

DOOLOUGH - The Lake of the Sand Banks

Area - 2,493 acres

Population -	1841	-	581
	1851	-	304
	1911	-	311

1855 - Landlords: Arthur Bingham, W.H. Carter, The Minors Cormick and Michael Clery.

Sixty one dwellings, and a herds house. In the 1860s, the houses were along the seashore and near the Caislean, "Sean Baile".

The houses were built of stone, thatched and without any chimneys. "There was a tax put on the chimney and on every window and on that account the people did without them to avoid tax". (91)

When the roads were made houses were erected inland close the road in Ballure.

Landlords

In 1585 Sir Edmund Barrett, who belonged to a Munster branch of the Barretts, had a castle here. He was knighted by Queen Elizabeth I for his favours to the Crown. "His sons, Edmund and Richard were brought up in England and were attached to the household of Lord Essex in 1594. Edmund, also called "The Baron of Erris" did good services in the wars as Captain of a Company, and received grants of abbey lands and of forfeited estates, and a pension in respect of his wounds and services". (92) Two of his sons fought in the Battle of Kinsale, on the side of the English Army. For their loyalty to the Crown, King James I, in 1605, gave Sir Edmund further lands in Erris and a licence to hold a fair at Doolough. Edmund also received the right to transfer his estate to his sons William, Richard and Edmund and their kindred in turn. "Strange as it may seem these Barretts, so much petted by the Crown went into armed revolt against it. They were shot and hanged like dogs and their property confiscated". (93)

By 1619 Michael Cormuck, another Munster man, living in a large castle at Inver, had taken over Doolough and its castle. Later, after the Cromwellian Wars the property passed into the hands of the Shaens. Bingham and Carter acquired the property through their marriages to Frances and Susannah Shaen, daughters of Arthur Shaen, in the mid-eighteenth century.

The remains of the old Barrett castle were plainly visible until about fifty years ago. The stones from the Castle, outhouses and cobble-stone yard were removed for the making of roads and houses in the early part of this century. The site of the castle is now the property of the Reilly family.

In the last century the Bingham family built a lodge in this townland in which they lived. They also built a pound a few hundred yards directly south of the National School house. They named a landing area here, Melchombe, after a place in Dorset in the south of England, from which they are believed to have originated. Old people say they were cruel landlords. Arthur Shaen Bingham of Doolough had some tenants on his estate "with whom he was on bad terms", reported the Belmullet police. (94) He was fired at near Shraigh on October 3rd 1881, while returning to Doolough from Belmullet. Afterwards, he was given police protection. The police rounded up some suspects whom they later

released, and reported to Dublin that "no tracks that could be turned to good account were found on the scene and there is no clue as to the guilty person". (95)

Many evictions had taken place in the preceding years in which the tenants were shown little mercy. At the time, the United Irish League were very active, some turning to arms to force the landlords to relinquish their estates. On March 15th 1882, George T. Shaen-Carter was fired at, at Attycunnane. There was £500 reward and free passage out of the country for anyone who would give information leading to a conviction. There was a conspiracy of silence. Two months later, May 13th 1882, Dublin Castle received a telegram, "Thomas Barrett, of Doolough, a small farmer shot last night in his own house, has died of wounds, one arrest on suspicion". (96) On the previous day, at a fair in Bangor, Barrett was said to have told a person, "I can leave my hand this day on the man who shot Carter". The suspect for Barrett's death was later released without charge.

In 1899, the landlords were approached by the Congested Districts Board about the sale of their estates for the benefit of the tenants. Arthur Shaen Bingham, Doolough responded "I am willing to sell some parts of my property in Erris provided I am paid such a price for the sale as I think sufficient". (97) Most of Doolough was eventually acquired by the Congested Districts Board and Land Commission, and then stripped and divided among the tenants. The Bingham family retained the lodge and surrounding lands. Denis Bingham was the last of that surname here. When he died, the estate passed to his nephew, Arthur Shaw.

Also living in this townland in what was the home of Maura Corrigan, National Teacher, Pollathomas, is a Mr Carter, a descendant of W.H. Carter who at one time owned half of Erris.

Schools

In 1826, there was a hedge school here. Andrew Walsh taught thirty two children "in any convenient dwelling". (98)

The first National school house in Doolough (Roll 7879) was established in 1857. It was a one room (thirty feet by fifteen feet by eight feet) high school built of stone and mortar with a clay floor, and thatched. The furniture consisted of 3 desks, 6 forms, 1 table and 1 press. There were 134 pupils on the roll taught by one teacher, Redmond Carrick. He was 31 years of age, a native of Co. Limerick and had taught in Belmullet Workhouse school before coming here. His salary from the Board was £14. Fr. Patrick Malone was the manager. (99) The largest number of pupils attending the school in any one year was in 1880 when there were 156 on the Roll. In 1888 there were only

two schools in the inspector's area in which Irish was being taught, one was Doolough. J.A. O'Connell, the inspector wrote at the time "Irish is the mother tongue of the children and although they may use English in the school, they use the vernacular once they leave the school door". (100)

In August 1914, Mr Dale, Inspector, states, "The pupils speak Irish fluently. They benefit to the full by the teaching of both languages. In some cases there is great mental power and development shown. This is notably the case in Doolough National School". (101)

There was a time when children were punished for speaking Irish. Catherine (Kitty) O'Toole of this townland said on her 100th birthday in 1956 that "she was forbidden to speak her native language at school and had a tally suspended from her neck which was notched whenever she was heard speaking Irish in public. A "monitor" visited the village in the afternoon and children heard speaking Irish were punished in school the following day". (102)

In 1888, Doolough school (Roll 7879) was replaced by a new school Roll 13383 which came into operation the following year. (103) With the introduction of compulsory education in 1892 the number of pupils on the Roll rose considerably. Evening classes for men over eighteen years of age were held here in 1902 towards which a grant of £24.15.0 was made. At least two subjects had to be taught. Books were provided. The average attendance at the evening classes was thirty two. (104)

In 1966, Doolough National School (Roll 13383) closed and the children were taken by bus to Geesala school. Shortly afterwards, the vacant school was bought by the Leonard family from Dublin, and renovated to form a holiday home. The following are some of the teachers who taught here: Michael Henry, Seamus Henry, Paddy Quinn, Tony Donoghue, and probably the best known teacher of all, Eileen Corkery from Dingle, Co. Kerry. She married Guard Sheridan who was stationed at Bangor and a native of Co. Donegal. She came to Doolough in 1920 and taught here until the school closed in 1966. The number of pupils from this school who acquired third level education is some reflection on the high quality of her teaching. Two of her pupils, Patrick Lindsey and Paddy O'Toole became Ministers in Dail Eireann.

Fishing

Writing to the Board of Education concerning Doolough in 1857, Fr. Patrick Malone says, "the population of this area consists of small farmers and agricultural workers who derive part of their support from fishing". (105)

In 1853 W. Watson, a fishing officer attached to the Doolough Coast Guard Station sent the following report to the government regarding the fishing conditions in this district: "1852 - 189 second class boats fished, 520 fishermen, no boys. 1853, 185 boats fished, 677 fishermen and 51 boys. Observation: Fishing much improved. No new curing establishment has been formed. There is one in existence. The fishing would be more productive if the men had better boats and gear". (106)

The fishermen went out to fish from Doolough Point, also called "Rinn-a-Roan, where seals come in to bask in the sunshine. This is a safe harbour, well sheltered from the prevailing winds. Near here was a Mass Rock where Mass is believed to have been celebrated during the Penal Times. A half mile east of the Point and by the seashore are the ruins of the Coast Guard station. An officer of this station named Gaughan married a girl called Winters in the old chapel on Illan Glas, Bunawillan, sometime about 1840. Fr. James Donoghue, Doolough was the celebrant. There were three Donoghue priests in the Killala diocese: Fathers James, David and John. All three were from Doolough.

Ship Wrecks

Many vessels have been lost on this coastline. The Thompson, the Mitchell, both merchant ships, and the Lee, a coastguard boat, were lost on this coast. During the 1940s, the Thelma, with a load of coal, dragged anchor from Elly Bay and drifted onto Doolough Point where she was wrecked. Hammond Lane Foundry, Dublin, towed the wreck to Belmullet where they dismantled it and took away all the iron which was scarce and expensive during the war. Some of the coal can still be seen amid the rocks at the point.

Roads

During the Public Works for the Distress in 1846 and 1847, two new roads were laid in this townland. One was built from the main road along the shore to the Coast Guard Station costing £140 and the other from the main road through the townland to the Point at Rinn-a-Roan costing £400.

Emigration

Doolough has shed more than its share of tears at the parting of its sons and daughters to foreign lands. In 1954, Mrs Kitty O'Toole, aged 99, talked about the time her sister, Sally O'Malley, went to America. "For a week before leaving she went round to every house in Doolough, to all the neighbours and bid farewell to them..... Representatives from every house in the village visited her home the night before departure

and had an "American Wake" in the house..... People came and discussed friends of their own who had already gone to America and requested the intended emigrant to take messages of good wishes to them..... At bed-time when the visitors were leaving they all bade goodbye again to Sally O'Malley. Early next morning, relatives and friends gathered to accompany her and escort her part of the journey. As they advanced from the house, people came out of their houses along the way and joined the procession until it reached the crossroads of the outskirts of the village and hand-shakes and goodbyes were all gone through again and then the emigrant mounted behind her father on horseback and went to Bangor where she met the mail car from Bangor to Ballina". (107) "When a letter from America was received, word was usually sent to the near relatives and the following Sunday after dinner they visited the home the letter was received in to hear it read and get the news from America..... If there was any mention of anyone in America, the relatives of that person were informed and they came also to the house". (108)

During the "Free Emigration" of 1883 the following householders with their families from this village left Blacksod Bay on board an Allen Liner for America: Michael Padden, Mary Divers, Michael Crane, James Jordan, John Gaughan, Anne McIntyre, Mary Jordan, John Gaughan, John Cosgrave and Phillip Heveran. (109)

Pat Gaughan, a son of John Gaughan who went on a "Free Emigration" passage, composed a song, "Geesala Bay". The first two verses are:

*When Winter is over, I'll go as a rover
As fast as a plover, with courage so high
I'll start in the morning without any mourning
And keep as fast walking as you may rely*

*I'll go to New York or some other harbour
A passage I'll order without any delay
I'll sail on the billows across the salt water
And make for the harbour of Geesala Bay."*

Pat Gaughan never did return. Some returning exile probably brought the song home and passed it on to Jimmy Deane, Inish, Dooyork, who used to sing it.

During the stripping of the land in the earlier part of this century, five families left Doolough for Co. Meath, where they were given Land Commission dwellings and farms. In 1937, Darby Heneghan, David Heffron, Thomas Connell and their families left. In 1939, John Gaughan and family left for Co. Meath; and in 1953 John Carey and his family left Doolough to settle in Meath. The Heffron family now have a furniture factory in Navan and a furniture show house in Dunshaughlin.

Apart from fishing and farming, there has been little employment in this townland. In 1980 a factory for making concrete products was established here; but having met with many problems, was forced to close within a few years.

Personalities

Doolough has had many well known personalities, one being Sean O'Ruadhain who wrote two books, *Padraig Maire Bhan* and *Gear Scealti Grin*. The first was mostly an autobiography of his own life; Marie Bhan being his mother who was a fair haired woman. He also wrote short stories and did translations of existing works. He taught in Carysfort College, Dublin until he retired about 1950. He died about 1968.

At a Feis in Belmullet on St. Patrick's Day in 1904, J. Gaughan won first prize for singing, J. Ruane, another singer, was "highly recommended" while J. Carney won first prize for dancing a double-jig. All were from Doolough.

Michael McHugh of this village was a well known fiddle player. He played at dances throughout Erris. Poilin Ni Chiarain, at present a Northern Ireland Correspondent for Radio Telefis Eireann, needs no introduction. This townland is proud to claim her as its own.

G.A.A.

One of the earliest outstanding football players from Doolough was John Reilly, who played on the Erris team that beat Ballina in October 1929. Since then Doolough has turned out many other outstanding players, among them Martin and Kevin Barrett who played for Kiltane.