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National College of Art & Design  
Department of Industrial Design

*“The Unique Design, Function, and Survival of the  
Galway Hooker”*

by  
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Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and Design and  
Complementary Studies in Candidacy for a  
Bachelor's Degree of Design.



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# INTRODUCTION



*O my boat can safely float  
In the teeth of wind and weather  
and outrace the fastest hooker  
Between Galway and Kinsale  
When the black floor of the ocean  
and the white foam rush together  
High she rides in her pride  
Like a seagull through the gale.*  
(“The Queen of Connemara.” Francis A. Fahy)

The Galway Hooker (or Connemara Hooker) of the 1990's is steeped in history and folklore. This pleasure boat of today has its origins many centuries ago. Its modern day function is very different from its original use. The Hooker of modern times has retained most of its predecessor's design. The features of this boat, typically with a black painted hull and three rusty-red sails along with such details as sawn oak ribs, oak keel, stem and stern-post, larch planking (carvel construction), internal stone ballast, gaff rig, loose footed mainsail, etc., all combine to make it uniquely pleasing to the eye and safe and lively to sail.

The Galway or Connemara Hooker is associated with the west coast of Ireland as their names suggest. There are three classifications of Galway Hookers; Bád Mór (big boat), Leath Bhád (half boat) or Gleoiteóg, and then the smallest size, known as the Púcán.

For many centuries boating and sailing have been an integral part of life on the west coast of Ireland. With so many inhabited Islands, dependency on boats was a feature of life in the region. Indeed from earliest times man was anxious to launch himself afloat. One will endeavor to trace man's many attempts throughout the ages to travel over water in wooden vessels from dug-out canoes through to wooden crafts such as the Galway Hooker. This evolution of will be dealt with in some detail and an attempt will be made to establish a link between the Clinker or Carvel form of construction and the Galway Hooker. The voyages of St. Brendan in the 6<sup>th</sup> century were in wooden vessels;- the Norse invaded Ireland in wooden long-boats, and the seafaring O'Malleys traversed the waters in wooden craft. The Galway Hooker fits well into the pattern of maritime evolution of these boats. To establish the earliest reference to the Galway Hooker is considered important. To explore the origin of the word *Hooker* and





to hypothesise on the origin and functions of the vessel will be an integral part of the dissertation. One will look at the importance of the skills of the boat builders and related trades.

Depending on the area, the Hooker was used for different tasks such as fishing, transport of turf, seaweed and general cargo and smuggling. Today the region where the Hookers are most familiar starts from Slyne head and down the coast of south Connemara as far as Galway bay and Kinvara. ***“This span of 150 miles and the Aran islands, encompassed the waters that bred an able and classic sailing craft, locally built to traditional design and manned by equally able Connemara and Claddagh men.”*** (Scott. 1996. P.19)

One unique aspect of this craft which still survives today, is its uncompromising efficiency, requiring only the bare essentials for rigging and equipment with a minimum crew. However such a versatile craft did require a tradition of experienced and skilled sea-farers to sail them safely through the treacherous waters along the rocky coast, and highly skilled boat builders. The entire community would be involved in one way or another in the realization and maintenance of new and old Hookers. In order to validate its originality and unique design characteristics one must explore the function and origins of the Galway Hooker.

The following three chapters will endeavor to trace the history and origin of the Hooker, explore the boats past and present functions and environment, and to examine the construction and design of the boat in relation to the above. The first chapter will attempt to establish a clear origin for the Galway Hooker by looking at maritime history and other relevant cultural aspects. The second chapter will describe the physical implications and requirements of the Hookers' native region. Finally the last chapter will look at what is presently required and how a Hooker is designed and built.



**Chapter 1**  
**History and Origins of the Galway Hooker**





Ireland was not separated from Britain until the thawing of the Ice Age which caused the sea level to rise and made an island of Ireland.

*“According to experts, Ireland has been physically separated from Britain for some 10,000 years. There were for a time, no doubt, periods of winter freezing in the North Channel, but by the time the first colonists arrived here (about 8,000 BC according to some, about a thousand years later following the calculations of others) Ireland was quite definitely an Island, and those Mesolithic colonists can have come here only by sea.”* (de Courcy, 1992, P. 9)

*“Europe’s earliest civilizations grew up on the Island of Crete and was essentially maritime, and Greeks and Phoenicians spread learning and techniques all around the Mediterranean basin<sup>1</sup>.”* (de Courcy, 1992, P.10).

There is also substantial evidence that the Phoenicians sailed northward along the coast of Spain, France, Brittany, and along the west coast of Ireland. Trading channels were quickly established throughout Europe due to these Maritime routes.

Dr. John de Courcy writes that Ireland’s contribution to the greatest adventure mankind has ever embarked; -*“to understand the encircling seas and use them for man’s physical, spiritual and imaginative enrichment”*, has never been fully researched and explored to a level that it deserves. The sea has always been an important means of moving goods from one place to the other around the world.

Many more experts agree that Ireland held an important place in European sea-travel in the context of trade and as a base for further explorations as far as the America’s. In terms of the development of the Galway Hooker there are two main influencing factors, firstly from the Mediterranean and secondly from Scandinavia.

From the earliest times; *“men living in varying stages of culture were anxious to launch themselves upon river, lake, and sea”*. (Hornell, 1970, P.15).

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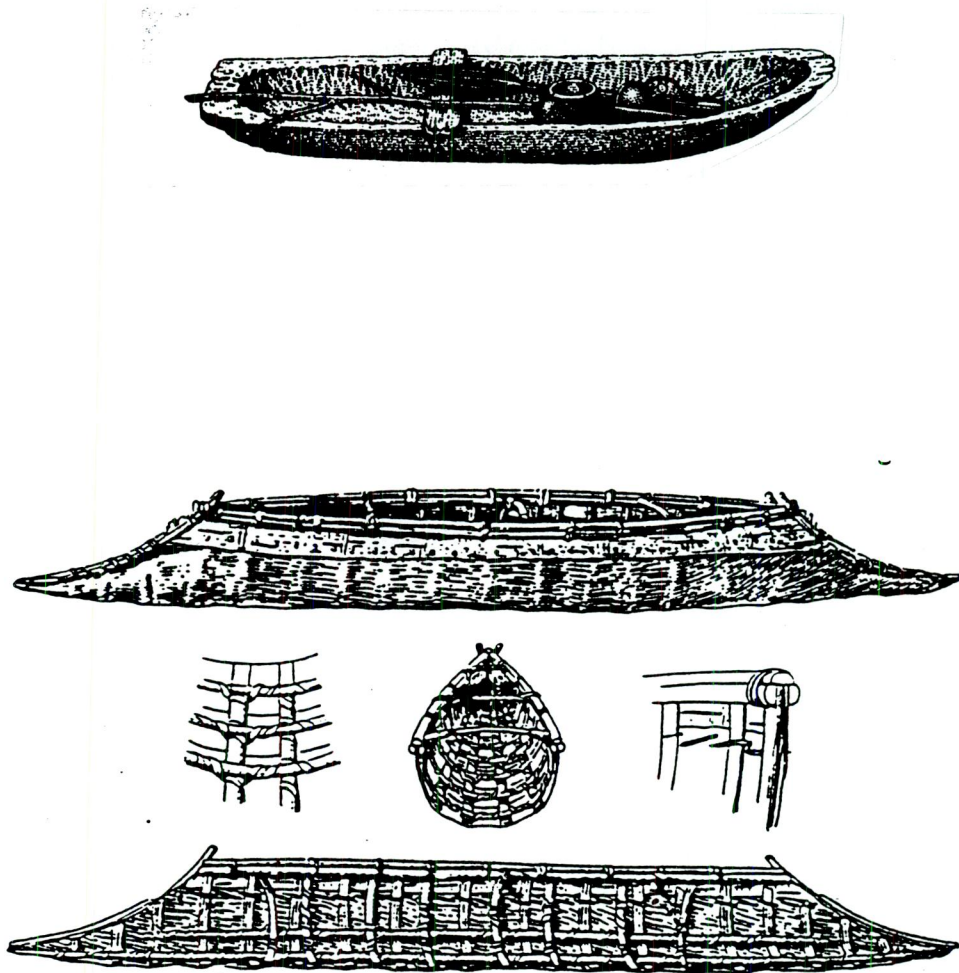
<sup>1</sup> According to de Courcy “..the Greek mariners sailed to ‘Thule’, which was probably stormy Shetland or Orkney, and sailors from Phoenicia rounded Africa long many centuries before Portuguese Vasco da Gama.” (de Courcy, 1992, p. 2)



Man very quickly discovered that the sea held many advantages. Using the most basic raw-materials that were readily available he promptly set off to explore where the ocean would lead him, unaware that his planet was 70% ocean.

Man's first boats were probably logs which he would have used to cross a lake or river, using his hands a paddles. The development from this would have led to the building of a raft by lashing some logs together. Quickly, early man discovered how to make dugouts and bark canoes.

Illustration of Dug out and Bark Canoe.



TEXT-FIG. 27. A Kutenai bark canoe. The top figure shows it in elevation; the bottom figure in longitudinal section. The middle figures, left to right, show the method of lashing the ribs to the stringers, an interior view looking toward one end, and details of the gunwale. (After Otis T. Mason, 1901.)

Soon the bark canoe led to the first plank built canoes which, according to Hornell, were made of three planks, without frames; the planks sewn together





edge to edge, or, alternatively overlapped. (Hornell 1970. P.188). It is from this point that the common European designs of planked boats known as *Clinker* or *Carvel* developed.

***“In the Clinker build the frames are inserted after the hull planking has been assembled; in the Carvel the frames are pre-formed and to these the planking is subsequently nailed. In the former the planks are overlapped; in the latter they are arranged edge to edge”.*** (Hornell. 1970. P.189.).

It is at this stage that the Galway Hooker finds its origins. The Carvel build is again acknowledged as being of Mediterranean origin by Hornell, he also states that; ***“all the evidence available indicates that the Carvel build was the distinctive and indeed the sole type of boatbuilding followed in Greek and Roman times”.*** (Hornell. 1970. P. 194.). Hornell’s description of the procedure for Carvel building interestingly, is the same procedure used to this day for the Hooker.

***“(a) the frames - floors and ribs - are preformed and are erected upon the keel in their permanent position before the planking-up of the bottom and sides; (b) as the planking is placed in position, each strake is nailed, spiked or bolted to the frames already erected; (c) the planks in each strake are fitted edge to edge to those above and below; (d) some soft material (oakum, cotton rags, leaves moss or fiber) is required to caulk and make watertight the seams between the various strakes, and (e) a greater thickness of planking is needed to allow for efficient caulking.”*** (Hornell 1970. P.193.)

At this point it is important to consider Bob Quinns’ theory on the origins of the people of Connemara, which is home to the Connemara Hooker, or Galway Hooker as it is more commonly known. This Theory is based on the established links between a north African civilization which traveled up throughout the western European coasts as far as the west of Ireland, long before the Celts<sup>2</sup> arrived. A documentary entitled “Atlantians” which Bob Quinn recently made was based on his theory.

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<sup>2</sup> ***“Scientifically speaking ‘Celtic’ is not a racial but linguistic category. Celtic speakers can only be loosely described as Indo-Europeans, like Teutons, Slaves, and Latins. Their language evolved, from a root common to them and the other three categories mentioned, through the circumstances of their history.”*** (deCourcy. 1986. P. 55)









(Severin. 1978. P.3.). Hornell suggests that St.Brendan's subsequent voyage was in a wooden boat; ***"...his second or wood-built boat voyage 525 - 527 AD"***

(Hornell. 1970. P.140.). Most of this information is attributed to legend, ***"Yet there is enough historical evidence to demonstrate that many of these men were adept in navigating the long known but perilous Atlantic seaways."*** (de Courcy. 1986. P.33). There is evidence that large amounts of maritime traffic was present in Ireland with many commercial and military interests.

In 844 AD a Norse-Irish expedition left Ireland for Cadiz and temporarily seized the City. ***"Two Spanish Arab embassies visited the Norse settlement in Dublin for negotiations"***. de Courcy continues to describe how the same Arab scholars wrote about Ireland, '... a great island in the encircling ocean, in which are flowing waters and gardens.' and noting its central location in trading routes from other land masses. (de Courcy. 1986. P. 54).

The documentary Atlantians draws the conclusion that natives of Connemara are not in fact Celtic but of Arabic origins. Quinn highlights similarities with today's cultural traditions in Connemara and north African tribes such as the Berbers. His theory is based on links which are commonly found in the Gaelic and other *Celtic* languages, one example being traditional folk-singing known as "Seanos" singing. Other strong similarities are found in the traditional music and crafts of the Celtic regions, and those of north African civilizations in particular the Berbers. The uniqueness of Seanos singing lies in the fact that it only found among Celtic and Arabic cultures. The Arabs call it *Musical Speaking*, the Connemara folk call it *Speaking the song*. Another unique coincidence is the actual Irish language, only three other languages place the verb first in a sentence, they are Arabic, Hebrew and Berber.

The only thing separating north Africa and Ireland is the sea. We already established that the first colonists must have come by the sea. Until recently the most common and preferred boat which was used in everyday life among the





people of Connemara was the Pucán<sup>3</sup> (the smaller version of the Galway Hooker). The Pucán had a dipping Lug sail or Lateen rig<sup>4</sup>.

Another interesting fact is the origins of the Connemara Pony, unique to the west of Ireland and thought to be descendants of a Spanish breed, and believed to have arrived through the numerous Spanish shipwrecks, in particular those of the Armada. We must remember that Spain was for a long time dominated by the Arabs.

There is a more contemporary suggestion of north African influences in Irish folklore found in the play 'Deirdre' by W.B. Yeats. In it for instance, there is reference to a Berbery ape and of Libyan<sup>5</sup> people fighting for their king. Today the Berbery People live throughout north African countries such as Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Morocco is very similar to Connemara, it was conquered many times but has always retained its traditional crafts and culture which are only fossilized in Europe. For example there are very strong similarities in Berber Jewelry to that of the Tara brooch. The suggestion of Byzantine influences in the Ardagh chalice is very plausible.

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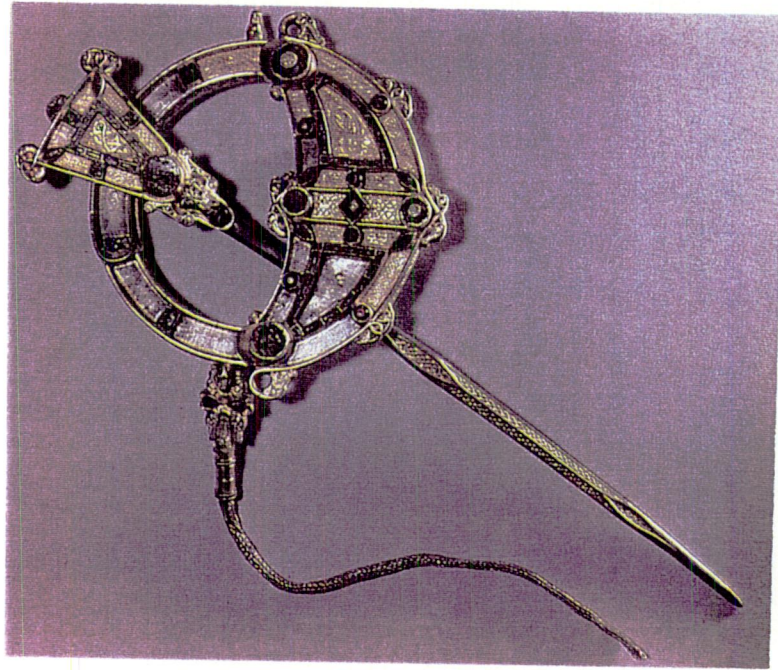
<sup>3</sup> Note that Púcáns bare the origins of the later developed Hooker and Gleoiteógs. Originally Púcáns had a different rig known as a Lateen rig or dipping lug sail, which mean they only had a main and fore sail, opposed to an additonal fore sail with the Gaff rigs of the bigger boats.

<sup>4</sup> The Lateen Rig revolutionized thirteenth century sea travel, when it was invented by the Arabs. Today the lateen rig is still found on the north African coast on the Arabian Dows and Falucas.

<sup>5</sup> Lybia in the 16<sup>th</sup> century included most of north Africa.



Illustrations of the Tara brooch and Ardagh chalice

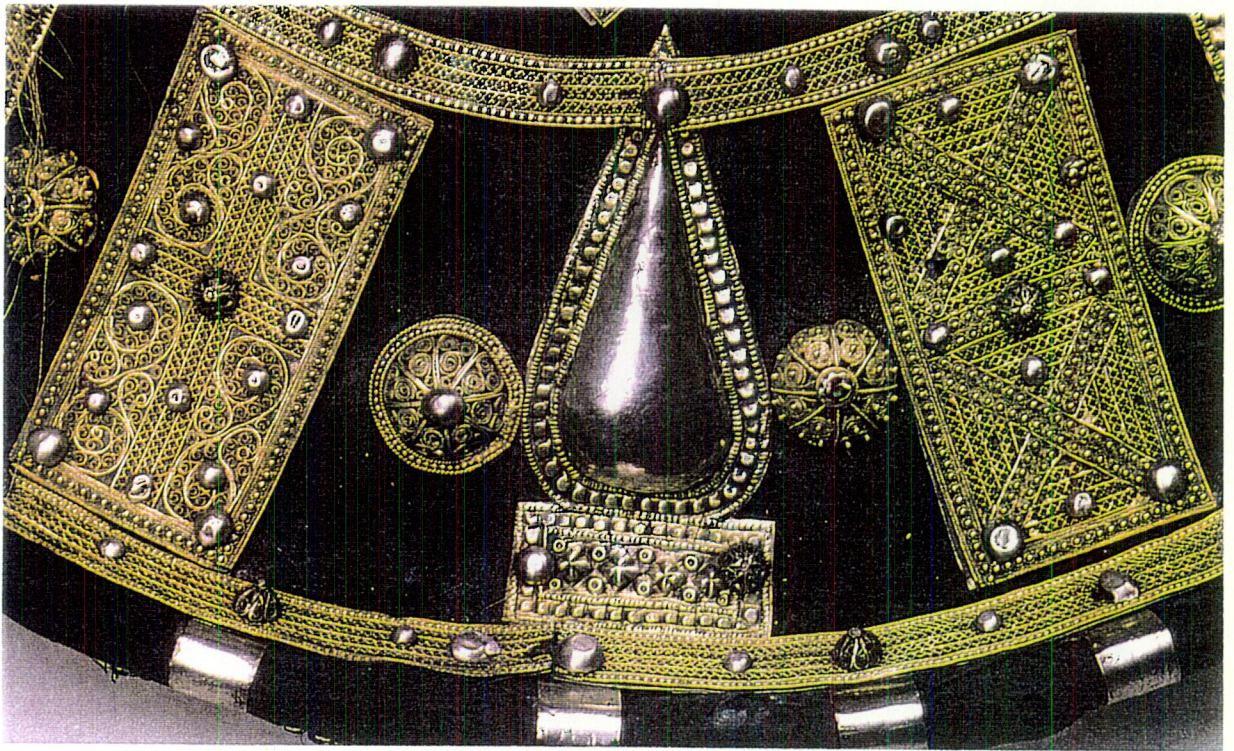


*The Ardagh Chalice (National Museum of Ireland)*





Illustration of a North African Shield.



David James from the Chester Beatty library in Dublin did some comparative studies on the similarities in Islamic and Celtic art. Particular similarities can be found in the book of Durrow. The Coptic influences in remote parts of the Sahara desert and the Coptic monks in Ireland sustain the suggestions of Arabic influences throughout Europe. Other evidence exist in traditions contained in language, music, and craft. The craft of boat building is among some of these





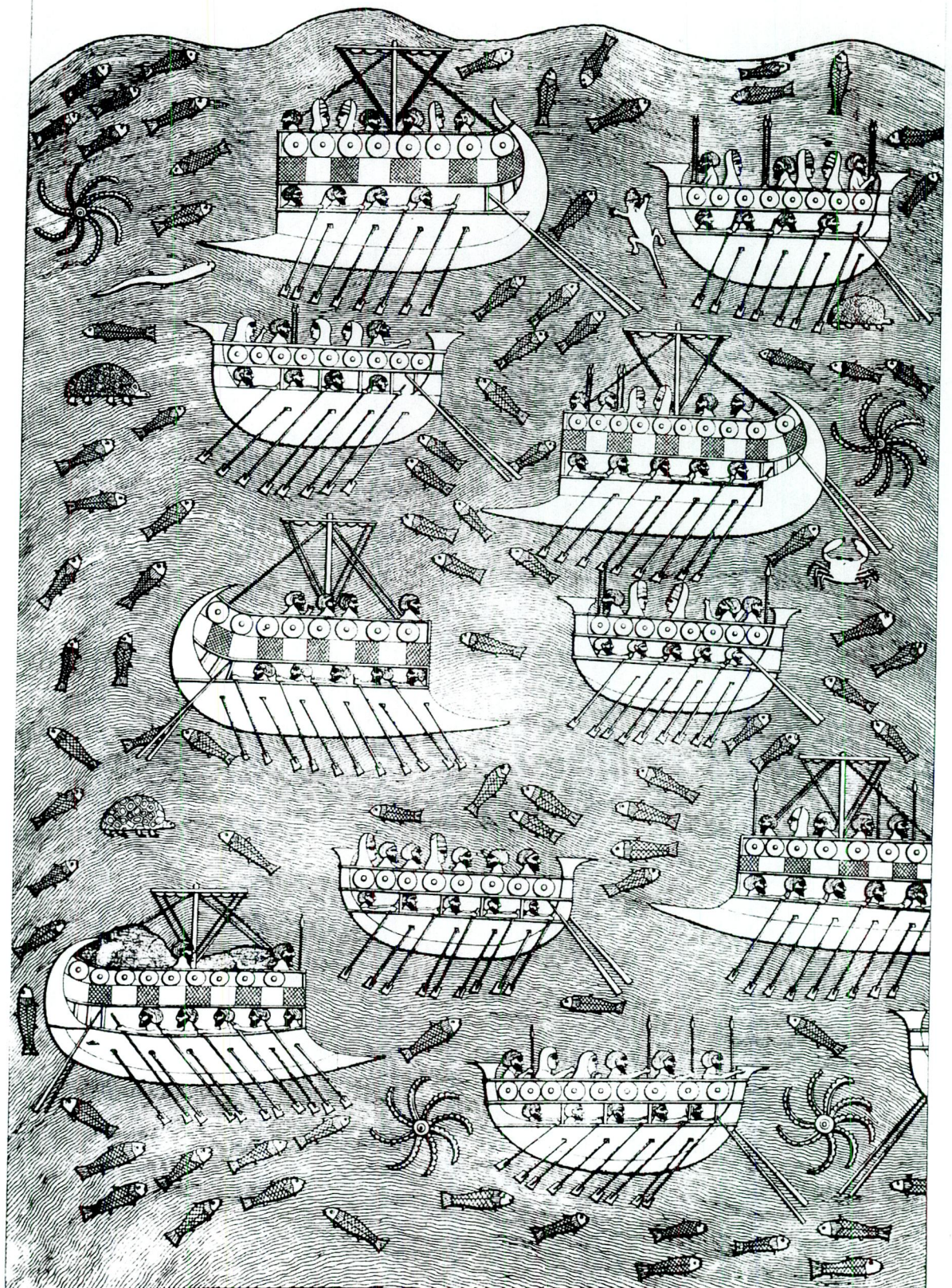
ancient traditions which still exist today. Christianity is the main reason for the rift which exists between Contemporary Europe and Islamic civilizations of the Mediterranean. Christianity has censored our very own heritage for example the Shila-Na-Gigs which have been for centuries kept secret from the population.

According to Chambers, before 700 BC the Phoenicians came to Ireland in Galleys *"Powered by rows of oars on each side and a single square sail"*.  
(Chambers. 1986. P. 25)





Illustration of early Phoenician Galley.







According to Farrell, *“when the Vikings invaded Ireland in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and Connemara at Ard bear<sup>6</sup> in 923 AD”* (Farrell. 1987. P. VI). Their influence was to prove significant on the maritime tradition in Ireland. This influence was to become evident in the ship and boatbuilding craft as well as the vocabulary of seamanship, *“The ship and boatbuilding craft in Ireland has never been the same since Viking days”* (de Courcy. 1986. P. 62). It was from Scandinavia that the wooden clinker building tradition came. Wexford for a long period after the Viking Age was renowned for its construction of war Galleys, built along the line of the Viking Longships. Ireland gained greatly from the invasion of the Norsemen *“the continuing importance of Ireland in the post Viking maritime Europe owes a lot to the maritime pattern established for the inhabitants of Ireland by the Vikings”*. (de Courcy. 1986. P.64).

Throughout Ireland there was never a unified sense of identity, the country was comprised of many clans and tribes throughout the country which were always coming or going and all of different background and cultures. Most of them quickly integrated with their neighbours. The main cities of the clans and tribes were usually significant trading ports which acted as independent gateways to trade. Towns such as; Youghal, Waterford, Galway, etc. would have had independent governing bodies. Incidentally Galway has always been known as *City of the tribes*.

In the Galway area there are two clans as sources of influence. The clan Teige O'Brien from the Aran islands were supposedly the protectors of piracy of the growing maritime trade of wine and honey from Spain and Portugal and a growing trade of salted herring from northern Europe. Salt had to be imported from Brittany where there was an abundance. One of the neighboring clans was the O'Malleys and O'Flahertys who were often in fierce conflict with the O'Briens. Evidence of Viking influences is traced as late as 1580 when the O'Flahertys and O'Malleys were reported to have used long ships to defend themselves from the English.

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<sup>6</sup> Ard bear is located at the south end of Clifden bay in Connemara.





*“The O’Malleys, sea-chiefs of the west, used Longships, ‘ Duine maith riamh ni raibhe d-ibh Maille, acht ‘na maraidhe’ --the only good O’Malleys are seamen.”*

*“..the father of Rodericke O’Flahertie, used longboats against the English.”*

(Farrell. 1987. P.28)

Again according to Farrell, Grace O’Malley<sup>7</sup> was reported to have used Longships and galleys as instruments of her power.

*“...in the west of Ireland then (1066) and for another four hundred years the ship used for warlike enterprises was the Hebridean Galley, a development of the Scandinavian Drakkar, in the use of which Granuaile (Grace O’Malley) in her day was celebrated.”*

(de Courcy. 1992. P. 13)

*“For centuries the O’Malleys had sailed the perilous sea routes to Ulster, Scotland ... Spain and Portugal in their swift and agile Galleys, powered by oar and sail, and in the three masted Caravel”.*

(Chambers. 1983. P. 20)

It is fair and true to say that Ireland was familiar with each type of boat, but it is evident that the boats were used according to their function. The Galleys used for long distance voyaging. and the Longships for coastal defenses.

The Aran Islands and Connemara traded mainly with the Mediterranean hence would have been exposed primarily to these influences in terms of boat building techniques and traditions. They obviously chose to stick to these traditions instead of the Scandinavian styles which are associated with clinker built boats<sup>8</sup> and which Connemara folk regarded as “rotten”. Equally in use in the Aran Islands and Connemara were small skin covered boats called Currachs<sup>9</sup> which were oar powered. These date back as far as the first or second century BC and were very popular because of their light and versatile design. They did not require any harbours or piers which were scarce and often inaccessible, and they could hold a decent cargo, even livestock.

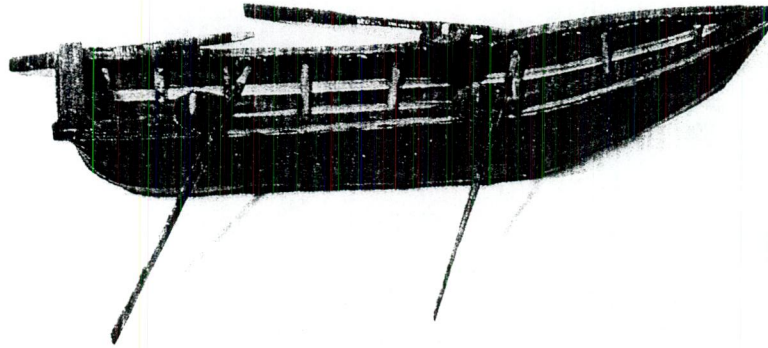
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<sup>7</sup> Grace O’Malley (Granuaile) 1530 - early 17<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>8</sup> Clinker boats for example are longships and longboats of Norse and Viking origins.



## Illustration of a Currach.



One of the main reasons why the Galway hooker still survives today is due to its use in the fishing industry. Since 1175 at least, Ireland had a thriving fishing industry which did almost all its trading with England and the Continent. Certainly by 1674, when the herring stocks failed and the fishing industry switched to mackerel, the method used was long line hook fishing from Galway / Connemara Hookers.

Having traced the development of boating from pre-historic times one has now reached the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Towards the end of this century John de Courcy Ireland states *that "the hooker begins to be mentioned on the south west coast of Ireland."* (de Courcy. 1986. P. 128). It is not possible to determine how far back the hooker's origins lie. However according to Hardiman's *History of Galway* (1820) we note that the larger Galway hooker developed after 1790 from much smaller versions such as the Pucán.

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<sup>9</sup> Note a distinction between *Currachs* and *Carracks* which are closer to Galleys.





Illustration of Pucán.



Lawlor states that in 1750 period *“when many of the local types of sailing craft began to take their final form. e.g. Donegal hooker, Kinsale hooker and the Galway hooker.”* (Lawlor. 1945. P.62)

The word hooker according to Farrell is not Gaelic, but was a Dutch word used to describe certain fishing boats from the thirteenth century. (Farrell. 1987. P.29). According to Scott the word hooker was also a Dutch word used to describe the actual hook line fishing method also from the thirteenth century. (Scott. 1996. P.76). One can assume that the original Galway Hookers had some Dutch influence. According to Farrell the Dutch had developed a craft during the middle ages for sailing in the shallows; these were variations of Norse craft. (Farrell. 1987. P.29)

Another popular activity was piracy, for centuries it was exercised by many clans, especially in the mid sixteenth century when it was rampant. It was at this time too, that the English king Henry VIII whose daughter Elizabeth was proclaimed Queen of Ireland, that the English government was urged to acknowledge the extent of Ireland’s wealth in fishing resources. This was due to





the growing threat from Spanish and Portuguese fishing fleets involved off Irish coastal waters. (Indeed not much has changed to this day in that regards despite national and European regulations). As the Irish at that time did not have a large enough fleet to prevent such an influx and cause some sort of blockade, the English refused to take any action to protect Ireland's fishing industry. This was not surprising in light of their policy towards Ireland. Due to the implementation of many trade restrictions and tariffs, many ships were sold to avoid seizure.

***"To destroy the Irish trade and to smash Irish shipping had always been an object of British ships, pirates or otherwise."*** (Lawlor. 1945. P. 36). Such Acts as the English Navigation Acts of 1660-1670 which compelled Irish manufacturers and traders to send their goods only in English owned ships, emphasizes their policies. Local piracy was the only line of defense, places such as Galway had a reputation where little mercy was spared to any unfortunate boat that happened to encounter their local fishing or patrolling vessels.

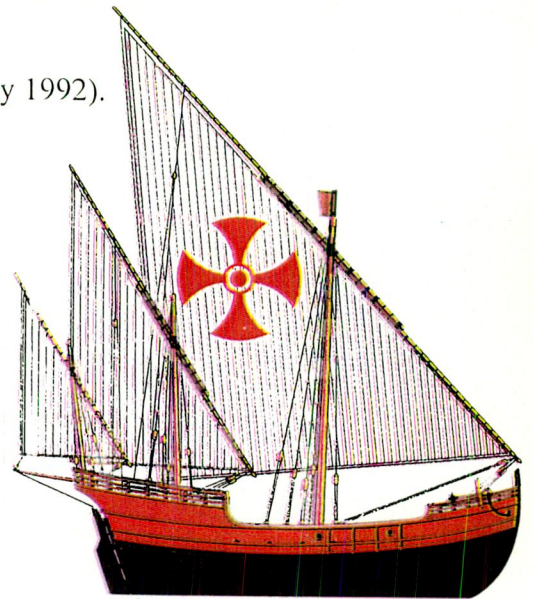
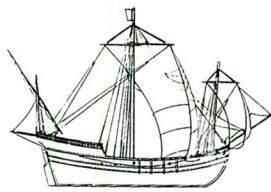
According to de Courcy it was not until the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century that northern Europeans and southern Europeans amalgamated their boatbuilding traditions.

The north with its stern rudder, square rigs, and clinker built boats with long extenuated sheer lines, the south having developed the Lanteen rig, and caravel construction, transoms, and little variation in the sheerline.

The west of Ireland was definitely exposed to such maritime developments by 1492 when Columbus stopped of in Galway before undertaking his voyage across the Atlantic in his Caravels.

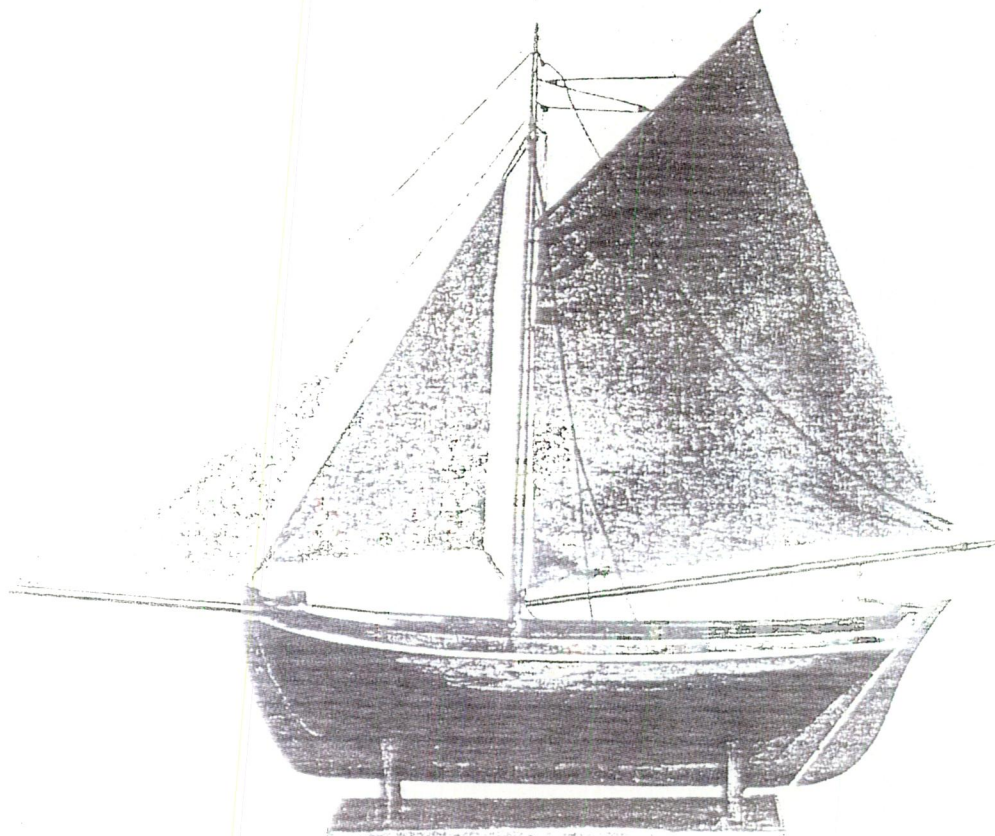


Illustration of both types of Caravel boats. (de Courcy 1992).



The Galway Hooker is a beautiful yet functional combination of both these styles, incorporating originally a Lanteen rig, stern rudder mounted on a transom, having the long extenuated sheerlines and of caravel construction. One can safely assume that the development of the first Galway Hookers took place when local boat builders used their adaptive skills and knowledge. Definitely by the 1800's Galway could claim to have developed their own unique design tailor made to their water and maritime activities.

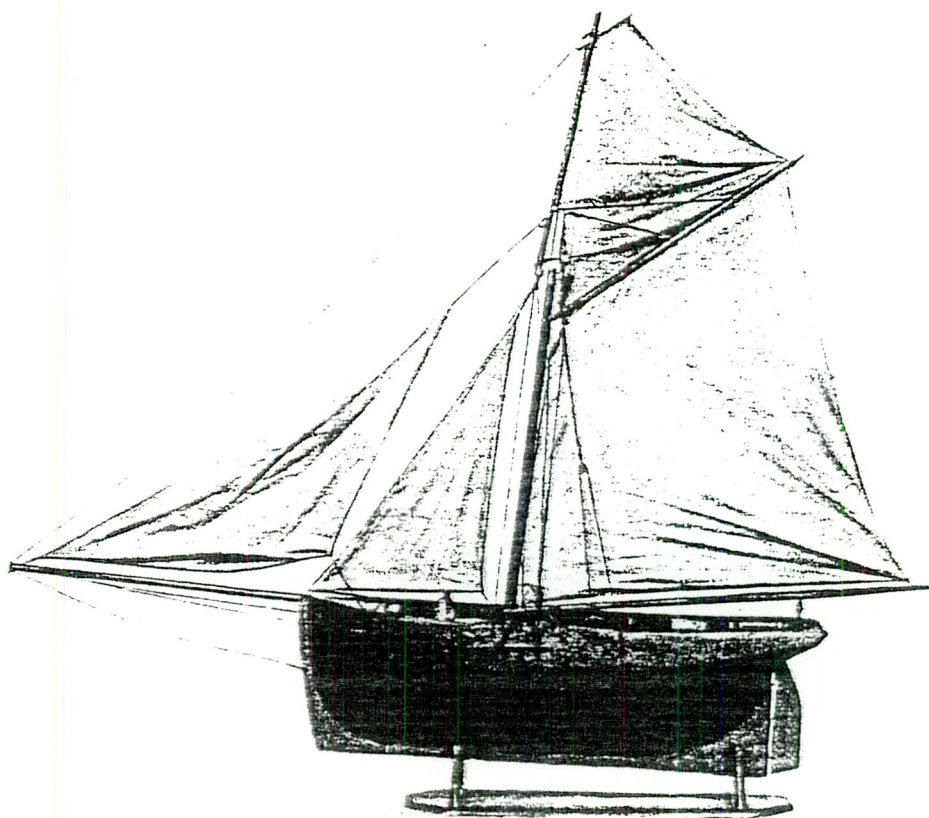
Illustration of a Hooker.





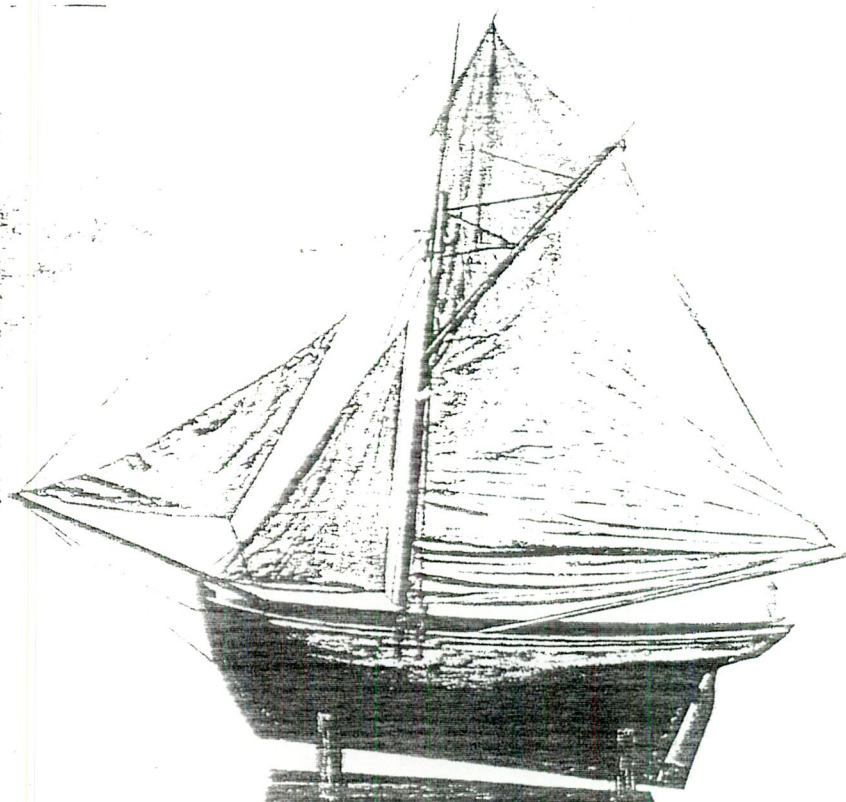


# Illustration of the Kinsale and Donegal Hookers.



*(By courtesy of the National Museum.)*

Local Types of Irish Sailing Craft.—The Donegal Hooker, a sturdy craft for the wild Western Seas.



Local Type of Irish sailing craft — the Kinsale Hooker.

The great era of Irish folkcraft, the passing of which is to be regretted.

*By courtesy of the National Museum.*

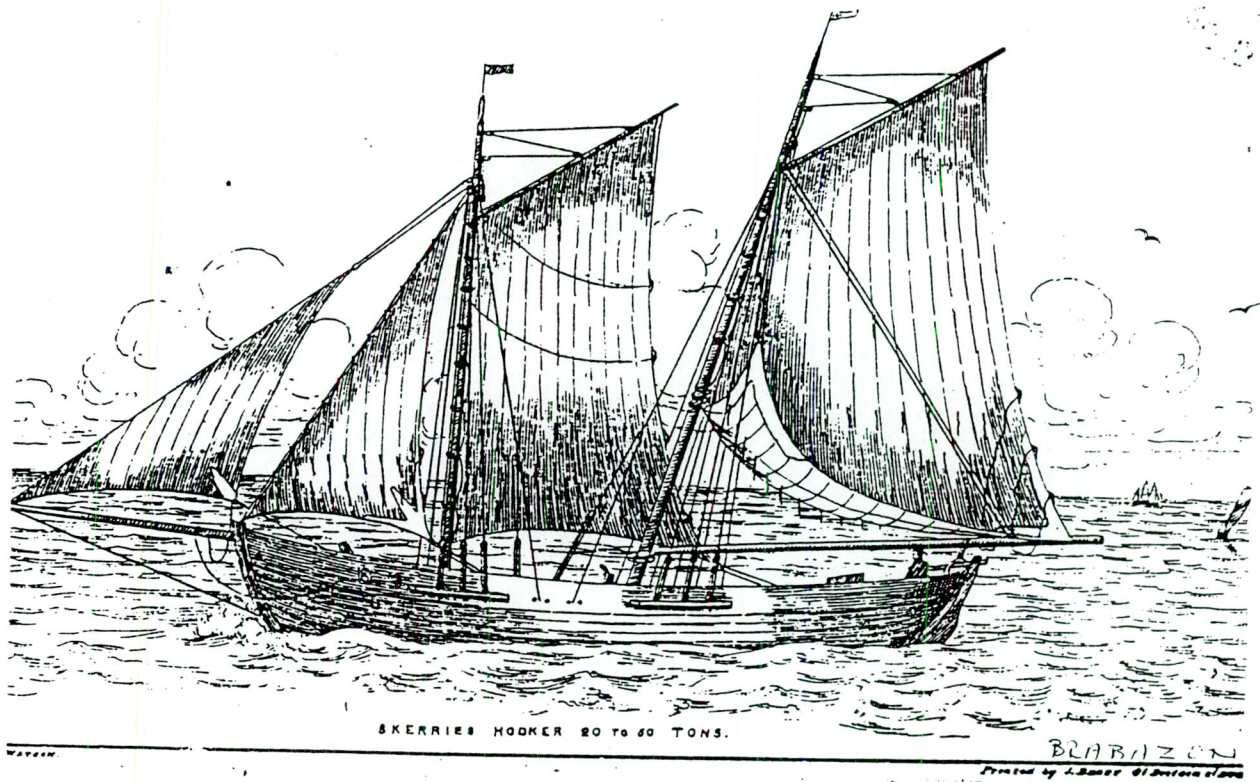


Illustration of the Kinsale and Donegal Hookers.





Illustration of a Skerries Hooker.



From the four illustrations one can see that the hookers share similar features. There are however some apparent differences. The Galway hooker has a transom stern raked at an angle of  $45^\circ$  to the keel with the rudder slung on a stern post. The rake of the stern post on the Kinsale hooker is nearly perpendicular with a counter stern. The Donegal hooker has a vertical stern post and would appear to have an elliptical counter stern. The Skerries hooker, from the diagram, would appear to have a pointed stern. The Boston hooker exhibits some features of the Galway hooker e.g. a transom stern and the “tumble-home”. *“Emigrants saw the introduction of the Galway hooker to the United States, the same Boston Irish hooker that over a 100 years later was to be quoted by ocean yachtsman Peter Tangvald as his choice of seagoing cruiser.”* (Scott. 1985. P.75).



The sail plan of the Galway hooker has changed little, a gaff mainsail is loose-footed with a small jib sail set on a bowsprit passing through the upper structure on the port side (left side when looking forward). No topsail was carried on the Galway hooker. The Donegal hooker has similar sail plan to the Galway hooker. The jib is large in comparison to the foresail (staysail) and the bowsprit passes through the upper structure on the starboard side (right hand side). A top mast to carry a topsail was another feature of the Donegal hooker. The sail plan of the Kinsale hooker can be likened more to the Donegal hooker than the Galway hooker. Like its Donegal counterpart it carried a topsail, however its jib sail is much smaller with the bowsprit resting on top of the stem. The standing and running rigging on all three are similar with only minor variations. The Skerries hooker is a much larger craft and is ketch rigged. The mainmast (at the front) carries two foresails and a boomless mainsail. The mizzenmast is raked aft and carries one sail.

The size of the Galway hooker changed from 1790 onwards. Before this date Hookers were only half the size of what they were to be in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hardiman recorded that *“Previously to 1790 the Claddagh fishing boats were little more than half of those used at present”* (Hardiman. 1820. P.293). The original size of the boats *“according to Dr. Young writing in 1776 was 4 to 6 tonnes.”* (Hardiman. 1820. P.292). From the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Fisheries Bounty Commission were encouraging an increase in the size of the hookers, to enable them to stay out at sea longer and to carry larger cargo. The aim of the Commission was to promote the fishing resources of the coast fisheries of Ireland by various projects such as the building of hookers. This was also going to facilitate trade along the coast between Galway and the scattered population of Connemara.

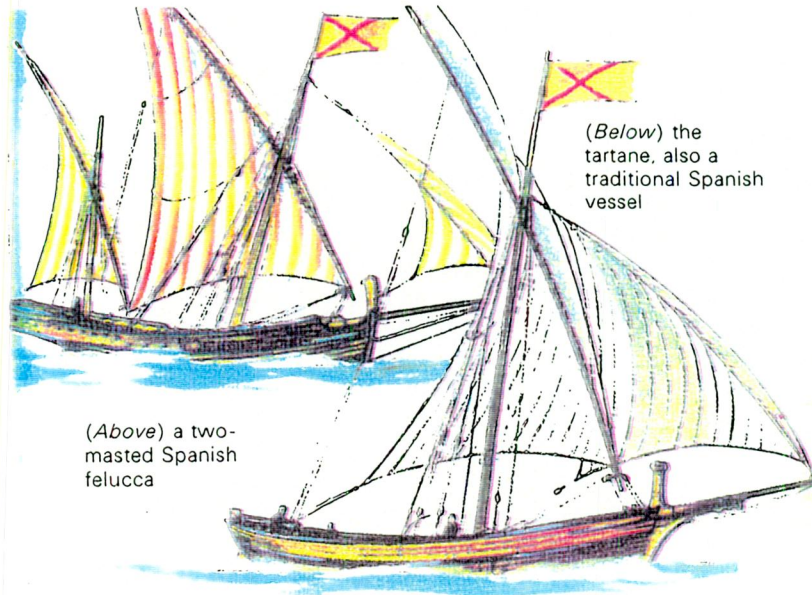
As well as the previously mentioned theories associated with the circumstances of the appearance of this type of boat on the west coast of Ireland the suggestion is made in W.H. Church's contribution to the Washington report of 1849, that the Hookers are of Spanish origin. He states that *“previous to the year 1588 the Spaniards frequented this coast much, and had permanent locations at Kinsale ... Dingle ... Galway; and I conceive the word ‘Hooker’ to be only an English*





*corruption of the Spanish word 'Urca' pronounced 'Ookra', a term for a small fore and aft rigged vessel, although I believe the word is now obsolete in Spain."* (Church. 1849. P.70). Jean-Pierre Guillou quotes Roy Clarke when stating that "the origin of the word probably goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century when the Spaniards used to call to Kinsale ... Dingle ... Galway." (Guillou. 1982. P.22).

Illustration of a Spanish Felucca.



According to Gilliland, writing in 1919, the origin of the Hooker is "....as a result of trade connections between Spain and Galway in past times." (Gilliland. 1919. P.163). According to Mr. Adrian O'Connell (boatbuilder previously residing in Errislannon, Clifden) *"before the days of deep docks at Galway, freighters from Spain had to anchor off, and probably land their cargoes using their own small sail boats, which in turn inspired local boatbuilders."* (Scott. 1996. P. 40).

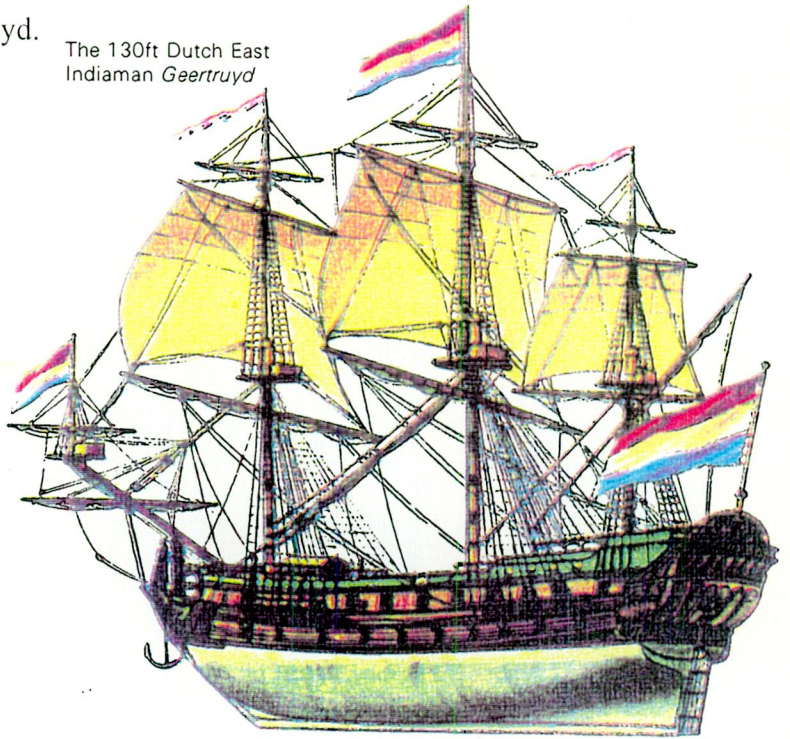
There is another school of thought which believes the Hooker to be of Dutch origin. *"These fat bellied craft ... known as Hookers, take their name from the old Dutch 'Hoeker' originally a two masted fishing or coastal vessel."* (Burnstead. 1955. P.742). Another reference to possible Dutch ancestry was produced by Hal Sisk of the Maritime Institute of Ireland. He suggests *"a link between Galway's export herring trade and the major outlet for this through*



*Cork where the world's first Yacht club was using sailing craft influenced by Dutch design."* (Scott. 1985. P.41).

Illustration of Dutch Geertruyd.

The 130ft Dutch East  
Indiaman *Geertruyd*

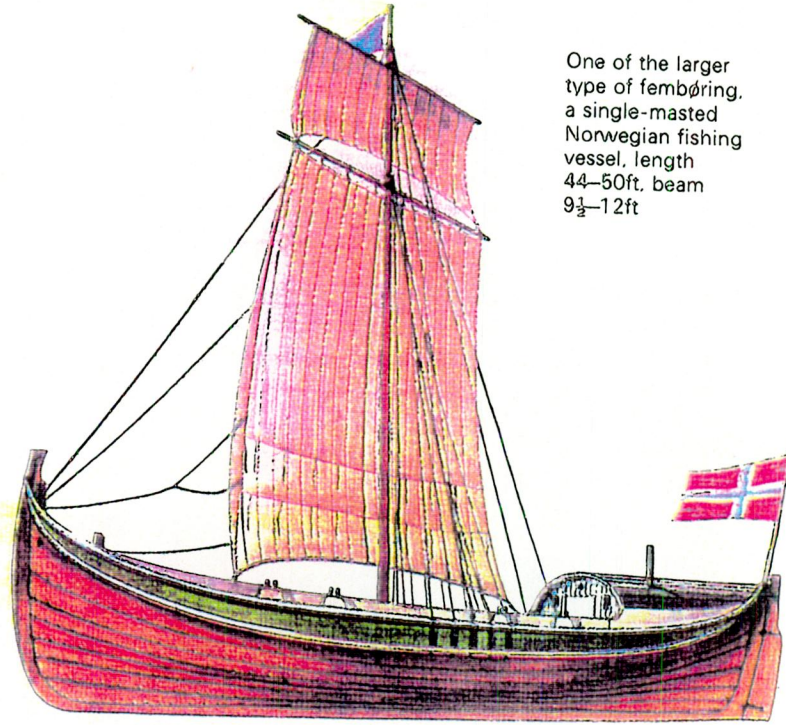


Dixon Kemp relates the origin of the hooker to Norway "*the Galway Hooker and Pookhaun exhibit evidence of Norwegian origin.*" (1891. P.412). Other than suggesting a Norwegian origin, Dixon Kemp doesn't offer any more detail on his theory. One is inclined however to relate this theory to the Norse influence which has been previously discussed.





Illustration of Norse Longship.



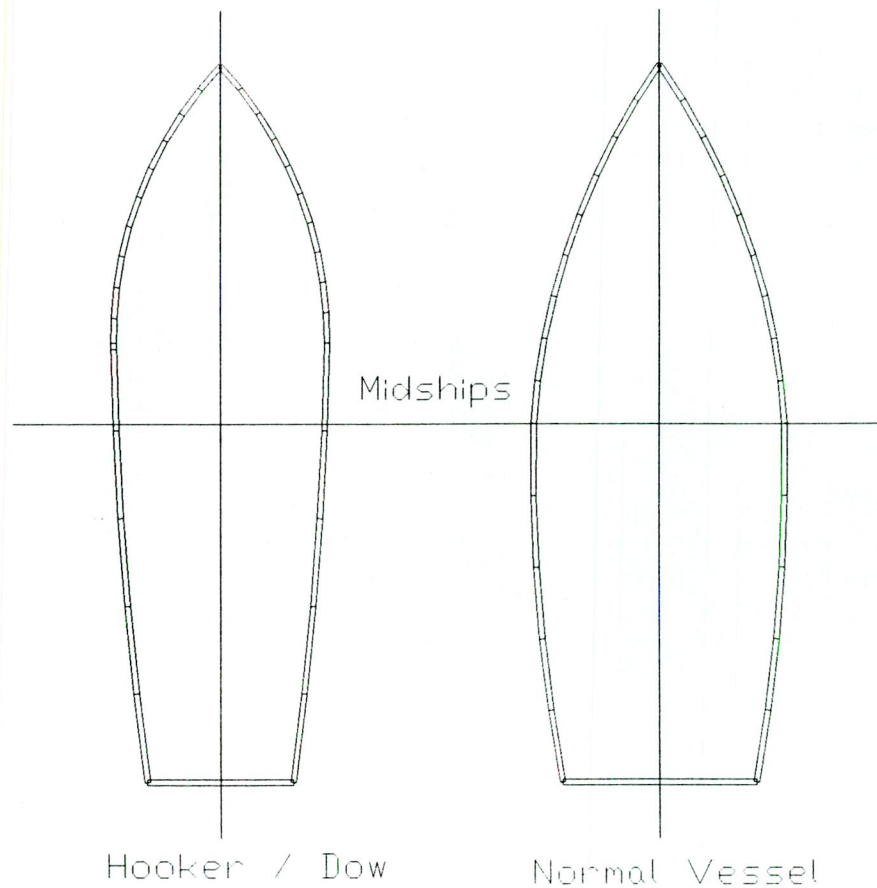
One of the larger  
type of fembøring,  
a single-masted  
Norwegian fishing  
vessel, length  
44–50ft, beam  
9½–12ft

That the Galway hooker originated in Galway is the theory held by Richard Scott who states that *“It is not unreasonable for Galwaymen to lay claim to the Hooker as their own, a very special craft tailor-made for their waters and to their needs when sail was the principal source of propulsion on their coasts.”* (Scott. 1985. P.45).

Another consideration is the unique shape of the hooker. Generally boats are usually widest at their mid-ships. However the Connemara hooker and the Arabian Dow are the only known boats to have the unique characteristic of being widest at their shoulders, (when taking the head to be the front of the vessel).



Diagram of the two shapes.

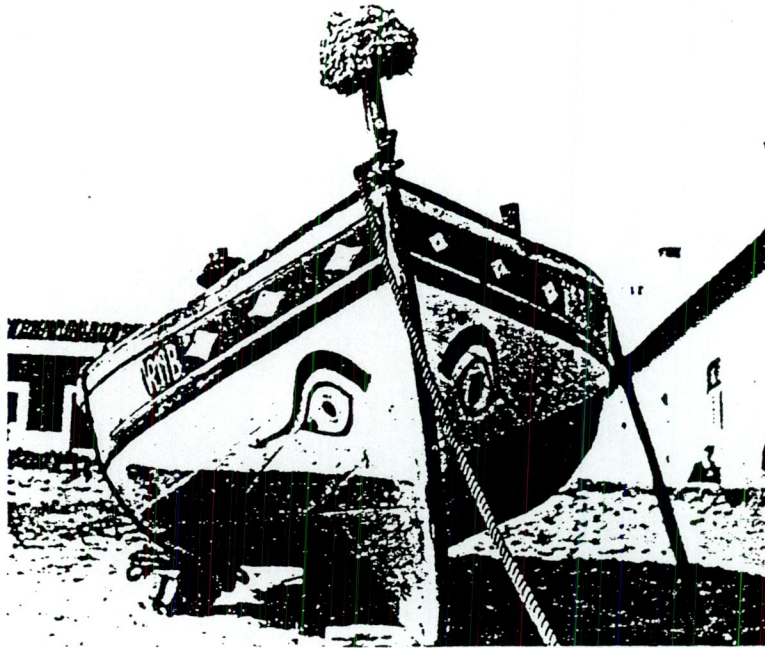


Considering that the Galway Hooker is carvel built and acknowledging that this is of Mediterranean origin, it seems reasonable to hypothesize that the Mediterranean influence is stronger than the Scandinavian. The clinker build is Norwegian in origin and there is no evidence of a clinker built Hooker. Examination of a photograph of a fishing boat in Portugal shows a resemblance to the bow section of the Galway Hooker.





Illustration of Portuguese fishing boat.



A fishing boat of Villa Real, Portugal, carvel built,

In the Hooker family the two smaller sisters of the Bád Mór are the Gleoiteóg and the Púcán. The word Gleoiteóg is possibly derived from the Irish word 'gleoite' meaning pretty. The word Púcán would also appear to be of Gaelic origin. One theory advanced from Josie Connelly of Cashel is that it may be related to the word 'Pucán', "*meaning a wrap around such as is used to bandage a hand or finger.*" The connection here could be associated with the action of swinging the lugsail round the mast.

Illustration of lugsailed Pucán (see p. ).

The Hooker (Bád Mór) and Gleoiteóg have similar hull shape (lines) and sail plan - a gaff high peaked main sail with a triangular foresail (staysail) and jib set on a bowsprit. The Pucán has a similar hull shape to the Hooker and Gleoiteóg, but has a different sail-plan, having only two sails. A dipping lugsail (Based on the Lanteen rig of the Mediterranean) and a jib set on a bowsprit. The Púcán had no standing rigging and the simple running rigging was favored for the developing Gleoiteóg and Bád Mór with a more complex Gaff rig.



An early lateen-rigged ship,  
widely adopted in the 9th and  
10th centuries AD by  
Mediterranean shipbuilders

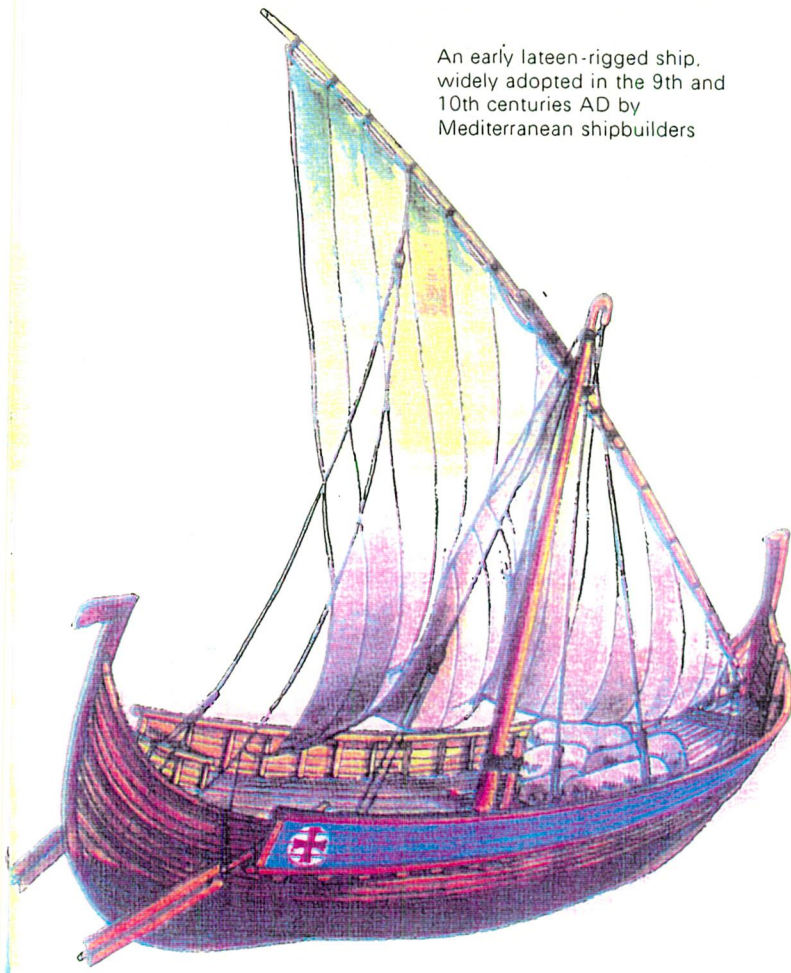
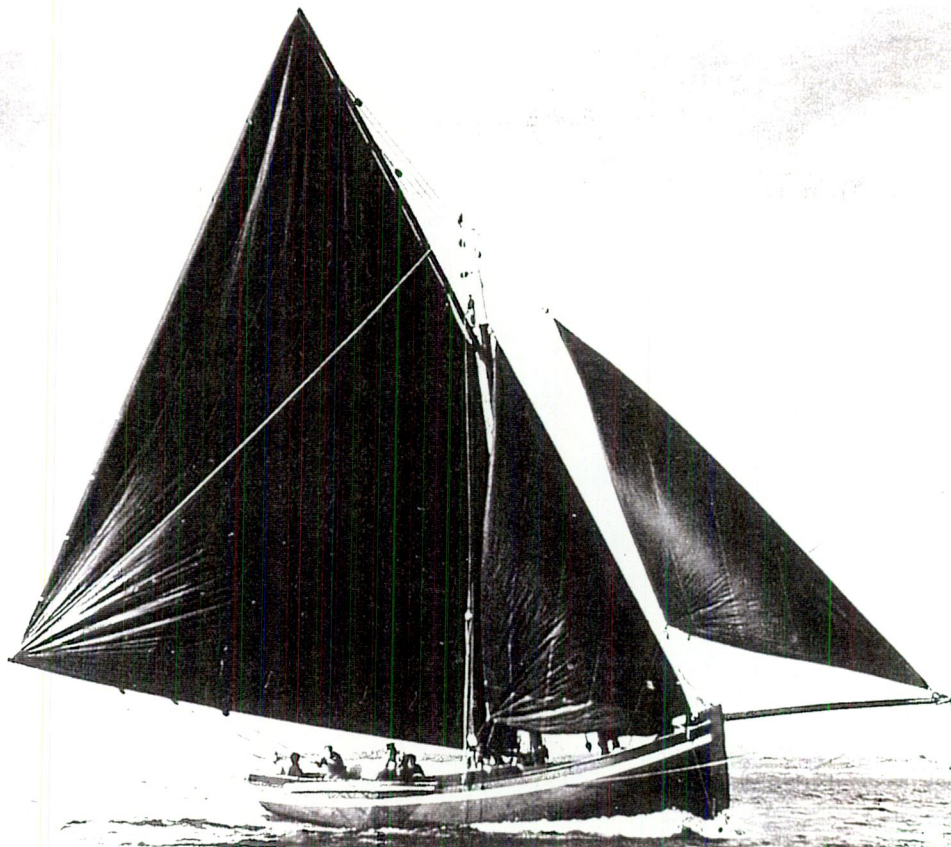


Illustration of Gaff rigged Hooker.







## **Chapter 2**

### **Location and function of the Galway Hooker**



In the west of Ireland, the most common region where the Galway or Connemara hooker is to be found starts at the south end of Galway bay, Ballyvaughan to Galway. Through the region known as the Claddagh and westwards towards Kilkieran and as far as Cleggan, not forgetting the Aran Islands at the mouth of Galway bay, whose population for centuries depended on the Galway hooker for supplies and trade from the mainland.

Connemara itself has always been a region generally inaccessible by land especially for the transport of goods. Until the beginning of this century Connemara has always depended on a maritime transport system. The coast of Connemara is notorious for its rugged shores and inlets which are under the constant attack of the restless and violent Atlantic ocean. Only sea-worthy boats with expert sailors, knowledgeable of the coast could be assured of safe passage between the breaking waves and rocks. Connemara has always had a reputation similar to other areas such as the Scillys, Cornwall, and Brittany, - coasts fringed with rocky outcrops which have caused thousands of epoch-making wrecks, the Scillys being the most infamous in the world.

*"With land so barren, Connemara folk had to slave for every square foot of return, using seaweed and sand to supplement the spares soil. As the population in the last century tended to cluster towards the coast, a living had to be made then from a mixture of small holding agriculture, and whatever the sea had to offer." (Scott 1996. P.16)*

The sandstone river valleys of the south coast of Ireland and England saw more commonly a deep and heavy duty boat usually of larger size and with vertical sides on the hull. Their main functions would have been industrial fishing and the transportation of goods but based in large sheltered ports and harbors. In Connemara and Galway the fishing fleets were different. Docking facilities were also often inexistant or inaccessible and small. Due to the nature of the shallow coast line, many jetties and piers were often dry at low tide. This required boats adapted to such situation. Anything more than a small harbor was only to be found at the main loading areas which were scarce. This meant the hooker had to be a light, fast vessel capable of navigating in shallow and rough seas with or without a cargo. Activities such as smuggling was also common.





This type of maritime activity required a specific type of boat which was suited to these types of waters.

*“ The Galway and Connemara hooker, and craft related to it, were all... fast, light, and dry. ;They all have sleekly modelled hulls, and while some comparison on their topside may be made with barges, they are not mere barges, but very cleverly designed, with a strong rise of floor.”* (Farrell. 1987. P. 3)

The Hooker is well designed for journeying but all these journeys either on departure or on their return or both, always had a substantial amount of goods, supplies, or freshly caught fish which could be stowed without compromising the safety of the boat at sea. the Hooker achieves this with a series of unique characteristic features. The tumble-home, the bow, the rigging and the actual construction, all make up the unique shape and design and the Galway Hooker.

Illustration of a loaded Hooker. (Scott 1996).



Loaded hookers getting under way from Maumeen about 50 years ago. The craft in the foreground is being manoeuvred out into the bay under a partially peaked mains'l while the crew hand clears the throat halliard. (Courtesy Bord Fáilte)



The physical layout of the communities along the Connemara coast in terms of Post Offices, schools, shops etc., is scattered, unlike a conventional town or village where everything is grouped. It is evident that the only convenient and efficient way to carry out normal day to day activities was by Boat.

The very survival of the Aran islands depended on sources of fishing and whaling which induced trading. The Aranmen would fish and whale which would see to food and fuel essential for the winter months. The whales would approach the coasts of the islands in the warm summer months. Catching a whale was done using open oar-driven boats, usually of wooden construction and Harpoons. One whale or Basking shark could produce a substantial amount of oil<sup>10</sup> and blubber to sustain a large part of the community on one of the islands. However, the main demand came from the mainland and the Continent<sup>11</sup> for which in return the Islanders would trade for turf which was their primary fuel source for cooking and heating. Turf was about the only abundant resource readily available throughout Connemara. Trading in turf was only possible due to the existence and use of the hookers which are still in use for such purposes to this very day.

Live stock would often have to be transported by boat and a Hooker would often carry three to four cattle. Again loading and unloading of cattle using any other type of boat would have involved additional complications with maintaining a stable equilibrium (with a live and moving animal) and the actual strength of the hull to sustain the weight of a hoof. Since harbors were not always present or at the correct height i.e. level with the boats deck, cattle often had to be persuaded to simply jump and swim a short distance to the shore, which was not difficult.

From the early eighteenth century the Galway Hooker's chief function was that of a work boat. *"In the nineteenth century boats were an important, indeed essential, part of existence for most people along the Connemara coast and Islands."* (Scott. 1985. P.21). It was commonly used for fishing but also carried turf, seaweed, limestone, passengers on pilgrimages, Poteen, (locally brewed illicit whiskey), etc... It can be equated to the truck or tractor of modern times.

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<sup>10</sup> Oil which was used to burn their lamps during the dark winter days, to facilitate sufficient visibility to knit and maintain essential equipment.





However Brabazon states in 1847; *"The fisheries are the greatest, and at present almost the only resource of the west of Ireland."* (Brabazon. 1847. P. )

In Duttons Agricultural Survey of county Galway in 1824, reference is made to the pre-occupation of the people of the County of Galway with fishing, *"There are very few persons who can be considered farmers alone. Farming and fishing, it is well known, do not assort well together; and however active the native appear in the latter occupation, they are little inclined to exertion in the former."* (Dutton. 1824. P.185). Both sources highlight the significance of fishing as a means of a livelihood since early 18<sup>th</sup> century. The smaller craft Gleoiteógs and Pucáns were involved in fishing mainly for domestic purposes leaving the commercial fishing to the larger craft i.e. the Hooker (Bad Mór). *"The main activity of the Hooker was coastal navigation in the bay but also engaged in line and net fishing which was the exclusive right of the Gleoiteógs and Pucáns."* (Guillou. 1982. P.26).

Another type of fishing sailing craft which was introduced to connemara in the 1890's by the Congested Districts Board was the Nobby and Zulu.

Some of these boats were built in Connemara by local boatbuilders. They varied in size from 13 to 20 tons and most were fully decked. The origin was not local *"in 1891 the formation by the Government of the Congested Districts Board, to assist development of the poorer areas of the western seaboard counties, included in its terms of reference the provision of fishing craft. This saw the introduction of two well known types from the east, the Manx Nobby and the Scottish Zulu"*. (Scott. 1985. P.77)

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<sup>11</sup> The continent was developing a very big demand for light to an increasingly literate





Illustration of the 49 ft C.B.D. Zulu *LEENANE HEAD*. (Scott 1996).



Another common activity was turf running. The Hooker was engaged in commercial turf running from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the early to the 1970's (occasional turf running is still seen today). O'Flaherty writing in 1864 of the Aran Islands states, "*They have noe fuell but cow-dung dryed with the sun, unless they bring turf from the western continent<sup>12</sup>.*" (O'Flaherty. 1864. P.68)

It is believed that boats from Aran and Clare sailed to Connemara to buy turf and bring it home. This initiated the turf trade. Duttons statistical Survey of 1824 relates "*A good deal of turf is cut on the shore and carried to Galway, or sold on the spot to boats from Aran and Clare.*" (Dutton. 1824. P.27).

Before the era of bottled gas and generators etc., turf was the most commonly used fuel. With the absence of bog in Aran and Clare the turf from Connemara provided for their fuel needs. The turf was brought from the bog to the pier with a horse and cart. It was then hand loaded onto the stone ballast in the boat. This stone ballast remained fixed as these working boats had working sails. With the turf loaded the hooker sailed off to Aran or South Galway. On arrival at its destination one crew of two, set off in search of a buyer for the turf while his companion remained in the boat with the cargo. Once the price of the turf was

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population.

<sup>12</sup> Western continent here refers to Connemara.





settled with the buyer, the turf was tossed onto the pier. The Hooker then sail back home for the next trip.

illustration of turf off loading



Kilronan, Aran in 1962. *AN TONAI* discharging turf immediately on arrival. This job is tackled quickly while the tide serves to ease the labour. When the last sod is tossed ashore there will be just enough time for a quick pint with the Aran consignee before putting to sea again.



settled with the buyer, the turf was tossed onto the pier. The Hooker then sail  
back home for the next trip.

illustration of turf off loading





Often the Hooker would partake in various trading on their return journeys. If a Hooker went to Kinvara with turf, timber would be purchased at Coole Park Sawmills for boatbuilding or roofing, etc... *“Housebuilding materials and the very timber for boatwork had to be carried back west by sea from Kinvara and Galway.”* (Scott. 1985. P.65). Similarly on the return journey from Aran some limestone would be brought to Connemara to be burned in the Limekilns. *“A ton of limestone, if very good, produces about 11 cwt. (558 kg) of lime; ... two cubic yards (1.53 m<sup>3</sup>) of good turf will burn one of limestone; four pence per ton (1.016) for burning.”* (Dutton. 1824. P.179). Cattle which had been brought to Aran for grazing were very often the cargo on the return journey.

*“The pier itself was crowded with bullocks and a great number of people ... When the empty Hooker was made fast while its deck was still many feet below the level of the pier, so the animals were slung down by a rope from the mast-head, with much struggling and confusion ... This tide was now too low ... the Hooker was anchored about eight yards from the shore, and a Curragh was rowed round to tow out the animals. Each bullock was caught in its turn and guided with a string of rope by which it could be hoisted on board. Another rope was fastened to the horns and passed out to a man in the stern of a Curragh. Then the animal was forced down through the surf and out of its depth before it had much time to struggle. Once fairly swimming, it was towed out to the Hooker and dragged on board in a half-drowned condition.”* (Synge. 1962. P.28).

Seaweed was also very much part of the Galway Hookers functions. The big boats were involved in carrying seaweed from Connemara to Galway and to other smaller harbors like; Maree, Clarenbridge, Kinvara etc. Local farmers in these areas came to piers and harbors with their horse and cart and purchased the seaweed for manure. Seaweed was a good fertilizer producing *“excellent potatoes, if planted early enough, and vegetables of all kinds particularly cabbage of a fine Flavor.”* (Dutton. 1824. P.183). The need and demand for fertilizer increased during World War II due to the scarcity of imported fertilizer ‘Guano’. The smaller boats Gleoiteógs and Pucáns catered for the domestic





seaweed requirements of Connemara. It was these boats that served the local needs, bringing the seaweed ashore for use as fertilizer in the potato and vegetable fields. According to Gilliland in 1919 the Pucáns ***“...are employed for line fishing and seaweed gathering.”*** (Gilliland. 1919. P.165). Seaweed was also brought to a local seaweed factory in Kilkeran up to the 1960's. In modern times some Gleoiteógs and Pucáns have been fitted with inboard diesel engines and are used to tow 'climins' of seaweed ashore.



Illustration of the Pucán at the Arramara factory.



Sometimes said to be the sweetest sailing craft in Connemara, the púcán differs from other local traditional boats in her dipping lug mains'l. Handling one in a fresh breeze is a skilled job as the mains'l tack has to be transferred round the mast on coming about. This is Stiofan Nee's boat out of Kilkieran in 1961 and at that time she was still drawing seaweed (sea rods or slataí mara) for the local Arramara factory which can be seen in the background.





In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there was little or no trafficking by road from Galway to Connemara. In this pre-motor car and railroad era rural people of the west of Ireland were dependent on these sailing craft for trading purposes. *“... a Hooker is a cutter rigged craft ... employed in carrying cargo between Connemara and other parts of Galway and Clare. The coastline runs due west from Galway town for about 20 miles, and then breaks out into Connemara proper, a maze of islands and bays remote from railways. Hence water transport is necessary to supply the wants of the inhabitants”*. (Gilliland. 1919. P.162). The main shop owners of Connemara purchased and fully decked a number of the bigger Hookers and Nobbies, i.e. O'Donnells of Carraroe owned the ‘American Mór’ - built in the 1890's. *“ From Galway and Kinvara general supplies were shipped back for the local providers such as, in this century, Ridge of Mweenish, Connolly of Mace,... Conroys of Kilkieran...”*. (Scott. 1985. P.65).

By the 1960's the work of the Hookers turf running, fishing, etc., had virtually ceased. *“By that time, 1966, only a small handful, a mere half a dozen of the large Hookers, remained in the final trade to Aran.”* (Scott. 1985. P.83). The end of the Hooker era was in sight. Most of these boats were bought by sailing enthusiasts. In an attempt to adapt these boats to more modern times some of the Hookers, Gleoiteógs, and Pucáns were fitted with inboard engines and continued to fish, bring seaweed ashore and supply a trade service to the remaining inhabited Islands. *“The last of the Casey family building boats on Mweenish was the late Colman who went to his reward in March 1963 ... at a small sheltered beach close by he was carrying out a major refit on a 29-foot Gleoiteóg ... A fine job she was too when completed and fitted with a diesel for lobster work.”* (Scott. 1985. P.58). Almost every family along the east coast were the proud owners of these craft. When an end came to the work of these boats many owners choose to see their Hookers rot away in their fields and harbors rather than to sell them. To part with this family heritage and tradition was impossible for many.

Today one witnesses a unique time in history for such a unique craft. The popular revival of the Galway Hooker has become a national interest. Annually at each event which reunites an increasing fleets of Hookers, the pride and heritage of such a cultural heritage is majestically born by the Galway Hooker.

## **Chapter 3**

# **Design and Construction of the Galway Hooker**

The Galway or Connemara hooker is regarded as one of Ireland's most unique examples of maritime heritage as a small wooden craft which still survives today. International naval architecture and historical heritage regard it as a "unique design" that has not changed in over 200 years.

Some of the characteristics surrounding the Galway hooker that are evident today can be dated back as far as the beginning of the thirteenth century and other aspects go as far back as the time of the Phoenicians from the Mediterranean and the Norsemen of Scandinavia.

The design and features of the Galway and Connemara hooker derived solely from their unique surrounding location and community dependent functions. Each boat is hand built by a boatbuilder. Research on the Galway Hookers would not be entirely complete without examining the boatwrights and their work. Every boatbuilder was required to serve an apprenticeship for seven years with another mastershipwright. One must also acknowledge the fact that boatbuilders were master craftsmen and that their skill formed an integral part of the working life of yesteryear. A good boatbuilder guaranteed a worthy sea vessel and the lives aboard; ***"In my estimation no vessel can be superior to a Hooker for a poor man's fishing boat."*** (Church. 1845. P.70). At times when boats, such as the Galway Hooker, were a means of livelihood and day to day life for an entire population along the west coast of Ireland, a good boatbuilder was a necessity. The boatbuilder was considered to be quite prosperous. In one parish of Moyrus at the turn of the century the community boasted various craftsmen such as tailors, weavers, coopers, blacksmiths, carpenters, etc. All these craftsmen made their own contribution to the community but there was a different onus on the boatbuilder<sup>13</sup> to that of his fellow craftsmen. His duty entailed building a boat which would ensure no accidents or loss of life. There was no room for mistakes in the finished product. A seaworthy vessel meant a structurally solid boat but maybe not a lucky boat. Social history relates a boatbuilder's instinct concerning the luck attached to a boat. Josie Connelly recalls such folklore when the owner of a newly built boat was told of the boatbuilders premonitions of the vessel's fate. In such a case the owner would

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<sup>13</sup> Similar to an Architect's responsibilities today.





be advised to sell the boat and hereby change its luck ... *"change her name - change her luck."*

In Gaelic the boatbuilder is called 'Saortha Bád'. Farrell states that this word refers to the Latin word 'Sapere' meaning 'to know'. Considering the vast knowledge which the boat builder's trade involved this derivative is very appropriate.

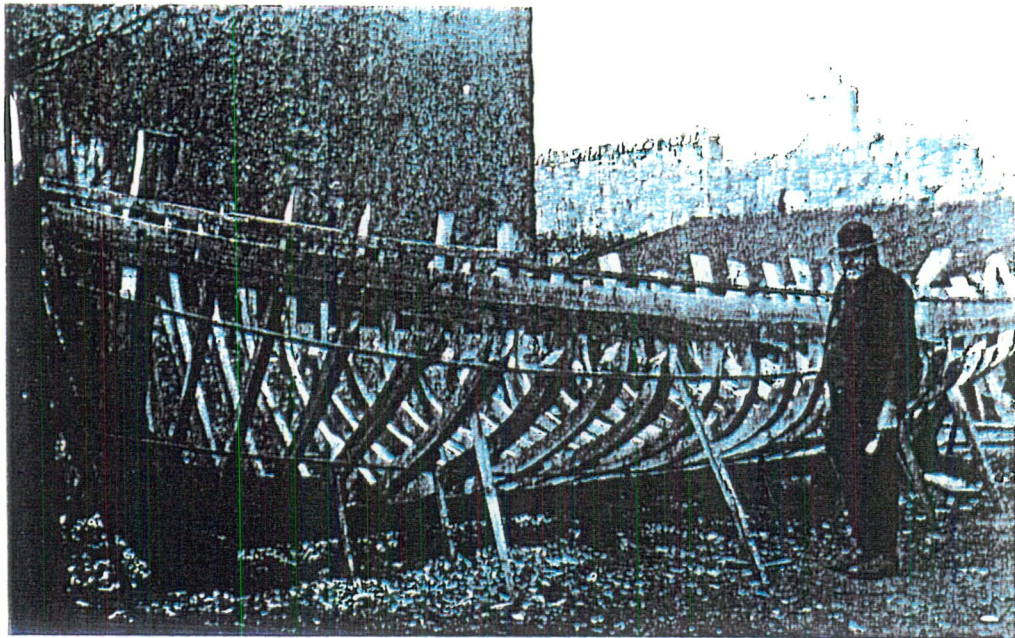
Today there are less than half a dozen traditional boatbuilders left in Connemara who learned their trade from previous generations. Some of the more recent families such as the O'Donnells and Caseys held the art of boatbuilding for as long as four generations and the Clohertys for a renowned six generations. There obviously were many families who had many traditional skills in craft such as boatbuilding, furniture making, sailing making, net and rope making, knitting, iron mongery, etc., ...



Probably the most widely respected Mweenish boatbuilding name was that of Casey or O'Cathasaig. Around the mid-nineteenth century Sean Casey was apprenticed to the Lettermullan boatwright Sean O'Laoidhe. Later he set up on his own and in due course passed the trade to his sons Padraig, Martin and Johnny. The last of the line to pursue the family business was Martin's son Colman. He is seen here in 1961 on a major refit to a 29-foot gleoiteog worked by Joyces of Inishbarra Island. This was probably the last big job completed here by a Casey as Colman died in 1963.







An Irish pookhaun building by  
John O'Donnell at New Docks, Galway,  
June 1932.

J. LEATHER.



Illustration of Mairc and Joe Cloherty.





On completion of his apprenticeship a newly qualified boatbuilder would have acquired a full complement of tools. These would have to be built up while serving his time. The wooden parts of these tools were made by the boatbuilder with the metal sections being made by the blacksmith.

In the early days boat plans did not exist. Instead the boatbuilders had tables and a selection of templates. Tables contained ratios e.g. the depth of a hooker is equal to half the beam. Templates were used to determine the exact shape of the sawn oak ribs; these templates were cut from 6mm material and carefully guarded by the boatbuilder. Individual boatbuilders modified these tables and templates to create their own unique design of a Hooker thus bringing about individual style and flair that is still recognizable today to an experienced eye. One associates certain features with particular boatbuilders; e.g. the distinctive bow of the Rainey built boats. The Fisheries Bounty Commission 1828-32 which offered a subsidy to boatbuilders and the fishermen was setup to revive and promote the fishing and boatbuilding industries. To qualify for the £10 bounty for the building of a Hooker certain standards were required; *"It is to be clearly understood, that the boat is to be completely finished in all respects, fit for sea, in a workmanlike and unexceptional manner, and subject to the approval of the inspector; and if any objection should be made to the whole or any part, the point is to be decided by a reference to two master shipwrights, one to be chosen by each party, who if they differ, may call in a third."* (Sea Fisheries Report. 1828)

In those early days high standards was of ultimate importance and the authorities were there to ensure it (unlike today, except for E.U. regulations concerning commercial craft.).

*"Instruction in building and repairing of boats was also given by the Board at its own boat yards at Mevagh ..., Killeybegs, ... at Carna where there had been experienced local boat-wrights (the Messers Casey) before the Board was established; at its own boat-yard at Galway, ... and at Baltimore ... . Apprentices were trained to become boat-wrights at Mevagh, Killeybegs, Galway and Baltimore, and many men became useful local tradesmen, but many, when out of their apprenticeships, got employed in Derry, Belfast, or Scotland."* (Micks. 1925. P.96).



In order for a boatbuilder to practice his own craft he was dependent on a range of intercommunity craftsmen who as a whole were all interdependent.

***“The boatbuilder was dependent on the blacksmith, who forged his chain plates, spider-band, anchors and dozens of other items needed for a boat, the sawyer who cut the timber, the flax spinners and weavers who made the canvas for the sails, the sailmaker who made them, the ropemaker who spun and twisted the hemp for the ropes - and so it went on and on.”*** (Seymour. 1986. P. 13).

It was the blacksmiths boast ***“that he made the tools for every tradesman and to crown all he also made the tools for his own trade.”*** (Danaher. 1962. P.135).

He would make sailor's anchor, the carpenter's saw, the fisherman's gaff, nails and bolts and many other craftsmen's requirements too many and varied to mention. The boatbuilder was dependent on the blacksmith to supply him with such items as rudder irons, mast bands, spider band, bowsprit ringbolt, straps for blocks, etc.,... One should note that some boatbuilders had their own forge in the boat-yard.

While the blacksmith manufactured nails, there was a craft of 'nailmaking' carried out by ***‘the nailer’***. The nailer has a reputation of being the most hard working of the craftsmen. By examining the 'nailers' work one quickly understands this significance.

Sawyers would frequently be hired out by boatbuilders to convert baulks of timber to the required dimensions. These sawyers would work in pairs in a saw pit close to the boat-yard. ***“The log was laid over a pit deep enough for a man to stand in, then cut in its length by a pit saw, with one operator standing on the log and his partner in the pit below.”*** (Blandford. 1974. P.91).

Before the days of synthetic fibers, ropes and sailcloth were made of flax and hemp. The women would prepare the flax for the *ropemaker* and for the *weaver* to make the sailcloth (known as Calico). Once the weaver completed the sail, the *sailmaker* would measure the sails accordingly to the spars of the boat and cut them to size.

The *Calico* then required treatment for protection and preservation from the seawater and other natural elements. This involved proofing the sails with a





locally made mixture of Tar and butter, or bark (kutch). Rubbed into the sail with a piece of cloth. ***“... the sail area of a 40 footer would run to about 900 square feet of heavy Calico, cut, sewn, and proofed locally.”*** (Scott. 1985. P.32)

The tumble-home is probably the hookers most distinctive feature. The Galway hooker is one of the only small craft which uses such a feature. It serves several functions in its design. The tumble-home of the hooker is used to describe the bulbous shape of the two sides of the hull. The first main aspect of the tumble-home is that it was not generally accepted to be suitable for small craft because it meant that the boats widest breadth was not found at the waterline but above it. This automatically raises questions about the satiability of the boat. However due to the other variations in the boats design such as the angled keel and curved topside, the narrow bow with hollow lines, the tumble home actually added stability to the boats heeling moment.

It also meant that the boat when heeling could rely on the extra bulge of the tumble-home for stability and floatation at the waterline especially when the hookers were, which was often, heavily laded with cargo.

***“The tumble-home served two useful functions in keeping the rail (topside) clear of water and lying on the ground on her side or against a drying pier. Some boatmen did not like too much of it, maintaining that it concentrated cargo weight a bit high and if water were shipped it could lodge inside the lee curved bilge. The degree and faring off the tumble-home into the hooker shape was an art, with subtle differences between the builders.”*** (Scott. 1996. P.27)

To compensate the lack of a load, part of the hookers design allows for the ballast in a hooker, which is usually comprised of large heavy rocks resting on the bottom floors of the boat. This provides sufficient weight for stability without compromising the holding space for cargo.

The rigging of the Galway hooker was originally designed for the smaller version known as the Pucan, which used the Mediterranean Lateen rig. However, with the development of the fishing industry in Ireland, the boat sizes were forcibly increased from 5-6 ton to 8-14 tons according to according to the 1836 Sea Fisheries Inquiry. This evolution was facilitated by the development of the Gaff rig. The gaff rig is now the rig most commonly found on all the



Gleiteós and Hookers. According to Leathar's *The Gaff rig* 1973, its development began in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century and had widespread usage by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The gaff rigs success lies mainly in its ease and safety. Its is a versatile system which maximizes the efficiency of the sail area and rigging. This was an important factor since canvas or linen was often expensive and scarce. It was probably designed by humble sea-goers who required an efficient sail which required a minimum crew to operate and control.

Each boatbuilder had his own unique and personal traits when defining the shape of a Hooker. Some builders had large tumble-homes, some had larger rake on the stern, and variations in the bow was also common. Today an experienced eye can determine the builder, by simply observing the behavior and shape of a Hooker. Some Hookers where evidently faster than others. Heeling and Weather-helm<sup>14</sup> was another varying factor on all Hookers.

The fact that every Galway Hooker is not built the same makes it a unique and distinctive feature. Every builder had his influences and characteristics but always kept within the traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation.

When building a hooker the procedure is quite definite. Traditionally plans are not used, the boat builder or shipwright always works mainly from his own experience<sup>15</sup>. The outline shape of the boat is drawn out on the area where the boat is to be built. From that the experienced shipwright will determine by eye where the waterline will be on the boat. This usually requires in depth engineering and mathematical calculations if more conventional and contemporary methods are employed. Then the spine and very backbone of the boat known as the keel is placed down on the ground. The next two integral pieces are carefully sawn out of solid oak and attached to either end of the keel.

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<sup>14</sup> Weather helm is a nautical term describing the a force which encourages the boat to turn into the diection of the wind. The phenomina is cause by two factors; firstly the force of the wing upon the main sail which is normally counteracted by the two foresails, scndly, the steep rake of the stern which will inherantly cause the boat to turn into the wind. This force usually is conteracted by the helmsman, who would compensate with the rudder. Too much weather helm or too little would determine the overall performance of a hooker in varying sea conditions.

<sup>15</sup> See appendix 1 interview with Josie Connelly.





The backbone of these boats is their Keel, a long plank usually of oak or beech and normally two thirds of the boats length. The keel is the first part of the massive construction of the larger hookers. Attached to either end of the Keel is a stem and sternpost and then the massive 6 x 3 sawn oak frames onto which the 1 1/4 inch larch planking is spiked. The planking is done by steaming the long planks of Larch and once flexible enough to take the complex and curvaceous shape of the hull it is quickly fastened to the ribs and allowed to cool into its final form.





Illustrations of the planking process where a Plank is being Steamed.



Illustrations of the planking process.





Other features are its carvel type construction, a stern with a distinctive back rake of  $35^{\circ}$  -  $45^{\circ}$ , decked at the bow and open decked from amidships aft. One of the most distinctive details of the hull is the Tumblehome of up to 12 inches on each side, a elegant run from almost amidships, and sweeping up to the raked transom. Above deck is a very simple yet efficient gaff rig, a mast and bowsprit, which bore one main sail and two forward sails.

Illustration of Spars being fitted on a New Hooker.





Illustration of new Hooker being measured for new Sails.







**Chapter 5**  
**Conclusion**



The Galway Hooker can be traced to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. This traditional craft has been very much part of maritime life on the west coast of Ireland since then. One acknowledges that in the past it was mainly a work boat. Only two generations ago it is recalled that there were over 600 odd hookers alone in the Claddagh area of Galway, which was the main fishing fleet in the Connemara of that time. Today there is only approximately 140 hookers throughout the country. Having outlived its working days its survival depends on it becoming a pleasure craft of today. The developments of this craft's history will ensure that it remains with us for many more years<sup>16</sup>. The descriptions of the Carvel construction is identical to the description given by Scott and Josie Connelly<sup>17</sup>. John de Courcy Ireland dates the first mention of the Hooker in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Strong suggestions are present as to some of the influences of the hooker originating as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Development in size of the Hooker can be attributed partly to the Bounty Commission. Having examined the many theories of the origins of the Galway Hooker one concluded that because the Hooker is Carvel build and acknowledging this build to be of Mediterranean origin one finds it reasonable to hypothesise that the Spanish influence is stronger than the Norwegian. Bob Quinns theory is not unfounded by suggesting Arabic origins in the boats and people of Connemara. It is a unique and amazing fact that despite the previous existence of Kinsale, Donegal, Skerries, Westport, Boston, and English Hookers the Galway Hooker is today the sole survivor. One of the possible reasons for the survival of the Galway Hooker is the survival of the boatbuilding craft among a people whose very origins are unique. The people of Connemara have kept not only the tradition of boatbuilding but their language, folklore, music and song which bears a unique resemblance to north Africa.

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<sup>16</sup> The Galway Hooker Association was founded in 1978. Its purpose to promote awareness and develop projects for the creation and restoration of the craft.

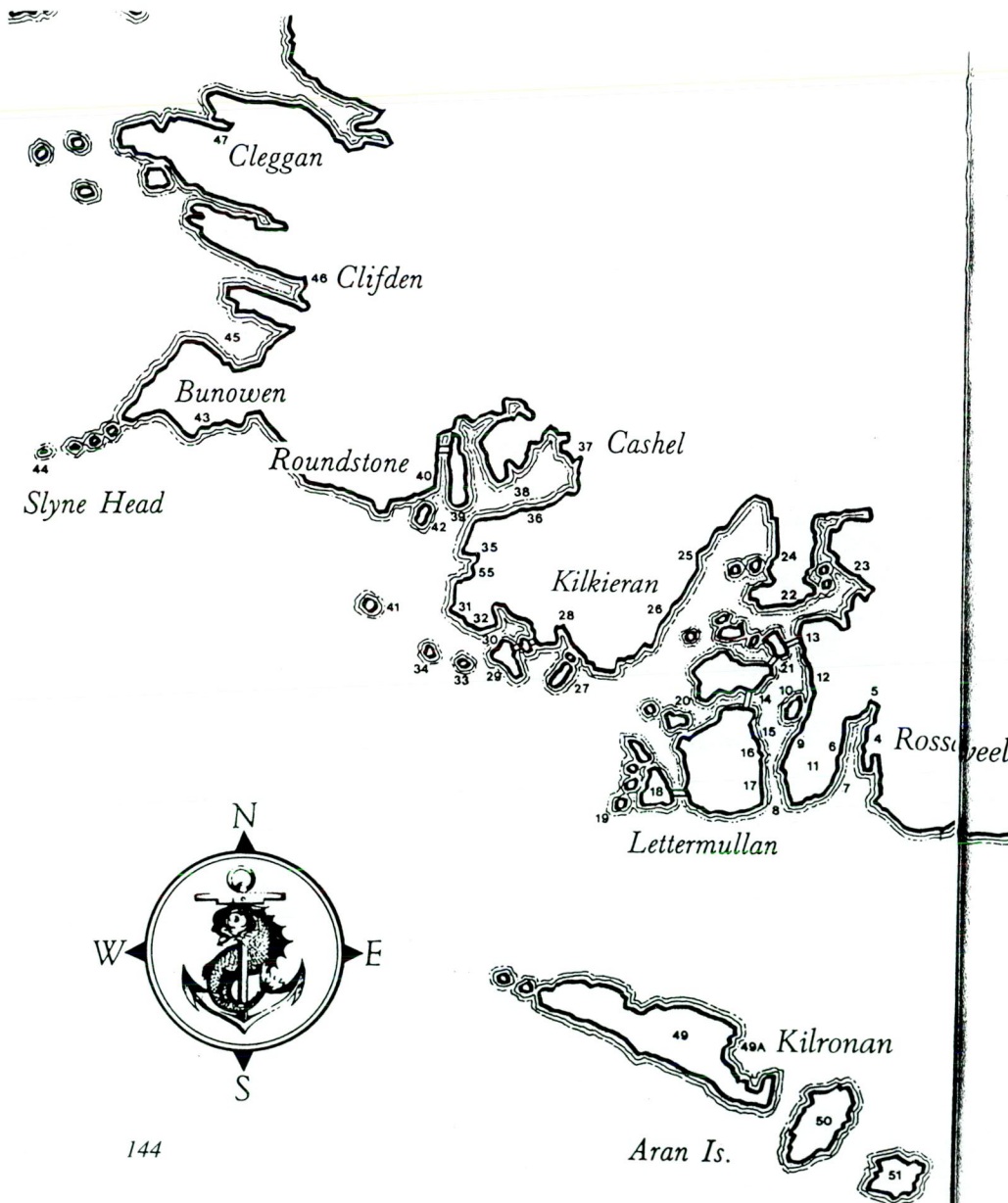
<sup>17</sup> Josie Connelly is involved with Sail West who are responsible for some of the most recent additions to the fleet of Galway Hookers.





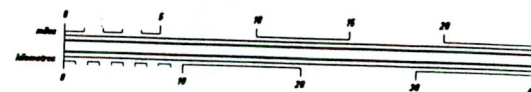
## Appendix I



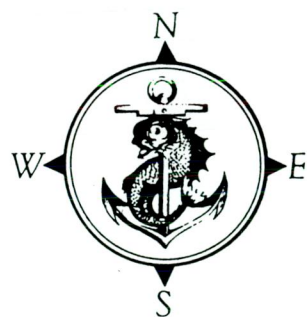


# The Coast of Connemara

(See placenames on preceding pages)



County Galway



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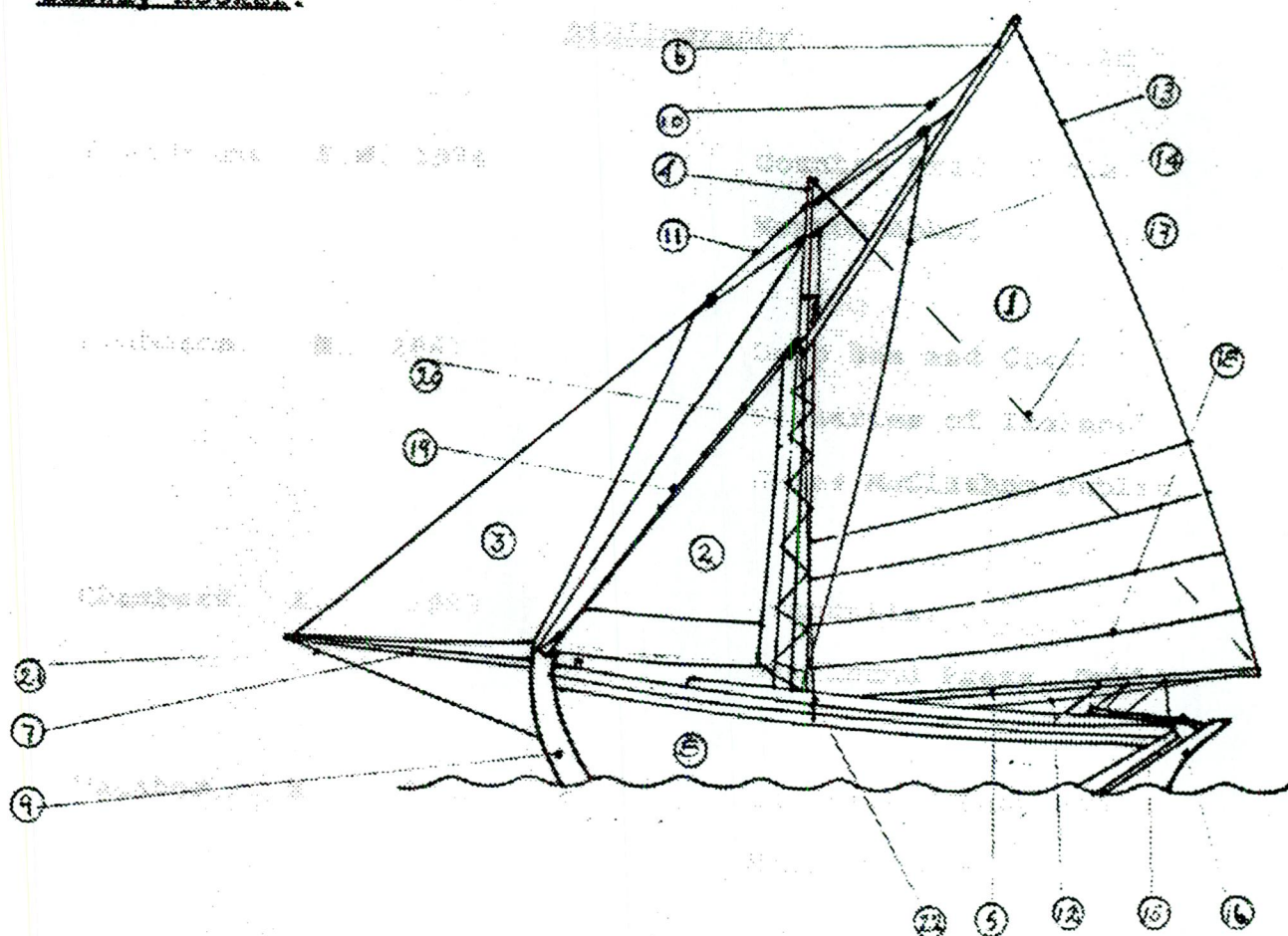
County Clare

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Galway Hooker:



1. Mainsail
2. Foresail (Staysail)
3. Jib
4. Mast
5. Boom
6. Gaff
7. Bowsprit
8. Hull
9. Stern
10. Peak Halliard
11. Jib Halliard

12. Roach of Mainsail
13. Leech
14. Down-haul
15. Helm
16. Rudder
17. Topping Lift
18. Reefbands
19. Forestay
20. Lacing
21. Bobstay
22. Shroud







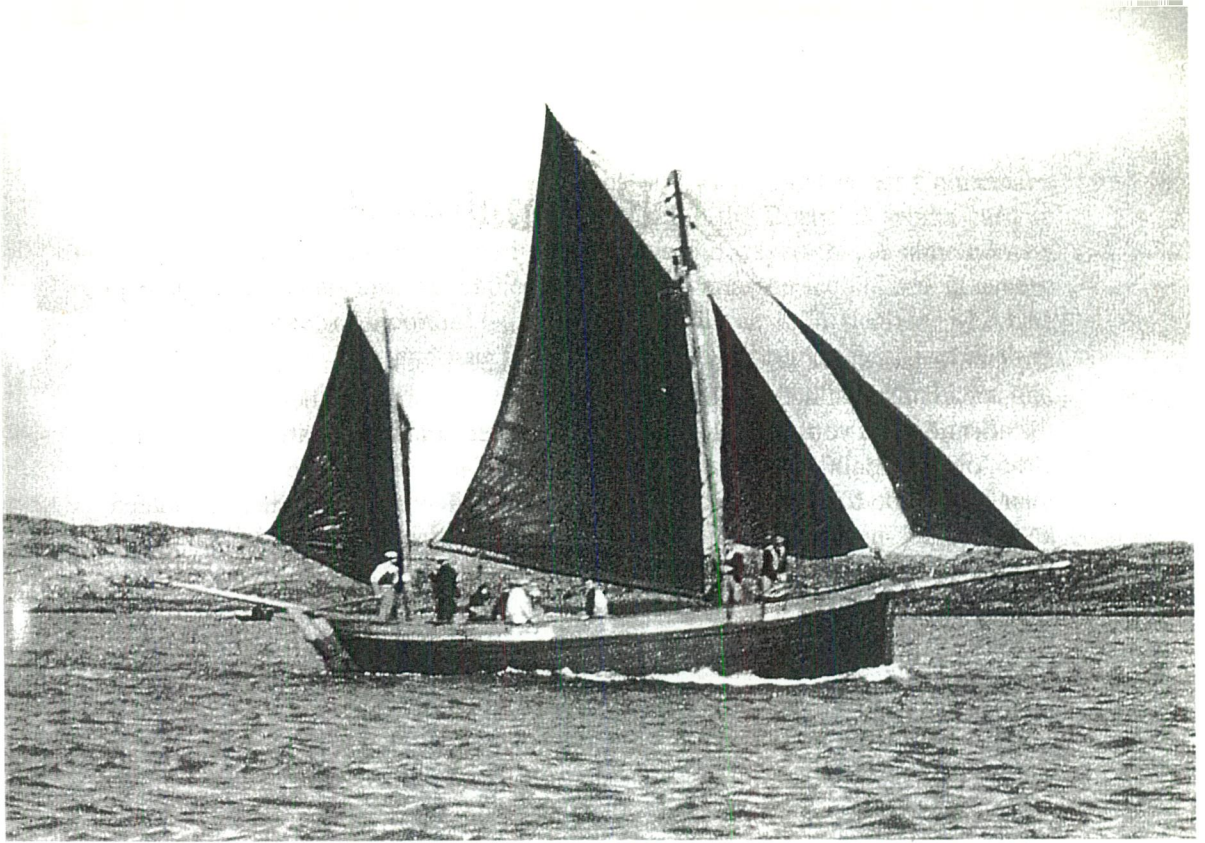
Sometimes there was a return freight in cattle from Aran. In this 1962 scene at Callahaigue the hooker *AN MHAIGHDEAN MHARA* is using a simple, effective method of discharge - by getting the cattle to swim ashore. The boat is held across the narrow entrance to the harbour and as the cattle are enticed to jump over the side they have no trouble in making the short distance to land. One of the hooker's crew almost followed this heifer into the water by the stern.



A very early morning scene at Rossaveel in 1963. The hookers *AN TONAI* in the foreground and *MOUNT* are getting underway for Aran. With rain and fresh wind about, a precautionary reef has been tucked into *AN TONAI*'s mains'l and just the headline remains to be let go once the jib is set.







A rare view of a Connemara nobby under sail. This is the *ST. COLUMBKILLE* sailing out of Lettermullan in the 1940's bound to Aran. Note the standing lug mizzen with its bumpkin spar out astern for the sheet. The bowsprit runs out to starboard of the stem head, though hookers usually set to port. She has been rerigged with a gaff mains'l in place of the original big standing lug main. (Courtesy Bord Fáilte)



Crew of a turf laden hooker from Kilkieran Bay relax on arrival at Galway about 1943. The foredeck chimney indicates a stove rather than an open fire in the fo'c'stle. (Courtesy Bord Fáilte)







From Gorumna Island in Greatman's Bay there was considerable trade in turf to Aran. This is Maumeen pier about 1943 showing 8 hookers in to load. (Courtesy Bord Fáilte)

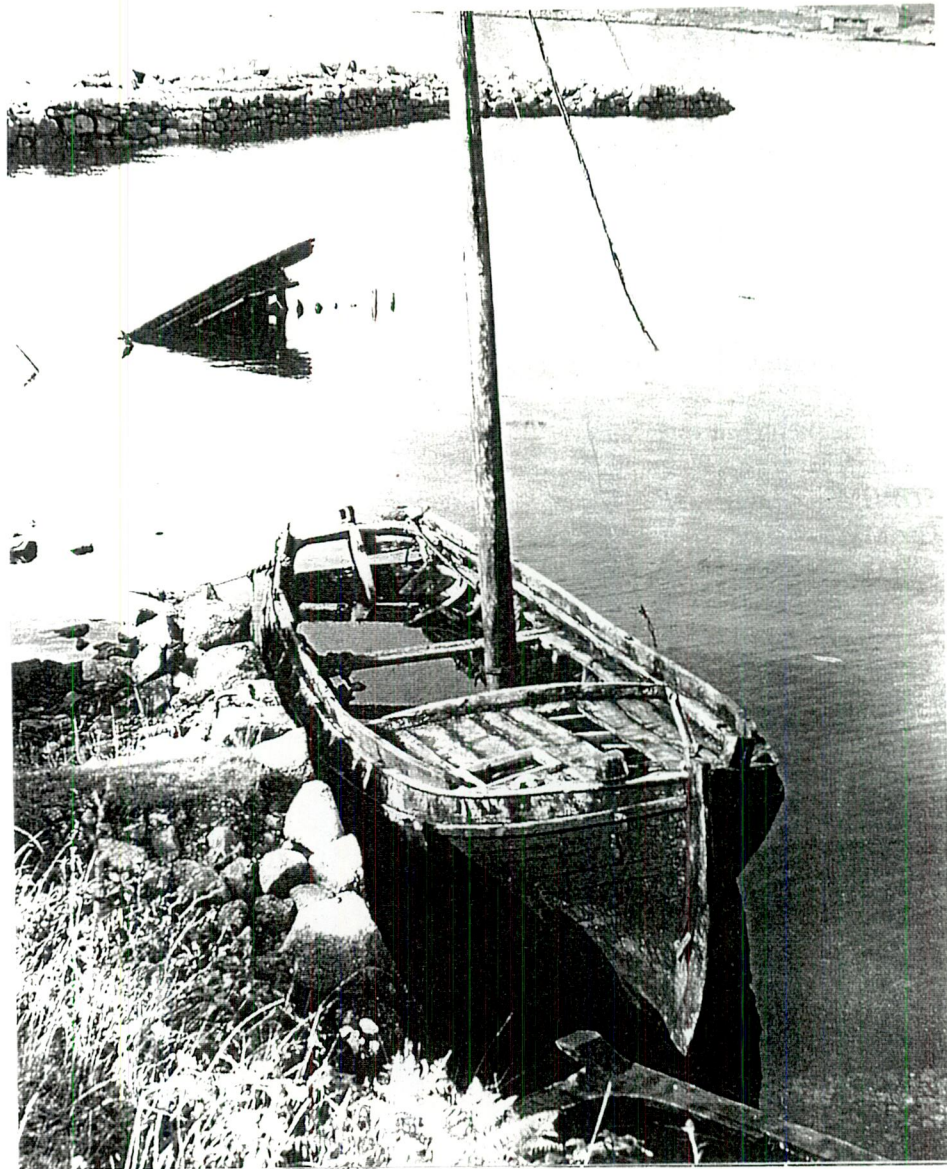






The *AMERICAN MÓR* powering past Inishnee in fresh conditions August 1990. After her rebuild of 1984/85 her tan terylene sails have added to her performance compared with her traditional barked canvas. (See page 65)





As their work need disappeared, many craft were laid up to disintegrate in some quiet backwater. This scene at Kilbrickan in 1961 shows a large gleoiteog that so ended her days, with the remains of another just showing above the water. In the background is Kilkieran Bay, once a great centre for working sail craft.





(Below) To the backdrop of Lettercallow Hill, the hookers *AN MHAIGHDEAN MHARA* and *AN TONAI* make a classic sight off Kilkieran September 1993.



Illustration of the Bows of three Pucáns at Roundstone June 1997. (Author. 1997).







Illustration of the Spanish Arch in Galway where O'Donnell had his boatyard.  
(Author. 1997).





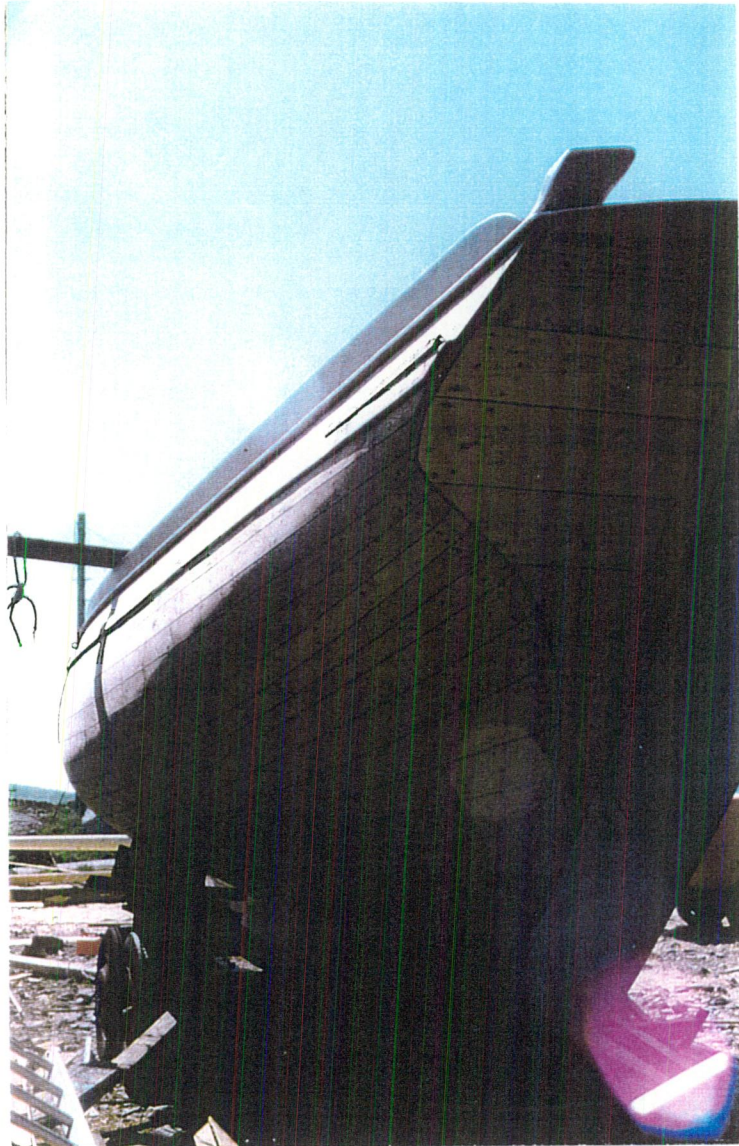


Illustration of a Restored Hookers' Transom. (Author. 1997).



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