



CAMIÑO POR MAR

Introduction: The Way... by sea

An exhibition about the reconstruction of a traditional boat in which four Irish friends made the Camino Xacobeo from Dublin in a rowing boat, the *naomhóg* "Naomh Gobnait".

The boat is fated to become the symbol of the Santiago pilgrimage by sea, consolidating at the same time the historical relationships between Ireland and Galicia.

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CAMIÑO POR MAR

The voyage

On May 23rd, 2014, at Saint James' Gate, next to the James Joyce Bridge in Dublin, Danny Sheehy, Liam Holden, Brendan Begley, and Brendan Moriarty dropped the "Naomh Gobnait" into the Liffey River.

This boat was built in Dingle in the traditional Irish way by Danny and Liam, with the purpose of spending three summers -rowing at sight of the coast- to move from Dublin to A Coruña and then completing by land its way to Santiago de Compostela.



Dropping the boat into the Liffey River (Dublin) on May 23rd, 2014

With the boat in the water, they picked up their credential or "passport of the pilgrim" from the representatives of the Camino Society Ireland and began a long journey of 2,500 km along the Atlantic coasts of old Europe.

They would make the trip in a spaced way during three years, at the rate of six weeks of navigation each year, rowing and taking advantage of favourable winds and currents.



The 'Naomh Gobnait' sailing the Atlantic



Dingle – Dublin – Douarnenez – Pasaia – A Coruña – Santiago

In what they called "Camino na Sáile", or Camino by salt water, rowed from Ireland to Wales and from there to Brittany (2014), from Brittany to the Basque Country (2015) and the third summer (2016), one last leg of 700 km, in which Glen Hansard replaced to Moriarty, arriving in A Coruña on June 23rd.

From A Coruña the boat was carried by land to Santiago, where on June 26th, 2016 the Irish pilgrims transported it through the streets to the very door of the cathedral. Although they were not allowed to take the boat to the altar, they did take their oars and there they prayed in Irish the ancient prayer to the apostle.

800 years had elapsed since the registration of the first pilgrimage of Irish people to Compostela.



Santiago de Compostela, June 26th, 2016



CAMIÑO POR MAR

The 'Naomh Gobnait'

A *curach* is a traditional Irish rowing boat, which is called *naomhóg* in Kerry (South-West of Ireland).

The vessel for the voyage was named 'Naomh Gobnait' (Saint Gobnait), after a medieval Irish female saint, and was 25 feet (7'6 metre) length, intended for a crew of four oarsmen.

She was lightly built, with a wooden frame and tar canvas covered.

She is an open rowing boat, with a mast and a sail for going downwind.





CAMIÑO POR MAR



The crew of the 'Naomh Gobnait'

Danny Sheehy (Domhnall Mac Síthigh). Born in 1951 in Baile Eaglaise (Ballyaglisha, Dunurlin, Corkaguiny), west of Dingle (County Kerry, Ireland), died in 2017 in Caminha (Portugal). Award-winning storyteller, poet, woodwork teacher, fisherman, farmer, writer. He was often to be heard on RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta describing his journeys by land and sea, as well as folklore and local knowledge, and reviewing newly-published books. He had won prizes at the Oireachtas for poetry and storytelling.



Liam Holden. Born in 1961 in Inistioge (Inis Tíog, County Kilkenny, Ireland). He received a scholarship to study Art at the National College of Art & Design, Dublin, until 1983. He took up a position as an apprenticeship potter in Kilkenny, where he won the 'Apprentice Ceramic Award'. He then went onto the Grennan Mill Craft & Design School, Thomastown. Then he moved to Dingle, County Kerry, and was inspired to paint. In 1994 he moved to Tinahely, County Wicklow, where he now lives and works from his studio at home.



Brendan Begley (Breannán Ó Beaglaoich). Born in 1955 in Ballynabuck (Baile na bPoc, Kilquane, Corkaguiny, County Kerry), northwest of Dingle, into a famous musical family, driven by his father, an influential accordion player Bhreandáin Bheaglaoich. He early steeped in the rich West Kerry music and songs, becoming a master, main reference and major figure in Irish traditional music.



Brendan Moriarty (Breannán-Pháid Ó Mhuirheartaigh). Born in 1964 in Ballinloghig (Baile an Lochaigh, Kilkuane, Corkaguine, County Kerry), north of Dingle, and a relative of renowned Irish poet and philosopher John Moriarty. Fisherman and professional stonemason, being the only crew member without a creative background, he tends to be the one looked towards for getting practical jobs done and joined the crew on the shy side.

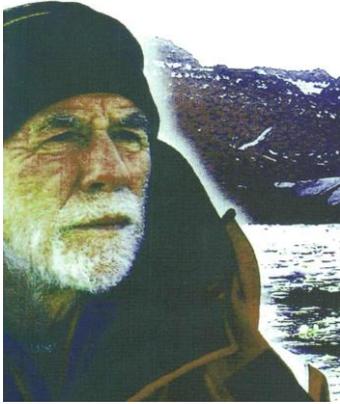


Glen Hansard. Born in 1970 in Ballymun (Baile Munna, County Dublin), a social housing worker district on the outskirts of Dublin. He busked with his guitar on Dublin shopping district and recruited the band 'The Frames'. He won the Oscar 2008 awarded for the best original song. Although he had never rowed before, Begley enlisted him to join the crew of the 'Naomh Gobnait' as substitute for Moriarty, who was unable to make it for the entire 2016 leg of the Camino.



CAMIÑO POR MAR

The team of collaborators



Paddy Barry, engineer and navigator with whom Danny Sheehy had sailed in 1981 through northern Spain on the 'Saint Patrick', a sailing boat, traditional Galway Bay hooker. In the same sailboat, they would sail again to the Canary Islands, to cross the Atlantic in 1986 to Boston and New York. In 2003 they would sail through the Mediterranean, and in 2011 they would sail to Iceland, this time on the 'Ar Seachrán', Paddy's yacht, which would later accompany the long voyage of the 'Naohm Gobnait' in some complicated journeys.

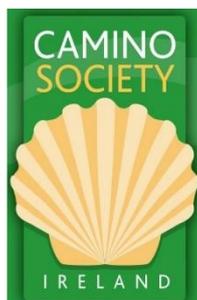
In the coverage of the trip of the 'Naohm Gobnait' with Paddy were members of the crew Liam Ó Muirthile (1950-2018), Mike Alexander, Ken Price, Eric Lawther, Kevin Cronin, Austin Duke, and Pat Cunningham.



Dónal Ó Céilleachair, filmmaker, producer, editor and programmer of films, founder of *Ocularis*, setting of independent cinema in Brooklyn (New York), since 1996. Technician in digital imaging, graduated from Trinity College, studied cinema in New York School of Visual arts. Documented the trip of the 'Naohm Gobnait' for the Irish channel of television TG4, aimed at the Irish-speaking public.



Máire Uí Shíthigh, Clodagh O'Mara, Patricia Moriarty, and Aidan Minnock, provided the adventurers with generous support from the shore, supplying provisions, supervising their journeys and joining the voyagers in many of their coastal camping.



Cumann Cairde Naomh Shéamais in Éireann (Camino Society Ireland), is a voluntary organisation, founded in 1992 by returned pilgrims to 'give something back' to the Camino and to future pilgrims. Deirdre Lillis, Leslie Rankin, Stephanie O'Donnell and Turlough O'Donnell presented in Dublin the Credential ("Pilgrim Passport") to Danny and the crew when they started their Camino voyage to Santiago.



CAMIÑO POR MAR

The accident of the 'Naomh Gobnait'



On their way to Finisterre, with Dónal Ó Céilleachair

On the afternoon of Friday, June 9th, Danny Sheehy and Brendan Begley, along with Padraig Ó Duinnín and Liam Ó Maonlaí, left the port of A Guarda with the idea of going to Tui.

When arriving at the mouth of the Miño River, the currents and the waves at sand bars complicated the crossing and the boat capsized. Almost exhausted, and taking the boat with them, they managed to reach the banks of Caminha, where the Portuguese Coast Guard promptly aided them.

The heart of Danny Sheehy did not resist the effort and the Irish poet died shortly after. His three companions, with symptoms of hypothermia and in shock, were duly treated at a nearby hospital.

In the summer of 2017, ready to continue rowing, Danny Sheehy, Brendan Begley and Brendan Moriarty returned to Galicia.

After a few days in the Ría de Arousa, they approached the infinite sea from the lighthouse of Finisterre.

They decided to dedicate four weeks to tour the Atlantic coast and enjoy the successive camping trips to Porto (Portugal), where the travelling boat would make its winter until the following summer.

The success of his previous trips led some friends to ask to participate as rowers in one of the stages that Danny had planned for this new season.



Padraig Ó Duinnín, master naomhóg-builder, founder of the Ocean to City race *An Rás Mór* (the great race, rowing festival at Cork) and of *Meitheal Mara*, a community boatyard in the heart of Cork City, a registered charity and nationally accredited training centre.



Liam Ó Maonlaí, musician, composer and multi-instrumentalist of solid musical training (voice, guitar, keyboards, harp, bodhrán), Irish traditional music performer and frontman of the group 'The Hothouse Flowers'.



The 'Naomh Gobnait' at Camarido Beach (Caminha, Portugal)



Beyond the Miño River, Mount Santa Trega (A Guarda, Galicia)



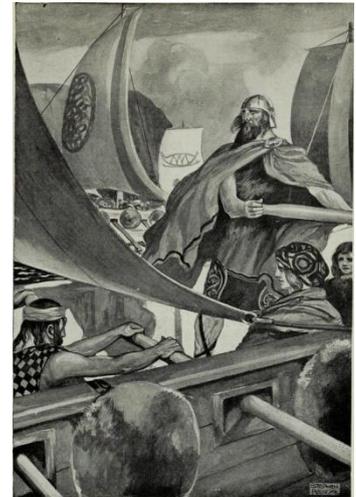
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Galicia and Ireland historic links

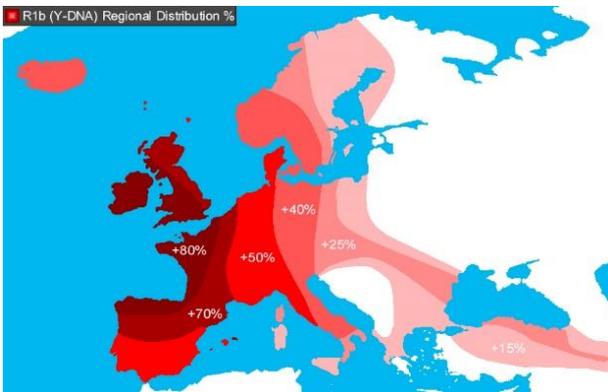
The tradition tells that Ith, son of Breogán (origin, in ancient Irish), from the top of the tower that his father had raised in a limit of Brigantia (today, A Coruña), had glimpsed northwards a land full of greenery, beyond the sea. Immediately, he prepared an expedition in search of those lands. Once they arrived there, he met with tribal chiefs and encouraged them to enjoy the country and not argue over the boundaries and landmarks. Some of the members of the local nobility considered him a threat and killed him.

Míl Espáine, son of Bilé and grandson of Breogán, decides to avenge the death of his uncle and prepares a punishment expedition. Míl died before the departure. His eight children, the Milesians, along with the nine brothers of Ith, will complete the venture and conquer Ireland.

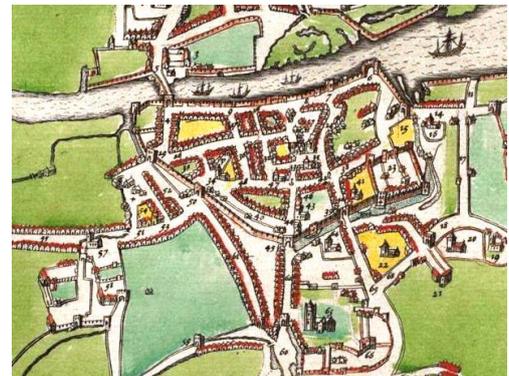
This is how the story is collected in the "Book of the Invasions of Ireland" (Leabhar Gabhála na hÉireann), a compilation of the 11th century of the historical tradition of Ireland. Beyond these stories, the genetic studies of current science credit the timeless links between the peoples of the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula and the people of Ireland.



The revenge of the sons of Míl (Stephen Reid, ca. 1900)



Regional distribution of haplogroup R1b of the Y chromosome, probably originating in the Near East about 20,000 years ago, with high frequencies of appearance of European Atlantic populations (Dan Bradley et al., 2009)



In 1210, Archbishop Henry created a hospital next to Saint James' Gate to welcome the pilgrims who were waiting in Dublin to embark for Galicia.



In the XV and XVI centuries the port of Galway received an important commercial traffic of Galician ships, which moored under the walls of the town, whose remains would later receive the name of "Spanish Arch".

The Jesuit Thomas White requested in 1603 the permission of Felipe III to build in Santiago the College of Saint Patrick, the second of these institutions created in Spain to train the future clergy of Ireland. The institution would disappear in 1770, with the expulsion of the Jesuits by Carlos III. Ramón Sanjurjo Pardiñas, Marquis of Casa Pardiñas, a title granted by Alfonso XIII, would later occupy the Old Irish College, now known as Pazo de Ramirás.

With the Rebellion of Tyrone and the uprising of Hugh O'Neill and Red Hugh O'Donnell against the government of Queen Elizabeth I in Ireland, the War of the Nine Years began in 1594. By order of Felipe III, king of Spain, in the month of September of 1601 a first fleet sent in support of the Irish rebels left A Coruña.

After the battle of Kinsale on January 3, 1602, in favor of the English forces, numerous Irishmen (soldiers, peasants, clerics, merchants, women, children ...) will arrive at the Galician coasts seeking shelter. The settlement in A Coruña of some of the rebel leaders, such as Hugo O'Donnell, Dionisio O'Driscoll and Donal O'Sullivan, will turn the city into a focus of attraction for the arrival of more exiles in search of refuge.

After the war with the Treaty of London (August 28, 1604), the Irish will continue to reach the Galician ports. In December of 1605 Felipe III orders that they be returned to their place of origin or serve in the Army of Flanders. Thus many of them will settle in Spain and, hundreds of years later, of the nearly thirty thousand Irish of the Spanish armies, the Coig, Fitzgerald, Kindelan, Lacy, Langtry, MacMahon, Martin, O'Doherty, O'Donnell, O'Donohue, O'Higgins, O'Neill, O'Scanlan, O'Shea, Sutton (Sotto), Trenor, White, left their mark among us.



CAMIÑO POR MAR

The Voyage of Saint Brendan

Saint Brendan the Navigator, founder and abbot of the monastery of Clonfert (Galway), considered one of the twelve apostles of Ireland, was one of the main Irish evangelizing monks of the 6th century.

The medieval story "Navigatio Sancti Brendani", an adaptation to Christianity of Irish mythology, describes his quest to the Island of the Blessed, the paradise on earth.

Brendan would have built a *curagh* of oak and ash, lined with tanned leather and waterproofed with tar, grease and butter, and with a group of monks had left Tralee (Kerry) on a long journey of seven years.



Saint Brendan's voyage (German print, 1476)



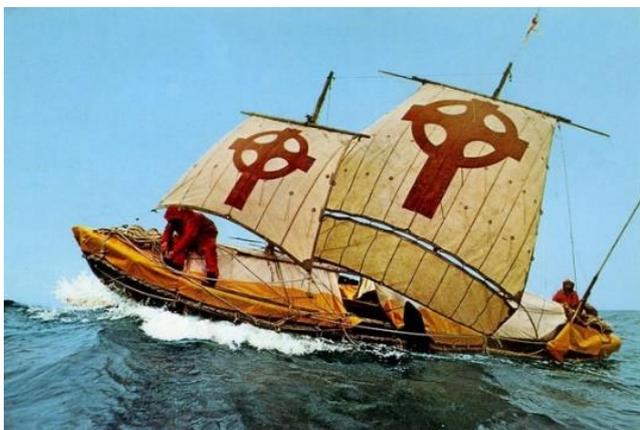
Brendan embarks with his companions in search of Paradise

In May 1976 the British historian, explorer and writer Tim Severin left Ireland in a leather boat as described in the *Navigatio*, and with stops in the Hebrides and Iceland, arrived in Newfoundland in June 1978, showing that it would have been possible that Brendan in his mythical trip would have arrived until North America.

The historic Brendan would have visited to Saint Columbano on the Scottish island of Iona. He would then continue navigating the Hebrides and Shetland, the Faroes and Iceland, islands on which he would have founded new cenobitic communities. It is even ventured that he could have reached America and the Canary Islands.



Saint Brendan's hypothetical historical route



The voyage of Tim Severin in the 'Brendan' in 1976

Also related to the search of the Other World, time and joy, in Galicia are told the stories of Amaro and Ero.

Saint Amaro built a boat to follow the path of the sun and reached the gates of paradise. Through a little hole, they let him glimpse Paradise. Only a fleeting moment and they immediately ordered him to go away. When he returned to his boat, no one knew him. It had seemed to him like an instant, and three hundred years had had gone by.

Saint Ero, abbot of the monastery of Armenteira, had been a day marvelled by the song of a blackbird, and settled down under a tree to listen to it. Soon the blackbird flew with its twittering away, and Ero returned happily and joyfully to the monastery. He did not recognize any of his monks, nor was he recognized by them: there had gone by three hundred years.



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The knight of the shells

On a parchment from 1443 of the Portuguese monastery of Alcobaça, one reads that, on a summer morning in the year 44, Caio Carpo Palenciano, illustrious equestrian of Maia, was walking with his wife and several relatives and friends.

Riding through the Bouças beach (Matosinhos), they saw a boat in the sea heading north. Suddenly, Cayo's horse began to gallop, and horse and knight disappeared submerged in the waters. Soon, both appeared perched on the boat and covered with scallops.

Caio, astonished, asked about the prodigy to the sailors: "We are disciples of a holy man named Iago, whose corpse we carry here to bury and give him rest. The shells which the knight sees himself covered with are the sign that our master Sant-Iago wants to have thee into the law of the Christians."



Retable of Santiago at the roman church of Santa María de Araceli (Giovenale Johanilis de Orvieto, 1441)

The Galician version of the legend tells that in the Vigo beach of Bouzas, noble families of Galicia and Portugal celebrated the wedding of Lobesio Rivano, of Gaia (land of Oporto) and Caya Valeria, of Amaia (land of Santiago).

In the game of *abofardar*, one of the entertainments of weddings, the groom threw his spear into the air and spurred his mount to see to catch it before it fell to the ground. In the gallop, horse and knight fell into the sea and disappeared sunk into the waters.

The miraculous intervention of the boat that moved to Padrón the remains of the apostle Santiago, made emerge from the sea the rider and his mount, both adorned with scallop shells.

It is noteworthy that already in the 11th and 12th centuries the scallop shell was used as a consolidated symbol of the pilgrimage to Santiago.



Relief at the Treasure Façade in the Cathedral of Santiago (1540)

The origin of the legend of Knight Caio, the knight of the shells, who has the leading role in one of the best-known miracles attributed to Santiago the Elder, is unknown. At least since the late Middle Ages, this miracle would achieve great popularity in some parts of Europe, where are located the first sources that narrate it in different versions, such as the Italian retablo of 1441 or the Portuguese parchment of 1443.

Despite not appearing in the *Codex Calixtinus*, which contains the oldest text of the *Liber Sancti Iacobi* (c.1140), Book II provides two miracles that would be in the origin of the here collected. Chapter VI tells how the sailor Frisono falls into the sea to protect the pilgrims that go in his ship, being rescued from the depths by the same Apostle. In chapter X is a pilgrim who from his boat goes to the water; claiming the help of Santiago, a companion throws a shield that recalls the scallop shell, in which the unfortunate travels safely to the next port.



Santiago as a pilgrim, statue dated at the end of the XI century (Church of Santa Marta de Tera, Zamora)



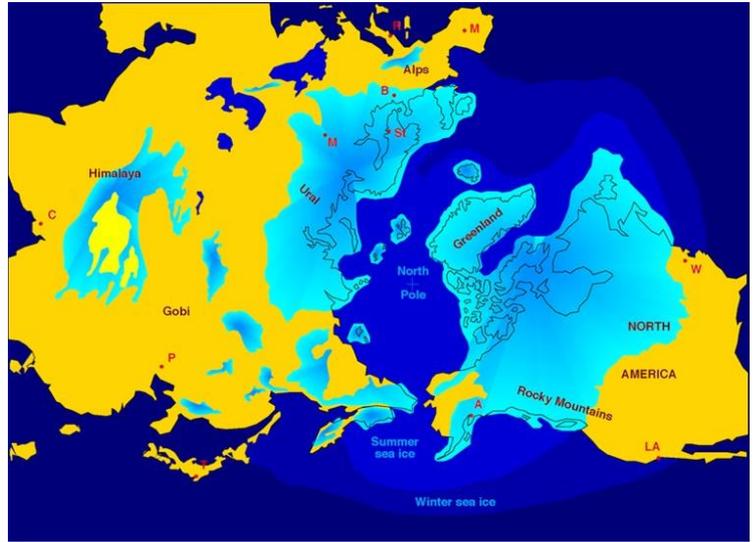
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The way of the sea

Although, in the words of Antonio Machado, "in the sea there are no paths, but wakes", the sea has always been the great road. A way to the unknown that begins where the earth ends.

Tír na nÓg -the Isle of Youth-, Avalon -the Island of Apples- or the three hundred years of the reverie of Oisín, peer of our Amaro and Ero, tell us about the existence of paradisiacal places in which time passes slowly, always joyful, without illnesses or miseries.

The search for these paradises prompted to travel to the other side of the sea, pursuing dreams, fleeing from persecutions, or in search of better living conditions.

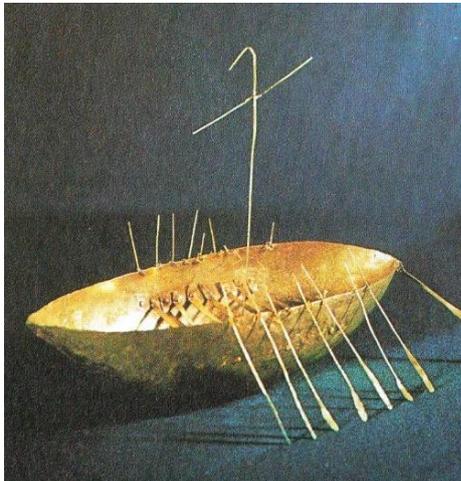


Palaeolithic glacial advance during the Ice Age (John S. Schlee, 2000)

The advance of ice in the northern hemisphere would force primitive European communities to seek refuge on the Atlantic coasts, such as the Iberian northwest or Brittany (located at the top of the Schlee map, above).

The glaciers would cover the Alps and the Himalayas, and the accumulation of layers of ice three or four kilometres thick would lower the sea level by one hundred and twenty meters.

With the climatic improvement and the progressive retreat of the ice, the populations would go colonizing the lands of the north that now were going again being uncovered and being habitable.



Golden boat, 1st century BCE (Brighter, Derry)

The boats would be the most common means used for travel and, despite the risks of navigation, in those days possibly the least dangerous way to do so.

Then, the sea is going to be the canvas on which the history of humanity is shelled and drawn, the great path that will allow the continents to be brought closer.

And, on the road of European construction, long since supported in the various Ways of Santiago by land, with the new seed of the odyssey of the brave Irish navigators in their pilgrim boat 'Naomh Gobnait', we will now add a new path, the **Camino by sea**.



'A Borna', built with wicker and leather between 1974 and 1975, under the direction of Professor Fernando Alonso Romero (Museum of Castelo de Santo Antón, A Coruña)