



HOLY ROSARY COLLEGE
MOUNTBELLEW

2023

GALWAY'S

FORGED GATES



GALWAY FORGED
GATES PROJECT
TIONSCADAL GHEATAÍ
GAIBHNITHE NA GAILLIMHE







HOLY ROSARY COLLEGE, MOUNTBELLEW

GALWAY'S FORGED GATES

2023



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HOLY ROSARY COLLEGE
MOUNTBELLEW



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council



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GALWAY FORGED GATES PROJECT: AN OVERVIEW

The vernacular forged wrought iron field gate is a very valuable, but often neglected, aspect of the cultural heritage of our rural landscape in county Galway. These field gates were for the most part forged in the local blacksmith's forge.

They are practical and functional while at the same time are an artistic expression of the blacksmith who made them. During the twentieth century cast-iron, tubular steel and other mass produced gates became more common while at the same time the forged wrought iron gates went into decline as did the blacksmiths forge. In addition to this changing farming practices has led to many of these gates being abandoned in hedges and fields throughout the county, as the older forged wrought iron field gates became too small to accommodate new big machines entering fields. However, to the careful observer there are still many beautifully crafted wrought iron field gate to be found around the county.

Therefore, the aim of this project was to identify, record, raise awareness and knowledge of the wealth of wrought iron field gates that are to be found in the county of Galway. It sought to identify the names of the local blacksmiths and their forges. As this project shows the best way to capture this information is to work with our local communities. Skehana & District Heritage Group have a great understanding and knowledge of their local heritage. The work of Skehana & District Heritage Group and the Transition Year students with Ms Carroll from Holy Rosary College, Mountbellew; local historians Emma Laffey and Michael Martin; Stephen Quinn, Blacksmith; Dr Christy Cunniffe, Heritage and Archaeology Expert and Bernie Doherty, Galway Community Archaeologist, have now uncovered a wealth of our rich hidden local heritage.

We hope that this booklet will inspire others to photograph, research and document the forges, blacksmiths and the fantastic forged gates that are to be found throughout our county. To find out more about Galway Forged Gates Project please see <https://heritage.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/category/topics/galway-forged-gates-project>

This project was funded by Creative Ireland and Galway County Council with voluntary contributions from Skehana & District Heritage Group and Holy Rosary College Mountbellew. It was supported by the Heritage Council as part of the Galway Community Archaeology Project. It is an action of Galway County Heritage Plan 2017-2022.

Marie Mannion,
Heritage Officer,
Galway County Council

INTRODUCTION

As Transition Year students we were asked by Emma Laffey to take part in a pilot project on local blacksmiths. The name of the project is 'Galway's Forged Gates' project and it is funded by Creative Ireland.

We were delighted to take part during our TY year in this very interesting heritage project. We learned so much about blacksmiths, their skilled work and even their involvement in the War of Independence.

We hope you enjoy our e-book on what we have learned during our TY year and we would like to thank Emma Laffey; Skehana & District Heritage Group; Mrs Carroll, our TY co-ordinator; Marie Mannion; Galway Heritage Officer; Dr Christy Cunniffe and Bernie Doherty; Galway Archaeologists and Shem Caulfield, forged gate expert, for the day out at Bannerton's Forge with blacksmith Stephen Quinn teaching us the blacksmith skills and even having a go! We would also like to thank Damien Goodfellow for coming in to talk to us about Graphic Design and building this beautiful e-book containing all of our work.

The 'Adopt a Blacksmith Group' would like to thank Michael Martin for taking the time and coming in to talk to us sharing his family stories and photographs about his family of blacksmiths from the Ballygar area. Martin also sourced information on writings by Paddy Egan on his memories of the Kellys Forge.

Lastly, we would like to thank Paul Connolly for allowing us to use his written work on Commandant Tommie Kelly during the War of Independence.

Thank you to everyone who has helped us along this journey. We are looking forward to the launch of 'Galway's Forged Gates' project.





Large forged farmyard gate in Mullaghmore, Moylough, County Galway.



Ballyglunin Railway Station forged entrance gates, Ballyglunin, County Galway.



Bell's House forged gates, made by Bannerton Blacksmiths, Ahascragh, County Galway.



Castlegar Gate Lodge front entrance gates, Ahascragh, County Galway.



Glynn's forged gate, made in pre famine times, Ryehill, Abbeyknockmoy, County Galway.



Forged gates at Broomfield Lodge, Menlough, County Galway.

Photographs by Emma Laffey.

Blacksmith Tom Connolly, Four Roads.

CHAPTER 1

THE BLACKSMITHS OF BALLYGAR



Dan and John Kelly at their forge replacing a rim on a cartwheel.
Photo courtesy of Michael Martin.

John and Dan Kelly

The photo above was taken in the mid 1960s and it shows brothers John and Dan Kelly at the forge near Killeroran. The forge had been founded by Michael Kelly who had returned from the United States where he worked as a farrier/blacksmith for the famous and very wealthy Vanderbilt family.

This is a wonderful photo of a place of enormous importance to the locality. My late father often talked about walking home to Cloonakilleg from school in Mount Talbot and calling into Frank Rourke's forge in Corrocot. Frank's forge was beside James Nolan's carpentry shop. They both teamed-up together for the 'shoeing' of a wheel using fire and water; people who had the privilege to witness this amazing spectacle were overawed by the skill displayed by the participants.

Completed cartwheels are visible in this photo near the fire used to heat the rims. The building in the background is still there today.

Special thanks to Michael Martin for the photo, the Kellys were uncles of Michael.



The Kelly home house.

mortem” on the way the game was going. Two “garsoons” were told to go over to the opposition camp to see what was happening there. The two came back with the message they heard from beyond – “Watch the fellow in the white shirt.” Apparently the No. 9 centre-field man was not playing up to scratch and No. 8 was the “bogey-man” to the opposition. The captain put on his “considering cap” and told No. 8 to swap his shirt for No. 9’s jersey. The result; Ballygar won by three points. The man in the white shirt, 1st half – Tommie Hannon, hale and hearty today, as apparently, he was the day they beat Killimor by 3 points.

“Under the spreading Chestnut tree the village smithy stands”, went the old poem, we rambled off in school. The only difference between that particular “smithy” and our “local” is that ours is under the spreading walnut tree. I doubt about the “spreading” part of it, as it was about the same size 50 years ago. But what a change in the activity. All I see is the door always closed and the front always clean. What a change from the old days. Outside three horses and an ass and cart containing a big “swingle”, a tongs, a “grubber” all waiting the smith’s expert attention. On the ground, the inevitable heap of horse manure, old shoes of every size and shape to fit horse, ass, pony, gennet and the occasional mule, old axels, iron hoops, old scythes, mixed with bits of hoof. Inside, sparks flying in all directions, the ring of the anvil as Michael Kelly or Johnnie shapes the shoe. The hiss of steam as he cools and toughens it in the trough of water. The

pungent smell as he fits the new shoe on the freshly paired hoof. He can’t talk as he nails the shoe in place because his mouth is full of horse-shoe nails. The shoes are nailed in place, the nails clinched, the hoofs rasped; as he heaves a sigh, takes the cap off his head and wipes the sweat from his head and face. “Tis hard work.”

The forge here was a regular meeting place – a man’s club of a kind. I never saw a woman there. A great place for news of all kinds, weddings, deaths, births. What time the funeral will be at? The meadow auction? Look for the notice posted on the door. On wet days, there was always a crowd there, because they could do nothing else. The smith is celebrated in song and story, – Seamus O’Brien, Páid Ó Donoghue, and in modern times, the “Blacksmith of Ballinalee” – Seán McKeown.

The day for “shooing wheels” was a big day. It had to be fine, otherwise, the fire wouldn’t burn right to heat the iron tyre. The wheels were sent by the different carpenters about the place (there was usually one in every townland). I often saw 20/24 wheels to be shod at the one “go”. It was hard work, but at least it was in the open air.

It is indeed a milestone in rural history to see the forge and the carpenters shop closed. The tractor has taken the place of the horse, for the time being, at least. How many young people have seen a team of horses ploughing or mowing? What a lovely sight on a spring or summer day? Is this the price of “progress” as we call what is happening?

P.E. Egan



Leaving the Church with the last of the old “cash at the door collections”; Michael Martin R.I.P. and Paddy Egan. Easter 1975.



**Shoeing a horse, Kelly's forge, Killeroran.
Photo: Patrick Martin.**

This piece on Kelly's Forge was given to us kindly by Michael Martin and was written by Paddy Egan for the *Newbridge - Ballygar - Togher News* of 1982. It was a much longer article but this gives you a snippet of what memories the forge held for the local people.

Kelly's forge, Killeroran, late 60s. A mare being shod under the watchful eye of her foal. A plough can be seen behind at the wall; nothing else is visible, the forge is winding down production and would be gone within a few years. A beautiful piece was written about Kelly's forge in the early 1980s by the late great Paddy Egan: 'All I see is the door always closed and the front always clean. What a change from the old

days. Outside three horses and an ass and cart containing a big "swingle", a tongs, a "grubber" - all awaiting the smith's expert attention. On the ground, the inevitable heap of horse manure, old shoes of every size and shape to fit horse, ass, pony, jennet and the occasional mule, old axles, iron hoops, old scythes, mixed with bits of hoof. Inside, sparks flying in all directions, the ring of the anvil as Michael Kelly or Johnnie shapes the shoe. The hiss of steam as he cools and toughens it in the trough of water. The pungent smell as he fits the new shoe on the freshly paired hoof. He can't talk as he nails the shoe in place because his mouth is full of horse-shoe nails. The shoes are nailed in



Kelly blacksmith family, Ballygar, 1930s.

place, the nails clinched, the hoofs rasped; as he heaves a sigh, takes the cap off his head and wipes the sweat from his head and face. "T'is hard work". The forge here was a regular meeting place, a great place for news of all kinds: weddings, deaths, births. What time the funeral will be at? The meadow auction? Look for the notice posted on the door. On wet days, there was always a crowd there, because they could do nothing else. The day for "shooing wheels (sic)" was a big day. It had to be fine, otherwise the fire wouldn't burn right to heat the iron rim. The wheels were sent by the different carpenters

about the place (there was usually one in every townland). I often saw 20/24 wheels to be shod at the one "go". It was hard work, but at least it was in the open air. It is indeed a milestone in rural history to see the forge and the carpenter's shop closed. The tractor has taken the place of the horse, for the time being, at least. How many young people have seen a team of horses ploughing or mowing? What a lovely sight on a spring or summer day! Is this the price of "progress" as we call what is happening?'



Two fine examples of Fitzmaurice gates.





Above: Mick Fitzmaurice's forge, Ballygar.

Right: From the *Tuam Herald* Archives that dates to famine times 26th September 1846. The poem is from a section they called 'The Poets Corner' but no author is mentioned.

Mick Fitzmaurice

Mick Fitzmaurice (on left) outside his forge on High Street, Ballygar, 1940s, with Frank Burke of Ballinamore Bridge (on right). This forge was as important for its social interaction within the community as for its practical functions. Fitzmaurice's forge is no longer standing.

Special thanks to Brian Scanlon for above photo.

POETS CORNER.

THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP,
 How loud the pond'rous hammer rings,
 How swift the bright sparks fly,
 As to the bellows' heavy groan
 Will the smith his stout arms ply!
 Though glad and loud may be the strokes
 With which his anvil rings,
 Yet as loud and glad the simple notes
 Which echo as he sings,
 Oh! dismal must the evening be
 When for cheery thoughts we stop,
 And listen to the clanging din
 That fills the blacksmith's shop.

'Twas the nursing home of scandal,
 At the corner of our street;
 And ever 'neath its dingy walls,
 The gossips used to meet;
 'Twas there the village idlers
 Were certain to be found;
 And there the loud and merry laugh
 In bolsterous fun went round;
 And many likely tales were fraxed
 As, by accident, they'd stop
 To catch the news that ne'er was scant
 Within the blacksmith's shop.



Fitzmaurice's forge, then and now.



Michael Fitzmaurice detail on double gate.



Michael Fitzmaurice double gate handle detail.



Michael Fitzmaurice double gate outside Ballygar.



Michael Fitzmaurice's blacksmith marking.



Michael Fitzmaurice gate on house in Ballygar, originally an RIC Barracks.

GALWAY'S FORGED GATES



Pig fair Ballygar, 1966, showing the carts on right hand side. Photo courtesy of Michael Martin.



Victoria Square, Ballygar, with Fitzmaurice's forge on the right.



A picture taken taken after the interview, of Mia Woods, Chloe Quinn, Rachel Quinn, Emer Fleming, Mairead Boyle and Nicole Bellew, with Michael Martin.

Adopt a Blacksmith

Our role in the Galway Forged Gates Project was to 'Adopt a Blacksmith', finding and writing information on a local blacksmith. Fortunately for us, there is a local man with whom Emma Laffey, project leader, arranged a meeting. His name is Michael Martin. Michael came to our school, Holy

Rosary College in Mountbellew, and he told us many stories about his family and gave and gave us insight of how the families lived and worked in the Ballygar area. Michael even provided us with lots of photographs of blacksmiths, their families and their work which will be included in this chapter.



James Mulooly and Mick Fitzmaurice outside the forge. Photo courtesy of Brian Scanlon.



John Kelly was a blacksmith in Ballygar; his brother Dan Kelly also worked with him but he was more involved in the farm. Their father was Michael Kelly who was Michael Martin's grandfather.

Michael Kelly was born in Newbridge, County Galway, around 1875. When he came of age, Michael was offered an apprenticeship at Pat Fitzmaurice's Forge which was situated on Victoria Square in the town of Ballygar. The square was named after Queen Victoria. He spent his apprenticeship there working with iron and shoeing horses. Michael Kelly's aunt, Bridget Branley, was married to Pat Fitzmaurice and this shows how tight the connections were among the blacksmith

traders. The forge was situated perfectly as it was right at a stage coach stop. The stage coach was run by entrepreneur Charles Bianconi, an Italian man who was known as the man who put Ireland on wheels. If a horse needed a shoe repair or a coach needed a wheel repair, the repairs were made at Fitzmaurice's Forge. The stage coaches were set up after famine times but before railway lines were constructed. More can be read about Charles Bianconi on the Moylough website on the following link: <https://moylough.galwaycommunityheritage.org/content/topics/mail-coaches>



Dan and John Kelly at their forge. Photo courtesy of Michael Martin.

Michael Kelly worked with a blacksmith in the Boston and Rhode Island areas of America. Initially, he lived and worked with a man named Thomas Martin (uncle of Michael Martin on his father's side) as a farrier, someone who shoes horses.

Michael then got a job with the well-known Vanderbilt family who were a very wealthy family from Rhode Island and who made their money from railways, shipping and breeding of horses. Michael worked as their farrier and blacksmith for many years. There is even a document of Michael shipping horses for the Vanderbilt family from London to Rhode Island in 1907.

When he had saved enough money, Michael returned home around 1911. He married Ellen Coleman and she was left her family's farm. They had two sons and five daughters. The farm was very small and Michael decided to open his own forge with his brother Dan at a junction of six roads at Killeroran. His uncle owned this particular bit of land and Michael bought it from him. The forge ran from the late 1920s until the early 1970s.



How the forge looks today. Kelly's forge, Killeoran, Ballygar.

This is a picture of a forge that holds great historical value and is still standing to this day. The blacksmiths worked together for the shoeing of a wheel using water and fire. The people who saw their work were always overwhelmed with the great detail and effort that went into their work.

If you look closely at this image, you will see fully-finished cartwheels sitting by the fire where the brothers heated the rims. It would take two men to shoe a cartwheel. The iron had to be heated to bend it and then placed into water to cool it down so it would be tight on the wheel.



Photos: with thanks to Michael Martin
Kelly family, Newgrove, Newbridge, Co. Galway:

Annie is the third girl on the right in the middle row,
Margaret Brannelly is on the left and the men at the
back could be neighbours or relatives; Margaret's
husband died previously,

Mary Delia and Annie Kelly are in the middle,
Patrick, James and Sarah Kelly sit at the front.

The Kelly family, like most families, had their share of hardship. Most of the family emigrated to Boston, leaving some of the younger ones at home. Annie Kelly was born in 1895 and in 1915 was aged just 20 years old. She, like her siblings before her, tormented her parents to let her go the America. They tried their best to have her stay. But she got her way and emigrated to Boston to join other members of her family. When she arrived in Ellis Island, New York,



Kelly family home, Newgrove.
Photo courtesy of Michael Martin.

her friend and neighbour Bridget Doyle was with her. Annie had her medical examination and the American authorities would not let her in. They said she had a heart murmur and sent her back on the *Lusitania*, the ship we all know sunk on its 202nd journey on the 7th May 1915 off the coast of Cork, by a German U-boat, drowning 1,193 passengers and crew, including the young Annie Kelly.

The Forge

by Seamus Heaney

*All I know is a door into the dark.
Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;
Inside, the hammered anvil's short-pitched ring,
The unpredictable fantail of sparks
Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.
The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,
Horned as a unicorn, at one end and square,
Set there immovable: an altar
Where he expends himself in shape and music.
Sometimes, leather-aproned, hairs in his nose,
He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter
Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;
Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and flick
To beat real iron out, to work the bellows.*

Gates

November 2015

Colm Mac Lochlainn

*Giving shape to threshold spaces,
Forged from iron, rivets, braces,
Blacksmith's hammer, fire and tongs,
Annealed with water, anvil songs.*

*Craft and workmanship revealed,
Gates mark the entrance to each field,
And farmers know them by their shapes,
These sturdy bars, diagonal braced.*

*Each farm threshold has its gate
Some made simply, some ornate
Examples of the blacksmith's art
Ideal width for horse and cart*

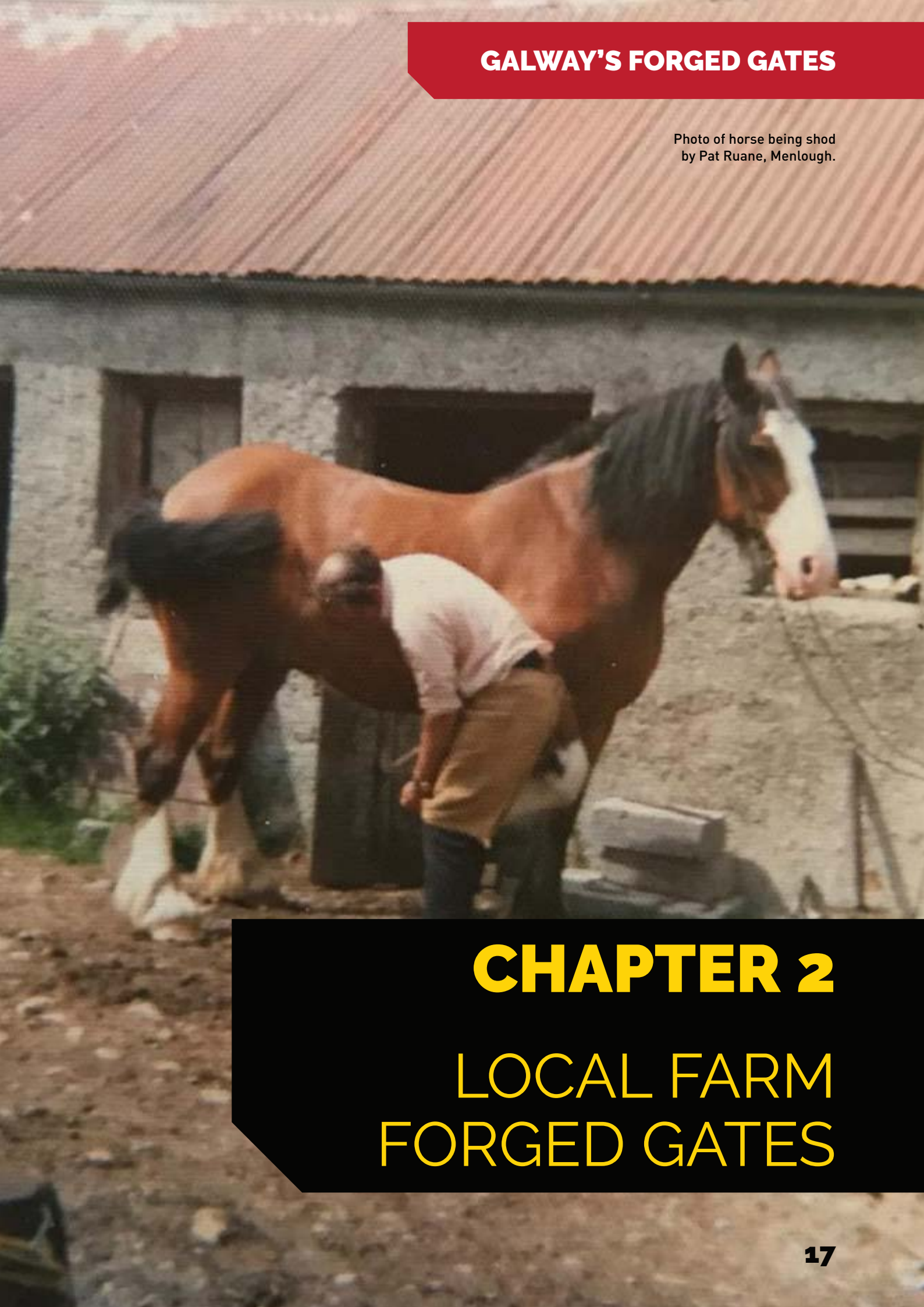
*Machinery becomes advanced,
Tractors' girth and size enhanced,
Through these gates they will not go,
A ten foot gap is soon outgrown,*

*And so these gates are taken down,
And left to moulder on the ground
Forgotten, hardly ever used,
Rusty, bent and tractor bruised.*

*But these are noble, these are grand,
To be admired where'er they stand
And bring to mind true artisans
Strong of arm and deft of hand*

*Whose hammers rang both light
and deep
Their forges gone, their anvils sleep.
These men who plied the
blacksmith's trade
Remembered by the gates they made.*

Photo of horse being shod
by Pat Ruane, Menlough.



CHAPTER 2

LOCAL FARM FORGED GATES



Photo of horse being shod by Pat Ruane, Menlough.

Micheál Ryan

My name is Micheál Ryan and I come from a small village called Waterloo, just outside Menlough in East Galway. We have always farmed our land here, going back many generations. I have grown up with gates surrounding our farm, whether they are galvanised sheep gates, pallets blocking gaps or rusty cattle gates. It wasn't until during our Transition Year in Holy Rosary College that I really knew the value of the heritage forged gate.

We always had a strong connection with the Ruane blacksmiths as they lived next door to us over the generations and before that in Menlough village which is only just down

the road. The Ruanes made most of our forged gates on our farm as well as some other farm items over the years, all made at their forge next door to our farm. Their work stands the test of time and is still being used on our farm today. I feel the most fascinating thing is how they created all of these items without any welding – just using iron, heat and their skill of bending iron.

Pat Ruane, a grandson of my neighbour blacksmith, also Pat Ruane, went to America as there wasn't enough work in Menlough for all of the brothers. He stayed there, I think, 12 years, saved up his money from shoeing horses in New York and came back and bought the place in Waterloo where he set up his own forge.



Blacksmith's makers mark of Patrick Ruane. Every blacksmith left their unique mark on their work, whether it was a stamp or a deliberate small mistake that no one else would see but him.



This is a photo of the decorative gate still hanging on our farm today. Augustin Laffey Vermont gate made by Patrick Ruane in 1945.



This farm item is called a Grubber. It was made by Pat Ruane for making drills and getting the soil ready for sowing.



Blacksmiths used dipping tanks to cool the iron into the right place when making new items. This is a photo of the dipping tank that belonged to Pat Ruane.



Pat Ruane, a grandson of my neighbour, also a blacksmith called Pat Ruane, went to America as there wasn't enough work in Menlough for all of the brothers. He stayed there, I think 12 years, saved up his money from shoeing horses in New York and came back and bought the place in Waterloo where he set up his own forge.

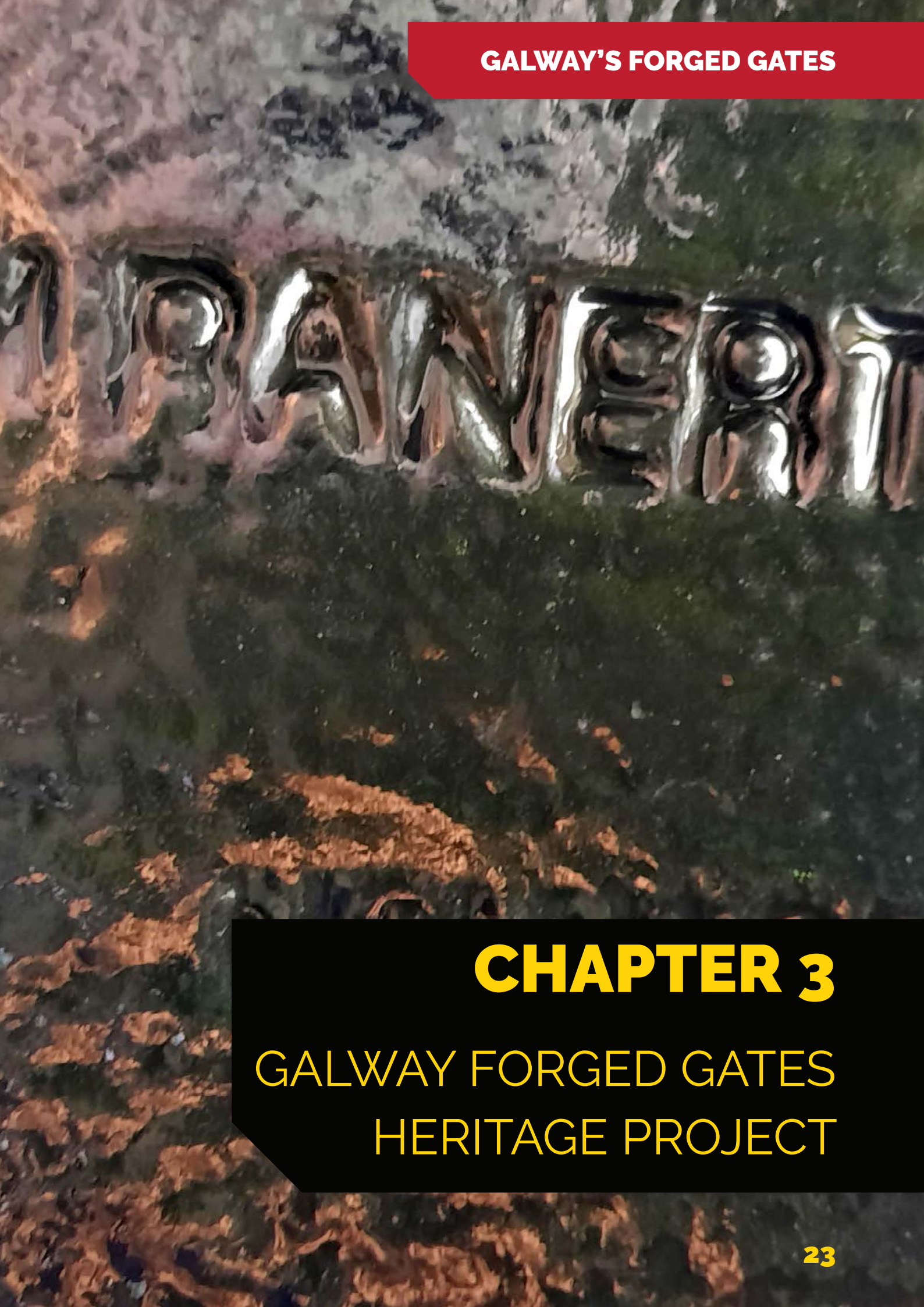
There were many things fixed, made and repaired in these forges all over the country and they were a valuable asset to every village. Everyone needs horses and donkeys shod as these animals had to be looked after; they were used on farms and for transport.



This is another gate of a local man on his farm.
The gate was made by Pat Ruane and it has his blacksmith mark on it.

There were many things fixed, made and repaired in these forges all over the country and they were a valuable asset to every village. Everyone needed horses and donkeys shod as these animals had to be looked after; they were used on farms and for transport.

I am glad I was part of the Galway Forged Gates Project as I have learned so much about the heritage value of Ireland's vernacular forged gates and about the history of our local blacksmiths. I hope to restore the decorative gate that is on our farm in the future.



CHAPTER 3
GALWAY FORGED GATES
HERITAGE PROJECT



Photo of Bannerton's Forge and mobile blacksmith.

GALWAY FORGED GATES HERITAGE PROJECT

As Transition Year (TY) students at Holy Rosary College, we decided to take part in a heritage project led by Emma Laffey and Marie Mannion (Galway County Council

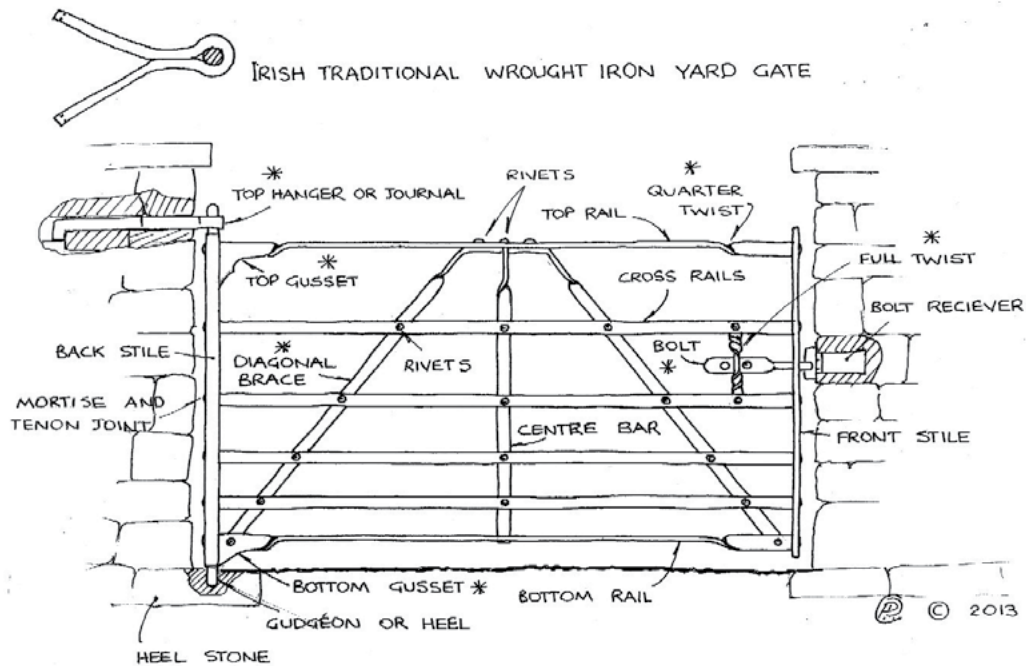
Heritage Officer) and funded by Creative Ireland. The project name is Galway Forged Gates Project.

Marie Mannion organised a day for TY students with a mobile forge run by Stephen Quinn of Killimor. It was a freezing cold day at the forge but it was brilliant to watch and learn about the trade and skill of the blacksmith. The mobile forge was set up in Mountbellew at Bannerton's old forge.

We were allowed to use implements to forge a small piece to give us an insight in and a feel for blacksmithing. This took our interest, so we decided we would love to take part in the Galway Forged Gates Project and do a model of a forged gate and an e-book to document our journey.



Photo of the horse's head we made with the blacksmith.



TOP HANGER : ONE PIECE HANGER SHOWN WHICH CATCHES INTO OR BEHIND PIER STONES.
 GUSSETS : ARE USUALLY ON TOP AND BOTTOM RAILS TO SUPPORT CANTILEVER EFFECT.
 * AND ARE MADE IN MANY DIFFERENT STYLES AND SHAPES.
 BOLT : SOMETIMES A LATCH, ARE VERY FUNCTIONAL IN DESIGN, AND USUALLY
 COMPLEMENT GATE TECHNIQUES.
 TWISTS : THE USE OF TWISTS ON THESE GATES ARE BOTH A PRACTICAL AND
 AESTHETIC FEATURE.

We were also introduced to Shem Caulfield (artist and expert in forged gates), Bernie Doherty (Galway Community Archaeologist), Dr Christy Cunniffe (Archaeologist and Heritage Expert) and GKMedia who documented and filmed the whole day.

Shem Caulfield kindly gave us the diagram of a forged gate that explains all the parts of the gate. Shem talked us through the various parts and the names they have. The diagram was given to Shem by Paul Devlin.



The mobile forge was set up in Mountbellew at Bannerton's old forge.



Marie Mannion (Galway Heritage officer), Bernie Doherty (Galway Community Archaeologist), Dr Christy Cunniffe (Archaeologist and Heritage Expert), were present on the day. GKMedia who documented and filmed the whole day.

Oisín Kindregan, Harry Mitchell, Cian Nolan, Ronan Kelly, Dean Cunningham, Padraic Mannion, Cian Fallon and Cian Kelly are all the TY students who were involved in constructing the model of the gate. Our first plan of action was to decide on a method of construction. Our first thoughts were

to 3D print the gate. However, on further consideration it was decided the gate would be erected using wooden materials.

We started by making a prototype to see if our design would be adequate. After further inspection of the prototype, we agreed to



Stephen Quinn, Blacksmith, doing a demonstration for TY students.



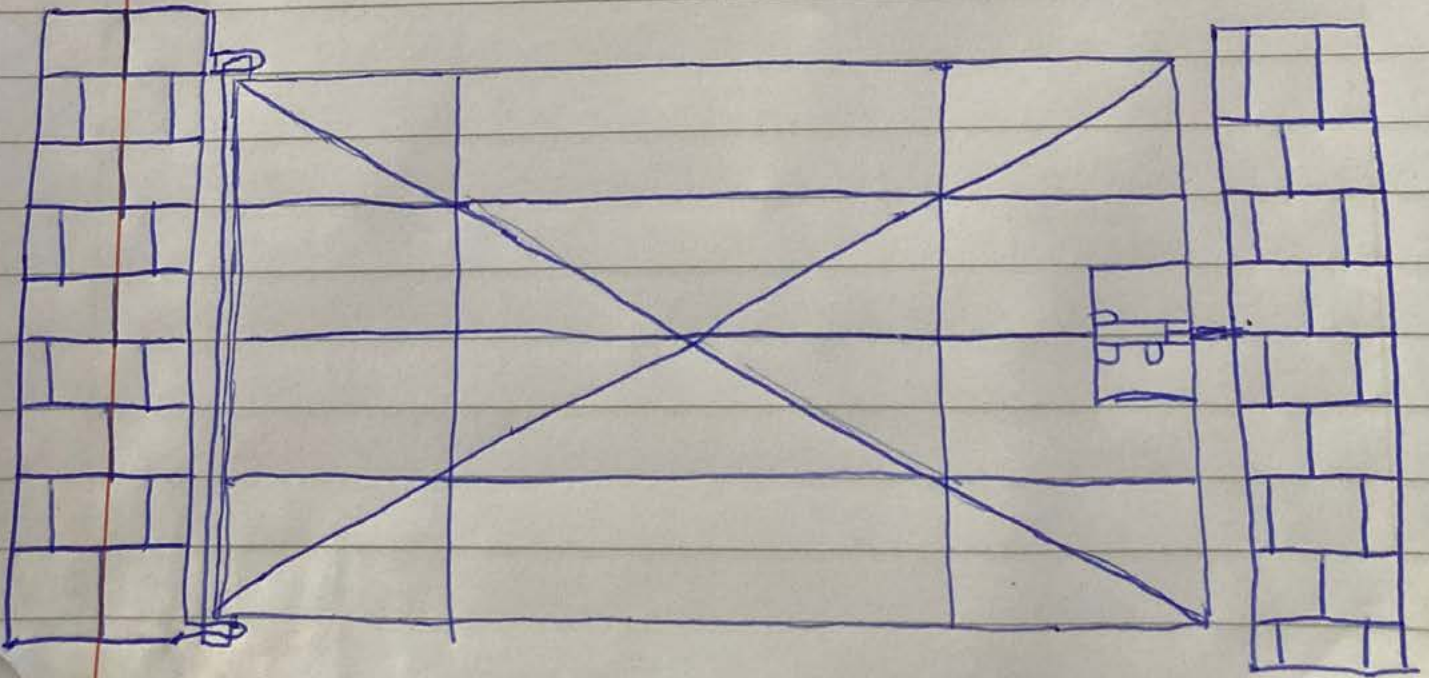
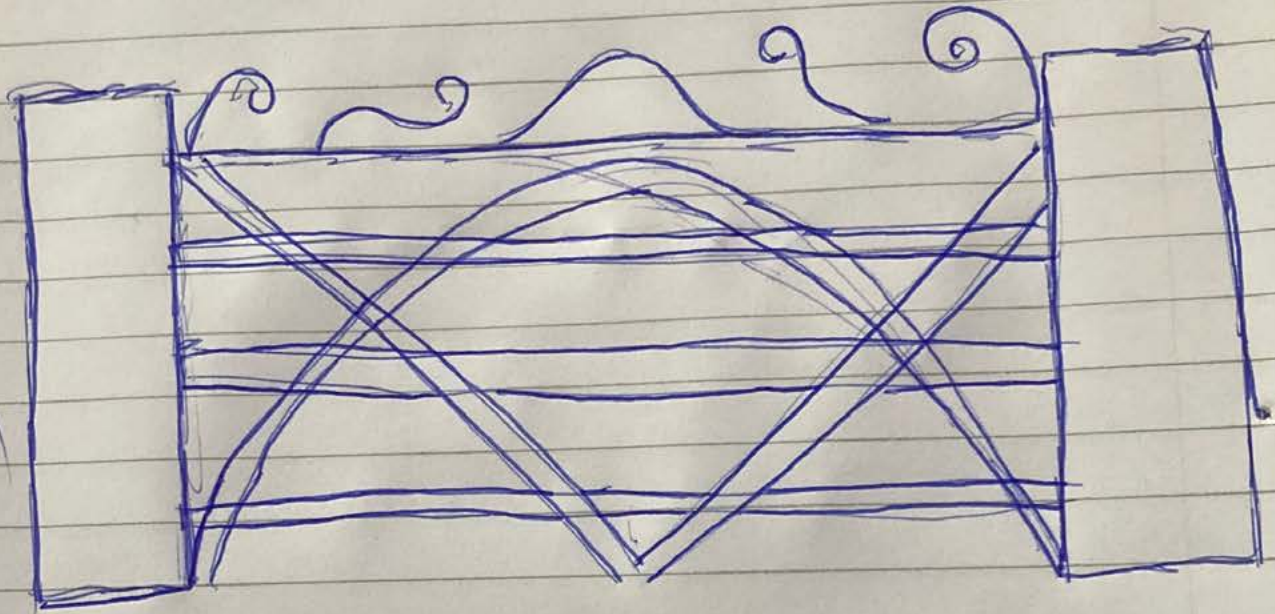
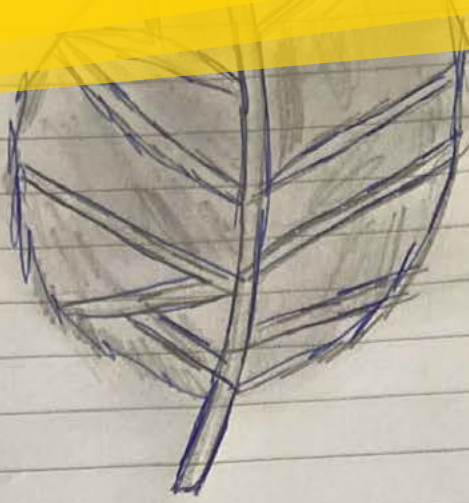
Building the model gate.

use joints, instead of just screwing the wood together, to replicate how the blacksmiths would have used joints in the past.

The creation of the gate began very successfully as we got into our stride. A minor roadblock was hit when an integral piece cracked. This was disappointing as everything was going swimmingly up until that point. Nevertheless, we got our heads down and rallied forwards.



Four TY students at a forged gate on Causey Farm.



Original sketch of model gate.



**BUY A PAIR OF
THE REAL
'Blacksmith
Boots.
EVERY PAIR
GUARANTEED.**

Who won 1st Prizes at the recent Connaught Exhibition held in Tuam, for his Ploughs, Harrows, and Gates, and also at Mount Bellew Shows. Those who have once worked Bannerton's Ploughs will use no other make.

A large assortment of Agricultural Implements always in Stock.

Repairs done while customer waits. All kinds of metals in stock. Call and inspect, or send post card for particulars.

MICHAEL BANNERTON, Manufacturer, Mountbellew

We also went on a trip to Causey Farm where we spotted some old forged gates. If we hadn't participated in the project, we would never have taken any notice of the gates.

On completion of the gate, we could not have been happier with the finished project. All of us were honoured and appreciated the chance to work with such lovely people for such a great project.

On doing some research with the help of Emma Laffey, we found some old photos of Bannerton's Forge and the business the Bannerton's had in Mountbellew. The forge was originally built for the Bellew Estate. The house no longer exists but the forge has been renovated and is now a museum. Looking through the *Tuam Herald* archives, we found an old advertisement for Bannerton's from 1908. Recently, the Mountbellew Heritage & Tourism Group restored an old Bannerton gate on the Bellew Estate and this had on it the Bannerton's blacksmith markings.

A meeting of above was held on Friday, 5th inst., in the Town Hall. Present—Messrs James Kelly, (in the chair); Fred Fore, Matt Connolly, W Monaghan, Tom Flatley, P Godwin, and J. Connolly, Sec.

After full consideration and discussion the following prices were arranged and agreed to be charged for the future—Heavy cart horse shoeing, 10s; medium, do, 9s; hackney, do, 8s to 10s; small ponies, 6s to 8s; donkey shoeing, 4s; mules, 6s; making new socks and dressing culter, £1 3s; dressing socks and culters, 16s; shoeing new horse wheels and stocks, £1 10s; re-shoeing, do, £1; shoeing new donkey wheels, £1; supplying stuff $\frac{3}{4}$ in. harrow pins, £1 15s; pointing old harrow pins, 6s; mounting new swing bars (per set) 15s; dressing of grubber

.....

A course for young blacksmiths, held recently at Gort Technical school, was attended by eleven pupils and proved a great success, it was stated at last week's meeting of the County Vocational Education Committee.

Mr. S. Folan, headmaster of Ballinasloe school, who inspected an exhibition of the pupils' work, said that the display was the best



We also found advertisements for blacksmith boots, a blacksmithing course being run in Mountbellew and even a blacksmiths' meeting to agree prices so everyone charged the same monies.

Lastly, we were introduced to Damien Goodfellow. Damien gave us a great talk and advice on how to go about doing an e-book. We had no experience before this in graphic design and Damien explained it all to us very simply. We hope you all enjoy our e-book and the hard work that Damien has put into it for us. We are delighted with the finished

product and can't believe how we managed to put it all together.

We have learned so much from this project and are very grateful to everyone involved who allowed us to participate and get active as students in relation to our local heritage which is all around us every day. We would advise all students from every school to actively get involved in any heritage projects that are offered to you. We really enjoyed our project over the months and we will always remember the old forged gate!





Bannerton's machinery repair show, Mountbellew town, 1908.





A Bannerton gate at the Forge Bellew Estate, Mountbellew.



Bannerton's five circle marking on the gate at the forge on the Bellew's Estate, Mountbellew.

CHAPTER 4

BLACKSMITHS DURING THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE



Commandant Tommie Kelly

Commandant Tommie Kelly of Corrocot, Mount Talbot., took an active part in the War of Independence and managed to avoid captivity throughout the entire war. This was some feat when one considers that there was one of the largest garrisons of soldiers in Co. Roscommon billeted in Mt Talbot House, less than a mile away from Tommie's home. The fact he evaded capture is down to his neighbour and friend, the blacksmith Frank Rourke. Frank was originally from Co. Down and came to our area to run the forge in Corrocot. Tommie Kelly worked in his father's tailoring business next door to the forge. When a number of military vehicles started

their engines and set out from Mt Talbot House at the same time; this usually meant that a raid or 'round up' was starting. Frank Rourke could hear the engines from his forge and he immediately changed the hammering sound on his anvil. He normally hit the anvil in three bursts at a time, but when a raid was on he changed this to two and delayed the third hit for a couple of seconds. On hearing this, Tommie ran from the rear of his father's premises to the 'dug out' in Poll-glass, located in the bog near Carrolls.

When the lorries arrived and soldiers burst through the front door Tommie was safely hidden in the bog. This caused much anger in the raiding parties and members of the 'Auxiliaries' bayoneted Tommie's dog to death in anger on one such raid.

Tommie Kelly joined the National Army after Independence and was one of the officers in attendance when Roscommon barracks was handed over by crown forces in early 1922. Many of the soldiers involved in raiding Tommie's house were also in attendance.

Tommie Kelly died in north London in 1965 and his family still live there. Frank Rourke was tragically killed when he was accidentally hit by a car in 1953. Both men had remained life-long friends.

Information and photo given by Paul Connolly, Mount Talbot.

Blacksmiths during the War of Independence

Blacksmiths had an important role in the Irish War of Independence because they were able to repair and fix weapons. A blacksmith's forge was also a great meeting place for IRA members to pass on information. Many blacksmiths were in the IRA and they helped by hiding and repairing weapons. This made them a target of the British Army. Even blacksmiths who were not affiliated with the IRA were sometimes targeted. This resulted in many accounts of blacksmiths being taken from their homes in the middle of the night and getting beaten, tortured and sometimes killed. A lot of the men beaten and tortured by the British died at a young age from the injuries they sustained.

There are many records of such events in the *Tuam Herald* archives, some of them being presented below.

Raids by Crown forces were made on some houses in Tuam on Thursday night, and Mr. J. P. Connolly, blacksmith, was arrested,

A party of masked and armed men entered the house of Pat Moran, herd and small farmer, Anbally, Cumber, and also the house of John Burke, a large farmer, Currendrum, an adjoining village, last week. Having covered the occupants of both houses with revolvers, members of the party made a long search and it is reported that £320—the savings of a lifetime of hard work—were taken from Moran. He had the money locked in a box which was broken open. Burke is an extensive farmer, owing about 30 acres of land. He had only a little money in the house and this was taken, together with some cheques and a cheque book.

J.P. Connolly arrested by Crown Forces, *Tuam Herald*, 1902.

AN EXILE'S RETROSPECTION.

I am far from the land where in childhood I rambled,
 The chums of my youth are now scattered and gone,
 I can see the dear school in memory's horizon,
 Where I often was spanked for the things I did wrong.

The maps on the walls partly wrinkled and torn,
 Showing towns o'er the ocean I ne'er thought I'd see,
 How I long to be back 'midst the scenes of my childhood,
 Yet an exile of Erin I'm destined to be.

The forge at the crossroads where daily we dallied,
 And saw the rough iron cut and shaped for the shoe,
 The blacksmith, we thought in our juvenile fancy,
 Was a giant of great strength as the sparks upwards flew.

Poem written by Patrick F. Noonan the *Tuam Herald* 1942.

PATRIOT'S DEATH.

In his 70th year we see the announcement of the death of an old Co. Galway blacksmith patriot. This is the late Mr. Thomas (Tom) Kenny of Craughwell. Tom Kenny was one of the props of Irish nationalism in the West, and he suffered for it on various occasions. But he feared nothing: imprisonment, ill-treatment, or even death, were all alike to him. He often was at the gates of death and survived, and he suffered jail and bodily ill-treatment on several occasions. He was in collaboration with Liam Mellows during the "Tan War, and before this was much identified with the Land League and the Land War. He was dubbed "a notorious outlaw" by a high British official in the House of Commons when the Galway-Rising and Moyode Battalion Assembly were being discussed. He was also President of the Connaught Council of the G.A.A. for many years. May he rest in peace.

TOM KENNY.

Now, maybe, you've heard of Tom Kenny; you haven't! nor yet of the way,
 He fought a lone fight,
 For freedom and right
 For many and many a day—
 With his old Fenian gun,
 Till the battle was won
 He kept pegging and pegging away.

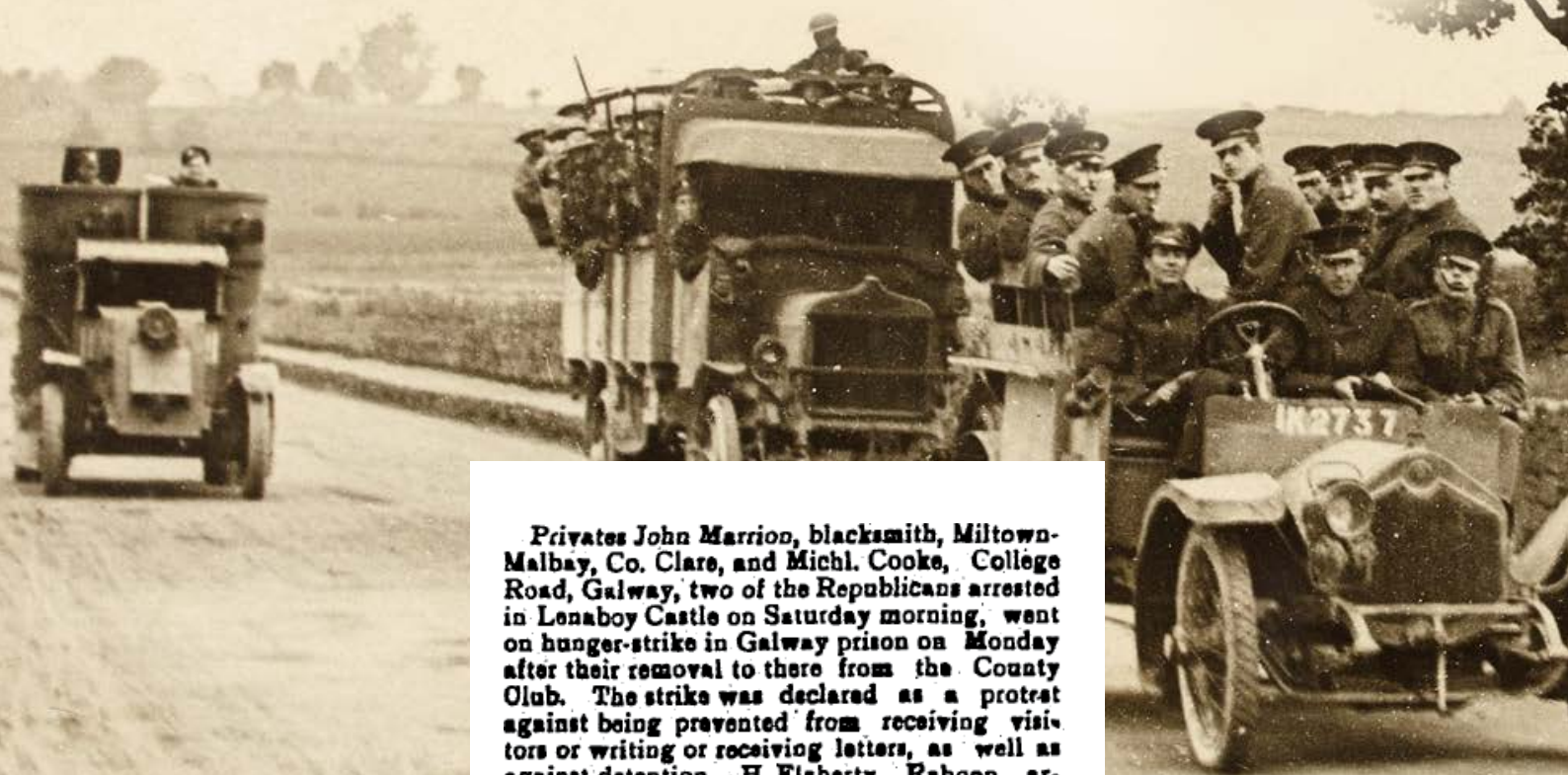
Well, Tom was a blacksmith at Craughwell, and always followed his trade:
 With the iron aglow
 He oft thought of the foe,
 As many a pikehead he made—
 With blow after blow,
 Now fast—and then slow,
 Till ready for work was each blade.

For Tom, he was a bold Fenian,
 With a liking for war and its ways—
 A true son of Erin
 Right manly and daring,
 'Tis he, that was worthy of praise—
 So where'er, that he's faring,
 We pray that he's sharing
 That bliss—we trust due in his case.

Above left: Poem written about blacksmith Tom Kenny, *Tuam Herald*, 1947.

Bottom left: Death notice of blacksmith Tom Kenny, dubbed as a "notorious outlaw", *Tuam Herald*, 1940s.

With thanks to Paul Connolly, Mount Talbot, for giving us permission to use his story about Commandant Tommie Kelly. Although Tommie was a tailor, he worked next door to a blacksmith, who saved his life.



Privates John Marrion, blacksmith, Miltown-Malbay, Co. Clare, and Michl. Cooke, College Road, Galway, two of the Republicans arrested in Lenaboy Castle on Saturday morning, went on hunger-strike in Galway prison on Monday after their removal to there from the County Club. The strike was declared as a protest against being prevented from receiving visitors or writing or receiving letters, as well as against detention. H Flaherty, Rahoon, arrested in the castle on the same morning, has been exempted from the strike as he is under eighteen years. The following, arrested by Dail troops at the engagement at Moinin-na-g-Ciseach on Saturday morning and lodged in the prison, joined in the hunger-strike on Tuesday morning:—

Michael Nowell (prisoners' commandant), Briarhill, Castlegar; John Broderick, Ballintemple, do; John Glynn, Kiltulla, Castlegar; William Tonery, Castlegar; Ml Flannery, Castlegar; Thomas Conroy, Briarhill, Castlegar; Edward Coyne, Briarhill, Castlegar; Thos Burke, Coclough, Castlegar; John Corcoran, Ballyloughan, Galway; Wm Hosty, Castlegar; John Fahy, Ballynew, Castlegar; Thos Mulrain, Kiltulla, Castlegar.



List of students involved in the HRC Galway Forged Gates Project: Model Gate

Team Leader: Dean Cunningham

Oisín Kindregan

Harry Mitchell

Cian Nolan

Ronan Kelly

Padraic Mannion

Cian Kelly

Local Farm Forged Gates

Micheál Ryan

Adopt a Blacksmith

Chloé Quinn

Mia Woods

Rachel Quinn

Emer Fleming

Nicole Bellew

Maireád Boyle

War of Independence

Noah Byrne

Noah Simmons

Cian McHugh



Comhairle Chontae na Gaillimhe
Galway County Council

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



HOLY ROSARY COLLEGE
MOUNTBELLEW



An Chomhairle Oidhreachta
The Heritage Council





HOLY ROSARY COLLEGE
MOUNTBELLEW