It was possibly built around 1237 because the Annals of Lough Ce 'record that in that year Richard de Burgo (Burke) and his Barons fortified their demesnes in Conmaicne Cuile-Toladh and Ceara (Carra). In the period before the arrival of the Normans what is now known as the baronies of Kilmaine and Ross was originally called the Conmaicne Cuile Toladh. Other historian's claim that the castle was built by the Joyce's who settled in the Barony of Ross around the middle of the 13th century.

This castle is mentioned in the Annals of the Four Masters and in O'Flaherty's 'Iar Connaught' as part of the story involving the son of Red Earl of Ulster. The event was described by Roderic O' Flaherty in his book 'West or Iar Connaught'

'Edmond, son of Richard the Red Earl of Ulster, was seized by Sir William Burke (his uncle) and his sons (cousins) on Low Sunday the 19th April in the Fryer's house in Ballinrobe; Roger de Flet, Seneschal of Connaught and Nicolas Lienot (Lynott) and other nobles of his company, being killed on the place. He was that night carried to Lough Measg castle, and the next night to Ballyndeonagh castle and a third night to the island on Lough Measg; whither the Archbishop of Tuam came to bring him and his kinsmen to a reconciliation: and as they were on a points of agreements, the villains who had the custody of his body, a certain family of Stantons despairing of their safety if he were set at

liberty, miserably turned him into a bag and cast him out of the island into the lake with stones tied to the bag..... Hence followed great combustions and wars in Connaught after.'



**View of the south west part of Lough Mask with Earls Island**

It is written in the Annals of the Four Masters that Edmond died in 1338 when he and his men were trying to visit the Augustinian Friars in the town of Ballinrobe. The Annals record that a band of men headed by Edmond (Albanach-Scottish) Burke, forcibly entered the monastery and seized Edmond after a short resistance. (Edmond Albanach was the son of Sir William Liath de Burgh. He acquired his nickname from the time he spent in Scotland from the spring of 1316 as a hostage for his father, after the latter's release by Robert the Bruce). Edmond was taken prisoner and carried all the way to Oilean-an-Iarla (the Earls Island) where he was drowned. The destruction of Connaught by both the English and Turlough Ó'Conor ensued. After the spiritual and temporal lands of the west parts of Connaught had been greatly destroyed between them, O'Conor then assumed the sway of the whole province banishing Edmond Albanach Burke out of Connaught. The eventual outcome of the war was the loss of almost all the de Burgh lands in Ulster, which was reconquered within a year by the Gaelic-Irish. The remaining de Burghs in Ireland fragmented into three distinct clans, all of which had several sub-septs. They were Mac William Íochtar of County Mayo, Mac William Uachtar/Clanricarde Burke of County Galway and Clan William Bourke of County Limerick. When Edmond Albanach was forced from his land he assembled a fleet of ships and took to the islands of the seas. His fleet harassed the coast of Connacht till he was delivered a royal pardon in March 1340. This period 1333-38 was known as the Burke Civil War. However Edmond Albanach prevailed in the end. He was eventually able to maintain himself as the most powerful lord west of the Shannon, over both the Ó'Conor's and Clanricardes'.

Later in 1585, Murrough na dTuagh O Flaherty (Murrough of the battle axes) was recorded as owning the castle and 18 quarters of land (1 quarter was the equivalent of 120 acres) in Baile Nonagh. He had acquired the castle and lands from the Burkes. This acquisition related to the payment of an Erick (originally known as an Éraic, this was a blood fine usually as a form of tribute paid in reparation for murder or other major crimes). This form of retribution was based on Brehon law. Murrough na dTuagh O Flaherty had a notorious reputation and was due severe sanction for some of his activities by the English. However in order to avoid punishment, he engaged in the process of 'surrender and regrant'. Although not of the senior branch of the family he was appointed as chieftain or head of the O' Flaherties by Queen Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> provided that he 'observe the Queens peace'. The rest of the O' Flaherty clan and his fellow Gaelic chieftains including the Burkes and the Joyce's were very unhappy with this arrangement and continued to agitate in the region. In retaliation for some of this misconduct an English force led by the notorious Bingham, attacked and plundered Murrough's territory in 1585. This forced Murrough to retaliate but he suffered immense losses and many of his family were killed. John Brown of the Neale, supposed to be the first English man to settle in Mayo, led a strong force of cut throats (as JF Quinn said in his history of Mayo) to Baile Nonagh in 1586 on his way to a raid on the 'Gleanntraigue' and Finny valleys where he is said to have taken 150 cows, a large drove of sheep and 100 ponies. Connaught was eventually brought to order by Bingham with Murrough na dTuagh being the first to surrender. The Burkes surrendered next and eventually in 1592 the Joyce's were ordered to Baile Nonagh castle to submit under the process of 'surrender and regrant'. Bingham, Governor of Connaught at this stage, was recorded encamped at the castle in 1592 probably on his way to plunder and pillage in the area.



**Ruins of Ballynonagh Castle today**

Nothing more was heard about the castle at Baile Nonagh until the Cromwellians had their say and Maurice Lynch of Galway was transplanted to this location in 1655. Whether he lived in the castle nobody knows. It is said that the castle burnt down one night during a party and that some of the stones were used to build Petersburg House which was built around 1715. The castle was already in a poor state on the 6 inch ordnance survey map of 1841 and after over 700 years what is left of the castle today is not much more than a ruined façade standing on the shores of Lough Mask. However it is still a valuable landscape monument to those more troubled times and its remaining stones echo with the stories and histories of our ancestors.

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- O' Flaherty, Roderic, *West or Iar Connaught*, 1978 Facsimile of the First Edition (Dublin 1846) Kennys, Galway.
- Quinn, J.F., *History of Mayo*, Vol. 2, Ballina, 2000, Reprint.
- *The Annals of the Four Masters*: M1335.4. and M1338.3



## Lough Carra as an inspiration for artists

Lynda Huxley

*Lough Carra Catchment Association*

Lough Carra has inspired many artists and writers. In 1892, in his classic 'Wild Sports of the West', William Hamilton Maxwell wrote : 'Lough Carra ..... as a sheet of water nothing can be more beautiful; and everything that the painter delights to fancy may be realised. Island and peninsulas, with rich overhanging woods, a boundless range of mountain masses in the distance, and ruins in excellent keeping – all these form a splendid study for the artists' pencil'.



**Reeds on the shores of Lough Carra with rainbow**

Few people who know or visit Lough Carra fail to be awed by its overwhelming sense of mystical elegance, one moment tranquil with a mirror-like surface reflecting the shoreline and the clouds, the next moment ruffled with wavelets and bending, golden reeds. And all the time, the changing light produces startling effects of colour shifts in the water, the rocks and the vegetation.

Capturing the ephemeral light in a frozen moment that represents an instant in the life of the Lough. Lynda Huxley has sought to achieve this with her photography as represented in the book 'Lough Carra' by Chris and Lynda Huxley (published in 2015).

The impressionist artist Deirdre Walsh of Partry conveys in her paintings the sublime effects of the light of the Carra environment. In Heritage week 2017, Deirdre gave a live demonstration of her 'plein air' painting on the shores of the lake on the Doon Peninsula. She has said that 'driven by a sense of urgency I continue to be caught up in a dance with the lake. Notes of colour appear and disappear as if through a mysterious veil .... Each painting is a silent orchestral piece.'



**Outdoor painting workshop with Deirdre Walsh on Lough Carra**

What is it about the Carra environment that makes it so aesthetically alluring to artists, photographers and visitors? The astonishing effects that the changing light can have, but this needs a subject on which to act, and it is this that makes Carra so special.

[www.loughcarra.org](http://www.loughcarra.org)



**Cloondaver, Lough Carra**



## The Plunket family and their use of Lough Mask in the 1830s

Brigid Clesham

Cong Moytura Heritage Society



**Map of Tourmakeady East showing The Lodge & plantations 1830s (Courtesy of Mayo County Library, Lynch Blosse maps)**

From at least 1830 the Plunket family had a sporting lodge at Tourmakeady, Co Mayo. The Plunkets' interest in the Tourmakeady locality stemmed from their love of fishing and shooting. It is evident from visits to Tourmakeady and Delphi described by the angling tutor and fishing expert 'The O'Gorman' that these sports were important recreational pastimes for the sons of the 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Plunket. In the preface to his book *The practice of angling particularly as regards Ireland* published in 1845, O'Gorman wrote that 'The Lord Bishop of Tuam is a very good angler; and so are his brothers John, David and William' and he claimed to have taught some of them the art of fishing. Another brother, the Reverend Robert Plunket, was a fishing companion in 1839. By this time Lough Mask was already known for its gilleroe or gillaroo trout, a species of fish that have a gizzard. Forty years later Sir William Wilde wrote of conducting experiments on trout in his ponds at Moytura on the shore of Lough Corrib to better understand the formation of this muscular gizzard.

O'Gorman also wrote of the Plunkets participation in sailing on the lake. During one stay 'a regatta took place on Lough Mask. It was a very animating scene, and much more amusing than those I have witnessed at Kingstown' (Dún Laoghaire). He wrote that at one regatta David Plunket competed in his four oared gig and won a small plate'. *The Telegraph or Connaught Ranger* of 20 September 1837 describes the spectators assembling for a regatta held in September 1837 at which David Plunket was a steward



‘When it was rumoured that the gigs had started for the rendezvous (Ennishaven) every creek and bay seemed alive with hustle and bustle and laughter and presently along the near and distant shores boats of all descriptions, from the solitary punt to the ten ton mountain lumber boat, were to be seen moving on to the centre of attraction, the noisy bagpipes cheered the merry souls of those in the large ones, while the smaller crafts came along side or followed in their wake; in a short time some gentlemen’s galleys were seen coming round the headland, bearing along in quick succession many bright eyed and blooming features’.

The Plunkets, along with many others, also used the lake as a means of transport. A Scotsman, Robert Graham, wrote of a visit to the Plunkets in September 1836. He and his fellow travellers went aboard the Plunket boat at Creagh, just outside Ballinrobe. The boat was ‘a nice English one built at Cowes’. It was manned by six men who rowed them across the lake in an hour, ‘altho’ we had a head wind and the distance was six miles or more’. On their way they passed Castle Hag and Cuslough and ‘were very glad to get ashore at Mr Plunket’s, for the head wind while rowing sent a good deal of water into the boat and it rained on the way’. Three days later Robert Graham returned to the eastern shore of the lake in Mr Plunket’s boat. (Henry Heaney (ed.), *A Scottish Whig in Ireland, 1835-1838 – The Irish Journals of Robert Graham of Redgorton*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999).

## Sailing on Lough Mask

Tomás Ó hÉanacháin

*Coiste Pobail Thuair Mhic Éadaigh*

Until about 1880, when the Congested Districts Board constructed the roads in this area, boat travel was the main means of transport to Ballinrobe. There are not many written records about boat travel on Lough Mask. One of the earliest references is to a battle in the 13th century, between the Joyces and the Burkes and they both had a fleet of ships on Lough Mask. It was said that the Joyces moored their boat in Srah na Long.



### Boats at the shore in Srah na Long

In the Tourmakeady Waterfall Magazine there are two articles about boat travel on Lough Mask. The earliest one describes a trip of a sailing boat from Brownstown, on the shores of Lough Carra through the Keel River to Clonbur on the shores of Lough Mask and overland to Lough Corrib. It was a pleasure trip by the landed gentry. In the second article, the writer gives us an account from the 1840's, before the famine, about a fishing holiday spent between Delphi Lodge and Tourmakeady Lodge. The fishing expeditions are described in detail. The fishing party fished in four oared rowing boats. Obviously, trout were much more plentiful then, as he says they caught around 1700 trout in the few weeks and that some of the fish were sold in the Dublin Fish Market. The author was staying with the Plunkett family in Tourmakeady Lodge.

The use of sailing ships/boats on Lough Mask is remembered in local bealoideas/folklore. A story came down in my own family about my great-grandfather, Michael Lydon, known as Michael Garvin, his mother was probably Garvin, and he got his name to distinguish him from the other Michael Lydon in the area. He was bringing pigs to the fair in Ballinrobe and he was travelling by sailing boat from Shanvalleycahill, on a boat owned by a man called Pat a'Chaptin (Pat the Boat Captain). On the journey across the lake, one of the pigs put its hoof out through the boat and they were nearly drowned, (this is what happened in the famous drowning in Annaghdown, immortalised in Rafferty's famous song Eanach Cuan). They reached Ballinchalla Pier and my great-grandfather went to the fair and he sold the pigs. He was complimented on how well fed the pigs were and he said 'they only

got potatoes and trout from the river'. He lived on the bank of the Abhainn Bhroin in Deirc. Trout must have been very plentiful and the bailiff's must not have been very vigilant. In the 1937 school folklore collection, Mrs Mary Duffy, Cappanacreha, took down a few verses of a song called Carraig na mBó, which describes the exploits of a sailing expedition on Lough Mask from her mother Catherine Derrig, Cappanacreha.

### **Carraig na mBó**

1

Ar chuala sibh an obair a rinneadh i gCill Bhríde  
Ar maidin Dé hAoine nuair a d'ardaigh an ghaoth mhór  
An bád ar an gcladach a b'fhearr a bhí deanta  
Go raibh sí faoi draiocht 's níorbh fheidir í a fháil.

2

Anois arsa Paddy tá mé ag smaoineadh  
Gur iomaí lá aoibhinn a chaith mé le sport  
Ó Carraig a Bhogán go Droichead Cill Bhríde  
's ar ais arist go baile an Ghoirt Mhóir

3

Ag teach Padraig Uí Mhearaí sea ritheamar ár rása  
Casadh Conaboy dhuinn ag dul soir ag an Trian  
Ar criartheach Sean Bhaile Chathail sea d'obair duinn bheith báite  
Ach meireach na fir laidre rachaimid síos  
D'ardaigh an stoirm is d'islíomamar na seolta  
'S thugamar ár n-aghaidh ar thaobh Loistin Mhóir.

There might be an opening for someone to do pleasure trips on Lough Mask in the future.



## Seoltoireacht ar loch measc

Tomás Ó hÉanacháin

*Coiste Pobail Thuar Mhic Éadaigh*

Go dtí 1880 no mar sin nuair a rinne Bord na gCeantar Cung (Congested District Boards) boithre sa cheantar seo ba ar bhád a thaistil na daoine go Baile an Róba. Tá trácht sa stair ar chath idir na Seoighe agus na Burcaigh sa triú céad deag agus luatar go raibh cabhlaigh báid acu araon. Bhí cabhlaigh na Seoighe lonnaithe i Sraith na Long.



### Báid ag an gcladach i Sraith na Long

Níl morán tuarasc scríofa ar thaisteal ar bhaid ar Loch Measca. In iris leabhar an ‘Waterfall’, tá cur síos ar dhá thuras ar an loch. Tagann an chéad ceann ón ochtú gcéad deag agus cuireann sé síos ar thuras i mbád seol ó Baile Uí Bhrún ar Loch Cearra go Cunga ar Loch Corrib. Thaisteálodar thrí abhainn an Chaoil agus shiuleadar go Loch Corrib ón bhFhairche. Daoine uaisle ar thuras pleisiur a bhí i gceist. Sa dara chuntas tá cur síos ar laethanta saoire a caitheadh idir Delphi Lodge agus Lodge Thuar Mhic Éadaigh. Bhí dúil mhór ag an údar san iascaireacht. Scriobhadh an chuntas sna 1840idí roimh an Ghorta. Bhí siad ag iascaireacht i mbád iomartha le ceithre mhaide ráimha. On tuairisc is léir go raibh na bric i bhfád níos fliúrsí ag an am sin ná mar atá anois. Deireann sé gur mharaíod 1700 breac i treimhse cúpla seachtain agus gur dioladh cuid de na bric ar an margadh i mBaile Átha Cliath.

Tá cuimhe fós sa mbealoideas ar thaisteal ar bád seoil ar Loch Measc. Bhí scéal ag baint le mo shin-shean athair agus turas a rinne sé go aonach Bhaile an Róba ar bhád am eigin sa naoú gcéad deag. Bhí bad ag fear as Sean Bhaile Cathail, Pat a Chaptin a tugadh air, níl fhios agam cen sloinne a bhí air. Bhíodh an bád aige i Sean Bhaile Chathail nó Sraith na Long. Bhíodh sé ag tradáil idir Thuar Mhic Éadaigh agus Baile an Róba. Bhí mo shin-shean athair Michéal Ó Loideain nó Michéal Gearbháin mar a tugadh air (is docha gur de sloinne Gearbháin a mhathair), ag dul ar aonach Bhaile an Róba le mucaí. Ar an aistear chuir ceann de na mucaí a chruib amach trí an bhád agus garó gur bathadh a raibh sa mbád ach ar chuma ar bith deirigh leo Baile an Chialadh a bhaint amach. Chuaigh Gearbháin ar an aonach agus dhíol sé na muca. Duirt an ceannaitheoir leis go raibh na muca beathaithe go maith aige agus séard a duirt sé leis ‘ara ní bhfuair na muca sin tada ach fataí agus bric abhna’. Bhí

Michéal ina chonaí sa Deirc ar bhruach an Abhainn Bhroin. Caithfidh sé go raibh na bric an-fluirseach agus nach raibh na baillí an-gnóthach ag an am. In iris leabhar an 'Waterfall' tá amhrán faoi bád seoil Carraig na mBó is ainm don amhrán, thog Máire Bn Uí Dhufaigh, Ceapach na Creiche an amhrán sios ona mathair Cait Uí Dheirg i 1937 i mbáiliúchain na scoil. Is leir nach bhfuil an t-amhrán uilig ann agus nior luadh aon údar leis. (féach thíos)

## **Carraig na mBó**

1

Ar chuala sibh an obair a rinneadh i gCill Bhríde  
Ar maidin Dé hAoine nuair a d'ardaigh an ghaoth mhór  
An bád ar an gcladach a b'fhearr a bhí deanta  
Go raibh sí faoi draiocht 's niorbh fheidir í a fháil.

2

Anois arsa Paddy tá mé ag smaoineadh  
Gur iomaí lá aoibhinn a chaith mé le sport  
Ó Carraig a Bhogán go Droichead Cill Bhríde  
's ar ais arist go baile an Ghoirt Mhóir

3

Ag teach Padraig Uí Mhearaí sea ritheamar ár rása  
Casadh Conaboy dhuinn ag dul soir ag an Trian  
Ar criartheach Sean Bhaile Chathail sea d'obair duinn bheith báite  
Ach meireach na fir laidre rachaimid sios  
D'ardaigh an stoirm is d'islíomamar na seolta  
'S thugamar ár n-aghaidh ar thaobh Loistin Mhóir.

Amach anseo b'fheidir go mbeadh sé go deas turás bád ar Loch Measc a eagrú do turasoirí agus muintir na h-áite araon.

## The Neale and Tourmakeady, a shared piece of heritage

Joe Greaney<sup>1</sup> and Anne Burke<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Heritage Officer, The Neale Heritage and Development Association*

<sup>2</sup> *Tourmakeady*

As you enter the village of The Neale from the Ballinrobe direction, you will note a neat building on its own on the right hand side of the road about 80 yards from the 'bad turn' at the bottom of the village. Referred to locally as 'the hall', the full name of the building and the background to it is more interesting.



**Adjutant Michael O'Brien**

On the afternoon of the 3rd of May, 1921, Michael O'Brien of Kildun, The Neale, was shot dead by Lieutenant Ibberson of the British Army Border Regiment in the Partry Mountains behind Tourmakeady. The only fatality on the side of the Volunteers, O'Brien was an Adjutant in the 18-member Flying Column which, under the command of Tom Maguire of Cross, took part in the famous Tourmakeady Ambush along with several other volunteers (c.50-60 in total) from the South Mayo Brigade. Many of these same Volunteers had been lying low after having taken part in the Kilfaul Ambush on the 7th of March, hiding out in the hazel woods and rocks behind Lieutenant Michael Moran's house in Kildun, where his mother, Mary and Michael O'Brien's sister, Kate, prepared food for them. Rested, regrouped and re-armed as best they could, the Column left The Neale area on the night of the 30th April after Confessions in Moran's house with Fathers Carney and Campbell and moved across bogs, back roads and fields, mostly under cover of darkness to get to Tourmakeady.

There, they laid low with the support and planning of the Srah Company and the Ballinrobe Battalion until the morning of the 3rd of May.

The Border Regiment were the back-up reinforcements who arrived to follow the perpetrators of the ambush into the hills and mountains on that fatal afternoon. The ambush was carried out on a small convoy of two vehicles of RIC and Black and Tans who were delivering supplies to the isolated, but well protected Derrypark RIC barracks seven miles to the south. The volunteers were poorly armed as referenced in a note by Michael O'Brien seeking supplies from GHQ on the 28th of April...just a few days previously.

With mostly shot guns and a few rifles, three units of the Volunteers, under the command of Tom Maguire, were set up to carry out the ambush. The first was at The Fair Green, led by Michael O'Brien. The second unit was set up across from Hewitt's Hotel (now O'Toole's shop) under Tom Lally and the third at Drimbawn Gate (the 'big house') under the command of Capt. Paddy May. Only one in this third Unit had a rifle, the rest of them had shotguns.

At 1pm the convoy arrived. There was supposed to be three vehicles, a Ford car and two Crossley Tenders, the familiar mode of transport for 'Tans'. It was allowed through to Paddy May's unit and they opened fire on the car. Three were killed in this first attack and then O'Brien's unit opened fire



on the second vehicle, the Crossley, at the Fair Green, and killed the driver. However, the others on board the Crossley scrambled for cover behind their vehicle and returned fire. With superior firepower, they were able to pin down the Volunteers to allow the RIC members to take cover in Hewitt's Hotel. The initial 'surprise strike' had taken whatever effect it was to take and it was now becoming a skirmish of a different type with the Volunteers losing the advantage. Aware of the likelihood of the arrival of military enforcements from Ballinrobe and Castlebar, time was of the essence to get most of the Volunteers home before the inevitable follow up searches and reprisals on the local populations took full effect. A house with the 'man of the house' missing would likely be burned and the occupants could be shot. Maguire called off the mission and dismissed his men. They scattered and the Flying Column took to the hills above Tourmakeady to make their escape across the rugged terrain.

As Maguire predicted, two Crossley Tenders and a Dennis lorry with around 40 members of the British Army Border Regiment arrived that afternoon and followed the Volunteers up the mountains under the command of Lieutenants Ibberson and Smith. Skirmishes broke out as they started to get nearer the exhausted and poorly armed Volunteers. Ibberson removed his military jacket, possibly due to the heat of the day, and got closer to Maguire, who initially mistook him for one of the Column. In the skirmish, Ibberson shot and wounded Maguire and Seamus Burke of Kilmaine. O'Brien went to Maguire's aid and was shot dead. In turn, Ibberson was shot by two volunteers named as Seamus O'Brien and Michael Shaughnessy. As night fell, the British called off their pursuit and the Volunteers made good their escape to get medical help for Maguire and Burke but had to leave their dead comrade, Michael O'Brien, in the mountain. Maguire was able to appoint Tom Lally to take command from there. Unlike the others, the Flying Column did not return to their home areas but hid out, it is believed, in the Mayo Abbey area until into June and were not captured despite a huge military response and manhunt. Later that afternoon, the British troop numbers of reinforcements grew to an estimated 140 strong.

Other pieces of the accounts of the Ambush make for compulsive reading and discussion. For example, the Volunteers seemed to be of the belief that they were to ambush a convoy of three vehicles, not two. A Patrick Vahey and Padraig Feeney, who both worked in Birmingham's shop in Ballinrobe, where the RIC bought supplies, had cycled, separately and unbeknownst to each other, to Tourmakeady to alert Maguire that they should only expect two vehicles. The set up of three 'units' for the ambush is interesting in that regard. Maybe the 'intelligence' didn't get to Maguire on time. Feeney was caught and shot in the back while 'trying to escape' as reported in The Mayo News on the 14th May. His family home, along with that of Maguire and O'Brien were burned by the British. RIC Sgt Goulden of Ballinrobe (formerly of Tourmakeady barracks) was ordered to burn Michael O'Brien's mother's house in Kildun, The Neale. He refused and resigned. The Tans burned the house of the mother of William Sears of The Neale. Presumably, they believed he was a participant in the Tourmakeady Ambush. Michael



**Memorial to Padraig Feeney in Tourmakeady**

O'Brien's body was handed back to his family and he was buried in Cong Abbey grounds on the 7th May, 1921. Padraig Feeney's sister Christina, married commandant Tom Maguire in 1924.



**O'Brien Memorial Hall, The Neale**

The Volunteers had proven that they could attack and disable an RIC/Tan patrol and that their activities could engender the closure of RIC Barracks: Derrypark RIC Barracks closed on the 5th of May, 1921 and the RIC Barracks at Cross, Cong and Clonbur were also evacuated.



The 'O'Brien Memorial Hall' in The Neale, it was opened in 1958 about 80 yards below the 'bad turn'. It was built by a local committee of volunteers. Third from the left at the back of the commemorative picture taken of the Committee is Watty Moran, son of Lieutenant Michael Moran (Mick) and grandson of Mary Moran, who fed the Flying Column in their hideout at the back of Mick's house in the aftermath of the Kilfaul Ambush and in preparation for Tourmakeady.

**O'Brien Hall Committee, 1958**

This picture of Adjutant Michael O'Brien, in full uniform, can be seen on the wall on the left of the entrance hall and so the deep and meaningful link between the communities of The Neale and Tourmakeady is forever etched in their shared heritage and identity on opposite shores of Lough Mask.

May 2021 is the centenary of the death of Adjutant Michael O'Brien and the Tourmakeady Ambush! No doubt a song or two will be sung, a story or two told.