Historical Notes on the Fisheries of some Tidal Tributaries of the River Shannon

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The Rivers Maigue, Deel, Feale, Fergus and Bunratty all enter the estuary of the River Shannon and they are generally regarded as tributaries of the larger river. Whatever may be the justification for this from the geographical point of view we must regard each of these rivers as a salmon and eel river in its own right. That is to say the stocks of salmon, eels and other fish are sufficiently discreet to be treated as independent of those of the Shannon and of one another.

The River Maigue and its Tributaries

Salmon and eels were fished at many places in the Maigue and its tributaries down the ages, but unfortunately it is not possible to follow in detail the ownership of the fisheries along the river. Be that as it may the historical documents are of sufficient interest to be discussed, if only because the methods of fishing are indicated for the various parts of the river.

In the seventeenth century the main River Maigue was regarded as a salmon river—it contained trout and eels as well—whereas the Camoge and Morningstar Rivers were said in their various parts to contain trout, eels and pike and the Loobagh was said to contain only trout and eels.¹

The tide runs up the narrow river as far as Adare Bridge, or perhaps a little beyond, a distance of about ten miles from the estuary of the Shannon. I propose to discuss this area first and then to proceed to the rest of the main river and thence to its tributaries, the Camoge, the Morningstar and the Loobagh Rivers (Fig. 1.). Later I propose to discuss the methods of fishing adopted as indicated by the historical documents.

Salmon derived from the River Maigue were subjected to capture by various types of fishing gear in the Shannon estuary before they actually reached the Maigue itself, but that is not a matter which need concern us here. The Civil Survey has a number of interesting references to fishings in the tidal waters, details of which are given in Appendix 1. (page 153). In all there were at least seven fishing weirs, mostly for salmon, in the estuary of the Maigue up as far as the townland of Kilcurly

¹ Civil Survey, iv, 94, 120, 158, 228.
FIG. 1 Sketch map of the basin of the River Maigue and its tributaries with inset showing position of rivers described in this paper.
in the year 1655, apart from the unused seats or sites of other weirs and weirs out of repair. These weirs were obviously head weirs, as the description given of those at Corcanmore indicates. This is, in fact, the first reference to a head weir, which I have so far been able to trace in the historical records. The list in the Civil Survey indicates that the estuary of the Maigue was then well fished for salmon (see Fig. 1 for location of these engines). I have not included in the list in Appendix I some weirs about which there was a doubt as to whether they were situated in the Maigue or Shannon.

How long these engines continued in existence it is difficult to say. Certainly they went out of operation before the Special Commissioners of Irish Fisheries held their inquiries into fixed engines for salmon after the passing of the Fisheries Act of 1863. Presumably they had also disappeared before 1845, otherwise it seems likely that the Earl of Dunraven would have also complained about them when he made his complaints "of the Maigue being regularly fished with nets—it is presumed they do in exercise of the public right."

A report from W. J. Fennell about a weir at Court Bridge shows that on 5th February 1846 this weir for eels occupied one arch of the bridge and as it obstructed navigation, it was obviously illegal.

Local information has it that for a very long period the tidal waters of the Maigue were fished by snap nets, a form of net which we will discuss later, although in the upper part of the area, from Clononn to Adare, draft nets were also in use up to the year 1885, when their use in that stretch of the river was prohibited by bye-law.

Under the provisions of the Shannon Fisheries Act of 1835, snap nets in the tidal waters of the River Shannon, including the tidal waters of the Maigue, were prohibited. From 1930 to 1935, inclusive, the following number of snap nets were in use:

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1930</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1932</th>
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So much for that portion of the river where the tide ebbs and flows. From Curragh Beg upstream the character of the river changes. Although there may be rises and falls of the water level under the influence of the tide, the flow was always in one direction, i.e. downstream, which, as we shall see later, has an important bearing on the type of salmon weir in use.

In the year 1263 the Bishop of Limerick made an agreement with one Reginald St. James, concerning the lands in Caherasse, together with the fishing in the Maigue, indicating the importance of the fishing rights at that early date.

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5 Bye-law 112 dated 12/9/1885 made by the Inspectors of Irish Fisheries.
6 Records of the Fisheries Division, Department of Lands.
7 John Begley The diocese of Limerick, Dublin, 1906, i. 141.
Before the dissolution of the monasteries there were important fisheries at Adare owned by religious houses in this vicinity. At the suppression of the monasteries, these religious houses were in possession of

a) Holy Trinity Friary, "a weir or fishing for taking salmon on the River May."

b) Augustinian Friary, "a weir or fishing for taking salmon on the river May"

c) Franciscan Friary, "a weir and fishing place for taking eels and salmon"8

Unfortunately we cannot now identify the sites of these engines although there are indications of a number of dams or weirs which may well be the remains of the friars' weirs. On 24th December 1587 one Robert Collam obtained a lease for 50 years of property which included, inter alia, the fisheries which formerly belonged to the three friaries in Adare.9 On 4th November 1595 Sir Henry Wallop was granted inter alia, the property leased to Collam in 1587.10

A fishing at Howardstown, near the junction of the Morningstar River with the Maigue, was the subject of a grant on 20th March 1604 when Sir Henry Broncar, President of Munster, received, inter alia, "the castle and town of Hewardstown, 2 carucates and a water mill with a certain fishing in the River Mawge, the estate of Gerald, Earl of Desmond."11

The Civil Survey of 1655 again gives us an indication of the fisheries in the main river from Curraghbeg upwards (see Appendix 1). These fisheries included 10 eel weirs and two salmon weirs, the locations of which have been indicated in Fig. 1. The two salmon weirs were at Adare and were presumably two of the weirs formerly operated by the friars.

On 15th December 1684 one Thady Quin, obtained under the Commissioner of Grace, inter alia, "Pierce Creagh's burgageland in Adare and the salmon weirs" and "a moiety of Poor Abbey with the salmon and eel weir."12 The "Poor Abbey" was one of the Adare houses. Thady Quin was an ancestor of the Earls of Dunraven.13 The salmon weirs were obviously two of those formerly in the possession of the friars of Adare.

By the time the first Ordnance Survey Maps were surveyed the salmon weirs at Adare had disappeared. On the main River Maigue, however, three eel weirs were

9 P.R.I. rep. D.K. xvi. 58. Fiant Eliza. 5116. See also XV. 123 Fiant Eliza. 4757 and 4758.
12 Com. Grace. 8.
13 See Dunraven in Burkoe's Peerage.
shown at Castleroberts, Bruree and Dromacummer East, all of which have now disappeared.

We must now consider the tributaries of the Maigue, the most important of which from the fisheries view point was obviously the Camoge, entering the Maigue itself just above Croom (Fig. 1). As far up as Knockainy, the "Manor of Any" had an appurtenant fishing in the year 1287, as indicated by an extent taken on 28th September. The fishing which I presume was for eels, together with a water mill, was then valued at 30 shillings, a considerable sum for those days. An inquisition taken in 1298, showed that Thomas FitzMaurice at his death held the "Manor of Glenogra" with, inter alia, "six pools, the fishing of which they extend at 7/10d a year." The manor of Glenogra is situated upstream of Monaster and included a castle, the ruins of which still exist.

The Abbey of Monasternagh or Nenagh at the dissolution had "weirs for eels and pikes" in the Camoge. These possessions were, inter alia, granted to Sir Henry Wallop on 4th November 1695. Westropp, writing in 1889, mentioned that "there are some remains of a detached building near the Camoge, perhaps a mill, though the country people say that a rope from a net in the river rung a bell when a salmon was captured." This idea of the bell is widespread and I have heard of it elsewhere.

The Civil Survey indicates that there were at least five eel weirs on the Camoge (see Appendix 1) and one eel weir out of repair. The locations of these weirs have been shown on Fig. 1. Two other eel weirs, the locations of which I have been unable to identify accurately, were almost certainly on the Camoge. One of the eel weirs was, as will be seen, at Monasternagh and it was, no doubt, the lineal successor of the Abbey's weir.

On 18th June 1610 Edward Baggott and Donough O'Grady were granted the "castle town and lands of Rawlston" etc. with a fishing weir. This weir was undoubtedly an eel weir situated at Rawleystown, just east of Sixmilebridge.

When the first Ordnance Survey maps were surveyed there were eight eel weirs on the Camoge, two at Ballymacsraideen and one at or near Monasternagh, all of which have now disappeared.

Only a few references concern the Morningstar River. In 1611 the two people who obtained Rawlston, also obtained on the same day a grant of the "castle, town and lands of Baggottsowne," with a fishing weir. This again was almost certainly an eel weir. Nearly eleven years later on 20th March 1622 a grant was made.

14 Sheet 21, Limerick.
15 Sheet 39, Limerick.
16 Cal. doc. Ir. 1285-1292, 205.
17 Cal. doc. Ir. 1293-1301, 255.
20 J.R.S.A.I. xix. 258.
21 Cal. pat. rolls Ir. James I, 160.
22 Sheet 31, Limerick.
to Sir James Craige of the "castle, town and land of Baggotstown" and a fishing weir. Baggotstown is situated near two miles or so above Bruff (Fig. 1).

Three fishing (eel) weirs (all out of repair) are indicated in the Civil Survey as existing on the Morningstar River, (Appendix 1.), the situations of which are shown in Fig. 1.

The Loobagh is briefly referred to in the Civil Survey as a river "the benefit and fishing whereof is only trouts and eels," where it runs through the town of Kilmallock.

Finally reference should be made to Lough Gur which is within the catchment area of the Maigue and its tributaries. As early as 1287 a jury extended "the water called Lock Gur with a fishing at 2s." Thomas Dineley, who travelled around Ireland in the reign of Charles I, wrote of Lough Gur, "The Lough a large mote which encompasseth the island and castle aboundeth in fishes, pike, eels and roches in vast quantity. Mr. Henry Bayly, son of the said John Bayly told me of a prodigious pike there lately taken of four foot and a half in length with one in its belly of about two foot long." We will have cause to discuss the pike in these waters later. The reference to "roche" is, of course, to the rudd, the true roach not being present in Ireland, except in the Cork Blackwater and the Struel, a tributary of the Mourne, in both rivers in which it is an introduced species.

*The River Deel and its Tributaries*

Westward of the Maigue, the Deel enters the Shannon two miles or so from Asketon, in the region of which there were important fisheries in the fifteenth century. Included in the rent of the "farmers of Asketon" in 1452 was a sum of 16/8 for the guritbes. Over a century later an inquisition indicates that the fishing weir at Asketon was worth 16/- It is, however, to Peyton's survey of 1586 that we owe our knowledge of the exact extent of the fishing there. The "Manor of Asketon," according to Peyton included

The fishing of the Deel called the cole fishing, the fishing of Lyn Assa around the castle walls and island. The various portions were called Lyn-en-assa, Lyn-en-monea, Lyn-en-allorte and En pool ne cally. The weirs were called Corre'en-Earl whynred; the Earl's weir at the salmon leap under the Bridge, Corrennumraroe or the friars' weir and Corre-edy-oqe-Lacy, the weir of Edmund oge Lacy near the Shannon.
We are also told that

There was the religious house of begging friars on half an acre held by Captain Bartlett with the field called Cloone numrare or the friars' land to the north. To it belonged the water-mill of Mollin begg and the weir of Corranumrar and the "tithe fish", the Corren earle or Earl's weir paid. The friary was then inhabited.38

Begley tells us that the tithes of the fish taken in the Earl's weir near the Bridge amounted to all the fish taken there from 12 o'clock Saturday to 6 o'clock on Monday following.29

At the same time Askeaton Castle had "a garden triangular in form in which there is a fish pond" and Newcastle much further upstream also had "a garden and in the same two fishing ponds."30 What these ponds amounted to we cannot say.

The Civil Survey of 1655 shows that Askeaton was a manor with certain appurtenances including, inter alia, a fishing "leap," three eel weirs and three salmon weirs.31 Other fisheries mentioned in the Civil Survey, included: —

1) Parish of Dononnel, Lt. Col. William Piggott. Cloghanarraid and Ferrenne Kelly and a fishing weir.32 Cloghanarraid or Clogharnaroid is situated just upstream of Rathkeale on the right bank of the river, where there are several dams indicated on the first Ordnance Survey map.33

2) Nantenan Parish. Lo. Boughill. Enismore. An eel weir.34 Enismore is probably opposite Scart on the left bank of the river, where there are several weirs.23

3) Newcastle. Colonel Francis Courtney. Newcastle with the benefit of a river running by the castle.35

The river running by the castle is the Arra, a tributary of the Deel.

The salmon weirs of Askeaton have long ago disappeared. By the time the first Ordnance Survey maps were surveyed in 1841 only a single eel weir remained at Askeaton.36

38 Begley, op. cit. i. 358.
39 Begley, op. cit. ii. 110, 112.
40 Civil Survey, iv, 307.
41 C.S. iv. 301.
42 Sheet 20, Limerick.
43 C.S. iv. 304.
44 C.S. iv. 253.
45 Sheet 11, Limerick.
The River Feale and its tributaries

The River Feale, or rather its tidal estuary called the Cashen, enters the estuary of the River Shannon from the south and to-day is an important salmon river in its own right. Henry IV in 1402 by patent granted to John FitzMaurice, Baron of Kerry, "the custody of the fisheries and the profits of the water of Cassan", and Thomas FitzMorris, a descendant of John's, on 23rd October 1553, also got a grant of the fishing of the water of the Cassan. After the succession of James I, Thomas FitzMorris, Baron of Lixnawe, surrendered his estates and obtained a regrant by letters patent on 16th July 1604. He surrendered them again on 1st July 1612 and got a second re-grant on 6th July 1612 including "the fisheries and profits of the rivers Brocker, Smerlach, Galley, Cashin and Feale." In 1616 Thomas FitzMorris or FitzMaurice demised to Anne Lowe, one of the daughters of Will. Lowe of Bristol, fishmonger, certain property namely:—

All the fishing and fishing places of the river of Cassan and Feale in Clannmorris extending in length from the sea W. to Listowel all the fishings and fishing places of the river O'Gall extending in length from the Cassan S.W. to the ford above the weir of Dromminn N.W. all the fishings and fishing places of Brough extending in length from the Cassan to Ballynegarrie S. and also all weirs etc. to the said fishings and fishing places belonging, with liberty to build weirs on any part of the premises etc.

According to Begley the Desmond estates in 1586 included a salmon fishing in the River Feale. On 22nd February 1611 a lease was made by the Crown to Richard Hardinge of the "site etc. of the late abbey or cell of Phele, otherwise, Nefelogh with, inter alia, the fishings of the river Phele." The "abbey or cell of Phele" was of course, at Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. A sketch map in Fig. 2 indicates the situation of the denominations of land mentioned in connection with the River Feale and its tributaries.

In the fresh waters and upper tidal waters of the Feale to-day many of the fisheries are preserved and in many cases the ownership of the fisheries has been severed from that of the land. In the outer tidal waters the fisheries are regarded as public, that is to say the public claim the right of fishing and not private individuals.

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33 Charles Smith, History of Kerry, Dublin, 1750, 215.
40 Drommerrin = Drommurrin, about 2½ miles up the Galley R.
41 Brough = Brick.
42 Ballynegare = Ballynegarrie, about 2½ miles up the R. Brick.
43 Cal. pat. rolls Ire. James I, 284 and Hore, op. cit. 8.
44 Begley, op. cit. ii. 117.
45 Cal. pat. rolls Ire. James I, 213.
The River Fergus

The Fergus enters the estuary of the Shannon on its north side, and indeed, is the most important river in County Clare. The only reference to fisheries of this river in the historical records are those relating to Ennis. A description of the Franciscan Friary at Ennis by John MacRory McGrath about the year 1360 describes the friary as being "diversely beautiful delectable; washed by a fish-giving stream." This friary had certain fisheries at its dissolution and one, Doctor Nelan or Naylande, petitioned Henry VIII for a grant of the friary and its possessions before even the house was dissolved. Naylande was apparently successful in getting his grant and we find him obtaining a lease from the Crown of the site of the monastery of gray friars of Inch of Clonramata, a water mill, a salmon weir and eel weir upon the river.

FIG. 2. Sketch map of the basin of the Feale with the denominations referred to in this paper.

47 J.R.S.A.I. ix. 185.
Fergus on 9th January 1589. A rental for the year 1577 shows that the Crown was then in possession of the premises, presumably leased to Naylande. He also obtained a lease of the same property on 13th July 1585. Naylande's surrender of the premises is dated 15th July 1585. The later two transactions fail to understand.

On 25th December 1589, Donough, Earl of Thomond, obtained a lease of the premises previously demised to Naylande, for 21 years. The same premises including, the salmon and the eel weir on the River Fergus were granted to William Dongan on 1st June 1621.

Henry, 7th Earl of Thomond, on 1st May 1658 made a lease for 21 years of Clonroande with "the mill fishing, fairs," etc. to John Gore. These fishings in this case must have been distinct from those previously owned by the Franciscan friary of Ennis. Clonroande is a portion of land just south of Ennis on the right bank of the river. For the O'Brien castle on the site see this journal (1905) p. 223.

It is surprising that so few references occur in the historical records relating to the Fergus. In recent years a number of eel weirs were used on the Fergus and their situations are given in Appendix 2. The salmon and eel weirs at Ennis have long since disappeared. In recent years draft nets for salmon have been used in the upper tidal waters and drift nets in the lower tidal waters. We will have cause to refer again to the Fergus later.

The Burren River

This river enters the estuary of the Shannon east of the Fergus, about eight miles from Limerick. The sole references to fisheries upon it relate to the area near Burren Castle. The Manor of Burren was shown on 18th September 1287 to have had "the fishing of a pool," valued at 20 shillings and two men, Sevrn Fitz-Ralph and Adam Manoberck had certain other pools which were worth 5 shillings. Thomas "de Clare fili Ricardi" by inquisition was shown on 26th May 1321 to have been in possession of fish weirs and rabbit warrens worth yearly 20 shillings. On 4th October 1709, Henry, 8th Earl of Thomond made a lease for 99 years to Robert Henry of Burren Castle, etc. Subsequently on 12th May 1712 the Commissioners, acting under Act of Parliament specially passed to enable the Earl of Thomond to give leases for ever, contracted with Thomas Amory, for a fee farm grant of the Castle with appurtenances. Accordingly on 26th May 1712 a lease for ever to Thomas.

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49 Archdall's Mon. Hib. 46.
52 P.R.I. rep. D. K. xvi. 110, Fiant Etiza, 5389.
53 Cal. pat. rolls Ire. James, I, 502.
55 The details of these weirs have been obtained from the records of the Fisheries Division of the Department of Lands, Dublin.
57 North Mun. A. Soc. J. iii, 249.
Amory was made of the Castle, farm and lands of Bunratty "with free liberty to hunt and hawke, fish and fowl upon the premises." On 26th November 1725 Thomas Amory sold his interest to Thomas Studdert in whose family it remained until at least 1915. One of the fishings concerned was a head weir. On 11th February 1867 the Special Commissioners issued to the then owner of the Bunratty estate a certificate authorising the use of this head weir. This weir was used up to 1880.

On the first Ordnance Survey maps of Co. Clare (surveyed in 1840) two eel weirs are shown in the townlands of Gortadroma and Ahaclare. These weirs have disappeared but another weir was used in the years 1936, 1937 and 1938 at Mountcashel.

Methods of fishing

Much of the interest of the accounts of the fisheries of these five rivers lies in the methods of fishing which are indicated. I propose to deal with these on a species basis, because most of the methods were used for one, or at least a limited number of species. Two main species are concerned namely, salmon and eels.

*Salmon and trout.* Instruments used for the capture of salmon, and to a lesser extent, trout, may be divided into three main groups namely:

1) Fixed structures
2) Moveable nets, and
3) Man power engines.

Of the fixed structures there are two main types used in these rivers, namely *head weirs* and *riverine weirs*. The head weir is a very ancient form of fishing engine which can only operate in that part of the tidal waters where there is an up and downward movement of the tide. It is unnecessary for me to repeat a description of the method which has been given in detail recently elsewhere. Clearly this type of fishing engine was important in the estuary of the Maigue, in the 17th century, where there were at least seven examples in use. It also appears to have been the main method of exploiting the salmon stocks of the Bunratty River as well. The estuary of the Fergus would also have been a suitable place for this type of gear and I would be surprised if it was not actually used there. Be that as it may none have been recorded.

There is no evidence that any of these head weirs had been converted into stake weirs or nets, as we know happened in the Blackwater and elsewhere.

The riverine salmon weir was used at several places on these rivers such as at Adare on the Maigue, Askeaton on the Deel and Ennis on the Fergus. This type of weir only functioned properly in places where the direction of the current of water was always downstream. Again riverine weirs have been described previously, and there is no need for me to repeat myself.

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59 Records of Department of Lands, Fisheries Division, Dublin and *J.R.S.A.I.* lxxvi. 188.
61 *J.R.S.A.I.* lxxii. 188-199, and xci 22-3.
62 See *J.R.S.A.I.* lxxvi. 189 for sketch plan of this weir.
63 *J.R.S.A.I.* xci 29 33.
We may now pass to the moveable nets. They include draft nets, drift nets and snap nets, all of which have been described previously. Draft nets were used in the River Maigue at one time and as stated below are now prohibited in that part of the estuary of the river above Clounanna. Draft nets are still used in the estuaries of the Feale and Fergus and they were used up to 1947 in the lower fresh waters of the Feale below Listowel Bridge. Drift nets were used in the Maigue but are now prohibited, but they are still used in the outer part of the Fergus estuary. Incidentally both these types of nets were occasionally fixed or anchored and thereby used illegally. Draft nets were, of course, used formerly to fish pools in the fresh water portions of these several rivers, but to-day this can only be done illegally as freshwater netting for salmon and trout is illegal. The pools below waterfalls where fish were held up especially under drought conditions would, of course, have provided just the right conditions for draft nets. This is probably the reason for the importance of the fish "leap" at Askeaton.61

As stated earlier the snap net was formerly used in the estuary of the Maigue but it is now prohibited by the Shannon Fisheries Act of 1935. Set nets for salmon, but more commonly for trout and other fishes were apparently very common in the Fergus system in the middle of the last century.64

Of the man power engines the rod and line is obviously the most important. O'Gorman64 has much to say on the angling of the Fergus which is worth reading. The rod and line was, in fact, not mentioned earlier than the middle of last century for any of the waters of these rivers. The strokehaul, by which a fish was shorthauled or snatched or foul-hooked was used in these rivers, particularly at certain obstructions, including those at Askeaton, where the hold up of fish facilitated this method of fishing. At obstructions, gaffs usually with a barb, were frequently used illegally to take salmon and larger trout, as well as an auxiliary to legal fishing with rod and line.

According to O'Gorman65 spears were used for the capture of fish in the Fergus system, especially in the winter when the fish were spawning, and Dutton65 refers to the same thing at Adare, in conjunction with lights. This practice of using spears in conjunction with lights was certainly continued until comparatively recently in the Fergus system, as well as in the Rivers Maigue, Deel and Feale. This practice is, of course, illegal and has been since 1716. I have myself never seen a salmon or trout spear from this area.66

Otters were used for fishing the lakes of the Fergus system. O'Gorman67 describes the otter in the following words:

The machine called an otter consists of a deal board, about four feet in length, and a foot or more in diameter, shaped somewhat like the keel of

64 O’Gorman, The practice of angling, particularly as regards Ireland. Dublin 1846, i. 202, and
65 See J. R. S. A. I. lxxxii. 109-134 in which I have given an account of Irish fishing spears.
a boat. One side of the board is much thicker than the other and bored with holes about an inch in diameter, for about six inches in depth, into which lead is poured, which renders it steady in the water. The upper edge of the board is much thinner; three or four small holes are made in the centre of the side of the board, through which whip-cord is run, and it requires some dexterity to arrange these cords, as on them depends the success of its operation. To these cords is attached a strong cross-line, with any number of flies that may be deemed requisite, and it certainly will make its way against even a strong wind and with such effect as to fatigue the rower of the boat opposite, from which it is always keeping away.

The otter is, in fact, merely a device for enabling a man on the bank, or in a boat, to cover a large area of water with a line carrying flies. Incidentally of similar effect, but operated between two persons either in boats or on opposite sides of the river, is the "cross line." This form of engine was extensively used up to about 50 years ago. It is now illegal.

_Eels._ Eel spearing is, of course, still legal and three eel spear heads from the Fergus system are preserved in the National Museum, Dublin. They are illustrated in Fig. 3. Each head is of the same type with no cross-bar supporting the tines and there is a socket into which the handle fits. These three spear heads were rather heavy weighing, 4 lb. 14 oz., 2 lb. 4 oz. and 3 lb. 6 oz. respectively. All three were of the cruder type of eel spear and fell into the category described as mud spears. They were used on soft and muddy bottoms. Eels lie in the mud on the bottom of rivers and lakes and the mud spear is used for "blind" fishing. The fisherman probes the mud and if an eel is present it may get jammed between the tines. The spaces at the base of the tines are said to be provided to enable the fisherman to pull the eel down the spear into the space, from which it can be readily removed.

Long lines, that is to say a stoutish line, with subsidiary lines at intervals carrying hooks suitably baited were extensively used for eels on the Fergus system but the practice seems to have died out completely.

The eel weirs described throughout this paper were presumably of the traditional type using the coghill net. I have already described this type of weir elsewhere and there is therefore no need for me to repeat myself.\textsuperscript{69}

_The fishes of the Rivers Maigue, Deel, Feale, Fergus and Bunratty._

Each of these rivers contains salmon, trout and eels and we need not elaborate further as regards these species. The Maigue and Fergus both contain pike which I have shown elsewhere\textsuperscript{69} is certainly not a native fish in Ireland but was introduced into the country very early. In fact the reference to weirs for "pikes" at Monasternennagh is one of the early references to this species in Irish waters. I have already

\textsuperscript{69} J. R. S. A. I. Lxxv. 213-223. and lxxx. 146-154
\textsuperscript{69} "Notes on Irish Pike" _Irish Nat. Jour._ xii. 177-182.

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FIG. 3. Heads of eel spears from the Fergus system, all preserved in the National Museum, Dublin.
referred to the so called “roach” of the Lough Gur (page 00). This species, in reality the rudd (Scardius erythrophthalmus, L.), also exists in the Fergus system in large numbers together with the perch, as stated by O’Gorman. The tench, also an introduced fish in Ireland, is found in the Fergus system.

The most interesting fish, which, according to O’Gorman was to be found in Inchiquin Lake and Fin Lough was the char. It is worth quoting O’Gorman verbatim as follows:—

We have those beautiful fish, gold and silver, on Inchiquin Lake, and another called Finlow. I have never seen them taken with a fly or bait, nor do they migrate. These I have seen seemed to have been cut, or rather burst, in the belly, and were floating on the water. Their mode of feeding is not known. Robert Hewitt, barrack-master of Clonmel, and one of the Waterloo heroes, a right good angler, informed me that on one day at Finlo, many were taken with flies, of which he never saw another instance. These I have seen were from fourteen to sixteen inches in length and the fish pale red and good. I have known no instance of any being taken in nets.71

This is the sole reference to char in this area, although they are known from two other County Clare lakes, Lickeen and Gortglas Loughs.72

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70 op. cit. ii. 2-6.  
71 op. cit. ii. 6-7.  
Appendix 1

References to fisheries in the Civil Survey (iv.).

[The proprietors' names have been modernised].

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<th>Description of engine</th>
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<tr>
<td>342</td>
<td>Patrick Purcell</td>
<td>Ballyne Carrigie</td>
<td>Ballynacarriga</td>
<td>Two salmon weirs (unset and out of repair)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>346</td>
<td>Major-General Patrick Purcell</td>
<td>Bally Cullane</td>
<td>Ballyculhane</td>
<td>A salmon weir in repair besides other weir seats or sites.</td>
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<tr>
<td>389</td>
<td>William Roche</td>
<td>Millicke</td>
<td>Corcamore ?</td>
<td>A head fishing weir</td>
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<td>389</td>
<td>Margaret Stephenson</td>
<td>Millicke etc.</td>
<td>Corcamore ?</td>
<td>Its proportion of the head weir aforesaid.</td>
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<td>348</td>
<td>Gorrett McTibbot Gerald</td>
<td>Courte</td>
<td>Court</td>
<td>A salmon weir besides weir seats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>383</td>
<td>Margaret Stephenson</td>
<td>South Cloghteachka</td>
<td>Cloghtacka</td>
<td>A weir seat</td>
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<tr>
<td>382</td>
<td>Dermott O'Brien</td>
<td>Kiltemplane</td>
<td>Kiltemplan</td>
<td>An old seat of salmon weir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>393</td>
<td>William Cassie</td>
<td>Clounanna</td>
<td>Clounanna</td>
<td>A fishing weir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>394</td>
<td>Ann Cassie</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<td>361</td>
<td>Major General Sir Hardress Waller</td>
<td>Clorhane</td>
<td>Clorhane</td>
<td>A salmon weir.</td>
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<tr>
<td>362</td>
<td>John Lissaght</td>
<td>Killkerrily</td>
<td>Kilcurly</td>
<td>One salmon weir seat.</td>
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<tr>
<td>362</td>
<td>John Fitzgerald</td>
<td>Corro</td>
<td>Curraghbeg</td>
<td>An eel weir seat.</td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Piers Creagh fitz Piers Adare</td>
<td>Adare</td>
<td></td>
<td>A salmon weir</td>
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<tr>
<td>146</td>
<td>William Stretch</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>An eel weir</td>
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<tr>
<td>147</td>
<td>Nicholas Lillies</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>A salmon weir and an eel weir</td>
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<td>141</td>
<td>Gerroott FitzGerald</td>
<td>Cahir Assey</td>
<td>Caherass</td>
<td>An eel weir</td>
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<td>140</td>
<td>Henry Casey</td>
<td>Carhowkeale</td>
<td>Shagh</td>
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<td>George, earl of Kildare Croom</td>
<td>Croom</td>
<td></td>
<td>Two eel weirs</td>
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<td>137</td>
<td>James Bourke</td>
<td>Ballymacrorie</td>
<td>Ballymacrory</td>
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<tr>
<td>136</td>
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<td>Ballyphilip</td>
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<tr>
<td>279</td>
<td>Eddy Lacy and Nicholas Haly</td>
<td>Bruree</td>
<td>Bruree</td>
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**On Camoge River**

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<td>139</td>
<td>James Bourke</td>
<td>Ballauccane</td>
<td>Toureen</td>
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<tr>
<td>371</td>
<td>Lady Ann Southwell</td>
<td>Kilamesradine</td>
<td>Ballymacsradeen</td>
<td>Two eel weirs</td>
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<tr>
<td>371</td>
<td>Francis Fanning</td>
<td>Giranamannagh</td>
<td>Ballymacsradeen</td>
<td>An eel weir</td>
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<td>Monasternenagh</td>
<td>Monasternenagh</td>
<td>An eel weir</td>
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<td>Dunkipp</td>
<td>Dunkip</td>
<td>One eel weir out of repair.</td>
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<td>373</td>
<td>Michael Fox</td>
<td>North Cnockdroum Tory Hill Assill</td>
<td></td>
<td>An eel weir</td>
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<tr>
<td>373</td>
<td>Margaret Brien</td>
<td>Carabud</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>An eel weir</td>
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<td>Four daughters of Sir Thomas Standish</td>
<td>Bruff</td>
<td>Bruff</td>
<td>Fishing weir out of repair</td>
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<td>James Fox</td>
<td>Ballygrenane</td>
<td>Ballygrennan</td>
<td>ditto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>James O'Grady</td>
<td>Milltowne</td>
<td>Milltown</td>
<td>ditto</td>
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**Appendix 2**

Eel weirs on the Fergus system used in years 1936, 1937 and/or 1938.

**Co. Clare, Ordnance Sheet 25° scale.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>Name of townland(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 Plan 16</td>
<td>Aughrim (Kelly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Plan 12</td>
<td>Aughrim (Kelly) and Nutfield (3 weirs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Plan 8</td>
<td>Aughrim (Toohy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Plan 8</td>
<td>Aughrim (Toohy) and Inishmore.</td>
</tr>
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