

Enniskerry Memories

ÚNA WOGAN WITH ANGELA WOGAN O'NEILL

I was born in Enniskerry in 1934. We lived at Church Hill House on Church Hill. My Grandmother Sarah had established a guest house on the premises in earlier years and although she passed away in 1930 and the guest house no longer opened for business we had one final guest who boarded in the house up until the early 1960s. Eleanor Grant Robinson, or Robbo as she was known to us, lived with us during all my childhood and beyond and was really a substitute for the grandmother we didn't have the chance to know. She was a great character, known by everyone in the village and quite eccentric in her ways. She used to tell us she was once engaged to "young Powerscourt" but I'm not sure if this was true or which Powerscourt she meant. Robbo loved fresh flowers and would be delighted when she spotted a funeral arriving in the graveyard nearby. As soon as the ceremony was finished she'd scoot up the road and collected whatever fresh flowers took her fancy and place them in vases around our house.

My grandfather Michael was still alive when I was small child and I remember him well. He used to take me to Prossers to meet Mr Coogan. At night time I used to listen out for callers to the house. Old Mr Dunne would call and I would get up and sit with him and my grandfather watching them play cards and slipping whiskey into their tea. Dick Kavanagh was another of my Grandfather's friends that would call to the house. I loved him because he had a pony and trap which he would bring every Sunday to mass. Also in the house was my father Paddy, my mother Ellen and my two younger brothers. My mother was from Kiltiernan and she and my father married in Glencullen. She died when I was eight years old. When she died my mother's sister Molly (Connolly) and later her daughter Maeve helped my father look after us. It must have been hard for them as they would walk from Kiltiernan several times a week to help him. Really everyone in the village was very good to us but I suppose everyone

knew everyone else at that time. My father worked for Wicklow County Council for many years as the Water rate collector for the village. He looked after the any problems with the water and also did building work around the village.

Most of the children in the village went to Enniskerry school where Mr and Mrs Corcoran and Miss Smithers taught us. Our next door neighbours were the McGrath's on one side and Dick and Mammie Seery on the other. I used to play with Nuala and Noel Seery, Deirdre McGrath, Peggy Deeley and Betty Doyle from the Dublin road. We'd play building huts at the back of the forge where Tom Arnold and Ben Ryder worked. Nan Walsh lived in the house beside the forge and she would lend us a saw or hammer when we needed one. Although Seerys moved to Kilgarron and later to Monastery we'd meet up and go to Knocksink in the summer. We had no interest in going to Bray to the sea as the river in Knocksink was as good and we had great fun making dams across the water. A big attraction was "Little Peggy's" grave which was near the gate off the Beech Walk. We'd pick cones for the fire in the graveyard and sometimes pick snowdrops and bluebells at the Summer Hill Hotel. Another wonderful place to pick flowers was at the Blue Bell Dale through the Powerscourt farm gates and also in Powerscourt we'd collect walnuts and crab apples in the Autumn. We'd really spend a lot of time visiting houses around the village. Up through the Bog Meadow and across the water gaps where Rafferty's house was, to Mammie Seerys or Barney Coogan's mother. We'd go to Mrs Langs past the sand pit. We'd catch baby crows and bring them home to try and make pets out of them. The rule was that we had to be home for dinner at one o'clock and tea at five o'clock. As we had no watches we must have driven people mad asking for the time.

In the village was my aunt Molly's (Tallon) shop where most people bought their groceries. Although her door was open during lunch hour she'd give you a telling off if you entered the shop during that hour. We'd buy our sweets in Mrs Buckley's shop, she'd only allow us a penny worth of sweets per day, and get our milk from Magee's. The Actons ran the post office. I remember many times sitting and chatting to Kit Farrell who used to weed and clear the channel at the footpath edge. He'd very graciously share his "Billycan" of tea with me as we chatted on a warm summer's day. A big event in the village was the procession every year and also the ploughing match with Gymkhana

and sports bands, the Bross and Reed band from Glencullen and the Tug of War.

Other people living in the village were Garda and Mrs Flanagan next to the barracks, the Dundas family, McNultys, Garda McGrath and his family and Nan Wogan on the upper end of Church Hill. Below our house was Joe and Monica Seery, next Nan Cullen's house, and then Mr Griffith who lived next to the courthouse. Tallon's shop was the other side of the courthouse and Prossers, Actons and Buckleys were on the same side of the village. Troy's shop was at the beginning of "Blackberry Row" where Ned and Mrs Doogan, Mr Woodcock and Bill Seery lived in the houses next to the Estate Office at the bottom of Kilgarron Hill. On the Dublin road next to the church was Canon Kennedy's house, after the library; towards the village were the Doyles. The cottages down into the village from the Dublin road had Ben & Mrs Ryder, Bridget Coogan, Parky White and Garda Kennelly. Quigley's shop. Mr Steele's house (I think he was a teacher in the Church of Ireland school), and the priest's house was next to Windsor's shop. Sam Tallon and Miss Cosgrave lived in the Powerscourt Arms Hotel or "Tallon's" as we knew it. Magees lived one side of the Powerscourt school and the other side at the bottom of Church Hill where the Corcorans, then the Wickhams (another Garda), the Deeleys and Mrs Good also lived on that side.

Nowadays going out to Enniskerry makes me very sad as all the people that meant a lot to me are gone. No more John Magee, Mammie and Dick Seery or Dick Kavanagh. Growing up in the village was like being around a large extended family and we spent a lot of time with all these people we knew so well. It was a very happy time in my life, a great place to grow up.

Úna Wogan is a native of Enniskerry studying the genealogy of several local families. This article was written in conjunction with her aunt, Angela Wogan O'Neill.