

North Mayo Heritage Centre

NEWSLETTER

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Feature Article

THE SHOEMAKER

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THE SHOEMAKER

The shoemaker, sometimes referred to as a cobbler, had an important role in the everyday lives of our ancestors. The difference in both jobs being that the shoemaker was an artisan who worked with new leather to make shoes while the cobbler, on the other hand, was defined as a shoe repair man, who worked with old leather. Both job titles were interchanged.

Shoemaking originated over 5000 years ago when shoes were made from a single piece of cowhide, then fastened with a leather cord. Although shoemaking became more industrialised in the mid-18th century, most of the work was still being done by hand.

During the early 20th century in Ireland, many people only had one pair of shoes, which were mostly worn in winter. When they needed shoes they visited the shoemaker, who, with a rule and tape carefully measured their feet. Then on a wooden last he made the boot or shoe to the exact shape of the foot so the wearer never suffered from corns or bunions.

The shoemaker scraped the soles smoothly on the inside with sharp irons and shaped the heel to a comfortable style. His workshop was generally small, with shelves full of leather for making new shoes and old shoes awaiting repair. Many tools of the trade were needed to make the perfect pair of shoes or boots e.g. a last, a hammer, an awl, a pincers and many other small tools or implements.

Shoemakers, for the most part, had inherited the trade from a relative. Strangely, a shoemaker would often be recognised by the dark tone of his skin, believed to be due to the tannin in the leather!

According to an article featured in the National Folklore Collection, submitted by Mrs. Bridget Callaghan, Ballyderg, Ballina, "there were no boots or shoes sold in shops. I got my boots made by a shoemaker named John Doherty in Foxford Co. Mayo. He usually charged me about eight shillings. I only wore them to Mass on Sunday, and to the market in Ballina on Monday. In those, my younger days, I found it more comfortable to travel barefooted. A pair of shoes lasted me about three or four years."

Due to an increase in demand for shoes and boots, many shoemakers became established. For instance, in the early 1900s, in the small village of Belcarra, four shoemakers were trading, namely Johnny Hopkins, Tommy Naughton, Bodkin, Pat McIntyre (until 1953), followed by his nephew, Tom McHugh (until 1990).

With the onset of industrial development and the increasing number of new factories being established in later years, the shoemakers couldn't compete and the trade slackened. These days people rarely go to a shoemaker and there are very few left in Ireland.

Sources:
www.duchas.ie
www.irelandxo.com
www.ionaddeirbhile.com



Boots made by local cobbler Jamsey McAndrew, Belmullet (Jamsie na mBróg) 1900's.
 Photo from Ionad Deirbhile Heritage Centre, Aughleam.

Brief history of the surname **COYNE**

Ó Cadhain: O Coyne, O Kine, Coyne, Kyne, Kine, and by translation, Barnacle; 'descendants of Cadhan' (wild goose, barnacle); the name of an old family of Partry, who are still numerous in Connacht.¹

This Connacht name, which has spread into Leinster, derives from that of the sept Ó Cadhain whose territory was in Co. Mayo and also, seemingly, from that of the north Connacht sept Ó Comhdháin. Descendants of a family whose Irish name was Mac Giolla Chaoine adopted the surname Coyne as well as Kilcoyne in Co. Mayo, while Coen and Kyne are also on record as variants of Coyne.²

(O) Coyne Ó Cadhain (cadhan, wild goose). A sept of the Uí Fiachrach. This and its synonym Kyne are essentially Connacht names.³

Of the 54 Coyne births in Ireland in 1890 - 13 were in Leinster, 1 occurred in Munster, 1 was in Ulster, while the majority (39) occurred in Connacht. The surname was principally found in Counties Galway and Mayo.

¹ "Irish Names and Surnames" by Reverend Patrick Woulfe,

² "Irish Family Names" by Brian De Breffny

³ "The Surnames of Ireland" by Edward MacLysaght

Extract from the Ordnance Survey Namebooks of 1838 A brief history of the townland

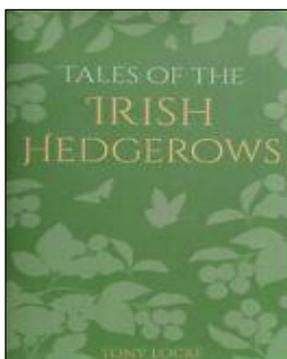
BALLYDERG / BALLYDARRIG

(Baile Dearg, red town)

Located in the north-west portion of the parish of Backs (Ballinahaglish), it contains 395 acres, 1 rood, 2 perches*, including 6 acres, 1 rood, 6 perches* of water. Proprietor, George Vaughan Jackson, Esq. It is let to 16 occupying tenants at will at from 20 shillings to 30 shillings per acre yearly. Co. Cess**, 2 shillings 8¼d. per acre. Tithe withheld by tenantry. Soil, part heavy clay and part moory, producing oats, flax and potatoes. Fuel plenty. Prevailing Names – O'Hara and Clarke. Ballyderg Lake is on the boundary between this parish and Kilbelfad parish, and is partly in this townland. There are two forts in this townland.

* There are 40 perches in a rood, and 4 roods in an acre.

** The County Cess was a form of local taxation. It is derived from the word 'assessment'.



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