

An Gorta Mór i gCois Fharraige

Lochlainn Ó Tuairisg

Dar le daonáireamh na bliana 1841, 11,278 duine a bhí ina gcónaí i bparóiste sibhialta Chill Aithnín ina bhfuil Cois Fharraige suite (2,000 teaghlach – díobh sin bhí 1,710 ag plé le talmhaíocht). Den mhéid sin, bhí léamh agus scríobh ag 593 duine; léamh amháin ag 264 duine, agus bhí 8,763 nach raibh léamh ná scríobh acu. Áiríodh 1,920 teach sa bparóiste sibhialta. Díobh sin, bhain trí cinn leis an gcéad ghrád; 27 leis an tríú grád; 872 leis an tríú grád; 1,018 teach a bhí sa gceathrú grád. Níorbh ann don chúigiú grád. Mar sin, sa gcuid seo den tír, is féidir a rá go raibh an pobal beo bocht, ag plé le talmhaíocht amháin, agus gan léamh ná scríobh acu – dream a bhí ag brath ar an mbarr sin a bhí éirithe chomh forleathan sin le céad bliain anuas, agus a mba chúis, cuid mhaith, le fás mór sa daonra ó trí mhilliún i 1750 go dtí ocht milliún in 1841. Agus, ar ndóigh, dá fhaide síos an dréimire dá raibh duine, ba mhó an seans go raibh siad i dtuilleamaí fataí amháin mar phríomhchothú bia. Agus dá gclisfeadh ar na fataí, mar sin, iadsan ba mhó a bheadh thíos leis. Tháinig an tuar faoin tairngreacht.

1845

Nuair a bhuaile galra nua, *phytophthora infestans*, na fataí deireadh an tsamhraidh 1845, is teip áitiúil a bhí ann. Contaetha Aontrama, na Gaillimhe, Ros Comáin agus an Chláir ba mhó a buaileadh. Mar sin féin, theip ar an tríú cuid den bharr, agus chuaigh an Rialtas, faoin cheannas an Phríomh-Aire Robert Peel, fear a raibh seanchleachtadh agus taithí na mblianta aige ar chruachas na hÉireann, ó ghorta 1816–17 ar aghaidh, i muinín na mbeartas céanna nuair a chlis ar an bhfómhar roimhe sin.

Mar chlis ar na fataí cheana, agus go minic, i rith an naoú céad déag. Bhí ganntan idir 1816–17. Bhí ganntan sa mbliain 1822, i gConamara agus in Iorras Mhaigh Eo go háirithe. Scríobh an t-innealtóir Alexander Nimmo litir chuig an bhFo-Rúnaí William Gregory i Meitheamh na bliana sin 1822 ag rá: *‘In Trawbawn and Garomna on Sunday last four persons had just died of want’*. Tháinig daoine as Conamara go Gaillimh ag cuartú beatha – tugadh díol seachtaine dóibh agus cuireadh abhaile arís iad. Is mar thoradh ar ghorta na bliana 1822 a tógadh céibh i mBerna (ar chostas £300), céibh an Spidéil (costas £150) agus céibh i gCasla, Céibh an Station (costas £350). An bhliain chéanna bhí dhá chéad fear fostaithe ar obair rilífe ar an mbóthar idir an Spidéil agus Casla. Bhí ganntan idir 1829–31, (arís i gConamara agus in Iorras), in 1832, in 1835; caitheadh £700 i mBéal an Daingin in 1836; agus in 1842 bhí 1,300 fear ag obair ar bhóithre éagsúla i gConamara.

Bhí cleachtadh áirithe ag na bochtáin ar ghorta agus ar ghanntan, mar sin, agus seifteanna áirithe acu chun dul i ngleic leis. D’fhéadfaí an mhuc, a bhíodh i mórán chuile theach (*‘the gentleman that pays the rent’*) agus a d’itheadh fúlleach na bhfataí nó fataí lofa, nó aon cheo eile a bhíodh thart, a dhíol. Ba nós leis an Rialtas oibreacha poiblí a chur ar siúl. D’fhéadfaí dul ag lorg déirce in áiteacha eile nár buaileadh nó nár buaileadh chomh dona céanna. Nó, go deimhin, d’fhéadfadh daoine bailiú leo as an áit agus an tiarna talún a fhágáil i dtigh diabhail ansin in éagmais a chuid cíosa.

Mar sin, thug an Rialtas faoi na bearta céanna ar tugadh

fúthu cheana. Ceannaíodh min bhuí go ciúin le díol ar an margadh dá mba rud é go n-éireodh beatha ródhaor. Bunaíodh coimisiún lárnach fóirithinte (an *Central Relief Commission*) chun comhordú a dhéanamh ar choistí áitiúla fóirithinte, agus tugadh deontas do Bhord na nOibreacha, a bhí ar bun ón mbliain 1831, chun obair rilífe a chur ar siúl sna ceantracha a buaileadh. Maidir leis na hoibreacha seo, ba é an prionsabal a bhí leo seo gur creideadh nach raibh sé ceart in aon chor rud a thabhairt gan tada do dhuine ar bith, cuma cén drochbhail a bhí air. Ní bheadh anseo ach cothú na leisce. Chaithfí rilíf a shaothrú agus é a shaothrú go maith. B’in an t-údar a bhí le bóithre a chur á ndéanamh agus gan iad ag dul in aon áit agus claíocha a chur á dtógáil in áiteacha nach raibh aon ghá leo.

Bhí dhá chineál rilífe ann: sealadach/éigeandála agus buan. Rilíf shealadach a bhí sna hoibreacha poiblí agus sa min bhuí, agus ní raibh sé i gceist go leanfadh sé ar aghaidh níos faide ná fómhar 1846, nuair a bheadh na fataí nua ar fáil arís, faoina bheith slán. Ach bhí córas buan rilífe ann freisin: tithe na mbocht. Córas réasúnta nua a bhí anseo, gan é ar an saol ach ón mbliain 1838, agus a cuireadh ar bun mar leigheas fadtéarmach ar fhadhb sheanbhunaithe an bhochtanaís in Éirinn. Faoi seo bhí an tír go léir roinnte ina n-aontais, aontais dhlí na mbocht (*poor law unions*) –in aontas dhlí na mbocht na Gaillimhe a bhí an ceantar seo. I ngach aontas bhí teach na mbocht agus bord caomhnóirí ag breathnú ina dhiaidh. Bhí spás i dtithe na mbocht uile na tíre do c. 100,000 bochtán (spás do mhíle duine a bhí i nGaillimh). Bhí sé i gceist riamh i dteach na mbocht go mbeadh coinníollacha beagán níos measa i dteach na mbocht ná taobh amuigh. Scartaí na fir ó na mná agus na páistí; chaití éadaí faoi leith a chaitheamh; bhíodh obair chrua mhaslach le déanamh (na fir ag briseadh clocha agus na mná ag piocadh ócáim); agus ní raibh an bheatha thar mholadh beirte. Ar ndóigh, bhí sé leagtha amach mar seo le daoine a choinneáil amach – ar an mbealach seo ní thioctadh isteach ach ná daoine a bhí i gcruachas i ndáiríre, na *deserving poor* seachas na leisceoirí. Rátaí dhlí na mbocht a d’íoc as an gcóras: duine

ar bith a mbeadh gabháltas de luach £4 nó os a chionn aige, bheadh na rátaí seo le n-íoc aige.

1846

I Márta agus Aibreán na bliana 1846, theip ar thrí ceathrú cuid an bharr fataí, agus tosaíodh ar choistí fóirithinte áitiúla a bhunú ar fud na tíre – bhí beagnach 650 díobh ar an bhfód faoi mhí Lúnasa. Bunaíodh coiste i gceantar an Spidéil, agus tá cuid mhór dá chomhfhreagras fós ar marthain. Ba iad seo a leanas baill an *Spiddal Relief Committee* ar 10 Bealtaine 1846: Andrew W. Blake, Esq. (Cathaoirleach), tiarna talún sna Forbacha; Rev. Francis Kenny (Secretary), sagart paróiste an Spidéil; Rev. John Cather (Cisteoir), ministéara Protastúnach sa Spidéil; Rev. John O'Grady, sagart paróiste an Chnoic; P.S. Comyn, Esq., tiarna talún a raibh talamh aige i gceantar an Spidéil; Francis Comyn, Esq., a dheartháir agus tiarna talún dhúiche Shailearna; Edward O'Malley, Esq.; John W. Fitzpatrick, Esq.; Capt. John White C.B.C.G.; S. Jones, Esq.; Thomas Bunbury, Esq.; Thomas B. Martin, Esq. M.P.; Mr. Edward Good; Mr. Carr C.B.C.G.; Mr. John O'Connor, Costelloe Lodge; Mr. Patrick McDonough; Mr. Kerr C.B.C.G., Costelloe Bay; Wm Kelly, Esq.; James Aylward; M. Manus, Esq.; Anthony Donnelan, Esq., tiarna talún sa Spidéil; Dr. James Browne; Patrick Burke, Esq.; Martin Morris, Esq., fear uasal as an Spidéil. Mar is léir, maithe agus móruaisle na dúiche a bhí ar an gcoiste seo. Seo ceann de na chéad litreacha a chuireadar chuig an gCoimisiún Lárnach Fóirithinte i mBaile Átha Cliath:

Spiddal, Galway
April 20th 1846

Sir,

We the undersigned Protestant and Catholic clergy of this parish would beg leave respectfully to call the attention of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant to the state of this neighbourhood the [portion?] of country west of Galway, 20 miles along the sea shore facing Connemara with a population or eleven hundred families, one third of them this moment without any means of support in consequence of the potatoe disease and fear much that in a few weeks or about the 20th of May we can add to that number two thirds more unless providence is pleased to arrest the daily increasing disease in the [highly?] staple food. There is no resident landlord and no public works altho a pier along the coast at Alla or Aiuleen in this parish has been often approved of as a fit place of refuge for the fishermen, many of whose lives could be saved, who are now no more if a pier was there built, there being no place of refuge for them in storm weather between Galway and Roundstone in Conemara, a distance of at least sixty miles. In the absence of any resident gentry, we feel it our duty as clergymen who are most and best acquainted with this locality and the present deplorable state of the people to call His Excellency's attention to the creation of this pier and the new line of road applied for at the Outerard Special Sessions the 16th instant as so thoroughly approved of by all the magistrates and cess payers. We also most respectfully beg to state that in the event of this pier and line of road being not commenced and with as little delay as possible that there is no other possible work in this rocky and mountainous country that can be contemplated to afford the people means to support themselves and keep them from actual starvation this season. We the Protestant and Catholic clergy

of this parish are fully determined to carry into effect any plan of His Excellency's into effect and in proportion to our humble means to contribute what we can, but our best exertions will be useless and unavailable without the prompt and generous support of a humane government.

John Cather, Clerk
John O'Grady, PP
Fras Kenny, PP

(NAI D568)

Tagairt atá ansin do chinneadh a rinneadh ag seisiún speisialta cúirte in Uachtar Ard i mí an Mhárta dhá scéim oibre a chur ar siúl: bóthar a chur á dhéanamh ó Rós an Mhíl go hUachtar Ard (Bóthar Sheanadh Phéistín), agus bóthar a dhéanamh ón gCnoc go hUachtar Ard (an Bóthar Buí). Agus mar atá fhios agaibh ní ar an Aill Fhinn a tógadh an chéibh ach sa Spidéil agus b'in scór bliain ina dhiaidh sin.

Is é a dhéanadh na coistí fóirithinte áitiúla síntiúis a bhailiú (airgead ó thiarnaí talún áitiúla go háirithe), eolas faoin nganntan a bhailiú, cabhair a lorg ón rialtas agus ó eagraíochtaí carthanacha, oibreacha rilífe a chur ar siúl, stórais bheatha a bhunú agus maoirseacht a dhéanamh ar dháileadh an uile chineál fóirithinte.

Is minic a náirigh siad tiarnaí talún áitiúla as gan dóthain tacaíochta a thabhairt dóibh. Scríobh sagart paróiste an Chnoic, Rev. John O'Grady, roinnt litreacha chuig an *Galway Vindicator* in Aibreán 1846, áit ar luaigh sé gur dhíshealbhaigh Blácach na Tulaí roinnt tionóntaí dhá bhliain roimhe sin agus go raibh siad anois i ndroch-chaoi. Shéan an Blácach go ndearna sé a leithéid; mhaígh seisean gur fhág siad dá ndeoin



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féin. Ba é freagra an tsagairt:

There is only one point in Mr Blake's letter which I believe to be true, and which is this, he never ejected legally but two or three – while very many were banished illegally without notice to quit. I wish Mr Blake would frequently visit his property and make enquiries of how things are going on; if he did I am sure a few inquisitive visits would rectify all. Come, respected sir, and restore the poor people their lands – assist us liberally this year by contributing to the Parochial Relief Fund. Mr Francis Comyn has given me an acre of land last week for a churchyard, and he is supplying his tenants with plenty of oatmeal, and has desired me by letter to put down his name for ten pounds in aid of our funds. Mr P. S. Comyn will also do the same. Come, respected sir. Step in timely to relieve the wants of your people and you shall get from myself every pecuniary assistance in your power – come quickly and you will do good. Withhold and many may starve.

Seanghearán a bheadh anseo: gan aon tiarnaí talún, na *resident landlords*, a bheith ag cur fúthu sa gceantar. Chuireadh na coistí fóirithinte liostaí de na *deserving poor*, an dream a bhí i dteideal beatha saor in aisce, le chéile chomh maith. Seo ceann as Leitir Móir, a chuir John Cather, an ministéara sa Spidéal ach a bhí gníomhach i gCeantar na nOileán, i dtoll a chéile:

Cases of distress in Lettermore, April 24 1846

David Jennings – aged 80 – wife – 3 children – no land – no provisions

Larry F____er – 50 – wife – 8 children – not able to crop his land – no provisions

Widow Geoghan – 2 children – no land – no provisions

Master Folan – 70 – unable to walk – with daughter of weak intellect – no land or provisions

Widow Mac Donagh – 70 – no land – no provisions

Michael Windham – in bad health – wife – 4 children – not able to crop his land – no provisions

Widow Logan – 7 children – not able to crop her land – no provisions

Widow Logan – mother-in-law of the preceding – no land nor means of support

David Mac Donagh – wife – 9 children – no potatoes for the last two months

Widow Daly – 4 children – no potatoes since Christmas

Widow Nee – 2 young children – no land – no provisions

Patrick Beatty – 60 – in very bad health – wife – 4 children – no land – no provisions

These are a few out of many cases in Lettermore. Many in the same state in Lettermullen and the other villages around.

NAI RLFC 3/1/3628

Bhí cuid de bhaill an choiste fóirithinte fial flaithiúil lena gcuid airgid féin. Seo a leanas liosta díobh siúd a raibh síntiús tugtha acu faoi Iúil na bliana 1846:

List of subscribers to the Spiddal relief fund

Andw Blake Esq. £5-0-0

Revd John O'Grady PP £10-0-0

Revd John Cather £1-0-0

Anthony Donnellan Esq. £5-0-0

James Mc Manus Esq. £4-0-0

Thos. Bunbury Esq. £2-0-0

Fras Comyn Esq. £10-0-0

P.S. Comyn Esq. £10-0-0

Patk Blake Esq. £10-0-0

John W. Fitzpatrick Esq. £10-0-0

Edwd O Maley Esq. £2-0-0

Mr. Edwd Good. £0-10-0

Revd Francis Kenny £5-0-0

Total £74-11-0

I certify that the above is a correct list of the contributions to the Spiddal Relief Fund.

Fras Kenny, Secty to the Spiddal Relief Committee

NAI RLFC 3/1/3628

Thugadh an coimisiún lárnach deontas i gcomhréir leis an airgead a bhailítí go háitiúil – ina dhiaidh sin tugadh a oiread aríst dóibh. Tá cuid mhaith litreacha ar marthain a léiríonn díomá nach bhfuair siad an méid a bhí ag dul dóibh nó geallta dóibh, a thugann le fios go raibh an fhadhb ag méadú as cuimse agus nach fada go mbeadh sé thar a gcumas dul i ngleic leis.

Theip ar na fataí aríst samhradh na bliana 1846 ach murarbh ionann agus an bhliain roimhe sin, an uair seo bhí an dúchan ó cheann ceann na tíre. Seo mar ab fhachtas do mhuintir Chois Fharraige é:

Spiddal, June 30th

1846

Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 27 Inst. I have the honour to enclose you the Treasurer's Certificate of the additional subscriptions together with the subscribers' names. With regard to the second part of your letter, I can, and do state, with a melancholy accuracy that the number of families in this district who are in actual want of relief in consequence of the loss of the potatoe crop, and who will require and are in want of employment on public works, and having no earthly resource, are at the very lowest calculation five hundred. You may form an estimate of our distress from the fact that we are not enabled to give more than two quarts of meal to each person as a substitute for eight days. On Thursday last a poor man in my parish was obliged in the last extremity to dig a portion of his little garden in search of new potatoes. He found a something resembling them, and, distressing to relate, this embryo likeness of a potatoe was strongly tinged with last year's fatal disease. I will no longer occupy the Commissioner's attention by further details of wretchedness and woe, but leave the redress, which I hope will be immediate to their tender and successful consideration.

I have the honour to be Sir

Your obedt and humble Servt

Fras Kenny

NAI RLFC 3/1/3827

Bhí cúrsaí ag dul in ainseal. I litir a scríobh Rev. O'Grady chuig an *Galway Vindicator* Meitheamh 1846:

I [...] assure you that starvation, the consequence of untimely legislative interference, has set in, by consigning already two of my parishioners to a premature grave. One has left a widower

and four helpless children in extreme necessity, and the other equally circumstanced, both of whom would have been alive this day had they the mere necessities of life to support them in their distress. I have this moment three hundred families without any means of subsistence, and unless kind landlords, who have given their tenants some meal for the past month, continue their charitable course, the two ensuing months, I can, alas without fear of contradiction, assure your Excellency, that tens and twenties of my poor people will suffer the penalty of starvation [...] No words can adequately express the distress of my poor people, who are pledging their blankets, their clothes, and every portable article they have, to enable them to live a few days.

Agus leag sé béim ar oibreacha ar an mBóthar Buí, a bhí fós gan tosaí.

Níor thosaigh an gorta i gceart, is é sin méadú ag teacht ar na rátaí báis, go dtí fómhar na bliana 1846. Bhí sé i gceist

ag an Rialtas go gcuirfí deireadh leis na hoibreacha poiblí faoi fhómhar na bliana sin, ach nuair a theip ar na fataí aríst, b'éigean cur leo. Ceannaíodh tuilleadh min bhuí ach san iarthar amháin a bhí sé le díol, agus sin má bhí géarghá leis. Bhí deireadh le teacht le rílif in aisce – ach má bhí féin, ba léir nach raibh an dara rogha acu ach é a choinneáil ar siúl. Ach feasta ba iad lucht íoctha rátaí a d'íocfadh as seo seachas an Rialtas. Ba é 'Irish property must pay for Irish poverty' mana rialtas nua Lord John Russell agus Pháirtí na Liobrálach agus iad ag tagairt do thiarnaí talún agus lucht maoine na hÉireann, a bhí, dar leo, sprionlaitheach agus leisciúil.

Nuair ba léir nach raibh ag éirí leis na beartais seo, d'fhógair an Rialtas go mbunófaí cisteanacha súip in áit na n-oibreacha poiblí – agus is iad lucht íoctha rátaí na mbocht a d'íocfadh astu seo.

Fómhar na bliana 1846, bhí teach na mbocht i nGaillimh lán go doras – b'éigean seideanna a thógáil agus foirgnimh a thógáil ar cíós. An fhadhb ba mhó a bhí acu: easpa airgid. Nuair a cuireadh é seo in iúl do Choimisiún Dhlí na mBocht, ní raibh mar fhreagra acu ach na rátaí a ardú.

Maidir leis na hoibreacha poiblí, lean na coistí orthu ag cur liostaí de dhaoine i dtoll a chéile agus ag eisiúint ticéid a chinnteodh áit do dhuine ar na hoibreacha, duine amháin as gach teaghlach, ar phá c. 10d sa ló. Idir Deireadh Fómhair 1846 agus Meitheamh 1847 bhí 33,325 duine fostaithe ar oibreacha poiblí i gContae na Gaillimhe. 5,405 fear 'able-bodied' a bhí ar na hoibreacha i mbarúntacht Mhaigh Cuilinn, ina bhfuil an ceantar seo, i mí na Samhna chomh maith le 33 bean agus 27 gasúr. Bhí ganntan ticéad ar lucht an choiste, de bharr éilimh, mar a scríobh Fr Kenny ar 3 Lúnasa: 'I have the honour to request you will have the kindness to forward another lot of work tickets with as little delay as possible. We are obliged to change the workmen every week in order to give a fair distribution of employment to add in aid of it. The last batch of tickets was issued in one day.' Cuireadh 500 ticéad chuige.

Má bhí siad 'able-bodied' féin bhí an diabhal orthu maidir le biadán, mar a thuairisc an té a bhí i gceannas orthu, Captain Clarke, i mí na Nollag 1846: 'I would respectfully submit my general observation that the labourers appear to be too much grouped on the works instead of being more spread over the line, which, I conceive, would prevent that unnecessary congregating and idling in conversation to which the country people are so prone.' Thug maor eile, Captain Hutchinson, cuairt ar an Spidéal thart ar an am céanna, féachaint an raibh chuile dhuine



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a bhí ag obair ar na hoibreacha i dteideal a bheith ag obair orthu. Ní raibh:

On Monday the 7th I visited Spiddal, barony of Moycullen, to ascertain if persons whose names were sent to me for relief were so; and on the 10th I attended the Committee there to scrutinise the lists and received every assistance from the chairman and members in doing so. A blacksmith's name (Wm Greany) caused a discussion, from the rent he paid; his comfortable slated house &c. induced me to strike his name out ...

I mí na Samhna 1846 tháinig scéala ó Rev. Kenny i dtaobh Thomas Malone, a chaith ceithre seachtainí ag obair ar an mbóthar nua idir Casla agus Uachtar Ard. Shiúil sé sé mhíle *'through a wet pathless mountain and the same journey back in the evening, after carrying dripping sand on his back during the day, with only one meal and that same a scanty one'*. Cailleadh é i bhfoisceacht ceathrú míle dá theach.

1847

In Eanáir na bliana 1847 thug an rialtas isteach scéim cisteanacha súip tar éis dóibh obair Chumann na gCarad (na Quakers) a fheiceáil. Gheofaí iasachtaí ó Choimisiún Dhlí na mBocht – iasacht ar íoc rátaí na mbocht ar ais. Bhíothas ag súil go mairfidís go fómhár na bliana sin. Feasta bheadh súp le fáil in aisce ag pé duine a raibh sé ag teastáil uaidh.

An mhí ina dhiaidh sin bhí cruinniú ag coiste fóirithinte an Spidéil. Fuair siad iasacht £100 ón gcoimisiún lárnach, síntiús £6-13-0 ón *Indian Committee, Calcutta*, agus thug Rev. O'Grady, Rev. Cather agus Rev. Kenny £5 an duine. Ordaíodh sé cinn de photaí móra, agus cuireadh súp ar fáil sa Spidéil, sa Lochán Beag agus bhí min bhuí le fáil ag muintir na Tulaí. Ní raibh cead ag aon teaghlach a raibh ball den teaghlach sin ag saothrú, beatha a fháil in aisce; chaithfí é a cheannacht. (Bhí ceann de na potaí seo taobh amuigh de shéipéal na Tulaí go dtí le gairid.)

Lean na hoibreacha poiblí ar aghaidh faoi shioc is faoi shíon. Chaithfí a dhul ag obair. Agus fuair na fir oibre tús áite nuair a bhí an mhin á díol. Ba é tuairim an rialtais dá mbeadh airgead ag na daoine – iad in ann bia a cheannacht – go gcuirfeadh an margadh bia ar fáil é. Ach mar go raibh daoine ag obair, agus mar atá feicthe againn, ag obair go crua, níos mó den bheatha ag teastáil uathu.

I mBealtaine 1847: tháinig deireadh le scéim na n-oibreacha poiblí. Leagfaí an bhéim feasta ar chóras dhlí na mbocht.

I mí Lúnasa 1847 mar thoradh ar an méid brú a bhí ar thithe na mbocht, ritheadh an *Poor Law Extension Act*: feasta d'fhéadfaí rilf a chur ar fáil taobh amuigh de theach na mbocht; tugadh cead do Choimisinéirí Dhlí na mBocht boird chaomhnóirí a scor (rud a rinne siad le teach na mbocht i nGaillimh, mar nach raibh siad in ann dóthain airgid a bhailiú ach ní dharna na leaschaomhnóirí mórán ní b'fhearr); tugadh isteach an Gregory Clause (má bhí ceathrú acra talún ag duine ní raibh sé *destitute*.i. bhí rud éicint aige agus ní raibh aon chead isteach aige – leis an mbrú a bhí ar theach na mbocht a mhaothlú beagán. Agus bunaíodh aontais dhlí na mbocht nua – feasta is ar Uachtar Ard den chuid is mó a thabharfadh muintir Chois Fharraige a n-aghaidh. Mar a rinne an bhean i sliocht as dialann de chuid duine de na Máirtínigh:

I was called into the kitchen late last night, and found there

a woman who seemed dazed and almost unconscious on the floor. Beside her lay a dead child, while in her arms she held a wretched infant, still living but terrible exhausted. As she revived under the influence of care and food, she told her piteous story. In direst need, having heard she would be relieved at Ross, she started from Spiddal, a poverty-stricken village eleven miles distant and separated from Ross by a waste of heather and bog. In cold and darkness, she struggled on till the elder child, who clung to her skirts fell and died. Then, carrying the corpse and the infant, she tottered on till at last she reached our kitchen.

Faoin am sin bhí trí mhilliún béile á gcur ar fáil tríd an gcóras seo ó cheann ceann na tíre (punt mine do dhuine fásta; a leath sin do ghasúir faoi naoi mbliana).

Níor theip ar an mbarr fataí i bhfómhar na bliana 1847, ach bhí greim ag an bhfiabhras ar dhaoine, a bhí lag faoin am seo tar éis dhá bhliain de ghanntan; agus níor cuireadh aon fhataí, de bharr easpa fataí síl, agus de bharr nach raibh fear a bhí ag obair ar na hoibreacha poiblí in ann mórán ama a chaitheamh ag cur fhataí. Rinneadh faillí sa móin freisin; agus cheal teasa agus uisce te, tolgadh galraí mar an tíofas.

Faoi mhí Dheireadh Fómhair bhí deireadh leis na cisteanacha súip – feasta chaithfí dul i muinín theach na mbocht. Chaithfeadh Éire íoc as fadhbanna na hÉireann.

I Samhain 1847 tháinig litir ó Andrew Blake, cathaoirleach choiste fóirithinte an Spidéil, ag lorg cúnamh ón rialtas:

I am directed by the Committee of the Killannin Board of Health to forward to you, for your consideration and assistance the following resolution passed by them this day:- "Resolved, that we behold with the utmost sorrow and dismay, the fearful return of famine and disease to this destitute district, visiting in their destructive career, not only their former surviving victims, but hundreds besides, who had hitherto escaped their dreadful influence.

No language can express, and the mind can scarce conceive, the awful privations which more than half our population are now calmly and patiently enduring; one well-known but melancholy fact will sufficiently describe their sad condition; that is, that we are assured, that many families are at this moment endeavouring to prolong a miserable existence, on one meal a-day of turnips alone, plundered sometimes at the risk of their lives, from the gardens of their more fortunate neighbours."

Luaigh mé an Gregory Clause ar ball beag. Clás e seo a chuir méadú mór faoi dhíshealbhuithe. Gearradh rátaí dhlí na mbocht ar gach sealbhóir le gabháltas os cionn £4; aon rud faoi sin, b'éigean don tiarna féin é a íoc. Dá gcaithfí amach iad agus na cábáin a leagan go talamh níorbh fhiú tada iad, rud a laghdódh bille an tiarna talún. An lá deiridh den bhliain 1847 chuir an Blácach tuairim is deich teaghlach as seilbh sa Tulaigh agus leag sé a gcuid tithe. Bhásaigh cuid díobh, gasúir ina measc, mar gur chodail siad amuigh an oíche sin agus oícheanta ina dhiaidh sin. Tharraing an gníomh mídhleathach seo raic agus tarraingíodh anuas an scéala i bParlaimint Westminster. (Tá cur síos níos iomláine air seo le fáil in *Biseach 2016*.)

Ba í an bhliain 1847 an bhliain ba mheasa den Ghort Mór ó thaobh cruatain de agus is le 1847 a bhaineann na scéalta is truamhéalaí: daoine ag fáil bháis ar leataobh an bhóthair – bhí

corp amháin deich lá ar an mbóthar i gCasla. In earrach 1847 a bhásaigh Bridget agus Patrick Duffy, beirt ghasúr, sa Lochán Beag. Nuair a thug an séiplíneach agus an Cather cuairt ar an teach, bhí an chuid eile den teaghlach i ndroch-chaoi, gan de bheatha sa teach ach feamainn agus duileasc.

1848

Chlis ar na fataí aríst in 1848, go háirithe san iarthar. Bhí teach na mbocht i nGaillimh lán. Fágadh daoine ag an ngeata, ag iarraidh teacht isteach.

Bhí ospidéal bunaithe sa Spidéal ó 23 Lúnasa 1847. Faoi 25 Márta 1848 bhí 32 othar ann agus seisear eile ag iarraidh dul isteach ach ní raibh aon áit dóibh ann. 18 Nollaig 1848 ag cruinniú d'Aontas Dhlí na mBocht labhair Rev. Kenny faoin ngéarghá a bhí le hospidéal nó fo-ionad fiabhrais. Cuireadh coiste speisialta, an *Killannin Fever Committee*, ar bun. Thairg Muiríseach an Spidéil teach dhá stór dóibh, iarbheairic póilíní i Sáile Chuanna – an *Sickhouse*, tá an fothrach le feiceáil i gcónaí. Bhí 235 othar ann fós i dteach cúnta na mbocht sa Spidéal sa mbliain 1851. 1,239 duine a bhásaigh mar gheall ar an bhfiabhras sna hospidéil fiabhrais i gcathair na Gaillimhe; 3,000 duine a bhásaigh sna hospidéil fiabhrais sa gcuid eile den chontae.

Agus an Gorta Mór ag druidim chun deiridh, ar 22 Aibreán 1848, scríobh sagart paróiste nua an chnoic, Canon John McCullough, litir chuig Ardeaspag Bhaile Átha Cliath, ag gabháil buíochais leis as síntiús:

I do assure your Committee that no locality can be in greater destitution than the parish of Killannin South, commonly called Spiddal. The population of my parish twelve months ago

amounted to 780 families, considerable more than 5000 souls and I can solemnly attest that one fifth of this number died since from famine and its consequences and much more would have been carried off were it not for the relief afforded by £43 I received from Dr Mac Hale and two small supplies of meal from the Society of Friends and one from Count Strzelecki. These supplies were exhausted when under the direction of Providence your enclosure came without solicitation on our part.

From the bungling manner in which the outdoor relief is being administered here, as yet not more than one half of those qualified by the quarter-acre test is getting it, and you may be prepared to admit that the condition of the recipients of this miserable pittance is far better than that of many who cling to their wretched rackrented holdings from the fact that one of the viceguardians, Mr. Keough, after going through the parish some time ago, called upon me and said he was now more certain now that when he was informed that the average rent exacted by the landlords who are all absentees was from 30s to 40s per acre for what he considered could not be worth more than 3s to 5s [for] all these. Landlords extracted their rents, feeding their tenantry with the promise that they would give them meal and seed in the spring, neither of which they gave as yet. There is a fever hospital in this parish accommodating, I think about 44 patients and I do again solemnly declare that there are upwards of 200 cases of fever and dysentery in the parish and in the western portion, particularly. In the neighbourhood of the Blakes of Tully the priest is called on every other day to attend from two to five dying persons where more than fifty houses were tumbled down or burnt last winter, the persecuted outcasts living in ditches or in sheds. Notwithstanding the cruel scenes enacted by James Blake of Tully, who is local agent to Pat. Blake of Gurtanamone, the people are peaceable and under the influence of religion.

Tá ráite agam roimhe seo go raibh Aontas Dhlí na mBocht na Gaillimhe i bhfiacha ó shamhradh na bliana 1846. Bhí tithe na bocht go léir lán faoi dheireadh na bliana, bhí a gcuid airgid go léir caite (síntiús phríobháideacha a bhí á gcoinneáil os cionn uisce) ach pé iarratas ar chabhair a rinne siad ó Choimisiún Dhlí na mBocht ní bhfuairadar mar fhreagra ach na rátaí a ardú.

1849

Bhí dúchan anseo is ansiúd in 1849 ach b'éigean don Rialtas leanacht dá chuid cúnaimh d'aontais na Gaillimhe agus an Chlocháin, Go deimhin, bhí d'fhiacha ar theach na mbocht sa gClochán gur tháinig an sirriam, gur thóg sé na headaí agus dhíol iad. Córas a bhí in ainm is freastal ar 100,000 duine, bhí sé ag freastal ar 114,129 in 1847 agus ar 308,655 in 1851. Mar gheall gur ar lucht íoctha rátaí a bhí an t-ualach seo ag titim – agus tabhair ualach air – tugann an litir thíos léargas spéisiúil ar mheon an drama sin a bhí in ainm is íoc as seo go léir.

County of Galway

The informations of George R. Mac Donald who this day came before me, one of her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for said county and being duly sworn on the Holy evangelists. saith as follows:

I am Collector of Poor Rates for the Electoral Divisions of Outerard, Killannin & Moycullen in the Galway Union.

On Tuesday last the 14th inst., having made distress (with



Cló Iar-Chonnacht

An Cheardlann, An Spidéal
Teil: 091-593307 cic@iol.ie www.cic.ie



An Tower, CD nua le TOMMY MELLETT & NEANSAÍ NÍ CHOISDEALBHA

Is stíl fhíorshultmhar croíúil atá acu ... ceol fuinniúil, lán le hanam agus le héagsúlacht – Meaití Jó Sheamuis

Buail isteach chugainn sa siopa nua sa Cheardlann, An Spidéal. Siopa oscailte ó Luan go hAoine.

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several of my assistants) for Poor Rates on the lands of Bohoona in the said Division of Killannin, the same was immediately rescued by a party of upward twenty persons, one of whom assaulted James Carson, one of my bailiffs, by giving him a violent blow with a stone. In a very short time upwards of 100 persons assembled and evinced a great disposition to attack the bailiffs even after the distress had been forced away.

I have on several occasions within the last two months made distress for poor rates in the said divisions which has always been forcibly and violently rescued from my custody and the greatest violence manifested towards me and my assistants. It is, therefore, quite impossible that the collection can be proceeded with in either of the said divisions without a military or police force to protect me and my assistants in the execution of my duty. I further state that opposition to the collection of the rate in the above Divisions is so great that I consider the lives of myself and my assistants would be in imminent peril were I to proceed further in the collection of the rate by means of distress. I therefore pray that prompt and valuable protection may be afforded me as the time is fast approaching when distress [in] the above Electoral divisions will not be available.

George R. Macdonald

Given before me, a Justice of the Peace for said County, this 16 Nov. 1848

George O'Flaherty

NAI OP 11/ 726

Is é a bhí i gceist le 'distress', maoin (beithígh nó barraí go hiondúil – beithígh sa gcás seo) a thógáil de bhuíochas an úinéara i leaba íocaíocht ar fhiacha, cíós nó rátaí go hiondúil. Bhí an rud céanna déanta ag muintir an Locháin Bhig dhá mhí roimhe sin, mar a mhínigh Francis Comyn, an tiarna talún:

on my arrival at Loughan beg hearing that there had been a rescue accompanied with great violence on a part of my property there – a distress for rent had been made – I sent for the police and on their arrival there two persons there pointed out to me as having been concerned in the affray I gave them in charge of the police who brought them to Spiddle, there being no writing materials nearer than that place for drawing the necessary informations. The law requiring the bailiff to swear informations against the two men, he positively refused to do so, in consequence of which I dismissed him and ordered the sergeant to liberate the two men.

Níor thaitin an chaoi ar iompair an tiarna talún é féin le Caisleán Bhaile Átha Cliath:

Your letter is not as satisfactory as might be desired. To a certain extent you appear to have acted as a Magistrate in calling out the Constabulary in a case in which you were personally interested and, had you proceeded to take informations in the case which you appear to have investigated with that object, I am advised to inform you that his Excellency would have deemed it necessary to bring your conduct under the consideration of the Lord Chancellor.

NAI OP 11/726

Bhí rilíf lasmuigh (*outdoor relief*) ar fáil go dtí Deireadh Fómhair 1849 (20,000 i gConnachta á fháil tuairim an ama

sin; 100,000 a bhí á fháil i gCúige Mumhan).

1849 agus ar lean

Is deacair a rá i ndáiríre cén uair ar tháinig deireadh leis an nGorta, ná dáta a chur leis. Bhí Aontas na Gaillimhe agus Aontas an Chlocháin fós ag fáil cúnaimh ón rialtas suas go dtí an bhliain 1850. Bhí 235 othar i dteach cúnta na mbocht sa Spidéal an bhliain ina dhiaidh sin. Chonaic muid ansin gur mhaígh an Canon McCullogh gur cailleadh an cúigiú cuid den daonra ina pharóiste féin. Cuirimis, mar sin, figiúirí dhaonáireamh na bliana do pharóiste sibhialta Chill Aithnín 1841 i gcomparáid le figiúirí dhaonáireamh 1851.

Sa gcéad áit, laghdaigh an daonra ó 11,278 go dtí 7,976 (laghdú 3,302); tháinig laghdú ar an líon tithe sa gceantar ó 1,947 go dtí 1,402 (laghdú 542). Sin laghdú de 29.298% ar an daonra – níos mó ná an cúigiú cuid, mar sin. Ar ndóigh, ní féidir a rá gur bás den ocras, nó tolgadh galraí, is cúis leis seo uilig. Chuaigh daoine ar imirce agus d'fhág siad an chomharsanacht. Ach, ba iad na ceantracha ba bhoichte ba mhó a d'fhulaing, na ceantracha ba mhó fás roimh an nGorta, agus ar an iomlán is ar na bochtáin is troime a luigh ualach an Ghorta Mhoir.

Ach níorbh in deireadh le gorta, i gConamara ar aon nós. Bhí ganntan ann in 1859–64, sna hoileáin go háirithe; in 1879–82; in 1890–91; 1894; 1898; 1904; 1912 (tráth ar chuir Ruairí Mac Easmuinn arán siar don Cheathrú Rua), 1922, 1923 agus 1924. An duine deiridh a bhfuil tuairisc againn a cailleadh le hocras gorta Éirinn, b'as Conamara í:

One of the last recorded victims of famine was a Mrs Flaherty of Garomna Island in Connemara in November 1897. English charity had aided twelve families on the island and the Flaherty family of four consisting of the parents and two children had earlier been given half a hundredweight of Indian meal by the relieving officer. After her death the police investigated. They searched the house and found no food and the police sergeant appealed to his men for aid for the surviving family members.

Foilsíodh tuairisc an bhliain dár gcionn, *Distress in the West and South of Ireland, 1898* – faoin trath seo bhí grianghraif ann de mhuintir Gharmna, na Ceathrún Rua agus Chonamara fré chéile, le fotheidil mar: 'a very distressed family', 'in search of food', 'dinner of Indian meal supplied by relief committee', 'seeking relief', 'the relief works'.

Sa mbliain 1925 thug an comhlacht scannánaíochta Pathé cuairt ar Chonamara agus rinne scannán gearr dar teideal *Connemara's Appeal*, faoin nganntan fataí a bhí sa gceantar an bhliain sin. (Tá sé le feiceáil ar YouTube.) 'There is no famine, but distress does prevail through failure of turf and of potato crops' a d'fhógair na teidil, agus an té a bhreathnódh go grinn ar na radharcanna de mhuintir na háite ag teacht ag iarraidh málaí arbhair le tabhairt abhaile leo (mar a rinne an ghlúin a chuaigh rompu), aithneoidh siad Baile Ard an Spidéil.

Foinsí: Páipéir an *Central Relief Commission*, Cartlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann; *Outrage Papers, Galway*, Cartlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann, Baile Átha Cliath; Seán Ó Mainnín, 'Paróiste an Chnoic in Aimsir an Drochshaoil' (clóscríbhinn neamhfhoilsithe, gan dáta). ■