South Antrim
Living Memories

Doagh Toome Whitehead



Dedicated to the memory of

Cahal Boyd
(1924-2014)

Robert McConnell
(1928-2014)

Contents

1. About the Project

The 3 Villages Living Memories Project was officially begun on 28 October 2013. This followed confirmation of a successful application to GROW South Antrim for funding under Axis 3 of the current Rural Development Programme. Additional match funding was generously provided by Newtownabbey Borough Council, Antrim Borough Council and Carrickfergus Borough Council.

The project has involved the communities of Doagh, Toome and Whitehead and the areas immediately surrounding these three villages. It has also been dependant on a huge voluntary commitment from the organisations responsible for the management, administration and delivery of the project, namely Doagh Ancestry Group, TIDAL (Toome Industrial Development, Amenities and Leisure Group) and Whitehead Community Centre.

The 3 Villages Living Memories Project has proved to be an exciting, challenging and worthwhile initiative which, we believe, has been of great benefit to those communities involved. It has provided an invaluable resource for those wishing to learn more about the social and economic conditions of life within their communities during the early and mid twentieth century.

The initial aims of the project were straightforward:

- To build better links and understanding between people from different generations and the three village communities here in South Antrim
- To develop new contacts and friendships
- To investigate similarities and differences in experience
- To record and archive the personal memories and experiences of some of the more senior members of the three communities who are representative of a variety of social and cultural backgrounds
- To make freely available this knowledge and experience, through print, digital format and on the internet. This will enable as wide a cross-section of people as possible to learn from the great wealth of knowledge which has been recorded and presented.
- To establish a model which would better enable the practice of listening

to, recording and collecting people's stories and experiences for future use as a community, inter-generational resource.

Although the project was hugely dependant on an extensive voluntary commitment, the funding did enable the employment of a researcher, writer and co-ordinator, Dr William Roulston of the Ulster Historical Foundation. This facilitated the local volunteers to increase and develop the necessary capacity which is so essential in collecting, collating and presenting local research material. Specialist training in oral history techniques was provided by Dr Jonathan Hamill. The book, website and exhibition designers, Glen Rodgers and Mark Thompson taught us much about the necessity for clear, concise, visually attractive and easily accessible presentation of written and visual material and finally, Chris Nelson who, in compiling and editing such stunning and effective video presentations, demonstrated the great effectiveness of this medium.

Hopefully the project will indeed continue into the future. Those volunteers who were privileged enough to meet with, share and to record the interviewees' stories and experiences were deeply moved and are determined to continue to build the wonderful resource so far created.

We believe that there is an urgent need for the collection and preservation of these memories for future generations. We will be forever grateful to those who were prepared to share with us such personal aspects of their lives and the lives of their past generations. Time passes so quickly and we have reflected, with regret, that many of us did not avail of the opportunity to ask our own parents to share their memories; memories that may have perhaps been lost forever with the passage of time.

Unfortunately two of the people who were gracious enough to allow us to interview them and to record their memories have since passed away, Mr Robert McConnell of Doagh and Mr Cahal Boyd of Toome. The 3 Villages Living Memories Project has at least enabled some of their past experiences to be placed on record and their voices, personally recalling these, can now be permanently available to their families and friends. For those of us involved in the project, this poignant fact alone has made the initiative so worthwhile.

Bob Adams
Chair, Doagh Ancestry Group

2. Oral History

Oral history is the use of memory and personal recollection to gain an insight into the past. It is collected through interviews with participants felt to be able to contribute on a particular subject or range of topics that are relevant to the overall aims of the project being undertaken. Time and again we will hear people, especially family historians, express regret at not having asked more questions of their parents and grandparents when they had the opportunity. Oral history is a way of doing just that.

The advantages of oral history as a means of recording the past are many. Only a fraction of what happened in the past will make it into the history books. Oral history can provide a perspective on particular events or processes by those directly involved, most of whom will not leave a written record of their experiences. It provides an opportunity to explore aspects of social and community history that are often hidden and can be used in conjunction with other sources, such as documents and written accounts.

The information in this book is derived primarily from the interviews conducted in the course of the Living Memories project. For the most part the information gathered related to the middle decades of the twentieth century – the 1930s to the 1960s. Some of those interviewed had clear memories from the 1920s, while the very oldest would just about have remembered the last months of the 1910s. Some allowance must be made for memory lapses and inaccuracies of recollection, especially with regard to precise dates and occurrences. Nonetheless, we believe that a wealth of invaluable information on a range of different subjects has been gathered through this project and preserved for the benefit of future generations

3. Acknowledgements

The following individuals were interviewed for the project. To all of them we express our sincere thanks for sharing their memories and reflections on their childhoods and early lives.

Doagh

Graham Andrew
Tom Andrew
Leith Burgess
Isabell Cooper
Wallace Fenton
Annie Hill
Derek Lorimer
James McAdam
Robert McConnell
Sarah McTrustry
Wilma McVittie
Mary Moore
Billy Robson
Willie Stevenson
William Andrew Turkington

Interviewer Leith Burgess with interviewee Mary Moore

Toome

Leslie Bell
Cahal Boyd
Robert Chesney
John Cushinan
Frankie Dale
Roddy, Owen and Mickey Gribbin
Mary Ann Higgins
George Laverty
Brian McCann
Gerry McCann
Jim McKee
Edmund McLarnon
Roisin McLernon

Mary Ann Higgins

Maureen McMeel
Edmund O'Donnell
Bessie Quinn
Matt Quinn

Whitehead

Victor Crampton
Sheila Herdman
James Lamont
Eithne McKendry
Brian McKenna
Kathleen McKenna
Greta Milliken
John Milliken
P. J. O'Donnell
Trevor Monteith
Hanni Reinhardt
Wilma Shaw
John Wilson

Brian and Kathleen McKenna

We are also grateful to the various interview teams. The members of these teams were as follows:

Doagh – Leith Burgess, David McConnaughie, Margaret Adams, Alex Hill, Jim Cardwell, Sandy Sherrard and Bob Adams.

Toome – Una Johnston, Henry Marron, Henry Gribbin, Marianne Carey, Charlie McQuade and Bob Adams.

Whitehead – Ricky Linton, Ronnie Warburton, Bob Adams and William Roulston.

For help with making introductions we are grateful to Victor Hart, Colin McCracken and Sam Crowe.

We are grateful to the following for supplying the images used in this book: Bob Adams, John Cushinan, Frankie Dale, Una Johnston, Derek Lorimer, Annette McKee, Mary Moore, John Milliken, National Museums Northern Ireland, Bessie Quinn, Matt Quinn, Molly Todd, William Andrew Turkington and Beth Mawhinney.

4. Summary of history of each village

The Holestone has overlooked the Sixmilewater valley for thousands of years

Doagh

Few places in Northern Ireland of comparable size have as rich a history as the village of Doagh in the Sixmilewater valley of County Antrim. The district has produced some remarkable individuals, including the pioneer of education William Galt and the mechanical genius John Rowan. In the 1790s many of the people of Doagh supported the United Irishmen and took part in the 1798 rebellion. In the nineteenth century the construction of a large flax spinning mill led to Doagh taking on the character of a mill village. The 1901 census enumerated over 500 people in Doagh as a whole. This broke down as 225 in 'Doagh Town', 152 in 'Doagh Mill', and 239 in the rest of the townland. Nearby at Cogry another mill community had grown up beside the spinning mill there. The population of Doagh remained at a similar level for the rest of the first half of the 1900s. In 1933 the narrow gauge railway line to Ballyclare, which had opened in 1884, closed.

The construction of a new housing development in Doagh in the post-war period led to a rise in the village's population. In his history of Kilbride, first published in 1959, Rev. R. R. Cox made the following observations on Doagh:

During the past few years it has taken on a new look. Where once there were open fields in the normal crop rotation – potatoes, corn and grass, a new housing estate has grown. Television aerials on roof tops appear now in ever increasing numbers. The old thatched cottage with its half-door is a thing of the past. Even the village pump has passed into an honourable retirement with the installation of piped water mains.

Doagh Railway Station

In the half century since Rev. Cox wrote those words, the village had witnessed even greater changes. Today Doagh has a population of around 1,200.

In the early nineteenth century the Doagh Hunt was formed by the Marquess of Donegall and other members of the south Antrim gentry and aristocracy. Its meetings generated considerable excitement in the surrounding countryside and large crowds gathered to watch the members of the hunt in action. Though the original hunt folded around 1840, the tradition continued in the area with the East Antrim Hunt which continued to excite much local interest. For the most part those interviewed looked back fondly on growing up in and around Doagh. Wilma McVittie was raised at Kilbride in the 1930s and 1940s and spoke for many when she said, '*There were hard times, but there were good times*'. She also felt that '*there wasn't the same devilment or badness then.*' In highlighting the sense of neighbourliness where he grew up, James McAdam from Hunterstown commented, '*Everybody helped each other, no doors were locked then*'. Mary Moore has lived in the Doagh area for over 80 years. In looking back to her childhood she reflected on the fact she had '*the best of neighbours … helpful*

neighbours', adding, '*At night folk would have gone to each others' houses. You never knew who opened the door and came in, just for a yarn.*'

East Antrim Hunt 'in Doagh 1953

Toome

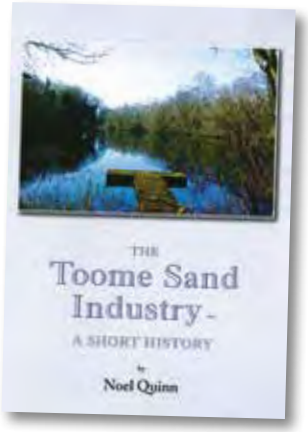
For centuries Toome has been an important crossing point of the Lower River Bann. In the late eighteenth century a bridge was built, superseding the earlier ford, as a result of which the village is often referred to as Toomebridge. Prior to more recent housing developments, Toome was very much focused on its Main Street. Its population in the mid twentieth century stood at around 200, whereas today it is in excess of 700. The 1931 *Belfast and Northern Ireland Directory* recorded that there was a market at Toome each Tuesday for the sale of agricultural produce, a cattle fair on the second Tuesday of each month and hiring fairs in May and November. The Gribbin brothers of Anahorish remembered visiting the fairs in Toome where such treats as yellowman and dulce were on offer.

The shops in the village in the early 1930s included James McCann, grocer and newsagent, whose son Gerry was interviewed for this project. Tradesmen included J. McKee, blacksmith. His son Jim, also a blacksmith, was also interviewed. Of others

Toome from the air c. 1926

listed in the 1931 directory, James McErlane, road contractor, was remembered by Mary Ann Higgins as a frequent visitor to their home, Union Lodge, while James McMeel of The Rock, was the father-in-law of Maureen McMeel. She related how his move to Toome was as a result of his work on building the new church at Moneyglass in the early 1920s. Aaron Corr was listed as a merchant. Frankie Dale remembered that birds or rabbits that had been shot would have been sold to him (a rabbit was worth sixpence). Frankie's own grandfather John Dale, whom he describes as 'enterprising', was listed as the agent for Warden & Stewart, a firm that dealt in agricultural produce. The postmaster was Thomas Leake, a vital conduit for the telegrams that Leslie Bell's father received in connection with his business.

Main Street, Toome



Toome was also known throughout Ireland and Britain for its eel fishery. In 1931 the manager of the eel fishery was William Ellis. One of the Lough Neagh fishermen living near Toome, Matt Quinn, spoke at length about his experiences. Toome was also well known for its sand industry. While none of the interviewees spoke in great detail about this, the subject has been very well covered by Noel Quinn in his book, *The Toome Sand Industry* (2012). The railway line to Cookstown passed through Toome. In the early 1930s the stationmaster was A. McKenzie. Passenger services ended in August 1950. Roisin McLernon grew up close to the railway line in Ballynaleney and remembers watching the last train to travel along it. She recalls that bangers had been placed on the tracks which went off as the train passed over them.

Toome was very closely integrated with its rural hinterland, more so than either of the other two places that are part of this project. There was a strong sense of community in and around Toome that transcended traditional divisions. To give one example of this, Frankie Dale remembers that if there was a death '*for a day or two the whole townland would have been in mourning*' and people would have stopped working. Frankie describes a neighbourhood as being like an '*extended family*', though just like any family that did not mean that there would not be disagreements.

Moneyglass, Toome

Whitehead

The sailing boats are rocking in the bay,
The deep blue water sparkles in the sun,
A cooling breeze blows up the ozone spray,
From misty Blackhead looms the lighthouse gun.

From James A. Armstrong, 'Whitehead in Summer'.

Whitehead Bay

No-one has done more to preserve and record the history of Whitehead than P. J. O'Donnell. In his book *The Town with No Streets*, he has explored its past in great detail. The modern town began to take shape in the late nineteenth century, its development facilitated by the easy access that the railway provided to Belfast. There was a period of rapid growth in the years immediately either side of 1900. Many of those who lived in Whitehead were employed in one way or another by the company that owned the railway. P. J.'s strong sense of the past also came through in his interview in which he talked about the town's origins, the formation of a ratepayers' association, the establishment of town commissioners in 1925, and Whitehead's elevation to Urban District Council status in 1927. For the next 46 years

the Urban District Council ran the town until this was abolished in 1973. As P. J. points out, '*The people who were on the council in those days were all businessmen – they had a vested interest in the town*'.

Whitehead at the beginning of the twentieth century

The 1937 census enumerated just under 1,300 people in Whitehead. By the early 1960s the population had risen to over 2,000. Whitehead was, therefore, significantly larger than Doagh and Toome during the childhoods and early lives of those who were interviewed for this project. It still had a certain intimacy, however. When he was growing up on a farm just outside Whitehead, John Milliken believes that he would have known half of the people of Whitehead by name and would have recognised nearly everyone. With many professionals living there also had a more middle class feel to it. There were also many more public amenities, shops, and leisure facilities, etc., than in the other two places. However, because of the nature of its development, Whitehead did not seem to have the same connection with its rural hinterland that Doagh and Toome had with theirs. Here there was a much clearer divide between urban and rural.

What came across strongly from those interviewed is that there was a strong sense of community in Whitehead. Brian McKenna pointed out that there was a very good community spirit and '*no religious boundaries whatsoever*'. He pointed out that it was not necessary to lock your front door and with no through traffic it was safe for children to play in the roads and avenues. P. J. O'Donnell also highlighted the good relationship between the various denominations in the town, pointing out that if there was a bazaar or a Christmas fair it did not matter which church it was in because everyone went to it and everyone supported each other. Kathleen McKenna spoke very warmly on her childhood in Whitehead and the type of town it was:

> *A lovely place to grow up in. Very friendly and you knew everybody. … You didn't seem to have any worries about anything. … The traders were … very helpful. People had time for one another and you helped everybody. … You would have known everybody.*

5. Families and family backgrounds

Those interviewed for this project came from a wide variety of family backgrounds. Some came from families that had been resident in their respective districts for centuries, while others were newcomers. When asked how long his family had been living in the area of the Point, Ballyscullion, George Laverty replied, '*Hundreds of years*'. John Milliken's family has been living in Islandmagee since the seventeenth century, having moved there from Scotland. Robert Chesney was the fourth or fifth generation of his family to have lived on his farm in Ballynaleney, near Toome. Derek Lorimer can trace his ancestry in Holestone, Doagh, back to a Samuel Lorimer who lived there in the late eighteenth century. This Samuel was a member of 1st Donegore Presbyterian Church in Parkgate and the congregation's clerk of session. He was also instrumental in having a boundary wall built at Kilbride graveyard and in collecting the money for it. Among the many interesting features of this graveyard is a 'corpse house' where bodies were placed to decompose to the extent that they would no longer be of use to the body-snatchers who supplied the Edinburgh medical schools. Samuel Lorimer took his turn at guarding the corpses prior to their interment.

George Laverty

Others had a more recent lineage in their respective districts. P. J. O'Donnell was born in Whitehead, as was his father. With regard to the generation before that:

> *My grandfather came here before the town was built in the early 1880s and he probably worked at the White Harbour at the quarry for the limestone because there was no town here at that time.*

John Milliken

Frankie Dale's grandfather bought a farm in Ballydougan in 1916, but as the place was a '*wreck*' as a result of a lawsuit he did not move there until 1926. Edmund McLarnon's father was the first of his family to live at Moneynick, Toome. On the other hand his paternal grandmother was a Wilson from Aghacarnaghan and her family had long been resident in the area. Edmund's mother was a Wolfenden from Ballydonnelly, near Toome; the name Wolfenden is believed to be of Dutch origin and to have first appeared in Ireland in the 1600s.

Brian McKenna's grandparents were hoteliers in Belfast, owning the Albert Hotel in High Street. Later his grandmother purchased the Whitehead Hotel (now the Whitecliff Inn). In 1936 Brian's father Arthur established a dental practice in Whitehead. Brian's wife Kathleen was also born in Whitehead. Her father, Patrick O'Neill, who was from Randalstown, was a signalman at the railway station. Her mother, Ellen McMullan, was from Glenravel and had come to Whitehead to work in a house. They met while out walking and married in Whitehead in 1933. Leith Burgess was born in 1942 in Flemingstown in Browndod townland, near Doagh. His parents were among the thousands of people who had departed from Belfast in the wake of the blitz heading for refuge in its rural hinterland. What drew them to the Doagh area was the fact that in the townland of Ballybracken lived Bob and Sarah Leith. Bob was a cousin of Leith's maternal grandmother.

Others moved to their respective settlements during childhood or in their teenage years. Trevor Monteith was born in Bangor, but moved to Whitehead, where both sets of grandparents were in business, when he was a toddler. Mary Ann Higgins was born in 1920 in Mounthamilton, near Cloughmills, and moved to the house in which she still resides, Union Lodge, in March 1925. Robert McConnell was born at Gateside, Ballyeaston, in 1928, but moved to Fourmileburn in November 1933 after his father found work with a farmer there. James Lamont was born near Portglenone and moved to the village of Ballycarry, two miles from Whitehead, in 1950 when his father took over a general store there. Matt Quinn moved with his family from Ardboe across to the lough shore near Toome when he was 11. In other instances work brought interviewees to live in a particular area. Now living close to Toome, Maureen McMeel was raised on a farm in County Fermanagh, near the border with Cavan. She left home at 16 or 17 to work in a shop in County Antrim; her sister had already found work in the office attached to this shop. John Wilson moved to Whitehead as a doctor in 1958. However, he was already familiar with Whitehead for some of his relatives had been evacuated there during the Second World War.

Though Victor Crampton did not move permanently to Whitehead until 1979, he had been familiar with the town from the 1950s. He was born in Coagh, County Tyrone,

where his father, Edward, who was in the RAF, was stationed during the Second World War. In 1946, the family moved to Ballygally where Victor spent his childhood. As a boy Victor would have visited Whitehead with his parents. His parents moved to Whitehead in 1962 when his father took over the Post Office in the town. Wilma Shaw moved to Whitehead with her husband and children in 1970. Before that they had lived in Islandmagee. However, Wilma had been visiting Whitehead from her childhood. Not only did her mother's family have a house in Islandmagee, her Sunday school excursions from Belfast had been to Whitehead.

While people often assume that country families have lived in the same place for generations, this was frequently not the case. In fact a number of those interviewed moved several times in their childhood. Mary Moore was born at Calhame, near Straid. When she was a few months old her family moved to Holestone where she lived until she was 6 or 7, and then relocated to Kilbride until she was 14. In 1945, her family moved to The Plains where she has lived ever since.

Marriage brought Greta Milliken to a farm near Whitehead in 1942. She had grown up on a farm at Ballyeaston where her father's family, the Dickeys, had lived for generations. In other instances, the husband moved to where his wife's family lived. Mary Moore met her husband Bob at a Farmers' Union dance. They married in 1956. Bob was from the foot of Slemish in the Braid valley. This was '*the end of the world*' for Mary who refused to live there and so Bob moved to The Plains.

No-one interviewed was born as far away from their place of residence as Hanni Reinhardt. She had been born and raised in Copenhagen, Denmark, and arrived in Whitehead in the spring of 1963 as an au pair to the family of a local doctor. It had not been her original intention to come to Whitehead for it had been her wish to go to London. However, her father overruled this and decided on Whitehead. He chose it because Hanni's kindergarten teacher had a niece who had spent a year in Whitehead with the same family.

Bessie Quinn

Some of those interviewed had fond memories of their grandparents. Bessie Quinn had been raised with her maternal grandparents at Gillistown. This was because her father had died when she was young and her mother had brought Bessie and her two sisters back to the home place. Bessie remembers

Bridge House, Toome

John Dale

her grandmother as a great cook from whom she learned recipes. Greta Milliken's Grandfather Wilson was from near Straid and in his later years moved to a cottage on her father's farm at Ballyeaston. She remembers that he had a pony and trap and a ride in it was a real treat. Greta recalls that it was his wish that his white pony should be allowed to graze in the moss after he died until its own death; this wish was granted.

Frankie Dale spent a good deal of time with his grandfather, John Dale, when he was young. John was from the townland of Tullylinkisay, near Castledawson, and had served in the Grenadier Guards in the late 1870s – one of his duties was guarding Buckingham Palace – before returning home. In 1880 he moved to Bridge House, Toome, with his wife Annie Arrell who was from Ballydermot, near Bellaghy. For a time John Dale drew sand to the railway before moving on to carting grass seed. Frankie recalls:

> *He drew grass seed from the market yard to the railway. Farms all grew grass seed and then it was graded down in the market yard. And he was drawing it from the market yard and putting it into the wagons. He was 80 at this time and he was handling 2-hundredweight bags of grass seed – quite a man. Of course I was flying about everywhere – I wanted to see the trains.*

Frankie Dale also speaks fondly of his great-uncle, Edward Dale, noting that he '*went far, he was the jewel in our crown*'. Edward was a schools' inspector. He was a very clever man who had somehow '*wangled his way into Trinity without going to the Rainey*'. He was also a fluent Gaelic speaker. Frankie remembers how he loved to see him coming to visit them.

A fair number of the families had known personal tragedies and many of those interviewed did not reach adulthood without losing at least one of their parents. For example, Edmund O'Donnell's father died when he was very young leaving his mother to maintain the farm. Roisin McLernon was only seven when her father passed away. The early deaths of siblings was also mentioned by a number of the interviewees. One of Annie Hill's brothers died when he was only seven. The three sisters of the Gribbin brothers all died young – one at the age of 25, a second aged 5 years, and a third on the same day that she was born. Matt Quinn's brother Peter drowned in Lough Neagh at the age of 25 while out fishing with their father in November 1948; not long before this his mother had died.

A number of those interviewed referred to the participation of family members in the First World War. James McAdam's father served with the 36th Ulster Division. He was wounded on three occasions, but survived the Somme in 1916. James recalls that his father rarely talked about the war. Three of Billy Robson's uncles, brothers of his father, served in the war and all of them survived, though one, William, who was in the Black Watch, spent a number of years in a prisoner of war camp. Not so fortunate was Leith Burgess' uncle George who was killed on 21 March 1918. He had been a sergeant in the Royal Irish Rifles. Leith has visited the memorial at Pozieres on a number of occasions. Two of P. J. O'Donnell's uncles fought in First World War. One survived, but another, who had served through the war, died when he was accidentally shot by a fellow soldier who was cleaning his rifle not long before the conflict ended.

Many of the interviewees had family members who had moved away from the area, some to another part of Ireland or across the Irish Sea to Britain, while others emigrated to another part of the world. Bessie Quinn had an uncle who had tried unsuccessfully to buy a ticket for the *Titanic*; later he successfully made it to America. Edmund O'Donnell's uncle, Henry Keenan, emigrated to Christ Church, New Zealand, and worked on a farm, later returning to Ireland. Frankie Dale's father had emigrated to Australia, but because of a disease of the eyes he returned home. Derek Lorimer's uncle John emigrated to Canada and eventually ended up in Alberta. He received land from the Canadian government – an initial 180 acres, followed by another 180 acres. John Cushinan had an uncle, Edward Kelly (right), in Pittsburgh who worked on the streetcars after he returned from serving in the American army in the First World War. John had resolved to go to America when he 18 or 20, but his mother begged him not to go in his father's lifetime and so he did not go. In an interesting instance of reverse migration, Frankie Dale's maternal grandmother, had been born in America.

6. The home

The earliest memories of the interviewees generally concerned the childhood home. When he was three years old Leith Burgess moved with his parents to a house near Doagh of which he still has clear memories:

> *We moved to McBride's farm at Kilbride in November 1945. I can vividly remember the thatched roof, whitewashed walls with about a foot and a half tarred around the bottom. The cassie* [lane] *was covered with shunners – cinders from Cogry Mill.*

Leith Burgess

Many of the interviewees were raised in houses that lacked the basic amenities that are now taken for granted, such as running water, electricity, inside toilets, and bathrooms. Annie Hill grew up in Hunterstown, Doagh. She remembers that water was supplied by a pump outside the front door and buckets were kept beside it for carrying in the water. Hot water for washing was produced by the range in the kitchen. There was no electricity in the house and lighting was provided by an oil lamp which had to be filled every day. Annie recalls using a candle to go up the stairs to bed. Many others related similar experiences. One of the Gribbin brothers remembers that he had the task of filling the lamps with oil before it got dark. Roisin McLernon recollects that one of her sisters looked after the lighting of them, both in the house and yard – '*quite a ritual*', as she describes it. In many homes the only heat was from an open fire. Turf was burned in fires around Toome, but there were few mosses near Doagh and so here coal was used.

Annie Hill

Generally speaking, the homes of the interviewees were not large. Several children might have slept in one bedroom. In his childhood home, Graham Andrew recalls that the three boys slept in one room, the four girls in another, with their parents in a third. Owen Gribbin talked about the 'settle bed' that was slept in by the younger children. There might have been five children in the bed, three sleeping one way and two another with the result that you might have woken up to find '*somebody's big toe sitting up at your nose*'. On the other hand, though she came from a large family of eleven, Roisin McLernon points out that because there was such a gap between the oldest and youngest, the entire family never lived together at the same time.

The home in which Edmund McLarnon spent most of his childhood was designed by a qualified architect, his mother's cousin, Bob Barton, who designed many houses in Belfast in the interwar years. This house, which was built 1937/8, did have an inside toilet and bathroom. There was no mains water, however, but a well in the backyard and a hand pump in the scullery. Everyone had to take their turn with the pump, especially if they had had a bath and the tank needed refilling. Later a Lister diesel pump was installed. In other homes bathing was more basic. A tin bath was used in the Andrew home. In Robert Chesney's home the water came from a spring. He can just about remember a windmill pump being installed in 1936 which supplied both the house and farm.

The most interesting childhood home of any of the interviewees is that still lived in by Mary Ann Higgins. A listed building, it bears the name Union Lodge. In 1837, the house, which was then called Union Hall and the residence of Robert Davison, was described as follows:

The house is 2-storeys high, slated, and was commenced in 1834 and finished in 1837, and cost 1,000 pounds. It is situated near the corn mill in the townland of Ballymatuskerty, on Lord O'Neill's estate. The above appropriate name was given to it by the proprietor Mr Davison, as it was from the benefit of the union linen Mr Davison made his money.

Union Lodge

Soon after this, the property was acquired by a Green family with whom it remained until acquired by Mary Ann's parents in 1925.

Food and diet

Half a century and more ago the food people consumed was much simpler than it is now and people's dietary requirements were more basic. As Robert McConnell put it, '*If you got a boiled egg for your tea you thought you were going well*'. When asked what his typical meal was John Cushinan replied, '*Plenty of potatoes and a big plate of champ and a dab of butter*'. Homemade soup and porridge were among the answers given to the question on favourite foods. Cahal Boyd's favourite meal as a child was yellow Indian porridge last thing at night, while for Gerry McCann it was eels fried in the pan. Leith Burgess also enjoyed eels which his father brought home from Cogry dam – '*an innovative change to our diet*'. Frankie Dale's mother made a type of white stew with potatoes and onions – '*lovely, you couldn't stop eating it*'.

Rabbit meat was once very popular. Leith Burgess remembers that rabbits provided more than half of the meat they ate. His father had nets and snares for rabbits; they also had a lurcher called Midas which caught rabbits. Frankie Dale remembered the 'lovely rabbit stew' that he enjoyed as a boy. Tom Andrew also remembered rabbit meat being widely eaten and that people went out with ferrets to catch rabbits. The spread of maximatosis in the 1950s largely put an end to eating wild rabbits.

Roisin McLernon

A high proportion of the food consumed by the interviewees was produced at home. Most people had their own vegetable garden and a large number kept a few hens and even pigs for their own use. Roisin McLernon explains her own family's situation:

> *We were sort of self-sufficient because we had eggs … and we grew all our own vegetables, we had potatoes, and we seldom ate red meat because we always had chickens, and maybe killed a pig and had that.*

For those living on farms that grew cereals, there was a ready supply of meal for baking. Greta Milliken remembers:

> *We had our own wheatmeal, we had our own oatmeal, which was from our own crops, and then that was put into a big bin and we were able to use that during the year. You would get maybe 2-hundredweights at the time and that lasted you right through the year to do all the baking.*

Some of those interviewed remembered their mother baking nearly every day. The Gribbin brothers recalled that their mother made wheaten bread in the open fire using an oven pot with coals placed on its lid; a long knitting needle was used to test if the bread was ready. Graham Andrew remembers that his mother was a good baker who made her own fadge, sodas, bread etc, using a griddle. In Derek Lorimer's home there was an open fire with ovens built into the walls. Annie Hill recalls her mother making fruit scones which were a special treat on a Sunday night.

Greta Milliken

Judging by the diet of some of those interviewed, the secret of a long life would seem to be a hearty fry. According to 96-year-old John Cushinan, '*The fry was well thought of.*' Likewise the Gribbin brothers indicated their enjoyment when children of fried bacon, eggs and bread. Robert Chesney recalls that the men who worked on his father's farm received a cooked breakfast every morning. If she wanted it, Annie Hill had a fry in the morning before school or else porridge or cereal. Hanni Reinhardt commented that coming from Denmark to Whitehead the Ulster fry was a novelty to her, but one that she enjoyed. For most people eating out was a luxury that was rarely, if ever, enjoyed. The only 'fast food' was provided by the fish and chip shops in Whitehead or, for the people of Doagh, in Ballyclare, while Chinese and Indian restaurants were unheard of.

What we now take for granted was for many of our forebears a real delicacy, even a luxury. As a child growing up in the 1920s, Roisin McLernon remembers that a white loaf was a '*great treat*' and was only for special occasions. She and her brother would have shared a slice and they competed for the half with the '*straight*' (crust). Robert McConnell remembered that every Wednesday during the summer a man would call at Fourmileburn in a pony and trap, one stop in a journey from Ballymena that took in Parkgate and Doagh. There was a 'fridge' on the trap for ice-cream. A slider cost one old penny, but even this was more than he could have afforded. William Andrew Turkington's mother-in-law, Mrs Bell, had her own business in Mill Row, Doagh, making toffee apples. '*They were good*, he remembers, '*they didnae last 5 minutes*'.

Communications

The first of the modern communication devices to appear in most homes was the radio, or wireless as it was generally referred to. These were usually powered by what were known as 'wet' batteries that could be recharged and, depending on usage, could last for around a week. When the Gribbin brothers were young the only wireless in the area belonged to the Mulhollands in Toome. In 1933, Roddy Gribbin, his brother Willie and another boy walked there to listen to an All-Ireland match; Roddy remembers that the house was packed. Cahal Boyd also has memories of going with his father to the home of his aunt, Bridget Carey, to listen to an All-Ireland football match. Unfortunately, the radio batteries went flat and they heard only half of it.

Those who needed a telephone for their business were generally the first to have one installed. Around Toome Edmund McLarnon's and Gerry McCann's parents had telephones for their grocery businesses, while Brian McKenna's father Arthur had a telephone for his dental practice in Whitehead. Brian still remembers the telephone number – Whitehead 19. Trevor Monteith has clear memories of the telephone in his family's home in Cable Road, Whitehead, and the local exchange where a telephonist would put the call through to whoever they wanted to speak with.

For those who did not have a telephone of their own there were a number of options. One was to call round to a neighbour who did have a telephone. Mary Ann Higgins remembers that one of their neighbours, who was a road contractor, had a phone and they could have used his if necessary. The nearest phone to the Chesney home was in Carlane school. Robert Chesney remembers running down to the school one night in 1948 to get the schoolmaster to ring for the doctor to come out to his seriously ill father. Brian McKenna recalls people calling to his home to use the phone. There was a box on the table for money to be placed in, though Brian wonders whether people were always honest about where they were calling.

There were also publicly available telephones. Maureen McMeel went to the Post Office in Toome to use the telephone. Cahal Boyd remembered the first phone kiosk at McCoy's Corner and people wondering how it worked. Annie Hill recalls a place on the Burn Road in Doagh where you could go to make a telephone call. Finally, as Roisin McLernon observed, the simplest way of getting a message to someone urgently was to

jump on a bicycle and pedal to their house.

Leslie Bell remembers that before the telephone was installed his father regularly received telegrams relating to his business from Thomas Leake, the postmaster in Toome. Leake kept a blackboard outside the Post Office that frequently read, 'Alec Bell please call'. For Cahal Boyd the sight of the man coming with a telegram from the Post Office in Toome meant bad news for it was usually to notify them of a death. The Gribbin brothers told the story about the time their father received a telegram from his half-brother who was training to be a teacher in Drumcondra. He was ill and needed money to come home. In order to raise the necessary funds, their father thrashed wheat all night with a flail and then took the straw on a cart to Draperstown where he sold it for thatching; he then wired the money to bring his half-brother home.

In the 1950s televisions began to increasingly appear in homes in Northern Ireland. A major boost for television sales was the Coronation in 1953. Brian McKenna's father bought a television specifically to watch the Coronation. Brian remembers about 20 people gathered in their house to see it. In Doagh a crowd gathered in the school to watch the Coronation on television. By the mid 1950s the Lorimers had a television and Derek recalls his neighbours calling in to watch the FA Cup Final. While some people purchased their television, others rented a set. Trevor Monteith recalls that his family rented the same television for over 20 years.

Celebrations

When it came to birthdays, most interviewees indicated these were not celebrated, either at all or in a big way. A few stated that they might have received a small present or had some friends round. Roisin McLernon remembers that her sister baked a cake for her birthday, while Matt Quinn recalls that a bottle of lemonade might have been bought.

The words 'low-key' and 'unostentatious' spring to mind when describing the ways in which the families of the interviewees celebrated Christmas. That is not to say that Christmas was not important or that it was not looked forward to. Roisin McLernon remembers that her mother always went out of her way to make Christmas special and many others spoke nostalgically of the Christmases of their childhoods. Greenery was the most popular form of Christmas decoration. Eithne McKendry remembers holly and ivy in her home in Whitehead. Edmund O'Donnell, George Laverty and Bessie Quinn also recall holly used as a decoration at Christmas. In Brian McKenna's home there would be a freshly-cut Christmas tree with about half a dozen large lights on it. Kathleen McKenna remembers helping her brother make decorations from coloured paper. There were church services, either the night before or on Christmas morning. For Hanni Reinhardt from Copenhagen one of the principal differences in the way Christmas was marked was that in Denmark the main celebration was on 24 December.

Christmas Day was usually spent with the immediate family. The gathering in of family members from far and wide was not widely noted. Eithne McKendry, on the other hand, went to her maternal grandparents, the Kemps, in Cable Road, Whitehead, for Christmas where there was a large family gathering. While many of the interviewees indicated that they had turkey for Christmas dinner, there were alternatives. Brian McKenna's family might have had a large chicken. Cahal Boyd's family had a goose or even two drakes at Christmas. Roisin McLernon's family might also have had a goose or a duck at Christmas. John Milliken also recalls having goose at Christmas which was probably one they had themselves raised on the farm. In Cahal Boyd's home there might have been a time of singing after their Christmas dinner.

Santa did visit some homes, but the presents he left were usually very simple. Annie Hill recalls hanging up a stocking at Christmas which she would awake to find filled with an orange, apple, pencil case, or toy. Apples and oranges were received by many of the other interviewees. In addition Cahal Boyd might have received '*a wee bag of sweets*'. Toys were something of a luxury, and some presents were more of value on the practical side, like the jotter and pencil that the Gribbin brothers remember receiving. A gift of money was also appreciated. For Matt Quinn the gift of 10 shillings seemed a fortune. There may have been other treats. Cahal Boyd remembered that at Christmas his mother bought a fruitcake from the grocery man which lasted them a month.

Eithne McKendry

7. School and education

If anything divided opinion among the interviewees it was their experience of school. Many indicated their absolute loathing of school, while others recalled their school years as an enjoyable time. For Mary Moore, '*They were happy days, the best days of your life.*' On the other hand, Gerry McCann admitted that he '*detested*' school. Some confessed that they were simply not 'studiers' and wanted an outdoor life, working on the farm or wherever. Derek Lorimer, who attended Parkgate School, points out: '*You were expected to do that much work when you came home from school there wasn't much time to study.*' What Roisin McLernon liked about Carlane School was the company of the other children which she did not have a great deal of at home as there was a big age difference between her and her next sister. One thing that all of the interviewees agreed on was that there was no school uniform – '*you were very lucky if you had a coat*' remembered Cahal Boyd – at any of the primary schools.

The former Gortgill School

There was some variation between the interviewees as far as their starting age at school was concerned. Leslie Bell began Duneane School when he was only 3. Isabell Cooper was 4 when she first went to Cogry; her two sisters were already at the school and she wanted to join them. Cahal Boyd began school in 1930 when he was 5½, while Annie Hill was 6. Leith Burgess still remembers his first day at Kilbride School and his mother crying when she left him there. Matt Quinn never went to school after his family moved from Ardboe to live near Toome when he was aged 11.

Most of the interviewees indicated that they walked to school. For some it was a mile or less, though many others walked 2 or 3 miles, or even further. Cahal Boyd walked about 3½ miles to Gortgill School in his bare feet – as did everyone else in the summer. Roisin McLernon and Brian McCann also recall children walking to Carlane School barefooted. Roisin herself walked 3 miles to school, '*and didn't think anything of it*'. Brian McCann also walked 3 miles to school, but later cycled there, one of the few at his school to do so. Leith Burgess walked 2 miles to school, but there were other children who walked 4 or more miles. Looking back now on walking along the road from Toome to Randalstown, Jim McKee comments: '*The main road was different then. You could have walked the middle of it … and there maybe wouldn't have been anything, only a horse and cart maybe or somebody on a bike.*' Robert Chesney recalls his grandfather taking him to Staffordstown School in a pony and trap. Because of the distances involved, travelling to secondary school was nearly always by bus, though Graham Andrew remembers cycling to the High School in Ballyclare along with 8-10 others.

Few concerns were expressed about children getting wet while on their way to school. Willie Stevenson recalls walking to school '*hail, rain or shine*' and if you got a soaking you just sat in your wet clothes all day. Brian McKenna remembers that at his school in Whitehead those who walked a fair distance in the winter and were cold and wet when they arrived were allowed to sit near the fire. He recalled the children of the lighthouse-keeper arriving at school soaked through if there was a high tide and a strong wind.

Most children took a lunch with them to school. Leith Burgess remembers taking a 'piece' (bread and jam) to school for his midday meal. On the other hand, because Annie Hill lived just round the corner from Doagh School she was able to go home for her lunch at 12.30pm. John Milliken attended Mullaghdubh School in Islandmagee where dinners were provided; looking back on them now, he comments: '*they were the best school dinners ever*'.

In some schools the pupils were off in the fortnight before Halloween to gather potatoes. Robert McConnell recalled that the money earned from this paid for a pair of boots for the winter – '*so that you learned the value of things*'. Derek Lorimer told the story of how his grandfather was crippled with arthritis which meant that his

father had to start farming at a very early age. To save the School Attendance Officer from taking action against him, he was struck off the school roll in March, when the ploughing started, and was not re-enrolled until October.

Schools

In the early 1930s there were three primary schools in the immediate vicinity of Doagh – Doagh, Kilbride and Cogry. Replacing an earlier school, Cogry Mills Memorial School was built in the aftermath of the First World War and named in memory of those men from the area who had died in that conflict. Isabell Cooper relates that there were three rooms in this school which were occupied by Mrs McDowell, Miss Houston and the principal, Mr Logan. The old school at Kilbride stood alongside the Presbyterian Church and graveyard. In 1937 a new school was built on the Moyra Road – Kilbride Central – which replaced the schools at Kilbride and Cogry. Isabell recalls this school being built. Her father cut the grass in the school grounds which was his source of hay for the few cattle that he kept. He had the right to cut grass here before the school was built and was allowed to continue after the education board took over the site.

In some ways the school in Doagh can be seen as the descendant of the Sunday school established there by William Galt in the late eighteenth century, the earliest Sunday school in Ireland, according to the inscription on Galt's own headstone in Kilbride graveyard. It was rebuilt in 1959. Although Leith Burgess had already left the school by this time, he recalls that while the new school was being built classes were held in a variety of different places, including the Orange Hall and the Torrens Memorial Hall. There was no school in the village of Toome at the time the interviewees were of school age. Those interviewed from this area attended a number of different schools – Gortgill, Moneynick, Duneane, Staffordstown, Carlane, Millquarter, Anahorish and Auchterclooney. Mary Ann Higgins went to what she calls the 'greatest school in Ireland! Gortgill.' Edmund O'Donnell from Cloghogue began his education at Gortgill and later transferred to Anahorish which had a good reputation as a school. There were two primary schools in Whitehead – Whitehead Primary School and Lourdes Primary School – both of

William Galt's headstone in Kilbride graveyard

Doagh National School Medal

Gortgill School plaque

which were located in Victoria Avenue. With Whitehead High School also in Victoria Avenue, it was known locally as the 'School Hill'. Today there are no schools left in 'School Hill'. Some of the schools were quite small. For instance, there was only one teacher at Staffordstown school, Mrs Dale, though a temporary second teacher was later appointed.

The source of heating in many of the schools was an open fire. Willie Stevenson remembers that in Doagh School there was a big fire in each room and the youngest children got to sit closest to it. Bessie Quinn attended Auchterclooney School where the pupils took turns to set the fire in winter. John Cushinan mentioned that there were two fires in Moneynick School, but nowhere to store the coal which had to be brought from a local farm. As John pointed out, '*it was a job for two carrying a big bucket of coal up … each day*'. John recalls an incident in his school that occurred one day that the regular teacher, Miss McMullan, was away. She had placed one of the senior girls in charge to keep order. At that time there were two open fires in the school. In imitation of Miss McMullan this girl stood in front of the fire in their classroom to keep warm – '*and if she didn't go on fire*', though fortunately without any serious harm coming to her. Edmund McLarnon remembers that there was a large boiler in one of the schoolrooms at Duneane which was coal and wood fired.

The curriculum was mainly based around the '3 Rs'. Annie Hill remembers learning her times tables. She also recalls writing on a slate with chalk, before moving on to pencils and writing books. Brian McKenna remembers standing in a line for spelling

and moving up or down the line depending on how well he had memorised the words. Cahal Boyd noted that when Master Murray came to Gortgill he taught dancing. Leith Burgess commented that James Blair, principal of Doagh School was interested in music and drama. A teacher at Mullaghdubh School, attended by John Milliken, was also very keen on drama, and John remembers going to festivals in Ballymoney and Carrickfergus.

The most popular playground games included football, rounders, skipping and tig. At Doagh School, Annie Hill recalls that boys and girls played separately. Cahal Boyd recalls that '*a wheen of the bigger boys played what they called wrestling, but it was pure murder*'. In some instances there was no playground. At Staffordstown Robert Chesney played football either in a field behind the school or in the road in front of it. Sports were rarely organised at primary school, though Mary Ann Higgins recalls a sports day in Toome. At secondary school, sports such as rugby, cricket and hockey were played.

Further education

Many of those interviewed, especially the older people, finished their formal education at the age of 14 or 15 and did not go on to further education. A number, however, went on to secondary schools, for a few years at least. Ballyclare High School was the principal destination for those from the Doagh area. Derek Lorimer transferred to the High School at 11, but left at 13½ as he would rather have been at home on the farm. Those from the Toome area generally attended the Rainey School in Magherafelt or Ballymena Academy. Brian McCann, for instance, went to the Rainey for a couple of years. In Whitehead the High School provided post-primary education for girls. Boys growing up in Whitehead might have gone to Larne Grammar School or travelled into Belfast. John Milliken, for example, attended RBAI – Belfast Inst – travelling there by train from Whitehead. He remembers cycling to Whitehead station where he caught the 8.20 to Belfast. This arrived at Yorkgate at 8.45 and he then walked about a mile to the school.

Mickey Gribbin and Gerry McCann were also educated in Belfast, both of them at St Malachy's School. Mickey received a scholarship to go to there when he was 14. During the week he stayed with friends in Lincoln Avenue and afterwards in Belmont Church Road, and went home at weekends by bus. He remembers cycling along the Newtownards Road on his way to school and having to carefully negotiate the trams and tram lines. Roisin McLernon went to a boarding school just outside Lurgan when she was 14, staying there until she was 18. She only got home at Christmas, Easter and the summer as it was too far to travel home at weekends. Her sister went to a boarding school in Ballycastle. At the age of 11 Brian McKenna was sent as a boarder to Clongowes Wood in County Kildare. He also only got home at Christmas, Easter and the summer.

Pupils at Parkgate School in 1937 with Mr Hall and Mrs Lorimer (Derek's mother) on either side. Robert McConnell is the second from the right in the second row

A number of those from the Doagh area went to the Tech in Ballyclare, among them Mary Moore. She spent a year at the Tech where she learned shorthand and typing. She continued to go to night classes in the Tech, in subjects such as knitting, sewing and cookery, even after she was married, enjoying the fellowship there. According to Robert McConnell, who attended Parkgate School, the principal, Mr Hall, selected the pupils who would do the examinations to decide whether they would continue their education at either the Tech or High School in Ballyclare. Robert believed that Mr Hall, whom he called '*a brilliant teacher*', paid for these examinations out of his own pocket. Sheila Herdman's father decided that she should do a secretarial course once she had left primary school. She, therefore, enrolled in a Gregg's shorthand course in the Gregg private school in Wellington Place, Belfast. Leith Burgess relates that he was never asked if he wanted to go to secondary school and so never had the opportunity of doing so. In any case, with a father in his mid sixties, Leith felt he had to find a job and earn a living.

After school Billy Robson went to Greenmount College and then studied agriculture at

Queen's University. As he could not farm (the farm going to his older brother George), he wanted a farm-related career. However, while he was at Queen's the family acquired a second farm which provided Billy with an opportunity to come home. Edmund McLarnon's brother and sister studied at Trinity College, Dublin. Edmund himself had won a university scholarship, but felt that he should stay at home to help his parents in the family business. After leaving Whitehead High School at the age of 18, Eithne McKendry underwent teaching training at Stranmillis College in Belfast. John Milliken was able to spend some of his third level education at Ohio State University in the United States.

Wallace Fenton completed several years of post-school education as he fulfilled his calling from an early age of going into the Christian ministry. He attended night schools and then went to a college in the centre of London for two years to train as a Church Army Evangelist. After spending some years with the Church Army in England, he moved to Northern Ireland to work in Carnmoney. There the bishop suggested to him that as he was effectively working as a curate's assistant he might as well go forward for ordination. This required further studies at Trinity College, Dublin, though because of his Church Army training he was allowed to complete his studies in two years. He was ordained on 28 June 1964.

Apprenticeships were the best route for those going into a trade. After leaving school at 14 Cahal Boyd went to serve his time as a joiner with his uncle. He remembered, '*I got half a crown every Christmas – and I was six years there.*' His uncle bought him the first suit he ever owned when he finished his apprenticeship. By this time he was a '*fully-fledged joiner – from half a crown at Christmas to £8 a week*'. After attending Larne Tech, P. J. O'Donnell served his time in a garage in Whitehead owned by Robert Auld. He earned 5 shillings a week in his first year which rose to £2 10s. by the time he had finished.

Teachers

Opinions on teachers varied considerably. What usually coloured an interviewee's opinion on a particular teacher was their use of corporal punishment. Some teachers were felt to have administered this rather too freely. '*Sadistic*', '*cruel*', '*psychopaths*', '*severe*', '*an auld tinker*' and '*as crabbit as a bag of monkeys*' were some of the words used to describe teachers. One teacher from Gortgill School was so fearsome that Cahal Boyd was the only one from the parish who attended her funeral. Isabell Cooper described two of her teachers at Kilbride School as 'carnaptious', a condition she felt was exacerbated by the fact that both were asthmatic. Another pupil at Kilbride was Mary Moore who reflected: '*They were your teachers – you gave them their place. There was no cheek or you would have been sent out to the master and you didnae want that.*' Sheila Herdman recalled that one of her teachers in Whitehead was '*desperate … she was fierce … you got a right old slap over the knuckles*'.

On the other hand, some teachers were remembered as '*brilliant*', '*great*' and '*clever*' and in some schools corporal punishment was rarely used. Robert Chesney recalls that the cane was little used at Staffordstown school and that you had to be very bad for it to be brought out. Greta Milliken, who went to Ballyeaston School in the 1920s, commented, '*You had fear in those days, you respected your teachers more than they do now, so there wasn't much need for discipline.*' Isabell Cooper describes Mr Logan of Cogry School as 'a great man' who would have lifted them in his car and taken them down to school; he retired when Cogry School closed in 1937. Isabell described another of her teachers, Miss Robinson, as '*a lovely girl, a very kind, caring person*'. Tom Andrew recalls one of his teachers at Kilbride as a man who never raised his voice, but was able to teach effectively and treated his pupils equally. James Lamont paid tribute to one of the teachers at his school in Ballycarry who recognised ability and encouraged those who showed it to persist in their studies. The same teacher could prompt very different memories. Wilma McVittie described Mr Spence, principal of Kilbride School, as '*a lovely man*'. On the other hand, Isabell Cooper recalled him saying '*Hurry up, this stick is waiting for you*' to any of the pupils arriving late to his school – and that this was not an idle threat. She still respected him as an intelligent man, however.

When Sarah McTrustry started in Doagh School around 1920 the principal was R. B. Robson. He was originally from near Greyabbey, County Down, and in 1882 had spent six weeks as a substitute teacher at this school. Three years later Robson returned to take up a permanent position in Doagh. During Robson's tenure a new school, which was capable of accommodating 130 pupils, opened in 1909. He retired in 1926, but not before he had been joined by his two daughters, Miss Alice and

Mr and Mrs R. B. Robson

Miss Jeannie. Sarah remembers that one of them taught her embroidery and the other cookery. Frankie Dale's mother Kathleen, nee Calderwood, was originally from Bendooragh, near Ballymoney, and had moved to the Toome area to teach in Staffordstown School. Derek Lorimer's mother Mary was also a teacher. Her family, Witherspoon, was originally from Muckamore, later moving to Hyde Park, Mallusk. Mary Lorimer began her teaching career as a monitor in Mallusk school. She studied at Trinity College, Dublin and was appointed to Parkgate School around 1921, initially boarding with a family called Morton. In 1925 she married Derek's father Joseph.

Florence Mary McDowell

A teacher who left an indelible impression on the children she taught was Mrs McDowell. Born in Doagh in 1888, Florence Mary McDowell was the daughter of William Lenox Dugan and his wife Mary Jane, nee Kidley. Her childhood home was Bridge House, just north of the village (now demolished). In 1903 she began a long teaching career as a monitor in Cogry School. She later taught in this school and when it closed she transferred to the new school at Kilbride which opened in 1937. In her later years she wrote two books, *Other Days Around Me* and *Roses and Rainbows*, which vividly recaptured everyday life in late Victorian and Edwardian Doagh. She died on 11 March 1976 aged 87. Her three daughters all became teachers. Mrs McDowell was Leith Burgess' first teacher. He remembers her as '*a Miss Marple character*' who was strict, but fair, while Mary Moore remembers her as '*a lovely old lady and was very kind with the youngsters*'.

Brian McCann went to Carlane School where the principal was John Murphy. Brian describes him as '*a very sharp teacher*'. Despite warnings to the contrary, Brian got on well with Master Murphy. Brian was good at the subjects that Murphy was interested in – algebra, geometry and arithmetic. Master Murphy would have asked Brian to run various errands for him, even sending him to the bank on his behalf. At Anahorish School Barney Murphy was remembered by the Gribbin brothers as '*firm*'. He would later be immortalised in the poetry of his most famous pupil, Seamus Heaney.

Brian McCann

8. Farms and farming

A high proportion of those interviewed, especially around Doagh and Toome, came from a farming background. There were, of course, huge variations is the type of farming and the scale of the individual farming operations. While many made their living entirely from farming, others had to combine farming with another activity to make ends meet. While most farms were passed on from father to son, Billy Robson's father was the son of the local schoolmaster. Norman Robson was, however, determined to go into farming and so a farm of 23 acres on the Burn Road, Doagh (in the townland of Ballyhamage), was purchased in the early 1920s. He lived on his own for a number of years before marrying Ada Mahony who was from Ballyronan, County Londonderry, and who had come to the Doagh area as a poultry instructor with the Ministry of Agriculture. They started up a poultry unit which as Billy says, '*was not so land dependent*'. Billy recalls his father delivering eggs and chickens to customers in Belfast on a Friday. During the interwar years, there were times when farmers were under huge economic pressure. Billy commented, '*During the late 1920s things became very difficult for everybody. … Times were very hard, land became almost worthless.*' However, the Second World War gave a boost to local farming and especially to food production. Mary Ann Higgins remembers that there was more work during the war with better prices for crops, while crop production was increased due to compulsory tillage orders.

Billy Robson

Livestock

Dairying

Most farmers would have kept one or two dairy cows for their own use, while for others dairying was the main activity on their farms. The Millikens, who farmed near Whitehead, milked 50-60 cows, but most dairy herds were considerably smaller than this. Sixteen cows would have been considered a large herd. The dairy industry experienced huge changes in the middle decades of the twentieth century, both in terms of technology and cattle breeds. One of the most significant innovations was the introduction of automated milking machines. By the early 1940s the Robsons were milking 12-15 cows and Billy recalls the impact of the new milking system on his father's farm:

I can just remember the milking machine being installed. … I think the first milking machine in the byre was installed about 1941 or 1942 which made a tremendous change to the labour required for getting the milking done. … It was a tremendous innovation getting the milking machines.

What facilitated this switch to an automated system on the Robson's farm was the fact that they had electricity installed around 1936-37. At that time the electricity was made by a small company in Ballyclare called Currans. Billy's parents believed that electricity would be useful to them, especially for the incubators for hatching chicks, and so when the line was brought to Doagh, they had it extended along the Burn Road to their farm. On the Millikens' farm a windmill provided the power for the milking machine, though they also had a stand-by engine for when there was no wind. Those without electricity continued to milk by hand. Mary Moore recalls milking on her father's farm:

We had no milking machines – we had no electric. … If there were two or three of you milking eight or ten cows it was good fun … maybe the auld cow would put her foot in the bucket and spilled it, but you just got up and went on with it.

Cows being hand-milked

Around 1950 the Stevensons at Thorndyke, Doagh, moved over to dairying and built one of the earliest milking parlours in Northern Ireland. Willie remembers these changes and how they were received in the country:

We started to milk and had a lot of heifers of our own to get started. We put in a milking parlour – we started right off with a milking parlour … everybody thought we were mad. Then the cows had to run loose to get self-fed silage and we had to take the horns off them all. We had Ayrshire heifers with nice-shaped horns and they had to come off – everybody thought we were clean away! But that was the only way you could keep them. The milking parlour was a great success. They came from miles to see it. The cows had to walk in and then walk up two steps – they got used doing that.

For Willie there was '*nothing as good as the milking of the cows, for you knew when you started in the morning, and you knew when you started in the evening, and you knew when you finished.*'

A major change in the dairy industry was the introduction of Friesian cows. Billy Robson recalls the impact of this.

In those days through the war, the traditional breed was based mainly on Shorthorns … Immediately after the war the Ministry of Agriculture said that the cattle population of Northern Ireland need an injection of new blood – there was a lot of very poor quality stock in the country. They encouraged farmers to import dairy Shorthorns from England. My father brought several in starting I think about 1948 and that was built up over the next 5–6 years. The milking ability of these cows was not what they expected. The Friesian breed had come into the country in the late 20s/early 30s and they had a reputation for producing more milk so there was a gradual change I think from about 1951/1952 on from the Shorthorns to the Friesians.

One particular cow that Billy remembers was a red and white Friesan that his father had bought as a heifer calf for £8. The cow was named Diana and she lived to be 18 years old and at one time was producing 11½ gallons of milk a day, at a time that other cows would have been giving 5-5½ gallons. Because of her colouring many people mistakenly thought that she was an Ayrshire. The Millikens also moved over from the Shorthorn to the Friesian, but around 1952 gave up milking altogether after John's father had a heart attack. Thereafter they concentrated on beef.

Milk churns on a trap

The milk on the farms usually went to the local creamery. A common sight for those who rose early in the morning was the milkman making his rounds. For a while Mary Moore's father did this. Derek Lorimer remembers the way milk was delivered:

> *They were mostly pony and traps and they had a couple of churns of milk on. It wouldn't have been in bottles. You went out with your pint can and they would have filled it for you.*

The milk cart was one of the last horse-drawn vehicles that Brian McKenna remembers in Whitehead. For some time Graham Andrew had his own milk run. As he and others pointed out the milkman has all but disappeared from our roads.

Many farms made their own butter. Greta Milliken recalled that on their farm there was an apparatus for churning the butter driven by horses walking in a circle. Later an end-over-end churn was used and later still an electric one. There was a well in one of their fields which produced ice-cold water which was used for steeping the butter. Once made the butter was sold from their home or supplied to grocers. Greta recalls that one customer wanted his butter unsalted.

Pigs

'*Every farm had a few pigs*', notes Billy Robson, '*and actually nearly every cottage house in the country the man would have had a sow or maybe two sows and sold the small pigs off.*' Pigs were generally killed at home on the farm by a peripatetic pig butcher. Hugh Pat Boyd was well known in the Toome area as a pig butcher. Mary Ann Higgins stated that a pig killed in the winter would have provided them with bacon for most of the year. Nothing was wasted. Roisin McLernon's recalls her mother making black pudding. The Gribbins had a place at Anahorish called the Slaughterhouse where they killed and cleaned out the pigs. Mickey describes the process:

> *These boys reared pigs until they were ready for killing and they had a place up in Anahorish called the Slaughterhouse. Roddy was the butcher for the most part. … There was one end where there was a boiler and it boiled water and the water was then put into a submerged bath. And the dead pig was dipped in that until they were sure that it would shave off. Then it was hauled off on to a platform and scraped clean – they all had gully knives and wee pouches for them. Then it was put on to a hook and chain and put on to a rail – in the slaughterhouse there were several rails. And the pig's inside was cleaned out. Then it was washed down and it was eventually taken to Belfast.*

The liver would have been taken to the local priest as a gift. The Slaughterhouse appears in Seamus Heaney's poem 'Anahorish 1944' in which he wrote:

> We were killing pigs when the Americans arrived
> A Tuesday morning, sunlight and gutter-blood
> Outside the slaughterhouse. From the main road
> They would have heard the squealing,
> Then heard it stop and had a view of us
> In our gloves and aprons coming down the hill.

Now the slaughterhouse is the base for Anahorish Preserves Ltd, founded by their nephew Malachy.

Billy Robson points out that there was a revolution in the pig industry in Northern Ireland in the 1950s. The traditional Northern Irish pig was the Large White York. There was also a Large White Ulster breed which became extinct. In 1953/4 some farmers began to introduce the Landrace breed from Sweden which was a superior pig. Around 1955-56 the Robsons bought a few Landrace sows and it was not long before all their pigs were Landrace. Today there are probably only around a third of the pigs in

Northern Ireland compared with the early 1960s.

Crops

Prior to the 1960s, the main cereal crop was oats. Graham Andrew remembers his father sowing oats with a fiddle. A bag was attached to the fiddle which held two bucketfuls of seed. Graham's job was to help refill the bag from the large sacks of seed that had been left across the field. Cahal Boyd described the harvesting of corn:

> *A field of corn was mowed by a scythe and a boy went after him tying it up. And then you had to stook it, and then hut it* [build the stooks into a small stack], *and then carry it in if you hadn't a horse.*

William Mawhinney using a seed fiddle on his farm near Doagh

In some places a little wheat was grown, while barley did not become popular until the late 1950s. Other crops grown included turnips, cabbages and kale. Billy Robson recalls his father growing mangels, a crop which resembled sugar beet and which was used as a winter feed for livestock. Around Toome the growing of grass for its seed was important. '*Grass seed was a great thing*', remembers Edmund O'Donnell, adding, '*there was a great demand for it*'. George Laverty echoed this, pointing out that there was a good trade for it. As John Milliken pointed out, Islandmagee '*wasn't really a cropping district*' and there were not large acreages of potatoes or cereals so the harvest was not as important there as elsewhere.

Edmund O'Donnell

Hay was the main fodder crop. Frankie Dale remembers that haymaking, which he describes as 'six weeks' steady, heavy work', was an anxious time of year for farmers due to the unpredictability of the weather:

> *The worry of saving hay long ago shortened people's lives cause you could lose your hay, and if you lost your hay, where were you? … People don't understand the pressure the farmers were under … the pressure was intense.*

Mary Moore feeding hens at The Plains

'*There was many a field of hay lost*', reflects Mary Moore. The following extract from the Kilbride preachers' book of 1 August 1920 illustrates just how wet one summer of yesteryear was: 'It has rained almost constantly for the last six weeks. A severe thunderstorm today and the heaviest rain seen for years.' Although silage became increasing popular in the 1950s and 1960s, John Milliken points out that hay had its advantages in that it was more portable. Most beef cattle would have been kept outdoors for the majority of the year and it was easier to take hay out to them in the winter.

Billy Robson commented that buck-rakes attached to the backs of tractors greatly helped with silage harvesting for it saved having to lift the grass by hand using forks or graips. A subsequent innovation was the 'green crop loader' which was like an elevator that lifted mowed grass up on to a trailer where two men built it. In the early days of silage production, silage was made in round containers which were roughly 12 feet in diameter and 12–15 feet high. Grass was forked into these containers – and forked out again. Later on silage was put into trenches with a wall built along each side. The silage was graiped off the trailer – these were the days before hydraulic tipping trailers – and then levelled and flattened by another tractor.

Flax

For hundreds of years flax was one of the main crops grown across much of Ulster and provided the basic ingredient of the province's linen industry. This continued to be the case up until the 1950s, having been given a boost during wartime. However, by the end of the 1950s the quantity of flax grown in Northern Ireland was negligible. The flax harvest, which took place at the end of the hay season, was one of the high points of the summer and was one of the main occasions in the farming year in which outside help was brought in. Roisin McLernon remembers that 20 or more men could be on their farm to help with harvest. '*It was always a great day for us*', she recalls, with much excitement generated by the arrival or so many people, all of whom received an ample tea.

Flax – or lint as it was frequently referred to – was pulled, not cut, and this was a laborious job. There was '*mair work with it than enough*' remembers Mary Moore, while Frankie Dale called it 'backbreaking'. Although neighbours frequently provided the labour, professional flax pullers could also be employed. Edmund O'Donnell recalls a firm of lint pullers in Ballymena who were paid so much an acre. He remembers that pulling lint was '*a very rushed job*'. When he was a schoolboy, Graham Andrew recalls, he and his brother were asked to pull a field of flax. They were paid a penny per 'beet' – 12 beets made a stook. The pulled flax then had to be tied up into sheaves. Bessie Quinn recalls that while she did not pull the flax, she did help with the harvest by going round the fields with the bands for tying up the sheaves.

Removing flax from the lint dam (National Museums Northern Ireland)

The flax was then put into a dam; most farmers had their own dam. The water supply to the dam had to be cut off and then the sheaves of flax were placed in the dam and covered with stones to weigh them down. The dam was then flooded with water to cover the flax. This process was known as retting and what everyone who experienced it remembered was the pungent smell of the retted flax. While in the dam the flax was tramped, a task Bessie Quinn and Frankie Dale remember doing. The flax remained in the dam for a week to 10 days, or perhaps a fortnight. Then it had to be thrown out; this was '*a stinking enough job*', remembers Graham Andrew. The retted flax was then carted to a field and spread out to dry. Afterwards it was lifted and taken to a scutch mill where the fibre was separated from the woody stems.

In the early to mid twentieth century there were still significant numbers of scutch mills in the County Antrim countryside. John Cushinan remembers three scutch mills within a short distance of his home in Derryhollagh. There were also several scutch

Scutch mill, near Toome (National Museums Northern Ireland)

mills in the vicinity of Doagh and Cogry. Robert McConnell vividly remembered the scutch mill at Fourmileburn and the men who worked in it. He pointed out that scutching was a dangerous job and that the scutchers' hands could easily be hurt.

> *If you looked into a scutch mill, in through the door, there were two of them in there – yin of them roughing and the other finishing the flax. You couldnae have seen them. You talk about health and safety. You couldnae have seen them for stour! Nae masks or nothing. Whenever they came oot that was all clinging on to their beards, their clothes, their eyelashes and everything.*

One of the scutchers at Fourmileburn was a one-eyed man who was known as 'Slasher'. During a fight part of his nose had been bitten off – he had bitten off part of his opponent's ear. Robert recalls that he had a loud voice – '*you'd have heard him at Doagh*'. The Magiltons also worked in the scutch mill. Robert recalled the Magiltons burning the 'shows' (the waste from the scutching process) in their home fire which left a strong smell. Robert's mother always knew where he had been if he had called with the Magiltons and there was a fire burning at the time.

Leslie Bell's father grew flax, though this was not for the linen industry, but rather for thatching the house they owned at Gloverstown which was dismantled and reassembled at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. The house had been an inn at the side of what was then the main road from Belfast to Derry. Later it was used a court house with a 'whipping post' for punishment. After that it became the Church of Ireland rectory for Duneane parish. The flax grown by the Bells was dry-retted, not dam-retted. Leslie's father supplied other thatched houses with flax for thatching. In fact, one of the first places that Leslie delivered thatching flax to, when he was 17 or 18, was the Mellon homestead near Omagh in what is now the Ulster-American Folk Park.

Horses

Horses continued to be used widely on farms until the 1950s. Ploughing was one of the most important activities for which they were used and a man good at working with horses was highly valued. Graham Andrew's father had a reputation as a first-rate ploughman who was in high demand for opening drills. Farmers would have had him make a start on the drills so that they could carry on from where he left off. Horses also pulled carts and farm machinery such as the 'tumbling paddy' which was used in haymaking. Horses also pulled the binder which was used in harvesting oats. Graham does not have fond memories of this: '*The worst bit was when they were cutting corn … there were three horses on the binder and sometimes you had to ride the middle horse and the sweat would have burned the legs off you*'.

Graham Andrew

Isaac Lindsay working with horses at The Longshot

Leslie Bell remembers his mother's family – who were the last to use horses in their district – cutting corn with horses, and spraying potatoes with a horse and cart – one man drove the horse and another pumped the sprayer which was bolted on to the cart. One of John Milliken's neighbours was one of the few people in the Islandmagee/ Whitehead area who continued to work

with a horse into the 1960s. John remembers him coming to their farm with his horse-drawn 'tumbling paddy' during haymaking.

John Cushinan:

They were very intelligent animals, horses. The neighbour next to us … Andy Greer … Andy was a bachelor, but he employed an old lady to look after him and he employed a horse-man. The horse-man maybe could have been two field lengths away from the house at lunchtime at 12 o'clock and this lady had a powerful calling voice. She called them and the men never heard her, but the horse snickered, the horse heard her, so they knew immediately that it was 12 o'clock. … The horse was just as keen as them to get in for a feed!

John Cushinan

Frankie Dale:

I did not like horses. I wasn't fit to work with them and they made a fool of me – I was too young. Horses are clever. They ruled me, I didn't rule them. … Besides they were dangerous. I know of three people who were killed with horses in the area. They were unpredictable. No, I didn't like horses.

Frankie Dale

Roisin McLernon:

The last horse my brother had – it was when he got the tractor and didn't need the horse any more. It was a great old pet. It was sold to somebody up in the Glens. A week later we looked down the lane [and saw] *the horse coming up the lane, coming home – all that distance!*

Farm workers

The owners of the larger farms employed workmen and labourers to help with the work. Some of these men specialised in particular tasks. Of particular importance was the horse-man. Robert Chesney remembers very well the horse-man who worked on his father's farm:

A horse-man got more money than other people. … A good horse-man always fed his own horses. In our case we were ploughing ground with horses right up until 1945-46 because we happened to have a horse-man at that time who wouldn't drive a tractor, would hardly sit on a tractor and he was an excellent horseman … my father kept him on and kept two horses. … He was in the stable every morning at the busy time at 6.30am.

Farm labouring, according to Robert McConnell, was '*hard work, sore work, and nae money*'. Robert explained the circumstances that led to his family moving from near Ballyclare to Fourmileburn in 1933:

My father ran about for a couple of years and couldn't get a job. Them was the bad times, the early thirties, really bad. [A neighbour] told my father about this boy looking for a man over at the Fourmileburn. So he went over to see him. He didn't start him, he said 'I'll see you in Ballymena on Saturday' – that was Ballymena hiring fair in November. So he had to go to Ballymena and he hired him. Well, he had 18 shillings in the week, that's 90 pence … and you had the old house which wasn't up to much, but was a roof. If you left the job, you left the house. … And you got a pint of milk or a taste of milk every day free … and we got spuds in with theirs in the field, but you had to work them yourself, what done you a year, and you got as many sticks as you wanted to keep the fire going.

The Gribbin brothers commented that a farm labourer who was paid 12 shillings a week plus his food was counted as well off. Cahal Boyd remembered two labourers on a neighbouring farm who were paid only around 8 shillings a week. Roisin McLernon recalls one particular man named Ned McGuigan who worked for them on the farm as a seasonal labourer. He was, according to Roisin, a '*very clever man*' who knew Latin and Greek. Gerry McCann also remembers Ned, whom he describes as a '*very smart man*' and very good at drawing. For a number of young men around Doagh, farm labouring alternated or was combined with working in the local mills. While Leith Burgess was waiting for a job to come up in Doagh Mill he worked for the Robsons and even after finding work in the factory he continued to work for them in the evenings and on Saturdays. Farm work was also carried out by women for, as Wilma McVittie points out, her mother worked in farmhouses and out in the fields, stooking corn, gathering potatoes, etc.

Blacksmiths

A blacksmith's forge was once a familiar sight around the countryside. Billy Robson remembers a number of blacksmiths around Doagh. One of the best known was Robert Reid whose blacksmith's shop was near the Methodist church hall. Billy is aware of quite a few old gates around the country stamped 'R. Reid, Doagh'. Another well known blacksmith was Charlie Patterson at Burnside whose forge Leith Burgess would later buy. In the 1950s there were still many horses at work that needing shod. Graham Andrew explained that a horseshoe might have lasted 5–6 weeks. Graham remembers that he was sent by his father to the blacksmith in Burnside to have the horse shod: '*He just threw you up on the horse's back and away you went down to the blacksmith, and he lifted you off it, shod the horse and threw you on again, and away you went home*'. Blacksmiths also helped to adapt farm machinery from horses to tractors.

Around Toome the work of the McKees as blacksmiths was described in glowing terms by many of the interviewees. '*There was only one place to go*', observed Frankie Dale, who acknowledged that there was hardly a farmer in that country who Jim McKee had not done some work for. Jim specialised in welding which he enjoyed for '*you never had the same thing to do twice*'. Jim's father was also a blacksmith and Frankie calls him 'an unbelievable man'. When it came to the time it took his father to shoe a horse Jim recalled: '*Some of them you'd maybe get them out again in half an hour and some of them it would be an hour … and if you got a rough one it maybe took you far longer.*' The McKees had a blacksmith's shop on the Quay Wall in Toome where the boats came in. Cahal Boyd remembered that they 'hooped' the cart wheels that he had made '*with a big fire and a big steel plate*', afterwards dropping them into the Bann to cool down.

Jim McKee

Tractors

One of the biggest changes in farming over the lifetime of those interviewed has been the advance of mechanisation and in particular the introduction of tractors. The Gribbin brothers commented on the scale of the changes that they have witnessed in their lifetimes, from working with scythes to the advent of the combine harvester. While tractors were used on some farms in the 1930s – Willie Stevenson recalls his father acquiring his first tractor (a Ferguson Brown) in that decade – there was a dramatic increase in the numbers acquired during the Second World War. At the beginning of 1939 there were 550 tractors in Northern Ireland. By 1945 this figure had risen to 7,300.

Ferguson Brown tractor

A number of those interviewed indicated that a tractor was acquired for their family's farm for the first time during the war. The Lorimers at Holestone bought their first tractor around 1941 – a Fordson. Derek remembers that it came with steel wheels rather than rubber tyres. A previous tractor ordered by Derek's father had been lost when the ship carrying it had sunk in the Irish Sea. The Robsons at Ballyhamage acquired their first tractor at around the same time. Before this Billy's father had taken the Alvis car that he had used to deliver eggs to Belfast and made it into a cut down car and effectively used it as a tractor. Lorry tyres were attached to the ordinary

car tyres and the Alvis did quite a bit of work in the fields. Other farmers were doing something similar on their farms, and Billy notes that considerable ingenuity was shown by farmers at this time. John Milliken's father acquired his first tractor around 1950. It was an Allis Chalmers which sat higher than either a Ferguson or Fordson and, as John points out, was better for going through crops.

Neighbouring

For most of the farming year, the work was carried out by the farmer with the help of his own family and any labourers he may have employed. At particular times of the year, however, a farmer would have to call on his neighbours for assistance and he in turn would help them. '*There was what they called neighbouring*', explained Cahal Boyd, '*You helped the man next door and then he helped you.*' The term used by Roddy Gribbin for this was '*morrowing*'. Especially during the harvest, as Owen Gribbin clearly described, upwards of half a dozen men might have been required for a particular task:

> *On the thresher there had to be a couple of boys forking, two men feeding the thresher, a man taking away the grain and maybe a couple of men taking away the straw and building it – so it had to be a neighbourly thing.*

In addition to offering labour, farmers would also borrow horses or machinery from their neighbours. Derek Lorimer points out that his family owned two horses and as three were needed for the binder so a horse would have to be borrowed from a neighbour – in return they would have cut their neighbour's corn. Cahal Boyd recalled that they did not have a horse of their own and so if they needed a horse, they borrowed one from a neighbour. This horse was used to bring the turf home or harrow the field for corn.

There also a friendly rivalry between farmers. With reference to the farmers around Toome, John Cushinan pointed out: '*The farmers years ago, they were very, very jealous of each other.*' The sight of a farmer cutting a field of hay could prompt his neighbours to do likewise. John also commented that farmers liked to outdo each other. In his words, they were '*acting like weans*'.

Harvest scene at Kilbride Church, Doagh

Markets and fairs

Visits to the local markets and fairs were a regular part of the farming calendar. Such occasions provided opportunities to buy and sell livestock as well as socialise with other members of the farming community. Robert Chesney's father had a small lorry which was used to transport cattle to and from markets and fairs. Robert has happy memories of travelling in the lorry to pick up cattle that his father had bought in Cushendall and other places.

John Cushinan remembered the monthly cattle fairs in Bellaghy and Antrim, both about 8 miles from his farm. He recalls one particular incident that affected his uncle:

> *My uncle had a bit of an experience. … One morning he went over to fodder the cattle and the gate was lying wide open. And it suddenly struck him – it was Monday, Bellaghy fair day. And he headed for Bellaghy. He got his cattle in Breslin's yard in Bellaghy. They had been bought by a cattle dealer innocently enough and he had to give the name of the man he had bought them off – and he paid dear for it … six months or something. Those cattle had been driven into Bellaghy and my uncle had to drive them home again!*

Leslie Bell can just about remember Bellaghy fair. He recalls walking to it from his grandfather's farm near Bellaghy and the large crowds of people who had gathered at it. For him it was '*like being at a carnival*'.

9. Work and employment

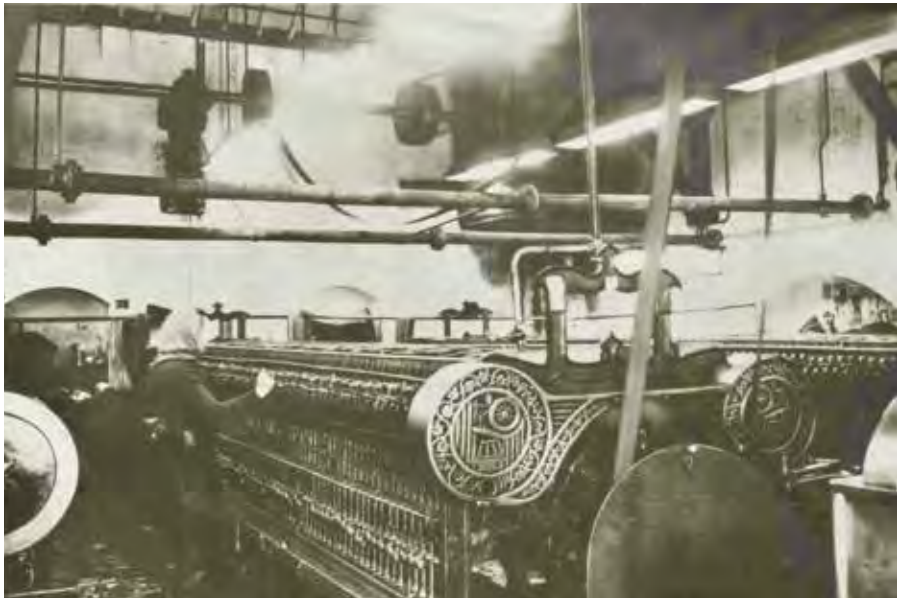
The Mills around Doagh

For people of a certain age, when they think of Doagh they think of the mill – Doagh Flax Spinning Mill. The mill was founded in the mid nineteenth century, on the site that had been occupied by John Rowan's foundry in Doagh. A large new mill, four storeys high, was built on this site *c.* 1920. In the 1940s, due to flax shortages as a result of World War II, synthetic fibres were introduced to the production process. This proved a success and a new factory was built on the Kilbride Road in the early 1950s. At their busiest, the two mills were employing 550 people. However, changes in the market resulted in the closure of the premises on the Kilbride Road. The original mill continued to operate, but it too closed in the early 1990s. The old mill building has now been converted into apartments. '*You can't picture it now not being there*' reflects Sarah McTrustry who began work in Doagh mill around 1930.

Sarah McTrustry

The former mill in Doagh

Doagh Mill was one of a number of industrial enterprises in and around Doagh. Not far away at Burnside was Cogry Flax Spinning Mill which was established in 1845 and was particularly associated with the McMeekin family. Many of the workers lived in the now demolished Cogry Square. On the evening of Friday, 25 February 1944 there was a disastrous fire at Cogry Mill which was blamed on an employee failing to make sure that a hot bearing had cooled before leaving work. This was a major setback, but the mill was repaired and brought back into use. Though Cogry Mill was one of the most progressive mills of its day – its early use of electricity was particularly innovative – it too was the victim of changing markets and closed in the late 1950s. The mill buildings were used until recently by an engineering firm. Another business was the bleachworks at Springvale, just north of Burnside. These establishments provided considerable employment, especially for women. Wallace Fenton, who grew up in Mill Row, Doagh, remembers a line of buses at the mill, bringing workers from far and wide.



Wet spinning in Cogry Mill c. 1929

The experiences of those who worked in these mills varied considerably. Isabell Cooper recalls that her sister Lily left school at 14 and went into Doagh Mill. However, it was a bad experience for her. Her boss was very strict and hard on the new employees, while the older staff were also difficult to work with. Lily left the mill, therefore, and got a job in Mossley Mill, cycling there and back, summer and winter. In fact, none of Isabell's family liked Doagh Mill, or '*the old prison*' as they referred to it. On the other hand, Sarah McTrustry recalled having a good relationship with her bosses in Doagh Mill. She remembers that her first pay was £1 16s 3d. for a fortnight's work, of which she was allowed to keep 3d. for sweets, her mother taking the rest. Wilma McVittie started working in Cogry mill in her mid teens. She remembers finishing school on a Friday and started in the mill on the following Monday. She too passed most of her pay to her mother. She describes Cogry Mill as '*homely*'. Wilma worked in the reeling room and what was referred to as the 'canary cage'.

One of Sarah McTrustry's bosses in Doagh Mill was William Andrew Turkington. He had previously worked in Cogry Mill which he thoroughly enjoyed: '*It definitely was a great place – Cogry Mill and Cogry … there's no doubt.*' William Andrew's first job in Cogry, at the age of 14, was doffing – a doffer was a worker who replaced the full bobbins with empty ones. He remembers Cogry as a great place to learn – it was strict, but if you showed the right aptitude you were taught well. He worked in Cogry for quite a while before moving to Doagh Mill where he was employed as a preparing master. When he was offered this job he told the bosses of Doagh Mill that he did not think he was capable of doing it. However, they told him that he was and so he accepted the position.

Coronation celebration at Doagh Mill with W. A. Turkington on the far right

Leith Burgess's father worked in Cogry Mill as a nightwatchman, fireman and stoker. Leith himself wanted to put his name down as a fitter at Cogry, but it was closing down at this time. He then tried to find work in Doagh Mill, but was told that he stood little chance as positions there tended to be handed down from one generation to the next. However, he was determined to put his name down and before his fifteenth birthday was offered a position at the new factory on the Kilbride Road, starting off

Painting of Doagh Mill

with loading lorries and cleaning machinery.

After briefly working in Cogry Mill, Isabell Cooper started in Springvale in August 1949 when she was 17½, spending most of her working life there. She calls it '*a great place*' where there was a very good relationship between the bosses and employees. She left work to have each of her children, but each time returned again. Another employee of Springvale was Wilma McVittie's father who was renowned for the great care he took of the Springvale lorry.

Fishing in Lough Neagh

When most people think of Toome they think of the eel fishery. Fishing for eels in Lough Neagh has been going on for centuries. There are records of fifth-century monks along the lough shore catching eels for their oil which was used in lamps. In 1830 one visitor to the area noted: 'Toome is famous for its eel fishery'. Until the twentieth century, however, fishing in Lough Neagh was primarily focused on pollan, a freshwater whitefish unique to Ireland. By the 1930s fishermen were concentrating more on eels for which they were receiving better prices, though pollan fishing did experience a revival in the Second World War. Today Lough Neagh is home to the largest commercial eel fishery in Europe.

Matt Quinn was born into a family that has fished in Lough Neagh for generations. He

Mending the nets near Toome

grew up in Moortown, Ardboe, on the west side of Lough Neagh, home to the largest community of fishermen around the lough. There Quinn is one of the most common names, so much so that the different families are known by nicknames. His Quinns were known as the 'Laddies'. '*We were all brought up on the lough*', reflects Matt, pointing out that he was one of five sons (John, Philip, Charlie, Peter and Matt), all of whom fished. At one time they had three boats on the lough. Matt started going out on the boats when he was nine or ten. He explains that he was big for his age and was regularly in demand: '*I had a good interest in it and if any boat along the area was a man short I would have pulled in.*'

Peter Quinn

In the early 1940s, when Matt was eleven, his family moved to the northern shore of the lough to an area known as The Three Islands. His father, Peter, had purchased a farm of 20 acres, as well as a house and outbuildings, thinking it would be a handier place from which to fish. Matt lives in the same house today. Though he may say with a slight smile, '*that's why we were so poor*' in response to a question about the family's longstanding associations with the fishing industry, there is no doubt that the life of a fisherman is neither easy nor lucrative. It can, however, be deeply satisfying. As Matt now reflects: '*It's a hard life, the fishing, but it's enjoyable too. … Whenever you got a good catch you were on top of the world.*'

The farm helped to supplement the fishing. They had a couple of cows that provided their milk and they made their own butter with a plunge churn. They also grew some potatoes and cereals on land they took in conacre. A few pigs were also kept. During the quiet season for fishermen, his father might have hired himself out to a farmer. However, when asked if his father was a fisherman who farmed or a farmer who fished, Matt is very clear that his father was first and foremost a fisherman. For health reasons his father had to give up fishing when he was about 70, but he retained a keen interest in the lough. As Matt recalls: '*When we would have come in, he wasn't long asking you what you got and where were you at.*'

Matt Quinn

Having been out on the water for nearly three-quarters of a century, Matt has an immense knowledge of Lough Neagh and its fish. In later years Matt's understanding of the lough was put to good use when he worked as a boatman for the Freshwater Laboratory of the University of Ulster at Traad Point. Despite his experience he is far from complacent about the potential dangers of working on the water. '*You have to respect the lough*', he cautions, pointing out that in March and April especially the wind can come in very suddenly and make boating dangerous. He is all too aware of this personally for on 26 November 1948 his brother Peter was drowned in the lough. Matt still has clear memories of the moment he was told this tragic news.

In his interview Matt talked about the nets used, pegging lines (which took about three hours), baits (got mainly from around the shore), and the fishing seasons (pollan was fished from February to May; at one time the eel season did not start until June, but it is now 1 May). He used nets to fish for scale-fish – trout, perch, pike and pollan. When landed, these had to be sorted into different boxes which were then collected by the local fish merchant, William John Johnston. Some of the scale-fish were sold locally, from house to house. He points out that one bad spawning season for pollan could affect fishermen for two or three years.

Eels were caught using lines that were set in the evening and lifted again early the

Matt pegging lines

next morning. At one time he might have gone out as early as 3am, but this was later curtailed to 4.30am. At times you could get a '*real big catch*', perhaps 2 stones to a hundred hooks (typically they would have had 600 hooks). Once the eels were landed it was vital to keep them alive. They were, therefore, put into tanks into which water was pumped. They were then lifted in a lorry and taken to the fishery in Toome. Ultimately, they were transported to the famous fish market in Billingsgate, London. Today, most of the eels are exported to the Continent.

Matt has seen many changes to fishing in Lough Neagh in the course of his lifetime. The lough was '*black with boats*' when he was younger. He reckons that there were over 300 fishing boats on the lough with three men to every boat. He points out that one of the reasons for the higher number of fishermen in the past was that there were fewer alternative sources of employment. This was especially true in those rural areas adjoining the lough. It is also true that today the size of the catches is nowhere near what it once was. Now an eel catch of half a stone to a hundred hooks would be considered good. Despite this, Matt remains optimistic for the future of fishing on Lough Neagh.

Toome Eel Fishery, c. 1959

Shops and shopkeepers

Local shops provided most of the necessities that could not be produced by the household itself. Grocery shops often offered a delivery service and many of those interviewed indicated that a high proportion of their groceries were delivered to their home. Andersons in Doagh supplied much of the surrounding district with groceries. Annie Hill recalls that a Mr Barkley from Burnside would call at her home and collect the order for groceries from Andersons which would then be delivered on a Friday. Robert McConnell remembered the groceries from Andersons being delivered on a '*horse and four-wheeler*' driven by a man called Gailey. Derek Lorimer recalls that a grocery van called once a week, bread servers came on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and a butcher called on a Wednesday and on a Friday evening. Greta Milliken also had her groceries delivered: '*All the grocery shopping was done from the grocer in Ballycarry. He came round for your order and then delivered it probably the next day. You got everything from him.*' Kathleen McKenna remembers the excitement of the breadman calling to her childhood home in Whitehead: '*It was lovely to see all the big, big trays being pulled out … it was like an Aladdin's cave.*'

Gerry McCann

Gerry McCann's grocery shop is the oldest business in Toome, having been founded by his father James in 1917. Gerry has been involved with the business from his childhood. When he was younger he went out in the shop's grocery van, making deliveries in a 10-12-mile radius of Toome. He also recalls people calling at their shop in Toome in a pony and trap for their weekly shopping. In the days before pre-packed food, items such as tea were weighed out, while cheese was cut with a knife by the shopkeeper to whatever size was wanted, Goods purchased could have been wrapped up in paper for the customer to take home. In the shop Gerry remembers that they '*had to have a wee bit of tick*' to allow people to pay for their groceries as they could afford them. He pointed out that it was frequently the case that groceries were paid for with eggs. Leslie Bell remembers that his mother would have had five or six cases of eggs waiting for the grocer with the result that instead of his mother handing over money to the grocer, it was often the other way round.

Edmund McLarnon's father had been the manager of Duneane creamery at Moneynick near Toome. At one stage his parents were giving serious consideration to emigrating

to New Zealand. However, having been persuaded to stay, they decided to start up their own grocery business. A shed was built and Edmund's father bought a Ford lorry so that he could make deliveries. This had a large wooden container on it with four drawers which were packed with '*the basics of the day*', such as tea, sugar, butter, lard, bacon, flour and wheatmeal. He also carried bags of animal feed on the back of the lorry – mostly dairy meal in 10-stone bags and Correndo (the trade name for flaked maize) as well pig meal. There was also a retail shop which was attached to their home. The feed bill would have been squared up by the farmers after the harvest when their potatoes and oats had been sold.

Edmund McLarnon

A. Fleming & Co., Whitehead

As the largest of the three settlements, Whitehead had the biggest range of shops. There were several grocers in Whitehead. Trevor Monteith's maternal grandparents, the Flemings, owned the main grocery business in the town. Another grocery business was run by Dan Gillen in Chester Avenue. Kathleen McKenna vividly recalls visiting it in her childhood:

When I used to go and do the grocery shopping Mummy gave me a list and I went to Dan Gillen and you brought a certain amount home. But then on a Saturday you went down and you left your order in and the young boy came up on a bicycle and delivered it to you. I can remember Dan Gillen weighing out tea and sugar and the different smells in the shop … Dan Gillen had everything in the shop.

Kathleen McKenna

John Wilson also remembered the '*great grocery shops*' in Whitehead, where the service was excellent, and two butchers and a fish shop. Sheila Herdman recalls a general drapery in Whitehead run by Miss Rapaport, the unusualness of her surname sticking in Sheila's memory. (The 1911 census lists the Rapaport family in Edward Road in Whitehead. The Rapaport family was Jewish. Nahum Rapaport had been born in Austria, his wife Marion Leah in London and their daughters Louisa and Stella in, respectively, Belfast and County Antrim. Nahum Rapaport died in Whitehead in 1941.) Another shop in Whitehead where the owners were of Continental European origins was that run by the Bonugli family from Italy. Eithne McKendry remembers the ice-cream sold from their shop. From 1962 to 1978 the Post Office in Whitehead was run by Edward Crampton. Previously he had been in charge of the Post Office in Ballygally. His son Victor points out that the Post Office in Whitehead included a sorting office for three postmen: '*My father used to receive the mail at 5 o'clock in the morning and then the postmen would come in at 6 o'clock*'. The Post Office also sold cards, stationary and toys.

In 1950, the Lamont family moved from near Portglenone to Ballycarry when James' father, Robert, purchased a general store in the centre of the village. Prior to this Robert Lamont had owned a small shop which had been started by James' grandfather. The shop in Ballycarry sold a range of hardware goods, drapery and groceries. The business also included a mobile shop. In his interview James talked fondly of the care with which his father ran his business and the pride he took in making sure his customers were satisfied. He also enjoyed a very good relationship with his staff. Drawing attention to the reconstructed shops in the

Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, James commented, '*I can identify with those completely because my Dad's shop was exactly the same.*' He recalls the quick turnover in perishable foods:

> *Everything was fresh. Dad would have gone on a Thursday to Belfast and he would have bought his bacon – that was fresh into the shop. … Once there was there anything going wrong with that bacon it was out. But the turnover seemed to be that fast that it didn't happen in any large measure, even in the summer months.*

James Lamont

James also remembers ribs arriving in the shop on a Thursday. Customers would have pre-ordered these, collected them on a Thursday night and put them '*straight into the pan*'. The shop's customer catchment area would have extended as far as Whitehead. James also remembers his mother buying meat from Sammy Haveron, the butcher in Whitehead, who would have made deliveries to Ballycarry. For the Lamonts the main reason for travelling to Whitehead would have been to visit the chemist or dentist. Growing up just a couple of miles from Whitehead, James' impression of the town was that it was '*a lovely clean place to live in*'.

Throughout the countryside there were small shops, though the range of goods that they sold varied considerably and in some cases could be quite limited. Matt Quinn remembers a small shop around a mile and a half away from his home at the Three Islands that sold sweets and minerals. Owen Gribbin recalled that near his childhood home lived Mary Ann McKeever who had a shop in a room in her house. There you could have bought 10 'merry maids' (chocolate-covered caramels) for a penny.

Commuters

Whitehead was different from Doagh and Toome in that most of those in work there were not employed in the town, but elsewhere, usually Belfast. John Milliken's impression of Whitehead when he was a child was that it was a '*dormitory-type town for business people*'. Brian McKenna also described Whitehead as a '*dormitory town*' where the inhabitants tended to work in Belfast unless they had a shop or other small business. Brian himself worked for a time in Watson's furniture business in Belfast, while his wife Kathleen worked as a typist for the Ulster Transport Authority in Linenhall Street, Belfast. Eithne McKendry's father, Samuel Moore, was in the civil service and worked at Stormont. Trevor Monteith began work in 1952 in the Belfast Bank (later the Northern Bank and now the Danske Bank). As Eithne points out, the departure of so many workers left Whitehead a rather quiet place during the day.

Whitehead Railway Station (National Museums Northern Ireland)

What facilitated easy access to Belfast was of course the railway which made it possible to be in the city less than half an hour after leaving Whitehead. According to Brian McKenna, the trains leaving Whitehead '*were solid, you couldn't have got on to them hardly*'. Furthermore, '*everything went by train, cows, chickens, people*'. Brian recalls farmers driving cattle down Cable Road to have them loaded on to the trains at the excursion platform. Kathleen McKenna's father, Patrick O'Neill, worked as a signalman at Whitehead station. Others she remembers working at the station in Whitehead included porters and clerical workers who dealt with the delivery of freight and parcels.

10. Church

For the majority of those interviewed church was a major part of their childhood. There are places of worship of a number of different denominations in and around each of the three settlements. These were generally within easy, or relatively easy, reach of the attendees and most people walked or cycled to church, while a few would have travelled by car. Interestingly, several of the Toome interviewees indicated that they remembered going to church by pony and trap or at least witnessing others do so. For example, George McCann went with his family to church at Cargin by pony and trap. Roisin McLernon travelled to church on a Sunday by pony and trap, but walked on other days, taking a short cut across the fields. When asked why this was so, she explained that the pony and trap was only used on a Sunday because that was when there were men to drive it. George Laverty attended the chapel at Ballyscullion and remembers that there were facilities at it for tying up horses. As a boy of six or seven in the early 1930s, Cahal Boyd remembered that there were quite a few jaunting cars that could have carried four or five worshippers. One particular man

Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Moneyglass

would have brought a load from Crosskeys to Moneyglass. Later buses were put on to bring people to the Catholic churches around Toome.

Church was attended nearly every Sunday and there were often other church-related activities during the week. Brian McKenna noted that the Catholic church in Whitehead was packed during the holiday season and reasonably full during the rest of year. Derek Lorimer recalled the road to Doagh 'black with people' returning from Kilbride Presbyterian Church. Those from Protestant backgrounds usually attended Sunday school before church. Involved in church life from a very early age, Wallace Fenton taught in the Sunday school in Kilbride parish church. One of the highlights of the year was the Sunday school outing. Annie Hill recalls outings to Larne and on occasion a picnic near Ballynure. There were around 20 children on these outings and they played games such as rounders. She remembers enjoying what she called a '*donkey's lug*' – a long roll or scone with cream and icing. Trevor Monteith remembers Sunday school outings to Brown's Bay on Islandmagee and Portrush. Growing up in Belfast, Wilma Shaw remembers that her Sunday school excursion from Newington Presbyterian Church was to Whitehead:

> *When you arrived in Whitehead in those days and got off the train the flowers were everywhere, absolutely beautiful. We thought it was great because we didn't have a garden at home.*

Though there was no Sunday school for Catholics, Cahal Boyd and the Gribbin brothers remembered that as children they went to confession once a month. Brian McCann recalls going to church every morning during Lent and then going on to school afterwards. Brian related that there was a Mass rock on his family's farm where services were held before Cargin church was built. He remembers that older people walking past it would have lifted their hat or blessed themselves. Cahal Boyd recalled that on 29 June each year they walked from Moneyglass to Creggan – '*that was some walk!*' as he later reflected.

Isabell Cooper

For many people there was a very strict routine to Sunday. Isabell Cooper recalls the Sundays of her childhood:

> *Sunday was a very strict day. … You got up on Sunday morning and got ready for Sunday school. You were there for 10 o'clock. You had to know your lessons for Sunday*

school – the teachers in the Sunday school were strict with you. … You came out of that and went down into the church – you had to be in the church for starting at 12 and you were in there until after 1, usually nearly the quarter past. And then you came home and changed your clothes … and you got your dinner – it was Sunday broth. And then after that you went to the mission hall for 3 o'clock for the afternoon Sunday school, and that was in for another hour. And then you came home. If my father had cattle grazing … away on the Rashee Road you had to walk away over there to bring maybe a couple of cows home to get milked and take them back again before you went to the evening church at 7. That was your Sunday. And if you weren't going to your own church you went to the mission hall for half seven.

For others Sunday might not have been so regimented, but it was a day to be treated differently from the rest of the week and in particular it was a day of rest from regular work.

The clergy

The relationship between the clergy and their flocks was generally good. The Catholic clergy around Toome were remembered for being regular in their visiting and enjoying a good relationship with the local farming community. Brian McCann recalls the time that he was asked by Father Sloan to go round the sick of Cargin parish and let them know that he would not be visiting them that day because his father had died. Mickey Gribbin remembers that after a pig was killed he would be sent to the priest with its liver as a gift. Other interviewees had their own memories of the ministers of their childhood. Frankie Dale describes the Rev. Robert Elliott of Duneane Presbyterian Church as a '*great man*'. At that time the minister of Duneane had his own manse farm where he kept pigs and chickens. The local farmers helped him with ploughing and the harvest. Mary Moore calls the Rev. John Armstrong of Kilbride Presbyterian Church '*a nice big man*'. In Whitehead Presbyterian Church, Sheila Herdman remembers that the Rev. William Stewart would interrupt his sermons to warn the boys in the gallery to be quiet.

Though his ministry in Kilbride Church of Ireland ended over sixty years ago, the Rev. John Redmond is still fondly remembered by many older people in and around Doagh and not just by the members of his own congregation. According to Wallace Fenton, on whom he was a strong influence, he was '*a great old warrior*'. He had been a chaplain in the army in the First World War and afterwards rector of Ballymacarrett in east Belfast. While in Ballymacarrett he had organised a mission which left a deep impression on people. Among those who attended were men who had stolen items from the shipyard; he arranged for these to be returned. However, his health had broken down and so he was moved to Kilbride, a smaller rural parish, beginning his ministry there on 5 January 1930. At this time he was a Curate in Charge, but five years later on 30 April 1935 he was instituted rector of Kilbride.


Rev. John Redmond

Kilbride was a poor parish when Redmond arrived, in need of much work and finance. The previous rector, the Rev. Parker Erskine Major, was a wealthy man who gave much to the church out of his own funds. Redmond, on the other hand, had to regularly appeal for money. In making an appeal, he would say, 'I don't want pennies, I want silver', as a result of which he was known affectionately as 'Silver John'. Wallace remembers that Redmond was active in having new houses built in Doagh in the 1930s:

When he came to the parish the housing situation in the area was apparently pretty grim and very few people would have had sufficient room in their homes to facilitate the needs of their large families. And he thought it was necessary for the church and himself to get involved in building houses. So he acquired a portion of land on the Burn Road in Doagh now known as Edenmore Terrace and he built six or eight houses there and he put bathrooms in the houses and that was almost unknown in this district. Most people had a bath out in the shed … Edenmore was one of the first places in Doagh to have bathrooms and Mr Redmond was responsible for that and it was then called the Church Houses.


Wallace Fenton

'*Out-looking in his ministry*', Redmond also provided facilities in Cogry where people were in need of practical help and was highly thought of there as well. He also promoted social and sporting activities which were additionally a means of raising money. There was an annual cycle competition in May/June, though it was nearly always a wet day giving rise to a local saying: '*It's Redmond's sports* [day], *it's bound to be raining*'.

Mr Redmond never owned a car, but walked throughout his

parish, often accompanied by his Great Dane. Every Tuesday morning he walked to Kilbride School for Religious Instruction with the Church of Ireland pupils. He left his dog with Isabell Cooper's mother while he went into the school. She was terrified of the dog, but she did not like to refuse him as he was a well-liked man – '*everybody's friend*'. He was only in the school for half an hour or so, and during this time Isabell's mother would feed the dog her bread to keep him settled. Mrs Redmond was English and much younger than her husband. Wilma McVittie describes her as '*lady-like … a lovely woman*'. Isabell Cooper recalls that '*she was a very good woman with young ones*' and took an active part in the running of the Brownies and Guides in Kilbride. Mr Redmond's farewell service in Kilbride was held on 30 September 1951.

Moneyglass church bell 1925

Moneyglass chapel

Maureen McMeel

One of the most important building projects in the Toome area in the early twentieth century was the construction of a new Catholic church at Moneyglass in the 1920s. The foundation stone for the new church was laid on New Years' Day 1920 and five years later, on 16 August 1925, the church was dedicated and opened by Dr McRory, the bishop of Down and Connor. As a young boy John Cushinan remembers observing the steeple rising higher and higher as it neared completion. A number of those interviewed from Toome had family members who worked on the church's construction, including Cahal Boyd's father. Another was Maureen McMeel's father-in-law. James McMeel was a stonemason from County Monaghan who had moved to Belfast to practice his trade, working on such projects as the construction of Clonard monastery. Maureen's husband Owen had been born during the family's time in Belfast. Maureen's father-in-law then found work on the building of Moneyglass chapel which brought him to this area (as it brought others as well). He made Toomebridge his home and around 1932 bought Rock Cottage where his descendants continue to live.

11. The Second World War

At 11.15 on the morning of 3 September 1939 Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, announced over the radio that Britain was at war with Germany. Robert McConnell remembered returning home from Sunday school to Fourmileburn to hear that the announcement had been made. Sheila Herdman had also been at Sunday school in Whitehead that morning. She had taken Dorothy Jackson with her. Dorothy was the daughter of Jean Jackson, nee Workman, who had once been a neighbour of theirs in Whitehead, but who had emigrated to Canada. Jean was making a return visit to Whitehead and had brought her daughter with her. On their return from Sunday school Sheila and Dorothy found their mothers crying. They had just heard the news on the radio and were fearful that the Jacksons would not be able to return to Canada. Thankfully they were able to make it back.

William Andrew Turkington

Of all of those interviewed, only one had been on active service – William Andrew Turkington who had been born in Cogry Square in 1919. He joined the RAF not long after the war began, serving as a Ground Gunner with his role to defend airfields from enemy attack. The longest he was stationed anywhere in England was in Lincolnshire. He remembers trying to combat the threat of the Doodlebugs, the challenge being to bring down something travelling at 400mph: '*There's only one good thing about them – they couldnae fire back at you.*' Later he was transferred to the south of England. During his time in England he made many good friends, some of whom would take him home to meet their families. Later in the war he was sent abroad, serving in India, Burma and Java (where he was when the war ended). He lost many friends in the war, but for him personally he acknowledges, 'I had a great war.' William Andrew left the RAF after the war, though he regrets not staying on, especially not joining his regiment for its visit to Japan. He also regrets not accepting an offer to go on a driving course when he was in the RAF.

William Andrew's brother-in-law was Sergeant William Bell of Doagh. He was a wireless operator/air gunner in 44 Squadron of the RAF. He was killed on the night of 6 September 1940 when his bomber was shot down returning from an operation over Germany. His remains were later interred in the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Germany.

Sergeant William Bell (in the middle)

Although, with the exception of William Andrew Turkington, those interviewed did not experience the war at first hand, that did not mean that it did not have major repercussions for their lives. For Roisin McLernon the war changed the course of her life. After leaving boarding school she worked as a teacher in Haywards Heath in the south of England for a year. She was then offered a place at a teacher training college in Cardiff, but following the outbreak of war and start of the air raids she returned home. However, for those who were children through the war or at least when it began there was a sense of excitement. As Robert McConnell recalled, '*The war years were to us good crack.*'

There was no conscription in Northern Ireland though at times there were concerns that it would be introduced. Isabell Cooper feared that her brother would be conscripted and thought that her father could hide him in the hayshed if he was. Many local men served in the Home Guard, including two of Wallace Fenton's brothers. Greta Milliken's husband Shaw was in the Islandmagee branch of the Home Guard.

The Belfast Blitz

Memories of the Belfast Blitz remain strong among those interviewees old enough to understand what was going on. There were two major air raids in Belfast in the spring of 1941, the first on Easter Tuesday night in April and the second on the first Sunday of May. In all, over 1,100 people were killed and tens of thousands lost their homes. Wilma McVittie's father was in Belfast the day after one of the air raids and saw the bodies piled up. Sheila Herdman's uncle, William Davison, a timber merchant who lived on the Lansdowne Road in Belfast, had a fortunate escape when shrapnel came through one of his windows into an airing cupboard. Cahal Boyd was at a ceilidh in the Ulster Hall on Easter Tuesday evening. He and his companions found it impossible to leave Belfast that night, but found shelter in St Mary's Hall. The next morning the blue car they had travelled in was completely grey with dust. Every road they tried to travel home on was blocked, but eventually they made it back to Toome via Larne.

Both Doagh and Whitehead were close enough to Belfast for their residents to have been aware of what was going on. Eithne McKendry remembers her mother bringing her and her siblings down to a cupboard under the stairs for safety during the air raids, while Sarah McTrustry recalls hiding in the coal hole. Isabell Cooper recollects her family going up to the back of a field and her father taking with him the large trunk in which he kept important documents. Trevor Monteith remembers that during the night his father took him up to the 'Bla Hole': '*I can clearly remember sitting up there and just watching the dockland ablaze*'. Brian McKenna's father told him that he had seen Belfast on fire from the White Rocks at Whitehead. Paddy O'Donnell remembered that some of the older boys went to the top of Muldersleigh Hill, where Whitehead Golf Course is now, and watched the bombs exploding during the Blitz. In Doagh, James McAdam remembers the skies lit up during the air raids. Mary Moore still has vivid memories of the air raids: '*It was rough now, you could have been ris' out of your bed whiles*'. Those who lived through the Blitz never forgot the experience. Leith Burgess' mother, who had been in Belfast during the Blitz, made sure that the fire in their home was put out every night before going to bed.

Bombs over Doagh

One particular incident during the Blitz had a direct impact on Doagh. During one of the air raids, a German warplane dropped four bombs on the townland of Holestone, two of them landing on the Lorimers' farm. Derek was just eight years old, but still has clear memories of the night in question:

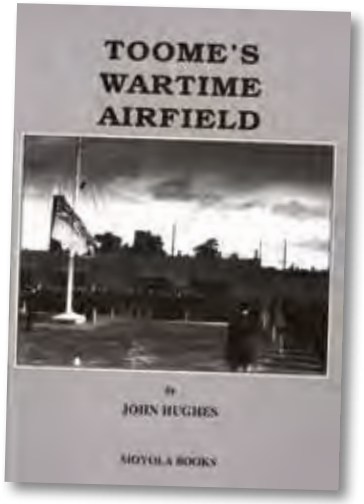
I remember wakening up in below the table with the Labrador dog and it was sitting beside me and was terrified. I remember Daddy went outside and came back in and he said the yard's full of stones or coals – it was that dark he didn't know what it was. It wasn't to the next morning that we realised what had happened. … We knew it was bombs, but we didn't know they were so near. … There wasn't so much damage done to the dwelling house, it was mostly to the outhouses – stones coming down and breaking slates. ... They said the shock went out over us. There were houses about a mile away and their ceilings came down with the shock. … There was a stone came down through the barn loft and landed beside a horse – I would have said the stone was a hundredweight – that horse didn't eat for two days.

Derek Lorimer

The bombs had landed in fields no more than 150 yards from their home. Two more bombs came down in Holestone Park, but did not cause the same damage. In one of the lodges to Holestone House a Mrs Brown had just got out of bed when a hundredweight stone from one of the craters came through the roof and landed in the bed where she had been sleeping. The day after the air raid a piece of shrapnel was found beside a hen and a dozen newly-hatched chicks in one of the Lorimers' outhouses. One of the bombs on the Lorimers' farm landed on rocky ground, the other on gravel. Derek recalls his father commenting that '*Sightseers coming to see the holes did far more damage to the crops than the actual bombs did.*' Both craters were filled in, but a much commented feature of one of them was that after it was filled in nothing grew on it for five years.

Toome aerodrome

In Toome the main point of interest during the war was the aerodrome at The Creagh which was opened by the RAF in 1943, and soon afterwards taken over by the United States Army Air Force (USAAF). In describing the historical and geographical contexts of his earliest years, Seamus Heaney once said, 'It is county Derry in the early 1940s. The American bombers groan towards the aerodrome at Toomebridge, the American troops manoeuvre in the fields along the road'. For many local people there was great excitement at seeing the different types of planes and the buzz of activity associated with the airfield. Frankie Dale remembers the building of the airfield at Toome as



one of the major events of his childhood. He recalls that it occurred '*just as I was started to look around me*', adding, '*the sky was full of aeroplanes, this was great … I used to go down to the aerodrome and see them taking off and landing – this was magic. At the same time, he now reflects on his naiveté at the fate of many of the aircrews, commenting 'I didn't realise a lot of those young boys would never come back.*' The Gribbin brothers agreed that the airfield was a '*big, big affair*'. Those who found work in it were well paid – maybe £3 a week which was considerably more than most other working men received. Gerry McCann remembers the soldiers stationed there coming into his family's shop in Toome. He also remembers that a party was hosted at the aerodrome for them. Cahal Boyd remembered going by boat to see a crashed aircraft on Church Island and finding it hanging on a tree. George Laverty also recalls the crashed aircraft on Church Island.

Rationing

One of the main ways in which the effects of the war were felt locally was through the introduction of rationing. Various commodities were rationed from foodstuffs – including milk, butter, eggs, sugar, tea, and sweets – to clothes and petrol. However, many of those interviewed acknowledged that because they lived in or near the countryside rationing did not affect them as much as if they had lived in the larger towns and cities. Gerry McCann noted that shopkeepers would have helped each other out with supplies. Mary Ann Higgins recalls that her family was able to produce their own milk and butter, but as a result of rationing they would have been short of tea and sugar. Similarly, Roisin McLernon believed that rationing did not really affect them as they lived on a farm, but the one thing that they noticed being short of was sugar. On the other hand, growing up in County Fermanagh, Maureen McMeel was aware of rationing, but as they lived near the border it did not affect them as much and they never wanted for sugar. To alleviate the shortage of eggs, Eithne McKendry's parents kept hens at the bottom of their garden in Donegall Avenue, Whitehead. As children, many of those interviewed especially remembered the sweet rationing. John Cushinan recalls one local solution to the shortage of pork during the war. A pig was being carried in a trailer when its owner stopped to have a drink in McKeever's pub. When the owner came out, '*the pig was gone! And there was plenty of bacon around Moneynick for a wheen of days!*'

Evacuees and refugees

As a result of the war, many children and indeed entire families from Belfast were either evacuated from the city or left for their own safety in the aftermath of the Blitz. Wilma McVittie remembers that '*the roads were black with people*' leaving Belfast on account of the air raids. Mary Moore's father went into Belfast after the Easter Tuesday air raid and brought out an old aunt and her family who stayed with them until the winter. Leith Burgess' parents were among the thousands of people who simply walked out of Belfast after the Blitz seeking refuge in the surrounding countryside. Edmund O'Donnell remembers evacuees from Belfast being sent to any vacant house around Toome and that on one night 200 evacuees were put up in Gortgill School, with straw thrown on the floor for them. Mary Ann Higgins remembers the evacuees coming to live near them:

> *'There were a lot of them around. We thought it was great fun to get these new Belfast people. Oh, they were interested in the farm you see, and out to get the cows and to see the milk. Some of them then asked which one gave the buttermilk! They were quite good fun.'*

In looking back on the evacuees, Frankie Dale comments: '*They were different. The women fought – the countrywomen didn't fight. … They were always ready for battle*'.

Soldiers

Detachments of soldiers from a number of armies – British, American and Belgian – were a regular sight during the war. P. J. O'Donnell pointed out that soldiers were billeted in the Royal and Royal George Hotels in Whitehead, while many of the private houses took in officers as lodgers. There were various opportunities for soldiers and locals to mix. P. J. remembers the Belgian soldiers at Ballycarry who would visit Whitehead. He describes them as '*lovely people*'. A strong friendship developed with one particular soldier who would call with P. J.'s father and mother. He returned to Whitehead after the war and P. J. drove him up to Derry to see the walls. Dr John Wilson's mother-in-law, Mrs McDowell, ran a fish and chip shop in Whitehead which was very popular with the troops. He remembers being told that Belgian soldiers would arrive in their lorries to eat there. The Rinkha, near Whitehead, was also popular with soldiers.

Derek Lorimer recalls some of the soldiers based at Ballyhamage coming up to their farm to help with gathering potatoes. For the soldiers it was a welcome opportunity to get out and about. Derek remembers three of them in particular – Ken Silvester from Liverpool, Bob Corry from Aberdeen, and Private Hobday from Manchester who

was known as 'Flash' as he was never that quick at doing anything. James McAdam also remembers the soldiers at Ballyhamage and a shooting range used by them at the Moiley Bridge; a red flag would be flown from the bridge to alert people to when shooting practice was taking place.

Ballyhamage House

Wilma McVittie remembered talking to the overseas troops along the road and that they were '*nice fellows*'. One of Brian McKenna's earliest memories of Whitehead was of the American soldiers giving out chewing gum to the children. John Cushinan recalls a very narrow shave with a lorry transporting American soldiers. He had been going along the road in a horse and cart to sow fertiliser when the lorry came up behind him very quickly. This startled the horse which headed for the hedge. The lorry never slowed down and cut off part of the rear end of the cart - '*a near miss*', as he remembers, for if the lorry had hit the axle it would have resulted in serious injury or even death.

12. Leisure and playtime

What in general comes across from the interviews is that the children of yesteryear spent far more time outdoors than youngsters today. In the words of Edmund McLarnon, '*It was an outdoor life when you were young*'. According to Leslie Bell, when he was growing up there was '*No scarcity of fun, no scarcity of things to see and no scarcity of people to play with.*' The leisure activities engaged in by the interviewees varied considerably and depended a great deal on where they lived. Residents of Whitehead, for instance, had many more leisure options than those in Toome and Doagh. The need to help on the farm meant that the children of farmers often had less time for leisure activities than those whose parents worked in other trades and professions. Expense was another factor in determining which leisure activities were possible. As Isabell Cooper recalls, even if she had wanted to play hockey she could not have afforded a hockey stick. Robert McConnell put it simply that young people had no money to go places. An indication of the value of money for one of the interviewees is reflected in a story told by Owen Gribbin. He remembers an occasion when he was given two shillings and half a crown for serving at a Mass for a wedding. As he recalls, '*I thought I was made up for life*'.

Those interviewed indicated that their childhood toys were few in number. '*There was no money for buying toys*', according to George Laverty. Roisin McLernon had a couple of dolls when she was a child: '*I thought I was very rich*'. Derek Lorimer recalls making a go-kart made with pram wheels and a wooden box. He points out that during the war toys were '*virtually unobtainable*'. Brian McKenna recalls the imaginative approach that his father, Arthur, adopted to acquire toys for his children during these years. During the war his father, a dentist, would have treated American soldiers stationed at Kilroot. These troops made toys and rather than charge them for dental treatment, Arthur accepted these from the soldiers. Brian remembers receiving such gifts as a scooter, rocking horse, wheelbarrow, and steam engine – all made of wood as metal was almost impossible to obtain because of the war.

Home entertainment in the evenings was simple, but enjoyable. Music featured strongly. George Laverty pointed out that his father was a good singer, while they also had a gramophone in their home and would have listened to it in the evenings. Wilma McVittie's father played the fiddle and '*could play it rightly*'. Bessie Quinn's grandfather taught the fiddle and she recalls that 'the house was always full of music'. Mary Ann Higgins remembers a '*wee bit of ceilidhing*' and that their neighbour

Painting of Whitehead in the early 1900s

Big Jamie McErlane came in nearly every night for a good chat.

Holidays were comparatively rare occurrences and for many of those interviewed did not feature at all in their childhoods. However, visits to grandparents and other family members did take place. John Cushinan had a sister who married a man from The Moy on the Tyrone-Armagh border whom he visited, riding there and back in a day on his bicycle – around 80 miles. From the age of 8, Leslie Bell cycled to his maternal grandfather's farm at Mullaghboy, Bellaghy, a distance of some 8 miles. Mary Ann Higgins also remembers staying on her grandparents' farm near Cloughmills and her mother coming to collect them in a pony and trap.

Swimming

Trevor Monteith looks back fondly on growing up in Whitehead: '*I had a very happy childhood … The town was buzzing for young people. … I got up in the morning and my mother hardly saw me till I came back in again at teatime.*' He had no watch, but every day at around 5.20pm the Ardrossan ferry passed Whitehead which indicated that it was time to go home for his tea. The County Antrim Yacht Club in Whitehead was one of the main focal points for leisure. Another was the outdoor swimming pond or pool which was opened in 1931. '*We all learned to swim in the pool … everybody went to the swimming pool*', remembers P. J. O'Donnell. It was, however, renowned for the coldness of the water. '*It was freezing*', recollects Eithne McKendry, though, as Trevor Monteith explained, there was a way around this:

> *Any time we went in for a swim in the pool we never went straight into the pool – you … went up on to the diving boards and dived into the sea outside, swam there for five minutes or so and then came in … the pool always seemed a lot warmer than the Belfast Lough! It was terrific.*

Brian McKenna recalls the popularity of the swimming pool, noting that the entrance fee was six old pence, while a season ticket cost 10 shillings. Frankie Dale also enjoyed swimming, though for him it was in Lough Neagh. '*The lough was beautiful at that time*', he recalls. The man who taught him to swim was David Bailie, later to serve as a Presbyterian minister in India and Bangor, whom Frankie describes as '*a great gentleman*'.

Sport

Sport provided a relatively straightforward means of enjoyment. As Frankie Dale remembers, '*heard a ball bouncing, away you went*'. The simplicity of the sporting equipment used was recalled by Matt Quinn:

> *We were mad about football. Many's the time we would have gathered up in some field along here, a lot of us. … What we used to do was to get a bundle of cloth and tie it all up together and play football with it – we hadn't a ball, but anyhow enjoyed it.*

Cahal Boyd and the Gribbin brothers remembered playing football using a pig's bladder as a ball. The bladder was a by-product of slaughtering and cleaning out a pig. As Mickey Gribbin explains:

> *In the process of taking the inside out there was a thing called a bladder and the bladder was precious because you could blow up the bladder with a straw … and that was the football.*

For those who grew up in the countryside there was no shortage of open space in which to play. Tom Andrew remembers using a field near their home as a sports ground throughout the year:

> *There's a field just out beyond our garden there and how my father ever made any use of it … in the summer time we played cricket in it and in the autumn and winter we played football, and at certain times of the year … we tramped around there on the bikes – the nearest we got to cross-country motorcycling. … At this time of the year* [June] *every night the local guys appeared from far and near and played cricket. The 5-gallon drum was the wicket … the guys were tough nuts, there were no gloves or pads … you stood there and faced the music … the only thing that was real about our cricket was the ball, it was the real thing alright and if you got whacked with it you knew all about it.*


Tom Andrew

While much sporting activity simply took the form of games among friends, some of those interviewed did play at a more formal level. Some of the Gribbins, for instance, played Gaelic football at county level, while Matt Quinn played for his local team, Cargin. William Andrew Turkington played association football for several teams around Ballyclare and Cogry, winning a number of medals. James McAdam started playing hockey when he was 16 and continued to play until he was 60, turning out for Parkview, the local club in Doagh, and Antrim.

James McAdam

Cinema

To provide entertainment for the workers at Cogry Mill, a cinema – known as The Picture House – was opened in 1919. This had seating for 400 people and included a stage for concerts. It proved hugely popular, not just with the mill workers, but with people throughout the district. In his interview William Andrew Turkington talked about his memories of the cinema:

> *I mind one day I was going up to my mother's and when I got to the Cogry picture house the big gate was open that let you into the yard and the two doors of the picture house itself were lying open. And I stopped a minute or two and I looked around and there seemed to be nobody about and I said "I'll go in and have a look at what this place is like." Wrecked it was and it was some picture house. There was a stage and in below the stage there were dressings rooms. And McMeekin has his wee box up nearer the roof. And they let it go like that. What I heard about it when I was a lad – it was built as a working men's club … John Duncan was the projectionist. And on a Thursday night that place was packed – I saw them lined to the Cogry corners from Ballyclare and all over the place. 'The Three Horsemen' – that was the name of the film that was on. … Who done the wrecking of that place I could not tell you.*

Florence Mary McDowell, who was a great singer, sang at the '*silent pictures*' in the cinema. William Andrew recalls people thronging to the cinema. He also remembers a number of individuals dressing up in costume and travelling around the countryside promoting the films being shown. Growing up in Ballyeaston, Greta Milliken was aware of the cinema in Cogry as her music teacher, Mrs Moore – a sister of Mrs McDowell – who was blind, played the organ in it. The cinema at Cogry closed in 1932, though it continued to be used for concerts, some of which were organised by Florence Mary McDowell. There was, however, a cinema in Ballyclare which many people from Doagh visited.

The picture house in Whitehead opened on Monday, 28 June 1937. The main film shown was *Luck of the Irish* and its star, Richard Hayward, made a personal appearance. Sheila Herdman's father had complimentary tickets for the opening night of the cinema as he knew the man who had built it. A film viewing cost six old pence. '*The cinema was terrific*', recalls Trevor Monteith, who remembers in particular *Scott of the Antarctic*, *Ben Hur*, and endless John Wayne films. He believes that not only was the cinema a big attraction, it was also a focal point for Whitehead. The cinema closed in the 1960s and, after a series of uses, was opened as the town's community centre in 1981.

Other forms of entertainment

Around Doagh, Holestone Young Farmers' Club was very popular. Billy Robson joined this club when he was 12 or 13. He describes it as '*a tremendous organisation*'. Billy also drew attention to an earlier organisation with similar aims that was formed in Kilbride with Mr Spence, the teacher, instrumental in its creation. Mary Moore remembers taking part in the stock-judging competitions, evaluating hens and cattle. Tom Andrew also belonged to this club and he recalls the public-speaking competitions and the amateur dramatics.

Dances and ceilidhs were also popular. Sarah McTrustry remembered the dance hall in Doagh which she went to every Saturday night. On one night she could not get in because she had no money and so some young men from Antrim pulled her in through the window. For anyone living near Whitehead, or indeed from much further afield, the Rinkha was *the* place to go on a Saturday night. It was here that Wilma Shaw met her husband. Mary Ann Higgins attended ceilidhs in Toome and Moneyglass. She walked to them unless offered a '*lift on the bars of a man's bike if you were lucky*'. Matt Quinn went to ceilidhs in the evenings, some of which were in the open air, such as at Creggan where a wooden platform would be erected on the grass. Maureen McMeel met her husband Owen at a ceilidh.

William Andrew Turkington remembers the singers in Cogry when he was young. Mr Spence, the principal of Kilbride school, would stop his car to listen to them: '*He reckoned there were more tenors in Cogry than in any other village in Northern Ireland. They were good, boy, there's no doubt about it.*' The singers would sing until the early hours of the morning.

Cahal Boyd remembered a man named Quigley coming from Portgleone to Moneyglass to teach Irish dancing in an old World War I army hut beside the chapel. The same man

would have taken them to a Feis at Newbridge. Cahal was also involved in a number of cultural activities focused on Moneyglass:

> *When I was 18 we started the first Moneyglass drama club. Then we started Toome Easter festival in Toome fair. Then we bought and fixed Moneyglass community centre. And then we went on to Moneyglass concert troupe. And the Moneyglass concert troupe travelled Ireland, England, Scotland and America and made a lot of friends.*

George Laverty was also involved in the drama group at Moneyglass, starting when he was 16. He points out that one of the leading figures in it was a Ballycastle tailor called Richard Mooney whose claim to fame was that he had made a suit for Roger Casement.

Tourism in Whitehead

In the middle decades of the twentieth century there was a flourishing tourism industry in Whitehead. It had long been seen as an attractive place for visitors, but in the 1930s tourism began to take off and in the post-war years it was, according to P. J. O'Donnell, '*really booming*'. The Urban District Council began to issue an official guide that emphasised on its front cover that Whitehead was 'The Popular Northern Irish Health and Holiday Resort' and included information about the various facilities that were available and activities that visitors could enjoy. In the summer Whitehead was popular with day-trippers who would arrive by train. The excursion platform was built to cater for the arrival of groups such as Sunday school outings.


Whitehead
Official Guide.

THE TOWN CLERK, WHITEHEAD.

The major figure in Whitehead's tourist industry was W. T. Devenny who established Devenny's Irish Tours. Brian McKenna recollects what this meant for Whitehead:

> *Devenny's Irish Tours started up and brought people from the north of England … They came over to Larne in the boat, were picked up in a bus – there were up to ten buses every week in the summertime. They stayed for a week, about £15 full board – travelling and everything. All working class people. They were fed well, looked after well, and they really enjoyed themselves. They'd have gone in the buses during the day around the north of Ireland – Giant's Causeway, Belfast, even went on the train to Dublin. A dance every night in the hotel. I remember going to sleep with the noise of the 'okey, okey pokey' every night. … They came on a Saturday and went back on a Friday.*

Brian remembers that the police would not allow people to park near the hotels to keep the spaces free for buses. John Milliken recalls that because of the high number of visitors Whitehead '*absolutely buzzed in the summer time*'. The outbreak of the Troubles, coupled with the advent of cheaper foreign holidays, effectively put an end to Whitehead's tourist industry and, as P. J. O'Donnell points out, there are now no hotels in the town.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13. Sickness and health

Most of those interviewed grew up in the era before the National Health Service. They were also raised at a time when a visit to the doctor's surgery often meant a visit to his home. Seventy years ago some diseases that are no longer commonplace were considered a serious threat to wellbeing and even life. Tuberculosis, or TB, was regarded with particular concern. One of Sheila Herdman's earliest memories of Whitehead was going into the back garden of her King's Road home and seeing a bonfire in the next door garden. She later found out that one of her neighbours had died of TB and his bedclothes were being burned. Diphtheria also claimed many lives. The Gribbin brothers lost a five-year-old sister to it, while it also claimed the life of one of Annie Hill's brothers at the age of seven.

On the other hand, there are illnesses that are now not viewed so gravely which were treated much more seriously in the past. For example, one of the interviewees had scarlet fever as a child and spent several weeks in hospital in Antrim. Another missed most of an autumn term with tonsillitis and then his mother kept him off school for the rest of the academic year to allow him to make a full recovery. Occasionally a visit to a hospital was required. Matt Quinn was in Antrim hospital having cartilage removed from his knee on the day of the Nutts Corner air crash, 5 January 1953. As a result of this disaster, three of the four crew members and 24 of the 31 passengers were killed.

Dr John Wilson

One of those interviewed in Whitehead had been a medical practitioner. Dr John Wilson moved to Whitehead in the late 1950s and has lived in the same house in Cable Road for over fifty years. The son of a caulker, he was born in Parkmount Street in Belfast and moved to Bangor at six months old. When he was a year old he moved to a small farm at Portadown that had been left to his mother, living there until he went to Queen's University to study medicine. After graduating from Queen's, he spent his house officer year at the Moyle Hospital in Larne, followed by another year in the children's hospital in Belfast. An opportunity arose for him to spend a year in Liverpool before going on to the famous children's hospital in Great Ormond Street in London.

Dr John Wilson

However, one day, as he was finishing up in Belfast, he was visited by Dr Joseph Dundee and Dr William Calwell. They wanted to combine their practices in Whitehead and wanted John to join them in the new practice. He had been recommended to them by Hugh Wilson, a surgeon in the Moyle Hospital. John still remembers his first encounter with these doctors:

> *They said, "Why are you going to England?" I said, "I am going to England because I have a lot of knowledge, but I have no practical ability by my hands." … They both laughed and they both said to me, "Give us six months in general practice and we will teach you more practical ability than you'll ever learn in England in the next seven or eight years!"*

They proposed taking him on as an assistant on a salary of £750. He told them he would need a car, but they instructed him to buy his own car and he would receive an allowance towards his petrol.

John began work in Whitehead on 10 February 1958 and has never regretted his move there. In 1959 he became a partner with Drs Dundee and Calwell, originally under a one-seventh partnership arrangement, eventually becoming an equal partner. He acknowledges that in the late 1950s it was very difficult to go into general practice. In 1958, for example, only two people in Northern Ireland got into general practice. The three doctors covered an area encompassing Whitehead, Ballycarry, Islandmagee, Magheramourne, Glynn and Eden. They also had about 30 patients in Larne. The practice started with 5,800 patients between the three doctors, but within two years this had risen to 7,000. A fourth doctor, Dr Ronnie Esler from Larne, would later join the practice.

In the early days of the practice there were several surgeries in Whitehead. Dr Dundee, for instance, continued to operate a surgery from his home on the Promenade. John also had his own surgery in his home in Cable Road to deal with patients at weekends where he could be assisted by his wife who was a trained sister at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. At one point home calls were transferred through to his house and his wife, who was a native of Whitehead, answered them. One day a call came through and when he answered he was told, "*It's not really you I want to talk to it's your wife.*" The next time he saw this patient he asked why this was so and was told, "*You get better information from her and you can understand it better.*" In 1969 a new health centre was opened on Edward Road.

By the time that John retired in 1996, when he had reached the age of 65, he had witnessed many changes in the medical profession. For example, when John started out in general practice home deliveries accounted for about 20 per cent of births, though this was phased out over the next decade. He feels that doctors used to have more time with each patient. He emphasised the importance of knowing each family's medical history as this assisted with the diagnosis of particular health issues. According to John, '*You were looking after the patient as a member of a family, and that, to me, meant you looked after the family in totum.*'

Dentist

Listening to the interviewees it would seem that a visit to a dentist was as dreaded an experience seventy years ago as it is now. There were, however, fewer opportunities to visit a dentist and basic dental treatment was often carried out by the local doctor. Mary Ann Higgins laughs now when she thinks back to her early dental experiences:

> *Dr McCaughey would have pulled the teeth for you … pulled them many a time. … I remember going there until I got two or three out and then he said, "Oh, you should go to the dentist, they might fill that for you". After that we started going to the dentist.*

Cahal Boyd also remembered having his teeth pulled by the local doctor and noted that he was 15 or 16 when he went to a dentist for the first time. Sheila Herdman recalls that dental services in Whitehead in her early childhood were provided by Dr Barney Dickson who had studied both medicine and dentistry. Sheila still vividly remembers one particular dental experience:

> *When I was seven years of age, for some reason or another, all the enamel came off my first teeth. And I was laid out in King's Road on our dining room table. Dr Martin gave me the anaesthetic and Dr Dickson pulled out the teeth and I woke up in the front room in King's Road minus seven teeth.*

Brian McKenna's father Arthur qualified as a dentist in Belfast and came to Whitehead to set up a practice in the mid 1930s People would have come to his father's dental practice from Islandmagee, Ballycarry and round to Carrickfergus. When he set up his practice in Whitehead Arthur worked two days a week in Carrickfergus – this went on for about 20 years – because Whitehead's population was then much smaller. Sunday morning could be busy for him with holidaymakers who had broken or lost their dentures the night before or were suffering with toothache turning up at his door.

14. Epilogue

Learning from the past – looking to the future

The book has been almost totally based on people's recollections of past times. Because of this it may not be factually accurate in some instances. However, the information gathered does paint a vivid and heartfelt picture of less tangible things like feelings, perceptions and emotions and how these have helped form the recollections of their youth.

Since the project began there has been a marked interest shown by a significant number of people who have stated that they are willing to talk to us and have their memories recorded for posterity. There has also been a reaction from many of those whom we did interview expressing that there were many things they had forgotten to tell us and so would be willing to be interviewed again.

We have also learned much from the wide-ranging questions we asked each interviewee and in some cases wished to return to them to further explore some of the issues and points they raised. Those whose memories stretch back 70, 80, or even 90 years possess an incredible resource that provides a window on a lost age and a way of understanding more about the lives of our forebears.


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