

THE POYNTZPASS AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

INTRODUCTION

In this unusual time, when Covid 19 prevents the Society from delivering its winter programme of talks, we have advanced publication of this edition of 'Before I forget...' to provide you with the opportunity to read about local history, if not to hear about it.

As it seems unlikely that our normal meetings can resume before autumn, at the earliest, we are working on delivery of talks online, which our members can then view at their leisure. Hopefully restrictions will relax enough by spring to allow outdoor gatherings where we can explore local sites of historic interest.

As usual the content of Volume XVI is based to a large degree on transcriptions of talks given by members to our Society in the recent past. They are the product of much diligent research. Everyone has a story to tell and the article on World War Two includes extracts from the memoirs of local people of life back then. I'm sure there are many, many others whose family-stories would add greatly to this and we would dearly love to hear from them.

We reprint here a fascinating interview with 87-year-old Peter Campbell, about his lifetime working on the Newry Canal. (This interview dates from 1984, when Peter talked to the young members of 'The 'Pass Times' group.)

The tragic outcome of a local ploughing match nearly two centuries ago I hope makes for interesting reading, as does David Griffin's excellent article on Whyte's Estate in Loughbrickland during famine times. The account of the multi-talented local stationmaster/musician, George Harrison White, and his activities in both roles, is the result of scholarly research, as is the history of St Bartholomew's Church Donaghmore. The latter is accompanied by a comprehensive record of headstone inscriptions in the very ancient adjoining cemetery. We are grateful to the small group of our members who spent many days painstakingly recording, checking and attempting to decipher the wording on the very ancient weather-worn stones.

The extracts from the unpublished Diaries of Lady Muriel Close, we have included here, give us a glimpse of the daunting task this young woman faced when she moved into the huge Drumbanagher House at the end of the Victorian era. The evolution and development of Scarvagh House and the rise and fall of the Reilly family also illustrate the difficulties many of the gentry faced at that time.

There are two gems, in more colloquial words from the collection Seamus Murphy has built up over many years, and an intriguing piece on Hazley's Well in Canal Wood.

And then, just for another breath of fresh air, you can enjoy the thrill of an invigorating gallop across the beautiful countryside in the pleasant company of Edwin Bryson, as he celebrates the bi-centenary of the Newry Harriers! Whoa boy!

In a measure of support to local businesses at this time of straightened finances we are repeating the advertisements of the previous issue and publishing them free of charge – please keep up your support of those businesses.

From its beginning, 'Before I forget ...' aimed to make our members' research available to the wider public in a form that was accurate and above all accessible to the ordinary reader. We hope this edition continues that tradition and that in it you will find something to inform, interest and, perhaps occasionally, amuse you during these unprecedented times.

Roy Copeland

(Chairman) 2021