

## **Chapter 6: Week-long Cultural Study, Connemara, Ireland**

*by Deborah L. Rotman, Kasia Ahern, Rhiannon Duke, Bianca Fernandez, and Jackie Thomas*

The primary learning goals for the cultural study are for students to develop an understanding of (1) the richness of Irish culture – music, storytelling, social organization, language, religious practice, history/tradition, and the like with a particular emphasis on those aspects of Irish culture that emigrants would have brought with them to America and (2) the historical contexts for emigration from Ireland as well as their consequences. This chapter summarizes the activities, experiences, and lectures that comprised the cultural study and what was learned through each one.

### ***Irish Language: Prof. Dónal Ó Droighneáin, Carna Center, Co. Galway***

During his lecture, Dónal explained what a Gaeltacht is and that they are currently worried for the future of Irish because the children switch into English easily (TV, internet, games, etc.). In addition, he provided census data from 2006 that expressed how there is good will towards the language, which did not exist decades ago, yet it is not really used as much as it could be. He explained there were other Celtic languages, such as Welsh, Breton, Cornish, Manx and Scottish Gaelic.

He then went through the history of the Celtic language, including the ‘ogham’, the Book of Kells, as well as the English colonization of the island. He explained how England made Irish seem like a language of the primitive and barbaric, forcing English upon them. With the Great Famine and the large numbers of Irish people emigrating, the population of people who spoke Irish dropped drastically, as did the total populace of the island. Dónal also mentioned the importance of the Gaelic Revival, which began to save the language, the culture, the folklore, songs and dances. He also reviewed current history, mentioning the treaty signed with England in 1922 which made Irish the official language in the 1930s, although that did not mean that Irish was accepted. He gave as an example a personal account of how his mother wanted to give him an Irish name on the official document but the official person said it had to be English. He was trying to point out that despite the good will and the work Ireland has already done to save Irish, there is still much that needs to be done to make it not become useless. It has been engrained into social thinking that English is used in the public and political sector. He ended by describing some particular elements of the Irish language, such as the fact that the verb comes before the subject and object and aspiration.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Dónal gave a great overview presentation, covering some of the major political and cultural events that would reoccur throughout our time there. He elaborated on the current situation they are facing: Irish is not being spoken enough as well as it being difficult to gauge how much Irish is actually used in the Gaeltachts around Ireland. He also did a great job combining a factual background with a personal perspective as well as some of the current issues they are trying to overcome. The students expressed an interest in having an Irish language primer, basic phrases, etc. that would give them some tools (and confidence) to interact with the people of Connemara in Irish.

### ***An Gorta Mór: Dan O’Hara History and Heritage Center, Clifden, Co. Galway***

The museum itself was simple but very informative. The video was a great audiovisual. It explained the hardships of living and working on a land that belonged to a landlord that wasn’t really interested in the people who worked and lived on the land. Evictions were common and many Irish emigrated in order to start a better life elsewhere. In addition, outside the museum building were some models of crannogs.

Martin’s presentation/discussion was superb! After allowing us a spectacular view of the Connemara landscape, including the Twelve Bens, he demonstrated to the group how to cut peat or turf from the bogs/ground. He even pointed out the old Irish oak that had been trapped in the bog for thousands of years and is black inside, slowly petrifying. In addition, as he went to put on his Wellingtons to begin cutting turf, he explained the origin and reason for the rain boots being called ‘Wellingtons’.

Afterward, we headed to the Dan O’Hara home (Figures 6.1 and 6.2), still intact even though he left after being evicted by his landlord for not being able to pay both the rent and the window tax. Martin explained how the evictions would occur and the injustice of it all. He went on to explain how Dan O’Hara



**Figure 6.1. Gable view of the Dan O'Hara homestead. Photograph taken by the author.**



**Figure 6.2. Chickens outside the coop of the Dan O'Hara homestead. Photograph taken by the author.**

and his wife and seven children had to emigrate and went to America. On the ship, which Martin mentions were later called 'coffin ships' because of the high numbers of death, Dan O'Hara's wife and three children passed away. When he landed on American soil, O'Hara was so poor that his children were put in foster homes and he wandered the streets trying to sell matches. He died two years later, poor and alone in a foreign country, but he became a legend through a song other Irish immigrants wrote after his death. As Martin was starting a turf fire and finishing the story, he sang the song.

Martin was very knowledgeable and shared some very interesting points, including the fact that the Potato Famine wasn't really a famine at all. The potato failed because of a fungus and the Irish people had become dependent on the potato and no matter how much pleading was done, other foods continued to be exported from Ireland while its people starved.

The encounter ended on a fantastic note as Martin opened a secret compartment and pulled out what he explained was the 'elixir or water of life', in other words, *póitín*. More or less the Irish equivalent of moonshine, *póitín* was used at times to determine if a person was dead by rubbing some of the liquid on the person's face. As he finished his discussion, he invited all to get a small cup of *póitín* and gather round in a circle. We toasted an Irish traditional toast of 'bless all those who wish us well and those who don't can go to hell.' We all drank and enjoyed a very rare look into a unique Irish tradition.

*Dan O'Hara (song)*

Sure it's poor I am today for God gave and took away  
And he left without a home, poor Dan O'Hara  
With these matches in my hand in the frost and snow I stand  
So it's here I am today your broken hearted

*A cushla gra mo craoi*

won't you buy a box from me  
and you'll have the prayers of Dan from Connemara.  
Sure I'll sell them cheap and low  
buy a box before you go  
from the broken-hearted farmer Dan O'Hara.

In the year of sixty four I had acres by the score  
And the grandest land you ever ran a plough through  
But the landlord came you know and he laid our old home low  
So it's here I am today your broken-hearted

*A cushla gra mo craoi*

won't you buy a box from me  
and you'll have the prayers of Dan from Connemara.  
Sure I'll sell them cheap and low  
buy a box before you go  
from the broken-hearted farmer Dan O'Hara.  
For twenty years or more did misfortune cross our door  
And my poor old wife and I were parted  
We were scattered far and wide and our children starved and died  
So it's here I am today your broken-hearted

*A cushla gra mo craoi*

won't you buy a box from me  
and you'll have the prayers of Dan from Connemara.  
Sure I'll sell them cheap and low  
buy a box before you go  
from the broken-hearted farmer Dan O'Hara.

Tho' in frost and snow I stand sure the shadow of God's hand  
It lies warm about the brow of Dan O'Hara  
And soon with God above I will meet the ones I love  
And I'll find the joys I lost in Connemara

*A cushla gra mo craoi*

won't you buy a box from me  
and you'll have the prayers of Dan from Connemara.  
Sure I'll sell them cheap and low  
buy a box before you go  
from the broken-hearted farmer Dan O'Hara.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* The Dan O'Hara heritage center was a fantastic learning experience. The museum was informative and well organized. Students would have liked more time to read through the posters and the different items and pictures they had throughout the room. Martin was successful at combining history with the current cultural climate. Our visit to the Dan O'Hara Farmstead was the perfect introduction to our cultural study. We will definitely do it again and do so again on the first day.

***The Landscapes of Connemara: Cartographer Tim Robinson, Roundstone, Co. Galway***

We met Tim and Mairead Robinson in their home in Roundstone. Tim spoke and then read a bit about Joe Heaney, a man from Connemara who started a singing career in North America because there was simply no future for him in Ireland.

Robinson also spoke about space and meaning and the concept of a cultural landscape. He mentioned Pearse and his cottage and how the man identified himself with sacrifice in order to fight for Ireland's freedom. He also mentioned the particularities of Connemara and its complex terrain. It is densely inhabited and all named and those names are linked to a web of folktales and songs. Robinson described how he would walk on foot, at times also ride his bike, and talk to the local people and discuss the area, the different names of the area and other stories that would undoubtedly spring up. He also discussed how some of the resources of the area were important during the pre-Famine and Famine periods, such as the seaweed, and how the seashore was central to their survival.

In addition, he spoke about his St. Brigid's cross and told a couple of folk tales related to her. She was originally a pagan goddess of fire, but with the Christianization of Ireland, she became a saint. One of the stories he told was of how she had walked into a church and as she entered all the candles lit up.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Although the experience was unique and lovely, it would have been more constructive if it had been placed towards the end of the week or at least after we had walked along the Connemara landscape so that the students had a more robust intellectual foundation on which to base to this activity.

***Daily Life and Material Culture (part I): Hennigan's Heritage Center, Killasser, Swinford, Co. Mayo***

The Heritage Center is Tom Hennigan's former childhood home. They lived with the natural environment around them without all the modern conveniences we are used to today: their TV consisted of a curtain their mother put in front of the bed in the living room where they all would take turns entertaining; their refrigerator was found in the lake because it would keep perishables like butter; they milked the cow twice a day: once in the evening for their morning milk and once in the morning for their milk in the evening.

Hennigan explained the horrible experiences the Irish faced due to the English. He explained how the Irish paid a high rent for land, a tax on various items, including a chimney and glass, forcing the Irish to become resourceful and try to beat the system, as they did with the half or Dutch door that would let light in during the day but would keep the animals out of the home. In addition, he explained that many of the landowners were absentee landlords who hired other men to collect the rent and they would not be paid unless they collected that rent.

Apart from explaining the larger scale movements that affected the Irish people's lives, Hennigan also focused on the everyday cultural and social experiences. He explained how the father was the main provider and he had the most to eat because without him, the family would starve and suffer greatly. He also explained some of the superstitions that dealt with fire, tongs, faeries, and even the horse skull under the hearthstone in order to increase the acoustics of the dancing. He also explained a regular day for his mother, which involved a great deal of physical work, including chores, setting the potatoes, haymaking, milking the cows, etc.

After listening to him share his childhood experiences and stories in his home, we moved on to the museum part of the experience where he had a display showing the history of the area from prehistory, to the Christianization of Ireland, to present day. We then saw an outstanding collection of different items that were of everyday use, including washing machines, fumigators, butter churners, cast iron pots, etc. He also explained and showed how the wool was prepared and some of the final products that came from seaming and sewing. He also talked about how the blacksmith was the most reputable occupation. He was the most respected man in town because he could make his own tools. Anyone who angered or crossed him would have to bear his curse and that was no easy burden to bear.

Tom also did a great job of explaining certain sayings such as "top dog/bottom dog", "down on your uppers" and "mad as a hatter" and their origins in our language. He even recited a beautiful poem by Séamus Heaney:

*The Basket-Maker's Song*

*The up-rights are sharpen'd, pegged straight in the ground.  
I pick forty rods, here's how they're stuck round.*

*The up-rights are sharpen'd, pegged straight in the ground.  
I pick forty rods, here's how they're stuck round.*

*Four twos for each side, three twos for each end.  
Four threes for the corners where all the rods bend.*

Hennigan was particularly interested in doing away with the idea that the Irish were backwards or primitive. He provided example after example of how things that seemed primitive and/or barbaric were really ingenious. He explained how they had natural inoculation that was due to sticking animal limbs in the roofs and rafters of the home and as the people breathed in those germs, they were experiencing immunization.

Tom ended the tour in a recreated schoolhouse, first mentioning the Maypole Disaster of 1908 and then explaining what his schooling experience was like. He finished his story with "Had a spoon, had I?" as a retort to a school master concerning why he was late to school. It was written on the wall of the recreated schoolhouse.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Tom Hennigan was extremely knowledgeable. His artifact-based lecture provided terrific context for daily life and the objects used.

***Daily Life and Material Culture (part II): National Museum of Country Life, Turlough, Co. Mayo***

The Museum of Country Life is situated on beautiful grounds overlooking a river and proved to be one of the best resources to aid our understanding of Irish emigration. The Museum focuses on the way of life that existed between the Great Famine to the end of the 1950s in Ireland. There was a particular emphasis on the objects of folk life and the role they play in the oral and folklore tradition. Exhibits stressed the people behind the objects as a means of conveying or communicating a certain way of life.

Objects often create a sort of material time line because they are shaped or influenced by the seasons throughout the year. For instance, St. Brigid's Day was on February 1st and children made girdles to pass thru to ensure the Saint's protection. Also, May Day is a joyful festival of flowers which represent a fresh

start in a household. Hurlies would also be representative of spring time because the lads would finally be able to be outside to play. Another exhibit featured an audio section where visitors would listen to a letter being read aloud from a relative who emigrated. Emigrants would seek news of the family and friends they left behind and in return they would pass on new ideas they encountered.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Ultimately, the trip to this Museum was well worth our time and proved to be a valuable resource in helping to solidify the concepts of Irish emigration. The interactive and visual components featured were very helpful. Each exhibit was related to our project and provided information on emigration and Irish Folk Life.

### ***Religious History of Connemara: Prof. Irene Whelan, Clifden, Co. Galway***

Connemara was an area in which souperism (the use of food or material goods to affect denominational change) was common. This practice has been hugely problematic in Irish history. Irene began speaking about dispensational pre-millennialism, which is associated with the second coming of the Savior, of a thousand years where the world as made perfect. Pre-millennialism believes that Christ will come before those thousand years and there will be signs and famine, which is why it had such a large effect on the people of Ireland during the Famine.

In the 1850s there was a movement of modernization and the concept of Republicanism became popular. Ireland at that point was a kingdom as well as a colony, so with the Act of Union, the Irish Parliament joined the English Parliament. The churches were also united (the Church of Ireland with the Church of England). The Catholics, though, became a minority in their own home.

Irene continued setting the background for everything that was happening on a global scale in terms of movements, thoughts, economics, and politics, including the Enlightenment, the Protestant felt imperative to spread their religion, and the importance of education. The evangelicals of the time were subversive and trying to pass a law that stated that Ireland should not get funding if they were not taught the Bible. It was believed that if the Irish became English Protestants, all the problems would be over.

Then in the 1820s, lots of events changed history for the Irish. McGee's sermon of 1822 was responded to by Bishop Doyle who wrote "A Vindication for Rights of Irish Catholics", who stated the only proper church was the Church of Ireland. He also stated the actions that should be taken: don't fall prey to prophecy and speculation, obey the laws, and use the law to change one's current condition. He stated that the Irish were special in the eyes of God ('Catholic Providentialism') and should do things legally and justly.

Irene then made note of O'Connell and how he started the Catholic Association, which was based on the blueprint from Bishop Doyle. Then in 1829 came the Catholic Emancipation from a very hesitant English government. For the Protestants, that meant that the end was coming. The schools established though created a sort of apartheid because students went to different schools based on their religion.

In the 1830s, there was the beginning of a proselytizing movement that became very radical and extreme in many areas, especially where there were not many priests but lots of poor Irish speakers. Pre-millennialism comes into play with John Nelson D'Arcy who was the son of John D'Arcy of Clifden. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, they were originally a Catholic family, part of the Tribes of Galway. He wanted to fix up the area, so he brought a great deal of gentry into Connemara. There were many women of high social classes that began to intermarry with the men of Ireland. There were also plans to place a mission in Connemara because the people were poor, Irish speaking. During 1845-46, pamphlets about the Bible called "Food of Men" were distributed to the starving people. Anglicans dotted the entire area, feeding and educating the children. In 1852, the Catholic Church responded and tried to revitalize the area. The Mercy Sisters and the Franciscans were sent to help the Catholic community. They organized missions that would preach for two weeks in the common vernacular. It became the Catholic Devotional Revolution. In addition, the Catholic Church in the US would buy chunks of land for Irish immigrants.

The Protestant missionaries made real efforts to get close to the people. They made spelling and reading books to teach the monolingual children of the area in Irish. They were the first to really talk to the peasant Irish. Ireland experienced cultural nationalism, or a sense of nationalism based on a cultural and/or religious identity. Some Irish Catholic traditions survived despite not being known by the church, in part because they chose to continue the religious traditions.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Irene Whelan's lecture was a very academic discussion concerning the religious and thought movements on a global as well on a more local level.

### **Landscape Hikes with Michael Gibbons**

The landscape hike began with a tour of D'Arcy Castle and the surrounding environs (Figure 6.3). The town of Clifden, located in County Galway, was founded in the nineteenth century by John D'Arcy who later developed the town as a commercial capital, looking to take advantage of the rich natural resources of fishing, wool, and marble. On the tour of the D'Arcy Castle, Michael Gibbons led the team on a stony and meandering path filled with five strategically placed stone fixtures, which at first glance resembled natural formations. Yet the team learned that these stout and weathered stones serve as intentional highlighters to draw the eyes of visitors to the castle's scenic beauty and landscape. Only one of these five stones is original, in fact D'Arcy had these stones erected to imitate other standing stones around Ireland. This castle is constructed in the Gothic Revival style. D'Arcy castle was only occupied for a short time before being abandoned around the 1840s, at which time it was then handed over to John's son Hyacinth. Ultimately, the castle was put up for sale because of Hyacinth's incurring debts. After a brief holding by the Eyre family, the land is now divided up with many Clifden citizens owning a share of the acreage.



**Figure 6.3. Michael Gibbons speaking to the students about cultural landscapes near the D'Arcy Castle outside Clifden. Picture taken by Perry McIntyre. Used by permission.**

The tour continued with a hike in the Kingstown area. After only a few paces into the tour the team quickly became acclimated to traversing a bog as it covered a good deal of the landscape. Further on Michael lead the group to examine several stones, which were used to mark burial places. With Michael's guidance the team was able to identify some of the main tomb types prevalent during the Neolithic period in Ireland. The team was also able to acquire a valuable lesson during this hike, the art of climbing a stone fence safely. After this quick tutorial the group was able to examine a fascinating feature of a *fulachata fiadha* or a Bronze Age cooking site. These sites were used to heat water and after taking a look at the stones surrounding the cooking site it was clear that many of them had burn marks. Since landscape is such a contributing factor in the formation of a culture, one of the most important thoughts for the team to keep in mind during these hikes was to consider environmental differences the Irish encountered upon arriving on Beaver Island.

Michael Gibbons also led the crew on a hike of watery fortresses for which the Connemara lakes are known, *crannogs* (Figure 6.4). Michael explained that the construction of forts on hills and often in lakes were popular as a refuge or shelter during times of war and conflict. These stone forts were man-made and typically circular in shape with a wooden stockade surrounding a small encampment. There is no visible entrance to a *crannóg* and most will either have a small boat hidden or a secret stone path known only by the inhabitants.



**Figure 6.4. Crannóg in Connemara. Photograph taken by the author.**

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* The landscape hikes were a huge hit with students. The weather was beautiful and it was marvelous to learn on the move. Students particularly enjoyed Michael Gibbons' lectures on various features on the landscape, their cultural meanings for peoples who inhabited these spaces both past and present, and the ways in which components of the environment fit together.

#### ***Sean-nós Singing/Dancing/Music at the Carna Hotel***

The group was fortunate enough to experience a live traditional music and sean-nós song session in a local pub. Young Connemara residents lead the session with a couple of songs performed by Johnny Mháirtín Learaí Mac Donnchadha, a world-renowned sean-nós singer. Each musician played a traditional Irish instrument including the tin whistle, accordion, and the bodhrán. The musicians expected the audience in the pub to contribute to the session and entertainment. There were several people from England who participated, one woman who was an opera singer contributed one of her favorite songs and another gentleman performed his own rendition of "Danny Boy." Our group was able to participate in the session during the céilí dances. The session incorporated traditional Irish songs as well as modern pieces that were written about Connemara. Some of the songs dealt with emigration and relatives across the sea, capturing the spirit of an American Wake. The ebb and flow between sadness and levity during the session moved seamlessly from a melancholy sean-nós song followed by an upbeat reel culminating in a true Irish sendoff.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Students thoroughly enjoyed this experiential learning opportunity. It was well-timed as one of our last event prior to departure and felt like an American Wake.

#### ***Daily Life and Material Culture (part III): Ionad Oidhreachta Leitir Mealláin and Gharumna Heritage Center***

The group was welcomed into a small cottage full from ceiling to floor with photographs and old homestead items. There was also an incredible collection of books in his library both in the Irish as well as English language. Our host explained many of the objects and their uses, recounted important historical



events, and elaborated on the local context of Leitir Mealláin. Following our tour of the cottage a world renowned sean-nós singer, Johnny MacDonncha, came and sang two songs to us.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Our visit to the Heritage Center was a wonderful opportunity to experience the material culture of a local context. Much of the activity was redundant with our visit to Hennigan's Heritage Center and the Museum of Country Life.

### *Visit to Fínis with Seán Ó Guairim*

On the final day in Carna, Co. Galway the team was fortunate to find an enthusiastic guide in Séan for a day on Fínis, a small island right off the coast of Galway (Figure 6.5). This island, once home to many inhabitants, now stands still in time with the ruins of the stone houses still erect. The island was only vacated a short while ago and is still accessible through a strand when the tide is out. While on the island, the team was able to explore the ruins, taking in the architecture of the houses while Sean told us stories about his time on the island when he was a boy, remembering back to when the houses were inhabited.

One story that Séan told was a testament to the central role the landscape had in the lives of the Irish. After Fínis was vacated there was a man who moved to the mainland and still walked the two miles to the sea everyday because he needed that force in his life. While enjoying the scenery and the salty sea air in the currach ride back, Séan was kind enough to take the group seal spotting to cap the trip off.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* The landscape and hike were marvelous. Seán was a thoughtful, knowledgeable, and generous host. In the future, we need to work more diligently to make the academic component of this experience explicit for students.



**Figure 6.5.** The view of gloomy Fínis from the currach. Photograph taken by Jackie Thomas. Used by permission.

### *Interface of Irish Emigration and Folk Tradition: Dr. Pádraig Ó Healaí, Carna Center, Co. Galway*

The lecture was aimed at linking Irish folk tradition and emigration from Ireland. He began his lecture by pointing out the many attempts to define folklore. He described folklore as a response to current human situations, such as weddings, births, deaths, fishing, and farming. Many people did not travel much in areas like Connemara. The most people traveled might have been 20 miles from home so an intriguing

subject like immigration would make it in to the tales. He expanded on his definition of folklore, saying that it also acts to symbolically represent emotions and “situations of a societal nature”. He told us about the Irish Folklore Society and how they have a very extensive folklore archives. The members of the Irish Folklore Society believe that Ireland as a nation needed to assert its identity and that identity was believed to be found in the folklore. In 1935, the government commission was even charged with collecting, archiving, publishing, and maintaining folklore of Ireland, which is unique because no other government in the world has done it. The archive includes 5,000 manuscripts, 400 pages each. Research showed that the areas that had the richest folklore were usually areas where a lot of Irish was spoken.

Pádraig went on to describe a questionnaire devised on immigration. The questionnaires revealed that when people immigrated their main concern was, not surprisingly, food. He mentioned that often people added frog’s ashes to their bread because it was thought to have therapeutic properties, according to folklore.

He described many different examples of Irish folklore. He explained how charms had elements that were from pre-Christian and Christian tradition. For example, one would begin a charm by mentioning “the god of healing”, and then finish the charm by saying “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”. He explained that the first 14 verses of John’s Gospel were very popular and were used by people in superstitious ways. If someone was emigrating, it was common for them to ask the priest to write down those verses of the Gospel and either tie it around their neck or sew it to their shirt to wear when they travel. These verses eventually became commercially produced on pieces of wax that people could carry around with them when they traveled. Another interesting piece of folklore that Pádraig mentioned was the caul. He explained that it was considered very lucky to be born with the caul still on one’s head. The caul was used by seafarers, including those traveling to America, as good luck.

Another topic Pádraig discussed was the “American Wake,”gatherings for people who were emigrating to America. They began as early as the 1830s and the tradition continued up to the end of the 19th century. The general feeling was that the good life existed in Ireland. After this time, the possibility that they would return was greater so there was not that same sense of finality as there was during the 19th century.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Dr. Ó Healaí’s presentation was brilliant! He did a spectacular job not only giving a good presentation on Irish folklore, but also connecting it so fluidly to the Irish emigration experience. His presentation was very relevant to our project in that it helped us understand how folklore impacted the Irish immigrants’ experience in coming to America.

### ***Political History: Teach an Phairsaigh, Rosmuc, Co. Galway***

Patrick Pearse was the revolutionary leader who was executed in the 1916 Easter Uprising. The cottage the group was able to visit was his summer cottage in Rosmuc. Patrick was born in Dublin on Great Brunswick Street (which is now Pearse Street) to James Pearse and Margaret Brady. James and Margaret had four children Margaret, Patrick, Willie, and Mary Bridget. The family was quite wealthy and had a successful business which allowed them to provide a good education for their children. During his life, Patrick was a barrister, teacher, poet, editor, and a journalist for the Sword of Truth. He visited Rosmuc in 1903 with the Gaelic League which worked to de-Anglicize Ireland and tried to revive the Irish language. This organization would send teachers around the country to teach people Irish and Patrick went to examine those who applied in Rosmuc. Patrick only meant to stay a day but remained there a week because he fell in love with the area and soon came to Rosmuc as much as possible. He decided to purchase a house in Rosmuc and in 1908 bought the present day site for £10. Patrick garnered a great deal of inspiration from this area and two of the most famous political writings were created here.

Patrick founded a school in Dublin, St. Hendis in 1908 which was the first of its kind because the subjects were taught mainly in Irish. After two successful years the school moved to a bigger building in Rathfarnham. Patrick also opened up a girls’ school called St. Eta’s. During the summer, Patrick often took the boys to Rosmuc and gave them Irish lessons during the day and during the evening took the children to mix with the locals in Irish. The students would camp out in front of the house because there was not enough room for them inside. When Patrick was executed in the 1916 uprising, the school was not the same. His sisters tried to keep the school open but it eventually closed in 1935. In 1921 the Black and Tans came to the

cottage and burned it down but in the late 1920s and early 1930s the community rebuilt the cottage which was eventually willed to the State.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* The visit to this cottage was excellent in that it provided a very manageable and through look into the dense and oftentimes overwhelming Irish political history. The tour guide did a wonderful job bringing the group up to speed on the history of Patrick while giving the group just enough time to explore the cottage independently.

### ***Irish Emigration to America: Máirtín Breathnach, Carna Center, Co. Galway***

Máirtín began explaining how the Penal Laws expressed anti-Catholic sentiment, and the English were trying to put the Irish in a position where they could never be in a position to be a threatening people. He spoke a bit about Michael Dwyer and how he was sent as an outlaw to Australia even though he was only really fighting for their freedom. He also mentioned O'Connell and the Catholic Emancipation.

He also spoke about the corn laws – corn was not strong enough for the constitution of the Irish who were eating potatoes four times a day and milk. Part of the potato crop failure was due to the Irish only cultivating one kind of potato. The famine was very difficult for the Irish, especially those who were in more remote areas where food help rarely reached. In addition, survival was based on the work done because set wages did not exist at that time, so if a person couldn't eat and was too weak to work, they would simply starve and have no way out of their situation. During the Black '47 (1847) men, women and children were hired to build roads that went nowhere to nowhere in order to make some money. Workhouses were set up, but disease was rampant and people were dying in absurd numbers. In addition, the peat hadn't dried, so there was no heat. Máirtín mentioned the idea of a pauper's coffin, which was used for those who were too poor to pay for a coffin. This particular coffin's bottom part would open and drop the deceased person into the grave and could be reused.

Máirtín also discussed how the home system was structured. The father trained the son and the mother trained the daughter. The father taught the son how to thatch the home, sew the potatoes, cut the turf and the drying process, how to fish, and how to build the boat and the home. They were a self-sufficient entity. In addition, the people had a great knowledge of the weather, which was being lost because it had been passed down for hundreds of years and could not really be written down. They would pay attention to the sea, the birds, the fish, etc.

He recounted the act of kindness of a Native American tribe who sent £710 during the famine year of 1847 to the Irish, just 16 years after they had experienced the Trail of Tears. The Queen had only offered £10 to their cause. The Irish were finally able to split from the English and be their own country. In recent times, they had a period of great economic growth with the Celtic Tiger since they joined the European Union, but that period seems to be ending.

Máirtín then explained how the first wave of immigrants consisted of about a million Irish people who mostly settled in areas like Boston and had to settle on the lowest rung of society. In New York they were more hospitable but there was resentment against all immigrants in the United States, in part due to the fear of losing jobs that Americans felt belonged to them. Máirtín also mentioned the high death rate on the ships that made the transatlantic voyage to America. They even earned the name of 'coffin ships'.

Then Máirtín explained a bit about the origins of the Gaelic League and Revival as well as people like Padraig Pearse. He also mentioned players in the political game, such as Michael Collins.

*Assessment/Suggestions for future cultural studies:* Many of the themes in Máirtín's presentation were redundant with topics covered earlier. So although we enjoyed his company immensely, this lecture was unnecessary as were able to master this content through other activities during the week.