Gaoth Dobhair by Land and Sea

by Cáit McBride

€6

CHAPTER ONE

A GOLA TRAGEDY

I remember a summer's day in the 1930's, the sun shone brightly as we walked to Derrybeg School. We had many interesting things to see, young lambs playing in the fields, a lark soaring high in the sky, a bird's nest to inspect. As we rounded the hillock at Derrybeg School, we had a full view of the Atlantic Ocean. It spread for miles out towards the edge of the horizon. One long blue placid sheet of water from Aranmore Island to the Foreland Corner in the North West. Three islands stood out in relief, Gola Inismaan and Iniserrar. These three islands were inhabited at this time.

We reached the school early. Our teacher was a hard worker and there was silence in the classroom in the early morning. Things changed on that June morning in 1931. When a senior pupil came in, the teacher asked her if the Gola fishermen had been found. She replied that the group of people gathered at her parents' shop had learned that the fishermen had drowned. She told how some of the grown ups were crying. The teacher blessed her face in shock.

Silence again prevailed.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ISLANDS' FAMILIES

I had more interest in Gola than in the other islands, because as a child, my mother spent some time in school there. She knew the different families living on the island. She could name most of these, as they had been her childhood companions. These included the McGees, McGinleys, the Duggans (who are linked with Irish history) and the Divers (whose name had really been Dwyer) had been Chieftains from County Wicklow in Michael Dwyer's time before Cromwell came and banished them along with many others. They went northwards by sea and arrived at Tory Island. A section of the family went to Gola. They were fishermen who mixed and married with the others and made a living from the sea.

The Divers settled there and there were also the Gallaghers who were excellent singers. Indeed one member of this family was a world famous singer. There was also Máire Bheag Gallagher, who married locally. Along with the McGees and the McGinleys, there were the Duggans and the Peoples, who were from Wick in the North of Scotland. They were originally Silversmiths but by the time they reached Donegal, they had changed to Blacksmiths and kept up the trade on the mainland for many generations.

The Peoples from Gola Island were fishermen, brilliant, with brains to burn. Some of them went to Australia, some went to America and some remained at home. Also on the island at the time were the McBrides and the Roarty family. The Roartys had a beautiful singing voice while the younger Roartys were fishing, the grandfather, Hugh Roarty, would lilt for the young people for a hour every night so that they could enjoy themselves.

My great aunt married a Sweeney and her family were fishermen. Her in-laws, who were also Sweeneys, lived nearby. Her brother-in-law, Éamonn, had died but his three sons had kept up the fishing tradition. She didn't like the three of them in the same boat, even though they were very careful, cautious young people who were never in danger. Summer time was a worrying time for the salmon fishermen, because a sudden squall could rise in the midst of the calmest weather and people had to be prepared. The island women didn't sleep very soundly at night. There were always that little bit of worry when their men of the island were deep sea fishing and the sea was treacherous.

Inismaan Island was a neighbouring island with a smaller population who were very hardy people. There were McGarveys, McGinleys, Colls, Gallaghers, McGees and McBrides on the island. Big Thomas, was the postman whose house was open for all visitors. All of the families on the three islands were intermarried and all interwined. The Friels of Gola had originally come from Fanad many generations before, where they had been associated with Colmcille and with Gartan. They had settled on the island and were traditional fishing families who were capable of beating the best of them at boat races. One day, they went to Rathmullan and won all the cups and that evening, they sailed down Lough Swilly with their trophies. Neil Boyle, the piper, played and the echo could be heard around the rocks off Inishowen and Fanad. They were known as the Red Blades of Gola as their oars were painted red whenever they went out to win a race.

The sons of the islanders didn't have all the luck in the world. Two of the Inismaan fishermen, Fred O'Donnell and Maurice Coll, went out for a spin one Sunday morning. Suddenly, a squall arose and the two of them were drowned.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SWEENEY FAMILY

Sheila Doherty-Sweeney, my grand aunt was a mainland lady. At the beginning of the century, she married a Sweeney, one of the Gola Sweeneys and went to live on the island. The Sweeneys had owned Doe Castle in the days of old, until the Plantation of Ulster. They reigned for three or four centuries at Doe Castle. As well as being the Chiefs of Doe Castle, they were also musicians, pipers, but their piping and titles were flung aside when they were evicted during the Ulster plantation and their land was given over to the Scottish landlords. They kept moving towards the west and some of them eventually arrived in Gola Island. Their ancestors were known as Séimigh (which is James). The were agile, very good swimmers, who were very good at racing and good fishermen. Of course, the music stayed in their blood for many generations and still does to this day.

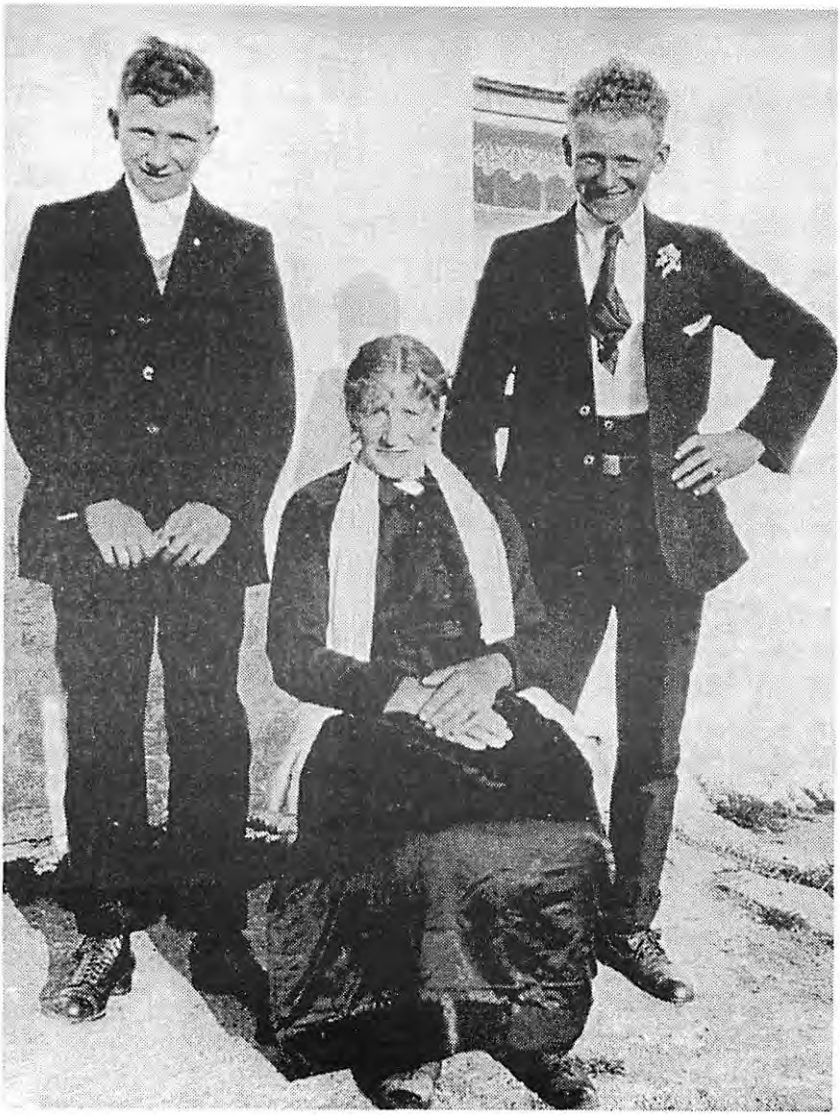
My great aunt Sheila could name all these families who lived on the island a century ago and sometimes, before she fell asleep at night would go over their names and think about them. This happened especially during the summer when nights were short and they were often awakened at daybreak because, as the boats gathered in their catches, they took their haul of salmon home. They anchored the boats beside the island and waited for the morning. They slept for a few hours until the market opened in Bunbeg, where they took their fish for sale.

On the morning in question, my great aunt, Sheila, woke before dawn. She listened and although she had impaired eyesight, she knew every step her family walked as they came back from the boat.

This particular morning, her family had come in and she though that the boats had arrived back safely. After a while, she thought that the noise was confusing. Their steps were going in two different directions and she realised that something wasn't right. She soon learned the frightening news that a local boat, the Celtic, was missing along with its crew, the three Sweeney brothers and Charles Diver. Telephones were few and far between at the time. Two local men, John McBride, N.T. and Pat Devine took their currach and hurried to the mainland where the telephoned all the ports from Downings to Aranmore. There was no trace of the missing vessel and they brought the sad news home - that the sea had claimed four more lives - Edward, Andie and John Sweeney and Charles Diver. The island people assembled to pray, led by Father Teague McGinley, an islander.

As children, we had many fairy stories about the sea and one story is told was that on judgement Day, the sea would be so ashamed of claiming so many lives that in would shrink to be small enough to hide in a cockle shell.

Many searches were made along the shore, trying to find any traces of those bodies, but they were never found. A freak wave swamped their boat and drowned the crew of the Celtic. The boat was later sold and in 1979, it was still in Mullaghmore.



Eddie Sweeney, drowned in 1931

Andy Sweeney, drowned in 1931

Bridget Sweeney - mother (Biddy Bhán)

CHAPTER FOUR

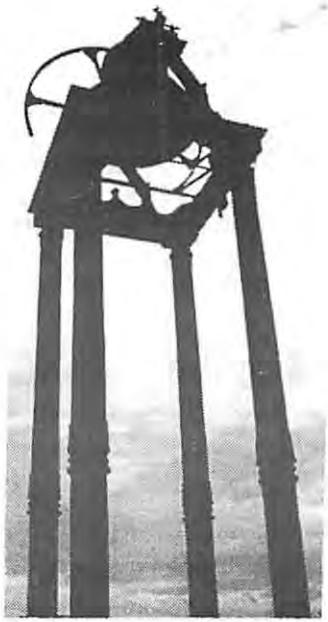
THE CELTIC

On a wild and stormy evening,
as the fishing fleet let go,
From the harbours of the Rosses
and the ports around by Doe;
They came from Magheraroarty
and the islands "round Gweedore"
One small boat among the number,
with a crew well known and famed,
Sailed across the ocean billow
and "The Celtic" was her name.

Little thought those fearless heroes,
as they sailed away in style,
The would never see their mothers
or their friends on Gola Isle.
Never now on Sunday morning,
will those bold lads sail ashore,
To pray down at the chapel
where they often went before.

Oft I bought their silvery herring
from those lads so bright and gay,
They will never say good morning
or you're welcome Davey Hay.
Never will they cross the sand banks,
never see those scenes so fair,
Never hear the Angelus ringing,
calling all to silent prayer.

Davey Hay, 1931



ANGELUS BELL
St. Mary's
Derrybeg

CHAPTER FIVE

THE PLANTATION OF ULSTER

Going back to the Battle of Kinsale, 1601, the Earls of Tyrone and Tírconnell, the O'Neills and the O'Donnells, travelled down as far as County Cork, to fight in Kinsale. The Spaniards sent them help but instead of sending help to Donegal, they sent it to Cork and the soldiers had to march down in mid-winter and after nine years of war, the Chieftains, the Ulster Chieftains, lost their battle and were finally defeated. The next event happened in 1607, when the earls had to leave Ireland and they went into hiding in Rome, in Italy and in Spain, hoping that some day, they would gather up another army, return to Ireland and win their country back.

As soon as they had left, the Government planted Ulster. They evicted people from good land, from Letterkenny across to the borders of County Down. The people who owned the better quality land were evicted and cleared out, and English landlords with their families were brought in. It happened however that the English people did not like the terrain and a number of Scottish planters were brought in. They were more acclimatized to the Ulster land and the Ulster weather and they settled well in Ulster. Sadly, their victims had to move out and move westwards. Firstly, they came to East Donegal and after that, many people who had to abandon Ulster came in to far West Donegal and settled in uninhabited land.

The Dohertys came from Inishowen, where there was a better type of land and settled in Magheraclogher. The Peoples who hailed from Scotland and who had settled originally in Ulster, had to go west and they also settled in Magheraclogher. The McBrides were guardians of a monastery in Falcarragh and worked the lands and tilled the soil there. The monastery was closed and they also moved

westwards. All along the coast could be found people who had been displaced and were starting up a new life. They just needed to build little houses to shelter them and therefore, they set off, bringing any cattle or possessions that they owned and kept walking, until they got somewhere to settle down.

Many people from the west of Donegal are Ulster people, long since banished and settled westwards. Their lives are very interesting because they met and married and settled and eventually they started moving out to America, Australia or indeed any place where they could earn a living and where they were not afraid of hard work. Many of them did however go into fishing and mixed and married locally. Others tilled the land, others had cattle and others worked here and there, wherever they could find a days' work. They drained and tilled the soil, converting it into better land. By reclaiming land and working hard, they were able to live off the land.

Among Gola's families would have been the Friels who had originated in Fanad and who had links with Colmcille. There were also the Roartys, who were guardians of Colmcille's monastery on Tory Island, many, many hundreds of years ago. The Duggans, Gallaghers, McGees, McGinleys, Colls and McGarveys were among the many families domiciled on the three islands off Gweedore, a century ago.

CHAPTER SIX

MORE DROWNING TRAGEDIES

The families of Gola took up fishing as a career and worked for many years as fishermen. Some went down to Galway and some went to Wicklow and to similar places, to instruct others in the art of deep sea fishing. Most of them had sailing boats, at that time they didn't have engines, therefore if they were out in the deep sea, they had to know how to use their oars or their sails, to make their way back home.

One group, Daniel O'Donnell and some of his family, were driven close to the rocks one night at Horn Head in a storm and the only way they had of keeping themsevles alive was to put out their oars and place them against the crags of Horn Head. People in the neighbouring Inismaan and Inisherrar islands were experts in sailing boats, swimming and fishing. The McGarveys of Inisherrar were not afraid of the ocean waves. However, one of the sons, Conal McGarvey, worked on a steamer, which was torpedoed off the North Coast of Scotland, during World War One and he was never heard of again. Tragedy didn't end there because about ten years later, a group of islanders had been to a sports day in Kincasslagh and on the way home, one of the McGarveys tripped and fell into the sea. His body was recovered ten days later by Eamonn Diver of Gola. All the boats in the area had been out that day, searching for him.

The Inismaan islanders had some good fishermen, who did a lot of salmon and herring fishing and even the ladies on the island could handle the boats as well as the men. Sometimes, the girls on the island would take their currach at night and row across to the mainland to a dance and they would row back home again when the night

was over. The mainlanders who lived near the coast all had currachs as well, because they liked to go out and do a day's cruising.

This is what happened to the two McFadden brothers from Bun an Inver. They had played a match against Knockfola players, on a Sunday in 1935. The two McFaddens were good players but the others had Shaun McCafferty, Owen Ferry and Manus McFadden, who were tough opponents and at the end of the day, Bun an Inver won the match.

Afterwards the two McFaddens decided to go for a spin in the currach, because that's what they usually did on a Sunday afternoon. Their house was situated just above the bay and their mother saw them going towards the shore, as they had gone for many Sundays since they were young boys. Misfortune befell them, however, as it seems as if one of them tripped or stumbled and the currach overturned. Other people who were on the beach and on the shore ran to their assistance. There was a Mr. Daniel Ferry who was an experienced sportsman and the local curate, Fr. Shields. The spotted the trouble and came quickly to help. They recovered the bodies but sadly they had expired by the time they found them.

Living near the sea or living on the islands, people had to become accustomed to tragedies. In about 1966, the last of the islanders moved permanently to the mainland.

On the fourth of February, 1943, three men aged over sixty, Joe McBride and his brother Daniel and a neighbour Michael McGinley were drowned off Maghergallon shore. Their boat capsized and their bodies were later recovered.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE CONGESTED DISTRICTS BOARDS

This was a board set up by a Mr. Balfour, an agent for the British Government. He set it up in 1891 to alleviate poverty and to give employment to people around the western seaboard. I have already mentioned Kinsale, when the Plantations came, the people of Ulster and other parts of Ireland were moved our to the infertile land around the western coast of Donegal. The congested areas in Donegal were Gweedore, The Rosses, Glencolmcille, Killybegs and similar areas. East Donegal had good fertile land, but in the West, the Ice Age scraped the clay off the rocks and left much barren soil.

The Congested Districts Board didn't start new industries, but they improved the industries that already existed. Dunlewey and Gweedore were famous for their woollen goods. People reared sheep, spun the yarn and wove it into tweed. That, however, was only one part. Ardara in the west of the county was famous for weaving and Killybegs was famous for rug making. It is maintained that the Greeks came into Killybegs thousands of years ago and were knotting pieces of wool together and making rugs, long before the dawn of the Christian era.

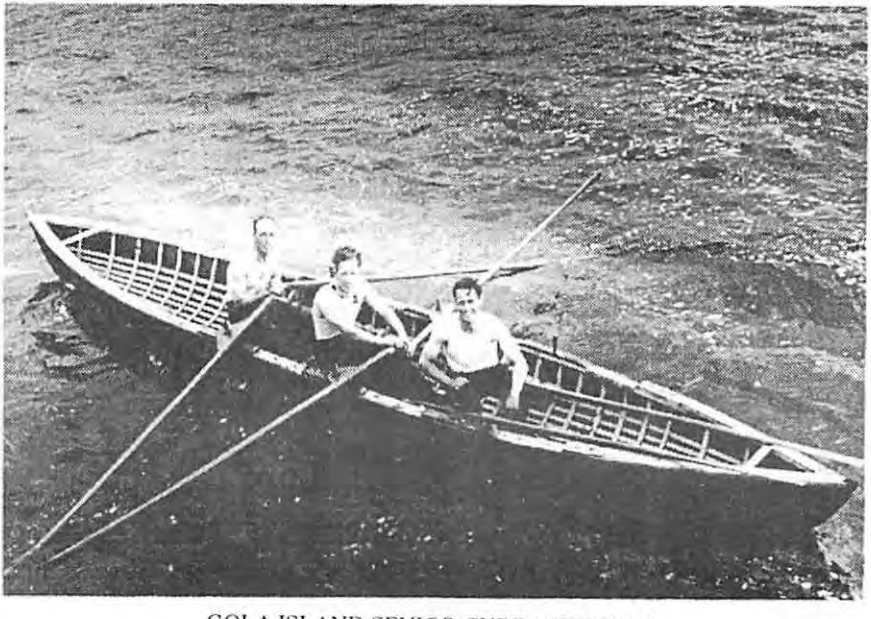
The Congested Districts Board in Gweedore was promoted by Mrs. Hart. She supervised the knitting industry and improved on that and on the weaving. Weavers were brought in mostly from Gallowshiels in Scotland. Mr Broadbean was the manager of the

factory assisted by Mr. Barr and Mr. Byrne. Rooms were provided and they taught the local men to weave the cloth properly. Dunlewey already had the expertise, therefore, they improved on their lot and got extra looms and very soon, there were quite a number of looms in the area. A building was set up in Middletown in the heart of Gweedore (the place is still known as the factory). Ladies were brought down from Glenties to reain the local ladies and to create more elaborate patterns. There was one woman, Mrs. Bridget Coll, better known as Biddy Hughie and she was one of the best knitters inthe area, so she undertook the training of a number of ladies.

There were O'Donnells, Roarties and Tighes and also Mrs. Breslin, Mr. Molloy and Mr. McNelis. Trainers were brought in from Glenties. Since they were gifted people, locals picked up the crafts quickly and very soon, they were the experts, each ready to train others. There came a time when machines were ordered to do the knitting and a Mrs. Margaret McCole and Mrs. Alice Duggan-Gallagher and four other ladies were put on the machines to train them. The training progressed well and within a short while, there were large numbers of knitters. The knitted garments were sent to London, since the Congested Districts Board had a place in Wigmore Street in London, to dispose of the knitwear and very soon, the Donegal Fairisles and the Donegal patterns were on sale in various parts of the world.

Both men and women were needed to work in the factory and so a lot of local men, even middle aged and not so young, were employed there and that meant revenue. Along with that, the factory supplied wool and as a result, the garments were knitted by the fireside. Fireside knitting was very suitable for the ladies of the parish.

As well as attending to knitting and weaving, the Congested Districts Board attended to other industries. Down at Meevagh Boat Yard in Downings, a boat building industry was set up. As there was plenty of fishing in the area, the boat building suited Downings and young men were taken in from other parts of the county to train as boat builders. One was a James Gallagher, who died later in America and another was Michael Coyle, who spent his time repairing boats and engines and timberwork. There was also Owen McBride, who served his trade and went to Liverpool and worked on boats there for the rest of his life. He died in Liverpool in 1985.



GOLA ISLAND SENIOR CURRACH TEAM
Hugh Roarty (R.I.P.), Eamonn Diver, Mickey Roarty

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE FARRIER OR BLACKSMITH

INDUSTRY

There were farriers and blacksmiths in Gweedore, but Dan Roarty from Magheraclogher was taken to a farrier in Letterkenny, where he perfected his trade. He had worked at this trade before he went to Letterkenny and until the end of his days.

The factory, was later bought by a Mr. Tom McBride, who had returned from working in Australia. He took over the running of the factory and his family continued on after him, until after World War Two. Other people took up jobs, running different sections of the factory over the years.

Some forty years ago a local couple, Anthony Gallagher and his wife Maire *nee* McBride opened a knitwear shop at Middletown.

CHAPTER NINE

THE WORLD FAIR IN CHICAGO

Many Gweedore people displayed their work at the World fair in Chicago. Owen Curran from Magheragallon was a basket maker and he could make creels and baskets of all types and he was taken to Chicago to show these. James Doherty of Stranacorkra gave an exhibition of woodwork and joinery. Hugh Ferry of Meenaduff gave an exhibition of how houses were built at the time and the different methods of roofing. Among the ladies in the group were Nora Gallagher from Derrybeg, who gave an exhibition of crochet work and Ms. Mulligan from Crolly, who gave an exhibit in knitting. There were quite a number of others giving exhibitions but sadly, we don't have their names now.

Charles McSweeney was the local piper. His people had been the Sweeneys of Doe Castle but after the Plantation of Ulster (they had been the musicians in Doe Castle as well as being the Chieftains), both themselves, their musical instruments and all their possessions were kicked out of Doe Castle and taken over by the British. They had to take to the road and eke out an existence, wherever they could find shelter and a bite to eat.

In the 1880's, Charles McSweeney was among a group of McSweeneys, who arrived in Gweedore and settled there.

Charles McSweeney was another member of the group that Mrs. Hart brought to the World Fair in Chicago in 1893, where he participated in and won the Piping Competition. Apart from this achievement, Charles was well known, as he loved to take out his bagpipes on a daily basis and play until he became a very old man. He lived very near Lunniagh School and a lady who attended this school in the early 1900's told me of how they loved to hear the Piper when they came out of school at three o'clock. He enjoyed playing the bagpipes for them. He played his music until the end of his days.

Very often, if people had a dance in their house, the paid him two shillings (the equivalent of ten cents) to play for the night. The length of the dance and the playing of the music were decided by a candle. The people of the house lit a candle and he would play as long as the candle burned. Once a candle had burned out the entertainment finished.

CHAPTER TEN

EMIGRATION

Emigration was a feature of Irish life from the beginning of time. The Picts lived in Eastern Ulster, mainly around Co. Antrim. They emigrated or travelled back and forth to Scotland long before Christianity came to this country. They travelled in pre-Christian times. Afterwards, St. Colmcille went to Iona and the Irish missionaries travelled during the golden age, to midland Europe and to central Europe, to preach the faith. Later, the earls of Tír Chonaill and the Wild Geese followed these same paths. Indeed , Irish people were often compared to the Wild Geese, because of their desire to travel.

Around 1772, sailing boats started crossing the Atlantic to America and very often, they advertised in the papers, telling of the good conditions for travelling on those sailing ships. The stable food at that time was oat and cake. Bread was made from oatmeal, as it kept fresh for the many weeks it took the ships to cross the Atlantic. Those ships could be dangerous at times as they were made of timber. The storms often broke them up but still, a large number of Irish people reached the American continent in the 1700's.

After the year 1880, Australia wanted to build up a population. There were some pre-emigration to Australia from various countries in Europe and Irish people took advantage of this. Many of them sailed, not just as individuals, but entire families set out, father, mother and children. as listed in many shipping lists in Australia in the mid 1800's. It usually took ten weeks when they would sail from Liverpool, Plymouth, Southern England or Southampton.

During the 19th Century, people worked in various gold mines or in other jobs in Australia. Very few of these people ever returned home. There were two or three from Gweedore who did return. Owen O'Donnell of Derrybeg came back and also Owen McGinley of Glenhola, but these men were in the minority.

Later in the 19th Century, people started going to America because of the opening of the coalmines in Pennysylvania and the copper mines in Montana. The railway then had to be built across the United States and it was Irish sweat and blood that built it. Young people from Gortahork parish worked on the railway and their address, when people wrote to them, was End of Railway, U.S.A. The railway was built from Eastern United States right across from New York. Another branch of the railway started on the Pacific coast and came eastwards and continued until the two branches met. Irishmen worked on these lines all during the 19th Century.

People in coalmines worked all day and night for very little pay, but it was still employment. Then, when the gold rush came to Alaska in the 19th Century, Irish people left different parts of America, crossed the continent to the west coast, sailed up the west coast through snow, ice and the dangerous conditions and worked hard in Alaska. In some areas, people still go to Alaska, but they go there when it is freezing, since it is easier to land and travel there.

Every village in Donegal had an Emigration Agent. His job consisted of giving advice to anyone who wished to travel to America. These people had to get a passport. They had to travel to Dublin to prove that they were in good health and they had to pay for their fare. Very often, the system was that the eldest of the family went to the States. He or she saved up and sent the fare or the ticket back to the second member of the family and once they had the money, all they had to do was to go to the Emigration Agent and he gave them all the details. He also arranged the trip for them.

The Ferrys of Derrybeg were the agents from the Gweedore area. They would have advertisements for the Cunard Line, The White Star Line and The Anchor Line hanging in their shop along with calendars from those firms and also pictures of ships such as The Mauretania and others. Not alone were these pictures in the shops, but when families emigrated, they always sent home a card with a picture of the ship and almost every house in the parish had a post-card of the ship that carried their families to America mailed to them. These postcards looked very bright at home but there was another aspect to it. Many emigrants never returned.

ASGARD MONUMENT GOLA ISLAND

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE HIRING FAIRS

People wanted to find employment and earn some money, but there was no work available locally. To help the family's financial situation, small children had to be hired out to earn their keep. The money was mainly needed to pay the rent. The first place that people went to was the Lagan. The Lagan means the fertile land stretching from the Swilly to the Bann.

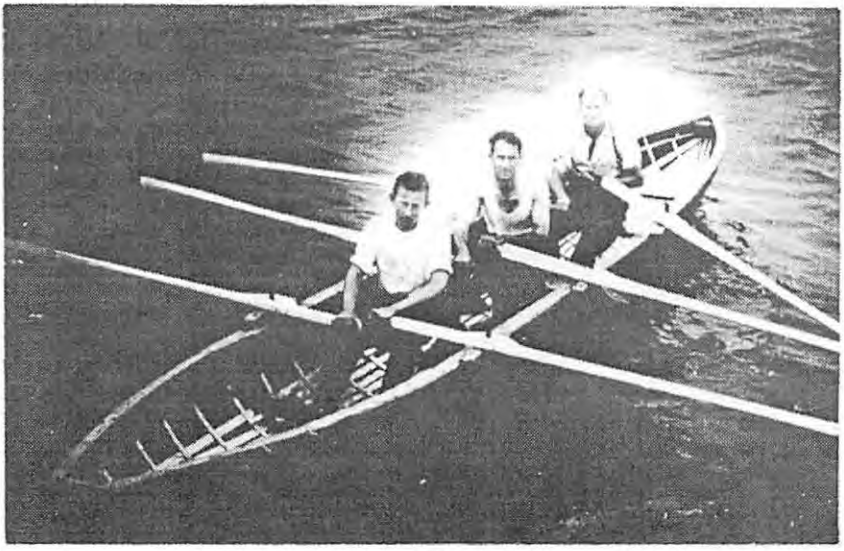
On different days in different areas, there were hiring fairs. There were four hiring fairs in Letterkenny every year and most of the children went either in February or in September and sometimes, on the first of November, to get six months' employment. The reason for this was that the rent had to be paid every six months and people paying the rent in November would go to Letterkenny, meet their children and pay the rent immediately.

The story is told about a man from Gortahork Parish, who went to Letterkenny during a bad winter. His daughter had been hired for six months in the Lagan and she brought her pay, which was nineteen shillings. That was more than was needed. She brought the money and gave it to her father in Letterkenny, at the hiring fair, before hiring herself out for a further six months. On the way home, the snow came and the following morning, the father was found dead in a snowdrift. He had managed to get the money for the landlord, but he had died in the effort.

As soon as the boys grew older, they moved to Scotland to work on a yearly basis with Scottish farmers. That was hard and heavy work and it also meant money to pay the rent. Afterwards, if they gathered enough money and had enough courage, they decided they would cross to the United States.

Going to the Lagan meant that parents could go to the hiring fair and meet their family once every six months, while they were hired out and even bring them home sometimes for a few months. When they went to Scotland, they also came back within the seasons. The worked between six and eight months on Scottish farms, saved up their money and brought it home.

Crossing the Atlantic often took between six and eight weeks for the ships. People were entering an unknown world, where they would have to find employment and make the most of it. Those who were successful and found suitable work very soon were able to send the American letters back, containing money. Again, since it was one of the main features, people would have to try and exist and keep their homes. People in America went to different parts, coal mines, copper mines and even in Alaska, to the gold mines. Some returned home occasionally but these people were few and far between. Most of them remained and settled in the States.



Paddy Tom Coll, Eamonn O'Donnell, Dinny O'Donnell

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE AMERICAN WAKE

Today, it is difficult for people returning, second or third generation, to realise the sorrow of the parting of the families. It was sad for parents to hear any of their children saying they were going to the States. It wasn't that they didn't like the States, but it meant that they would never lay eyes on them again.

The "American Wake" is an Irish word, showing that before people left for the States, they were always waked in their own home. Usually, the night before they left, the neighbours would all gather and they had a dance in their house, where they would dance and sing songs for the whole night. One of the emigration songs had a very popular rhyme "the land is too small to serve all and we must cross the sea". There were similar lines in most of the emigration songs, giving the whole explanation of why they had to leave. The land wasn't fertile, they couldn't make a living on it. There was nothing to do but go to another country to earn their money.

The night before people left, as well as singing songs, they stayed up for the whole night and then in the morning, a convoy would assemble. If a young person left, usually a group would travel with him to the railway, or Loch a' Ghaineamh (the Sandy Lake), beyond Dunlewey, where the Gweedore people would turn back. The Falcarragh people said goodbye to their emigrants at Droicead na nDeor (The Bridge of Sighs), south of Falcarragh. Very often people were seen going out by Muckish and they were never seen in Ireland again.

Some adventurous young people wanted to get to the States to find a new life. One of those was James, a worker in Daniel O'Donnell's shop in Derrybeg. As well as working in the shop, he was also out on the mountain looking after O'Donnell's cattle. Mr. O'Donnell was a businessman and James took one of the cattle and walked it to Creeslough, where he sold it for one pound and ten shillings, two Euro in today's money. That was the cost of sailing to America at the time. He walked to Derry, got on the ship and headed for the States, where he spent some years and earned a good living.

Another man, Daniel McBride of Glassagh, who was teaching in Bun an Inver school, shot a rabbit on Lord Nixon's land. This was a major crime at the time. He was caught and fined one shilling but he didn't pay the fine. He hid his gun under the leaf of the table in his parents' kitchen. He went to the States, where he had a successful career as a businessman. He helped many people there who had travelled from Ireland.

Patrick Peoples from Magheraclogher, went to Australia in the 1800's. Australia hadn't made nuch progress by that time. He bought waste ground around the town of Randwick. At the time, it wasn't worth very much and he didn't pay a large sum of money , while purchasing the land. However, the boom came to Australia. people started to get rich. Australia was building up a population and they were bringing in people from other countries.

A fifteen year old boy from Donegal, who was hired out to a farmer in Co. Tyrone, was arrested for taking his master's horse without permission. He was sentenced to seven years' penal servitude in Van Diemen's Land. He eventually escaped from prison, fleeing into the Bush in the Queen's own land. He began capturing wild horses and taming them. He had a most successful career as a salesman and ended up owning large tracts of Australian territory. His grandson, who visited Ireland seeking his roots in the 1990's, is a wealthy landowner in Queensland,

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

HISTORY AND LEGENDS OF GWEEDORE

In olden times, people built their homes near the sea. The houses were huddled closely together in clusters, known as clochans. This was for safety as wild animals roamed the forests on higher grounds. They were also afraid of pirates attacking from the sea and there was safety in numbers. Their land was mostly held in commonage and they lived peacefully together.

This system changed in the Famine years of 1845-1847 when fever came and spread rapidly from house to house. This increased the number of deaths.

Lord George Hill came to the parish in 1838. He altered the system of sharing commonage. He allocated a definite plot of land to each individual tenant and fixed the rents accordingly. The Griffiths Valuations of 1857 show a high increase in rent figures.

It is obvious that people lived in Gweedore in the Stone Age. Stone knives were found in Magheralosk, while other stone age objects were found in Carrick, Gola Island and in Carrickfinn. People survived on fish and on seafood. Log boats were made from native trees. People didn't travel over land and relied on their boats.

Pirates invaded Donegal thousands of years ago. Traditional stories are far removed from the truth, but some facts emerge. We are told that the Formorians, a fierce tribe from overseas arrived on

Tory Island. This island was uninhabited and was used as a base for attacking the mainland. The killed and plundered. The Nemadians, who had lived peacefully in the North West were terrified. They decided to wait and not to wager war against the Formorians. However, the invaders used stones and boulders to kill the natives and at the end of the day, the mountain now known as Cnoc Fola was saturated in blood.

Ever since that event, the place was known as Bloody Foreland, the mountain of blood. In mid-summer, when the purple heather blooms, it still retains the blood red colour. The boulders are Ice Age deposits.

Long ago, the people regarded the Ice Age and the sea as powerful giants. One story tells of a giant called Gorm who lived on the east of the parish and his arch enemy, called Inis, who lived in Iniserrar Island. They fought continuously. One day, Inis decided that he would go quietly to the mountain and kill Gorm. He was very near his enemy, when he stepped on a giant oak tree, which cracked beneath his feet and raised the alarm. Gorm reacted suddenly and he gathered some stones and boulders into his large apron and gave chase.

As he was racing near Cnoc Fola, his apron burst open and the stones started falling on the mountainside. He continued racing to Carrick, but by this time, Inis was striding across the bay to his island hideout. Gorm flung the last fistful of boulders after Inis, but they dropped into the sea and are still a danger to local boats.

It is also possible, that a hugh iceberg had begun to thaw as it reached Cnoc Fola and because of the mild sea breeze, the debris carried by the ice remained on the mountainside

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

ACCIDENTS AND TRAGEDIES

The Western seaboard has known many tragedies over the last two hundred years. In 1862, The California, a British bases ship went off course in the North Atlantic and sailed into Carrick beach. Three local men, Charles McHugh, Shane Gallagher and a member of the McFadden family knew that those on board were in danger. The ship sank and the three men rescued many of the crew. The received an award for their bravery from Queen Victoria. Two coloured men were drowned and their bodies are buried at Glassagh beach.

In 1930, an unidentified ship struck a fishing boat from Inisboffin Island, on a summer's night. Three of the crew were drowned and there was one survivor.

In the early 1800's, three men from Tory Island were drowned at Ballyness Bay, near Falcarragh. Two bodies were recovered. Later, a body was washed ashore at Portstewart. He was identified as the Tory Islander, because of the green button sewn on his shirt collar.

On a November night in 1935, a boat carrying twenty passengers from Burtonport to Arranmore Island was driven on to the rocks by a heavy hail shower. Nineteen passengers were lost. There was only one survivor. They were on the last leg of their journey, after working for six months in Scotland. Some bodies were never recovered.

Another nineteen people lost their lives on a May evening in 1943, in which is known as the Ballymanus disaster. A mine from the Second World War was washed ashore on the nearby beach and exploded with disastrous results. "Beidh a cuid féin ag an fharraige" which means "the sea will claim its own", is a very true saying.

Owen O'Donnell was a shopkeeper, who also owned a farm. Artificial fertilizers were not in use in olden times. Wrack (sea-weed) from the sea was wildly used. especially for potatoes. Owen O'Donnell and his son, Hugh, went to Umfin Island for a boat load of wrack, some one hundred years ago. The boat was overloaded and started sinking. Owen managed to save his son, Hugh and his neighbour, Hugh Ferry, from drowning. Sadly, he perished and his body was later found. Owen was the only swimmer in the group. He had previously rescued many people from drowning, a number of years prerviously, on the fateful day of the flood in Derrybeg Church on the 15th August, 1880.

Owen had been a much-travelled man. He had spent some years in Australia in his youth.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

SOCIAL

OCCASIONS

In bygone days, islands were cheerful places to live in. On winter nights, people went to céilís in each other's houses. They played cards and draughts. Weather permitting, they went to dances on the mainland.

The men played football. At one time, Gola Island had a full team. In the 1940's, there were seven players on the Gweedore team. Descendants from all three islands are active in G.A.A. circle nowadays.

All three islands competed in boat racing long ago and brought trophies back from places as far as Rathmullan. The Skiffs winners were the last of the old stock. Their team was, James Friel at the helm, Ned and John McGee, Charles Diver, John McGinley, N.T. and Hugh Sweeney. In the 1950's, the currach team made national history. Both senior and junior teams from Inis Meain and Gola, won the All-Ireland races in Galway.

Fishermen on the Donegal seaboard were excellent currachmen. At a regatta in Magheroarty in the early 1920's the coastguards from Inisbofin maintained they were better than the local men. Two men from the area, Eamonn Herrity, locally known as Eamonn Shéamais Bhriain and Hughie Eamonn Sweeney from Gola Island took up the challenge. They defeated the Inisbofin coastguards and left them far behind.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

SCHOOLING

Schooling was practically unknown in Ireland until the Catholic Emancipation came in 1829. Soon afterwards, schools started to be opened all over the country. In 1842, three primary schools were opened in Gweedore and before the end of the century, that total came to twelve. Three of the schools were on the islands.

After the Irish Government was formed in 1922, there was a great upsurge in learning. Vocational classes were opened throughout the country. Their teachers moved from place to place, mostly on a nightly basis. In 1926, there was a ruling that all children under fourteen had to attend a primary school. People needed very little encouragement because they were anxious to get an education.

Most of the teachers throughout the country were from English speaking areas. The Government was anxious that there would be more Gaeilge on the curriculum and on the school rolls. Therefore, in 1926, preparatory colleges were opened in Irish. These were called "Coláistí Ullmhúcháin". Three colleges for boys and three colleges for girls were opened, all on the Irish seaboard. The girls' schools were Coláiste Bhríde, Falcarragh; Tourmakeady in Co. Mayo and Daingin in Co. Kerry.

Some one hundred students were taken in on a yearly basis and this meant that about six years later, there were a number of native speaking teachers ready to go into the Irish schools. That system continued for forty years. The year 1926 saw the first batch of students taken in and every year after that, the same amount were

taken in to study to become teachers Preparatory college entrance exams were very stiff, mostly similiar to the standard of the present Junior Certificate examination. Children of about fourteen years of age went in to do a three-day written exam, as well as oral tests. It was a hard task preparing for these exams, but the Gaeltacht teachers did their best to train their pupils.

In our schools. I was among the batch to enter for that exam and we didn't know exactly what it would be like. I got a bulky letter on a school day, when I was about fourteen years of age, telling me that I had succeeded in the exam. It was lunchtime and we had a school rule. which stated that nobody entered the schoolroom during lunchtime. Anyhow, I was encouraged by the other pupils to go in and show my large and bulky envelope to our teacher. I will never forget the reaction of the teacher. She jumped up with joy. I thought she would be angry with me for coming in, but instead, she told me that she was happier than if she had won The Irish Sweep. Strangely enough, I was standing in the same spot where another pupil had stood many years before, on the day she told us that the Gola fishermen had drowned.

Before the coming of television, the names of teachers were often mentioned. Among them were Noher Boyle, Dualtach Dúgánach, Owen Coyle, William Coyle, Mary McBride, Donal McBride, John and Hugh McBride, Frank Gallagher. Kitty Fox. Nellie Peoples, Bartley Campbell, Jimmy McBride, Ownie McFadden, Paddy McKye-Sharkey, Miss Mahony, Miss McSorley and others.

GAOTH DOBHAIR, COUNTY CHAMPIONS, 2002

Back (l to r) Tom Beag Gillespie (manager), Hugo Diver, Ruairi McCool, Pierc Coyle, Ronan McNelis, Neil McGee, Seán Sweeney, Donal McBride, Colman McCool, Michael McCafferty, Alan Boyd (manager), Bernard Boyle (trainer)

Middle (l to r) Stephen Cassidy, James Gallagher, Manny Gallagher, Michael Doherty (capt.) Daniel Rua Gallagher, Brian Gallagher, Seán Diver, Brian McGee, Kevin Cassidy, Seán Nancy Gallagher, Declan Sweeney

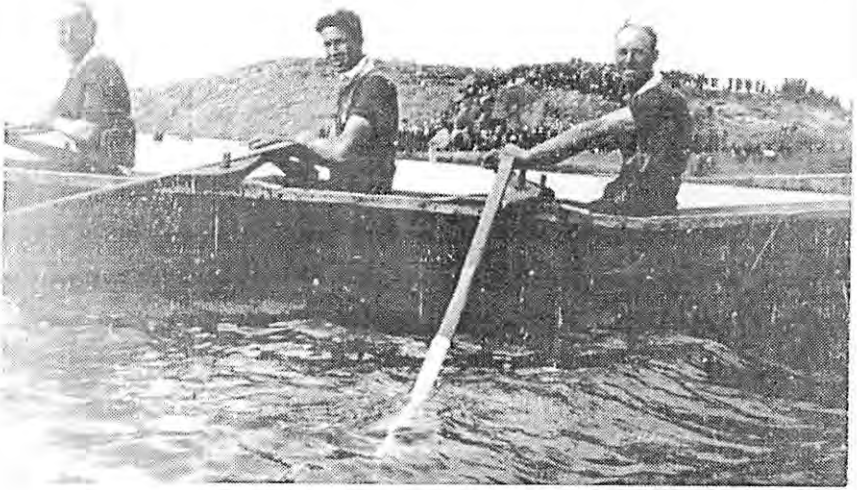
Front Sitting (l to r) Joseph Sweeney, Eamonn McGee, Thomas Diver, Joseph Duffy, Christopher Cannon

ISLANDERS SUPPORTING GALWAY CURRACH RACES

Gola Island National School

		Pupil's Name.		Religious Denomination.	Class No.	October — Quarter commencing Tues 1st	Week ending Saturday, 12th	Week ending Saturday, 19th	Week ending Saturday, 26th	Week ending Saturday,
			67							
6	"	Hugh Sweeney	69	"	5					
5	"	Joseph Roarty	46	"	6					
9	"	Edward Diver	71	"	7					
	"	Charles Diver	73	"	8					
					9					
					0					
					1					
					2					
					3					
					4					
					5					
					6					
					7					
					8					
					9					
					0					
4	Free	Ellen Diver	91	"	1					
2	"	Nappy Doherty	91	"	2					
8	"	Annie Duggan	84	"	3					
9	"	Bridget Roarty	94	"	4					
3	"	Ellen Mc Ginley	88	"	5					
7	"	Nappy Coll	83	"	6					
6	"	Nappy Diver	82	"	7					
5	"	Kate Peoples	74	"	8					
4	"	Mary Mc Ginley	65	"	9					
9	"	Hannah Doherty	79	"	10					
2	"	Kate Duggan	52	"	11					
2	"	Nancy Sweeney	34	"	12					
1	"	Maggie Coll	33	"	13					
3	"	Mary Doherty	20	"	14					
4	"	Sheelah Mc Ginley	4	"	15					
					6					
					7					
					8					

VIEW FROM GOLA



INIS MEAIN CURRAGH TEAM

Paddy Tom Coll, Eamonn O'Donnell, Dinny O'Donnell

THANKS TO

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

G.V. Lists

CHOREOGRAPHERS

Neil McBride, Máire Mulroy, Anne Louis, Síle Nic Aoidh

PHOTOS AND INFORMATION

Dónal Ó Fearraigh, Máire Ferry, Sr. Maura, Polly Duggan, Nora O'Donnell, An Chrannóg, Veronica, Nora McBride

COVER PHOTO

Niall Mac Giolla Bhríde

GOLA CURRAGH RACES JUNIOR TEAM 1950'S
Donal McBride, Willie Sweeney, Hudaí Diver

The Author

Cáit Níc Giolla Bhríde

Cáit Níc Giolla Bhríde is a retired national teacher. She was educated in Scoil Mhuire, Derrybeg; Coláiste Bhríde, Falcarragh and Carysfort Training College, Dublin.

She taught in Letterkenny for ten years and then returned to Scoil Mhuire, Derrybeg where she continued teaching until her retirement in 1981.

After her retirement, Cáit took a keen interest in local history and geneology and has spent many years gathering information from various people whom she is always greatful to.

In recent years, Cáit has written various articles as well as Stairsheanchas Ghaoth Dobhair in 1996 and Gnéithe de Stair Ghaoth Dobhair in 2002

Séamus de Faoite Print, Termon. 074 - 9139211. Fax: 074 - 9139492