Chronicler who brought story of Galway hookers to life

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**Richard Scott:**Richard Scott, who has died aged 81, was the author of an acclaimed history of the renowned sailing work boats of Galway Bay.

A keen photographer, he also illustrated for the book. First published in 1983, The Galway Hookers went into its fourth edition in 2004.

In the first definitive work on the subject, he maintained that the Galway hookers had no close counterparts elsewhere in the 19th century. Whereas other maritime historians traced the origins of the craft to Holland and Norway, he argued that it was not "unreasonable for Galwaymen to lay claim to the hooker as their own, a very special craft tailor-made for their waters and to their needs".

Built for the deep waters of the Atlantic, they were originally designed as fishing craft. Galway Bay was once famous for its herring shoals before these moved south to Kinsale; turf-carrying was a later and secondary occupation for the hookers.

Born in 1926 in Drogheda, Co Louth, Richard was the eldest of the six children of Jack and Gertrude Scott. When he was 10 the family moved to Dublin, and he was educated by the Christian Brothers at Westland Row.

Joining the Civil Service, he spent working holidays on some of the last trading schooners out of Arklow, Cork and Appledore in Devon. His first venture into maritime history, The Story of the Kathleen and May, was inspired by his experiences in Appledore.

In the mid-1950s he was transferred to Shannon airport and he settled in Limerick. At the suggestion of Harry Knott, one of his early sailing mentors, he visited Connemara. There he was fascinated by the local sailing craft which in the late 1950s were at the final stages of a working existence that had spanned a history of centuries.

The circumstances of this existence, the environment, building and operation, were quite different from anything he had experienced elsewhere. He reckoned that by the mid-1940s such craft had ceased serving a community need. But he thought it was desirable "as part of Gaelic social history and of the history of the sea, that these boats should be preserved in living form, in numbers representative of the areas they once served".

His book chronicles the remarkably successful restoration movement that saved the Galway hookers from virtual extinction, and pays tribute to enthusiasts such as Denis Aylmer, John Helion and Dick Fletcher.

In 1978 he joined with fellow aficionados to preserve these traditional craft in all their classes, helping to found the Galway Hooker Association. The following year the first annual three-day Crinniú na mBád was held at Kinvara.

His outstanding memory of the revival was when in August 1980 "no less than 15 traditional sailing craft of all sizes, headed by the local An Maighdean Mhara, all set sail together [ from Callahaigue] down Greatman's Bay".

A member of the Maritime Institute of Ireland, he received the first special award of the Galway Hooker Association in 1981 for services to traditional craft. He recently completed a book on schooners in Ireland, with the working title Twilight of the Schooners; it will be published later this year.

He retired from Aer Rianta in 1986, after a long and successful career. A very popular character within the boating community of Connemara, a great talker and a perfect gentleman, he will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Predeceased in 1991 by his wife Claire, he is survived by daughter Aileen and sons Peter and David.

***Richard Joseph (Dick) Scott: born June 4th, 1926; died January 24th, 2008***