

1975

Caoineadh Airt Ui Laoire : Booklet about the Film, 1975

Sinn Fein

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Caoineadh Airt Uí Laoire

SCANNÁN DÉANTA AG CINE GAEL - AR SON SINN FÉIN

Cast List

CAOINEADH ART UI LAOIRE — CAST LIST

Art O Laoire: SEAN BAN BREATHNACH.
Eibhlin Ni Chonaill: CAITLIN NI DHONNCHU.
Director: JOHN ARDEN
Narrator: TOMAS NAC LOCHLANN.
Eibhlin's Mother: SIOBHAN NI SHUILLEABHAIN
Eibhlin's Sister: Maire Ni Dhrisceoil.
Morris Henchman: JOE CLANCY.
Barmaid: BERNADETTE NI FLATHARTA.
Dancer: PADRAIC BRADLEY.
Old Woman: GURNEY CAMPBELL.
Drama Group: Colm B. O Finneadha, Bairbre Bolustrum,
Mairtin Mac Fhlannchada, Mairtin Davy, Siobhan Na
Dhabharain, Coilin Tuathail.
Soldiers: Kieran Lawton, Mairtin O'Caifai, Tommy Healy.
Voices of Conventional wisdom: Paschal Finnan, Sean Mac
Iomhair, Margaretta D'Arcy, Julie Cummins, Sarah
McKenzie-Bary, George Narramore.
Horse: Lancer.
Music by: Mickey Finn, Mairtin O Fatharta, Gearoid O h-
Ainle, Michael Mac Suibhne.
Written by: Bob Quinn.
Script Co-ordinator: Seosamh O Cuaig.
Additional Material: Mairtin Mac Donncha.
Sound recordist: Riobard O'Cuinn.
Sound Mixing/Dubbing: Pat Hayes.
Electrical supervisor: Seosamh O Tuairisc.
Production Assistants: Helen Richardson, Mairtin
O'Coisdealbha.
Lighting Cameraman: Joe Comerford.
CINEGAEL — Producer/ Director/Editor: Bob Quinn.







Caoineadh Airt Ui Laoire (Lament for Arthur Leary) is the title of perhaps the last great epic poem in the Irish Language. It was written by Eibhlin bean Ui Laoire (nee O'Conaill) after the death of her Soldier husband, Art at the ford of Carraig an Ime, County Cork in 1773.

The Poem survived thanks to the oral Irish tradition, being handed down by word of mouth. That this resulted in the addition of many verses, adds to the richness of the poem.

Art O'Laoire differed from most of the thousands of other Wild Geese (Irish men who joined continental armies after the Siege of Limerick) in that he came home to Ireland — and died there. And his death was directly connected with his refusal to hand over his horse for the sum of £5, one of the almost defunct Penal Laws which could at any time be re-invoked.

The incident and the poem that describes it are used as a basis for the film 'CAOINEADH AIRT UI LAOIRE', but the film hopes to say more about the present day than about the 18th century.

It is set in the Connemara Gaeltacht, one of the Irish-speaking areas of the Western seaboard of Ireland where the language used is probably closest to that of Art O'Laoire and his native contemporaries.

The Irish-speaking parts in the film are taken by Connemara people, all of whom live within a few miles of each other, and none of whom had any film or professional acting experience.

Sean Ban Breathnach who plays Art O Laoire is a broadcaster with Radio na Gaeltachta and at one time ran a mobile disco in London. Caitlin Ni Dhonnchu, who plays Eibhlin, lives in Ros a Bhil. The English-speaking parts are played by people from outside the Gaeltacht. John Arden, (better known as playwright than actor) runs the Corrandulla Arts Centre in East Galway. His wife, Margaretta D'Arcy, is also a playwright and contributes to the film. In fact, altogether

About the film

there are five playwrights taking part. The other three: Siobhan Ni Shuilleabhain (frequent Oireachtas and RTE prizewinner); Paschal Finnan (accepted — and rejected — by the Abbey Theatre); and Gurney Campbell (Paris-based author of 'Gandhi', which was performed on Broadway.) Gurney played the old woman in the film — at ten minutes notice! The original suggestion for making the film came from Eamonn Smullen, Sinn Fein, also a playwright.

It is no surprise, then, that the form of the film is basically theatrical. An amateur drama group in Connemara is rehearsing a stage presentation of the story of Art O'Laoire under the direction of a non-Irish producer. The clash of personalities between the producer, and the actor playing O'Laoire begins to suggest an analogy with the 18th century. The film develops this analogy and zig-zags between past and present at a disconcerting rate. The film develops this analogy and zig-zags between past and present at a disconcerting rate. The producer, in fact, becomes the historical 'villain' and at one stage is caught changing costumes, to make explicit the analogy.

This film was written, produced, directed, shot, recorded and edited in Connemara by Cinagael. This fact, which might indicate that film-making doesn't necessarily have to be concentrated in urban areas, is regarded by Bob Quinn as more important than any faults or virtues this particular film might have.

The
Lament
for Art
O'Leary

THE
LAMENT
FOR ART
O'LEARY

The Lament for Art O'Leary

My love and my delight,
The day I saw you first
Beside the market-house
I had eyes for nothing else
And love for none but you.
I left my father's house
And crossed the hills with you,
And it was no bad choice.
You gave me everything:
Parlours whitened for me,
Rooms painted for me,
Ovens reddened for me,
Loaves baked for me,
Beds made for me;
I took my ease on flock
Until the milking time
And later if I pleased.

My mind remembers
That bright spring day,
How a hat with a band of gold became
you,
Your silver-hilted sword,
Your manly right hand,
Your horse on his mettle,
The foes around you
Cowed by your air
For when you rode by
On your white-nosed mare
The English bowed
To the ground before you,
Out of no love for you,
Out of their fear,
Though sweetheart of my soul,
The English killed you.

My love and my delight,
As you went out the gate,
You turned and hurried back,
And kissed your handsome sons,
You came and kissed my hand.
And said 'Eileen, rise up,
And set your business straight,
For I am leaving home,
I may never return.'
I laughed at what you said,
You had said as much before.

My love and my darling
That I never thought dead
Till your horse came to me
With bridle trailing,
All blood from forehead
To polished saddle
Where you should be,
Sitting or standing;
I gave one leap to the threshold,
A second to the gate,
A third upon her back.

I clapped my hands
And off at a gallop,
I did not linger
Till I found you dead
By a little furze-bush,
Without pope or bishop
Or priest or cleric
One prayer to whisper,
But an old, old woman
And her cloak about you,
And your blood in torrents,
Art O'Leary,
I did not wipe it up,
I cupped it in my hands.

My love and my secret,
Your corn is stacked,
Your cows are milking;
On me is the grief
There's no cure for in
Munster.
Till Art O'Leary rise
This grief will never yield
That's bruising all my heart
Yet shut up fast in it,
As 'twere in a locked trunk
With the key gone astray
And rust grown on the words.

The death of Art O'Laoire over 200 years ago must now appear as just one more tragic story in the long history of our people's subjection. This event has gained a singular prominence due to the unique record contained in his wife's poem, now accepted as one of the finest laments in the Irish language. For us it has a wider significance, forming as it does part of that central theme in our people's culture: defiance of the alien conquest.

This film is not another exercise in futile probing of myths, but essentially a comment upon reality in the present Ireland of 1975. We have long grown accustomed to occasions for lament, with each generation contributing its share of noble sacrifice. The disinherited Irish have not easily accepted their subservient status and the frequent eruptions of violent resistance have left England with her unsolved 'Irish question'.

Art O'Laoire in his day showed a reckless defiance but like so many other individual acts of heroism, before and since, it ended in failure and death. He made a final gesture as a free man but it was a futile one. We are accustomed now to daily accounts of more deaths with all the horror and bitterness of a hopeless and apparently insoluble conflict. This has been variously posed as a religious conflict between Catholics and Protestants, between Irishmen orange and green, or at time a venting of irrational anti Britishness. Yet it is now, was then and always has been essentially about conquest and robbery.

The conquest robbed the people of their land all their material possessions, and was maintained by destroying all their basic human rights. Language, culture, and political freedoms have always been denied in attempts to destroy any will for resistance. The process has continued with modern imperialism extending the robbery to all our country's natural resources — its people, land, sea, minerals, oil and gas. Each group of exploiters has made a contribution to destroying our people's morale and by mis-representing and distorting our history has undermined the determination necessary for a re-conquest by the people of no property. The spirit of defiance and will to resist despite all the odds against them ensured that the Irish people retained the mental attitude required for a war of liberation. But defiance and resistance are not enough in themselves to liberate a people. Courageous campaigns of resistance, however noble their inspiration, will fail like the gesture of Art O'Laoire if they try to ignore realities.

The hard reality which must be faced in Ireland is that there is an exploiting class and an exploited class. The latter comprises the vast majority of our people and only needs to be organised to win state power and undo the conquest we have so long endured. Romantic acts of heroism or defiance may inspire people but will never organise them.

Tomas Mac Giolla, Uachtarán Sinn Féin.

An Irish Lament

SCANNÁN
DÉANTA
AG CINE GAEL

AR SON
SINN FÉIN

