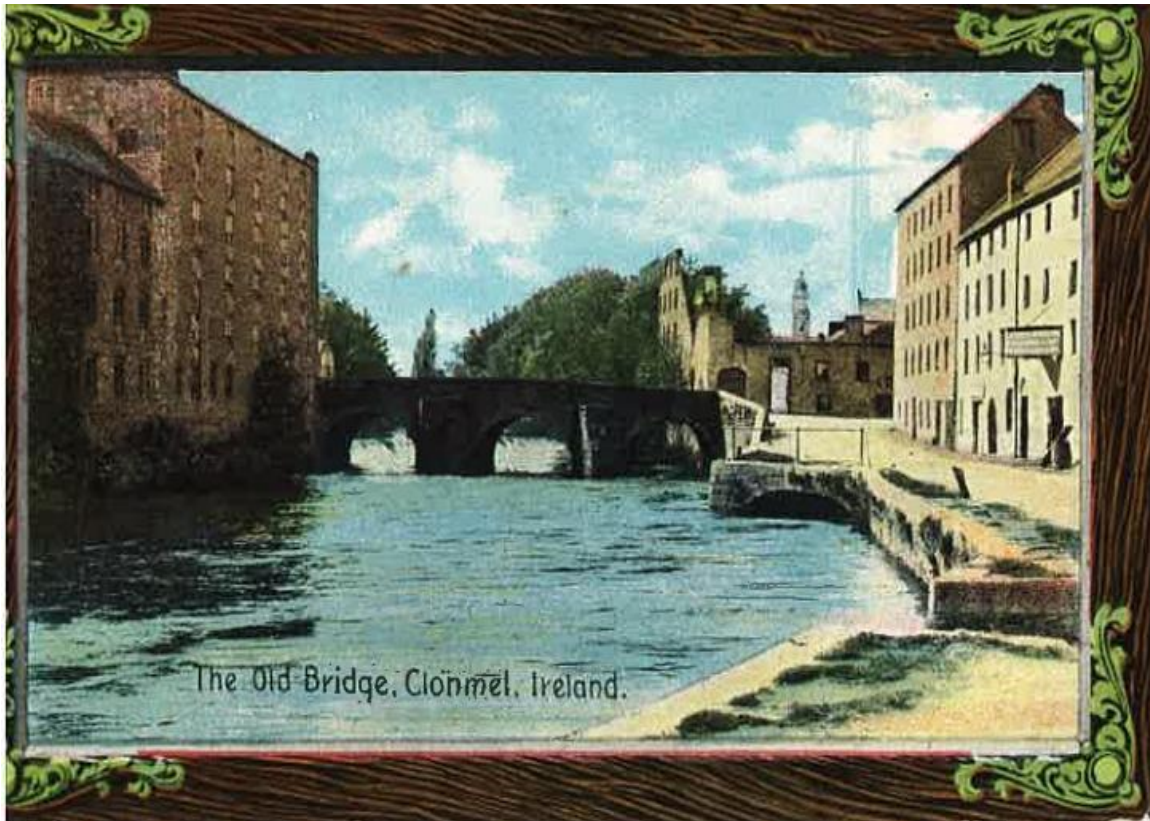


# Reminiscing project “Back in My Day”



## Volume 2



Comhairle Contae Thiobraid Árann  
Tipperary County Council



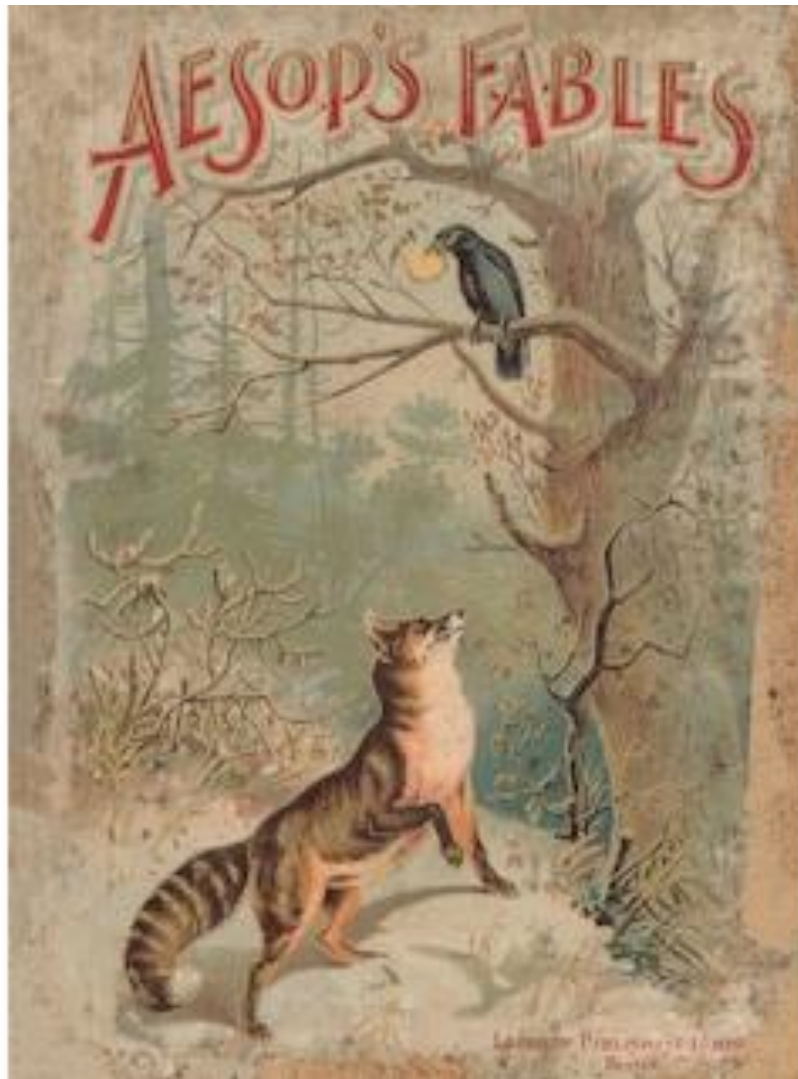
## Chapter 1 School days and growing up

It is nothing short of amazing that after eight decades and in some cases nine, the memories of our schooldays are still so clear and etched on our minds. There was such a wide range of experiences and emotions that displays a vibrant tapestry of memory in which to linger and savour.

Coming to school for the first time, the first major fence of childhood, is still recalled, for the most part not so fondly as it marked a departure from familiarity and loving care. There would be many other such moments in the years ahead. One correspondent lived by the sea in Dublin, only one hundred yards from the school and remembers being led by his mother as a four-year old in 1935 along the iron railings and through the garden with some foreboding. In Clonea Power they walked barefoot to school and if they were lucky they got a pair of wooden clogs which were hard to walk on especially when they put in studs to make them last. The first image in the town schools would be the face of a nun, her face surrounded in white starched cloth with a rosary beads around her waist. Of course, the nuns could never leave the school, they couldn't even cross the few metres of footpath to the post box to post a letter so they gave the post to the pupils. If you were reared in the village of Newcastle, you walked up the village. Having walked a mile, one pupil soon realised that the teacher was not the caring kind. Some used a plastic bag for a school bag. The lady in her nineties who went to school on the Green in Holycross remembers the first day as if it were yesterday. She had a red cap on her head and didn't take it off and the teacher said, "Bain do chaipín díot". She did not understand a word she was saying but somebody grabbed it and pulled it off. Another girl got a lift on her father's bike the first day but after that she walked the two miles from her home into town. Another had her mother walk her to school, leaving at twenty to eight for eight o'clock Mass, a practice that lasted throughout her school life. One remembers the fox and crow of Aesop's Fables on the wall. Another girl was late going to school due to physical disability but her father had the newspaper every day and read it aloud to her and questioned her on it afterwards.

The experience of school after that first day was mixed, in general it seems to have been a harsh regime. One remembers the gardener more than the teacher and the language experience approach - "Tá mac uí Riain ag rómhar sa ghéirdín."- Mr.Ryan is digging the garden. One teacher was a short man who used the rung of a chair liberally. Another shook a boy who couldn't remember anything so hard that his head broke a pane of glass. But always the great teacher would arrive and he would be "the bees' knees". They mention "nice kind teacher", shopkeepers' children got away with everything while mill workers' got away with nothing". At Our Lady's Island in Wexford they walked across the fields to school to a husband and wife team with their bread and butter and jam. Someone had to go to the shop for him at lunchtime to get the newspaper. In one school if you couldn't sing, you went to the garden. Another girl was told she was singing flat and was asked to mime-it affected her greatly. "Some nuns were nice, some were vicious, some didn't want to be there, it was a prestige thing for farmers' daughters". In Clonmel, they were very much into singing, an interest that lasted all of nine decades. She learned Eamon a'Chnoic

as her party piece and remembers the tuning fork. The first song she learned was Boolavogue-she learned many rebel songs and remembers them all. Many people learned poetry off by heart like the Daffodils.



An only girl who went to school at three and a half and hated school. The mother said she was worse than any boy. She got a few days off to pick the spuds "where by one o'clock your back would be broken and the weather was poor". My father would say they have Lar on the back". Lar was laziness. One correspondent compared one teacher to Lucifer but entreated me to mention by name Mary Theresa McCarthy O Donnell-the nicest most wonderful teacher. Another teacher was perceived to think of himself as a gentry man and the correspondent felt that there was a lot of class distinction in schools. In some country schools, first thing in the morning, you would be sent off for sticks to light the fire. One person remembers collecting money for the black babies and when they were transferred up to the boys' school a good mile and a bit away they had to do the primary cert. The principal had a choir for the Mass in Latin. He also had a bata for dishing out punishment. It was very important to be in time for school and as they walked from Ballycurrane outside

Thurles the train would pass Cahill's pump at 9:10. If they didn't meet the train they would have to run the rest of the way. A big crowd would walk to school together but generally came home their separate ways. One lady recalls that they were only allowed to speak to two elderly ladies on the way home. Some school teachers inspired a life-long love of Irish-one lady won a scholarship to Rannafest in the North West Donegal Gaeltacht in primary school and returned to the same bean a' tí for decades and is still a fluent Irish speaker today.

Going to secondary school wasn't much better. Many went to commercial class where they learned book keeping, typing and shorthand at thirteen. At one hundred and twenty words a minute they were "dingers" on the typewriter. Another went to boarding school in Carrick, caught a bug, put into isolation and her mother collected her and brought her home. That was as far as her education went. She worked behind a counter all her life and feels she got more education at home. Another girl was far from impressed when the nun hopped her pastry off the table in home economics class. One girl had the experience of her mother collecting her from a co-ed school and when she arrived she noticed two neighbours' children kissing under the stairs. That finished that school for that girl who ended up in a St. Louis school. Everyone wanted to escape from school. In the convent in Thurles, inside the gate was a big furnace and almost ninety years later the woman recalls how she would put her head under a tap before school and be sent down to the furnace to dry out. In other schools, children got wet going to school and remained drowned all day. A man from Templemore summed it up in one, "enjoyed primary, endured secondary despite the standard issue strap".

Although the subjects taught in most schools were pretty similar, different skills were taught. Children learned to embroider in school which led to a life in the Apostolic Societies embroidering vestments for newly ordained priests. They could also knit, turn the heel of a sock, sew a button hole although there was often more blood on the calico than anything else. Knitting long scarves seemed to be in every school but some school confined themselves to preparing for the scholarship. The explosion in secondary education is shown by the thirty students who enrolled in Boyle in 1966 which in subsequent years had risen to ninety, due to free travel on the buses.

Most still remember the games they played in school although some said there were no games or they didn't feature highly. The occasion one girl remembers was the drill display and the maypole of all colours going around to marching music. The game of rounders was a big thing as was hopscotch, ringa ringa roses, skipping and marbles. "When playing games on the street we never saw nine-we were in bed by eight". Other games were the farmer's got a wife and hide and seek or Sally go-round the garden. For one girl there was a general happiness about school and everyday seemed to be sunny. There was a tradition that you changed into ankle socks and put on summer dresses on Good Friday and they never got a cold. The sandals were freer. In Clonmel they were very into singing and they had a nun who was all into going to feises. There too, games were skipping, jumping in and out with a crowd was better, throwing empty cigarette packages, pitch and toss cowboys and Indians "wait until the goodies arrive" but "I was always the misfortunate Indian". For the boys it was

generally hurling and football and if the principal had a special skill like handball that became a big sport in the school.

Finally, one girl said that they played mainly among themselves. As painters there was always chalk in the house for marking dados so they could make beds and use a flat stone.

She summed up the feelings of most "My young days were happy days".

## **Chapter 2 Family memories and household**

Family life then is almost unrecognizable to that of the present generation. The range of family experience is very wide and many correspondents although domiciled in Tipperary for many years, have family and household memories far from Tipperary throughout the length and breadth of Ireland and they provide a great contrast between city and country, between north and south.

The house by the sea on Carrig Road, Dalkey had no electricity but had a garden and the children seemed to be pulling weeds all the time. His father was a builder but during the war there was no building materials because all the shops were English-corporation houses on one side and private houses on the other. There were ten children in the family. The first four were boys. During the war there was nothing to be done, the father put together a team to cut turf

in Glencullen bog. They cycled from Dalkey to Cabinteely, forty or fifty would cycle and put the bicycles in the police barracks and then trucks would take them to the bog. It lasted for seven years on a council contract. The truck company could get petrol and the turf was delivered to hospitals, schools etc. All the turf went first to the Phoenix Park where there were miles of turf.



He got married at twenty-four to get out of the house! His mother was a genteel lady and her brother had a dairy in Sandycove. Ballyguine Dairy which they owned supplied the milk to the Martello Tower of Joycean fame as did his grandmother. Buck Mulligan refers to her in Ulysses as an old hag but in fact she was nothing of the sort. She wore all black delivering the milk and they were slow to part with the money when she counted up the bill for them at the end of the week. They had twenty-five cows housed in Sandycove and they had a shop selling milk and butter. From the top of the house you could see the sea and as a young boy a mine exploded off Dalkey and sucked out all the windows in the house and along the seafront. It was a fascinating place when there was lightning because unlike on land the lightning danced on the sea.

At school the town girls swapped with a farmer girl for slices of butter and jam all made at home. Grinders were lovely and you could get a slice for a penny if you were lucky enough to have a penny. "She found a shilling once but had to give it up". In another house in Carrick there were nine of them

at home, six boys and one girl. The six boys went into the army in Kickham Barracks in Clonmel. He was in the F.C.A. at fifteen and in the regular army at sixteen. The old army sayings still linger - "without discipline there is no organisation." In another family there were nine-four brothers and four sisters. She was the youngest and they were all jealous of her. Her favourite dinner was pig's head and crubeens but she didn't like bacon and cabbage. The eldest reared the youngest. One lady's father was a butcher and he thought that the best cow was the Whitefaced Fresian but the Aberdeen Angus was the most expensive. With regard to a favourite meal you ate anything that was put in front of you or went without and you accepted that. One lady's father worked in the tannery in Carrick when it opened. The smell was all over the town but it was the place to be. It employed a couple of hundred and they were the first to employ women. If you showed her father a piece of leather, he would run his fingers along it and tell you how good it was. It meant a lot to the town and Carrick never got back on its feet after it. They were German employers and good employers.



One of the outstanding family memories was the parcel from America consisting of fox furs and tea wrapped in a scarf as tea was scarce at the time, all from sisters who were gone over since 1932. The parcel from

America was like going shopping - get a skirt, open it out, make a dress and hand it on. There was no mound of rubbish because people re-used everything. She picked up tips from her Mum. Crolley dolls painted a different colour, an old scarf that was bad on one end was used to dress up the dolls at Christmas. Although born and reared in the town, they were not allowed to go down town because they would be looking at the windows and would be late so they went the back Mall. The only shop on that street sold apples for a halfpenny out of a basket on the window. All the parents looked after all the children. Her favourite dinner was bangers and mash with Blake's sausages or Hafner's if anyone was going to Dublin. There was no T.V. The first to come was the transistor radio and we all went down to the bank of the river at Ladyswell-that was our spot. She loved rice pudding on a Friday with a spoon of jam in the middle.

The first world war and war of independence were a source of memories in many households. Her grandfather was shot and died beside his brother and then the telegram went to the wrong house. Another brother was in Gallipoli. There was a memory in the family of the Black and Tans raiding Dempsey Square and pulling her aunt out of the bed. The aunt later died of pneumonia. The houses were basic on the street, just four walls. She often went up to Treacy's for cracked eggs which were cheaper. Treacy's yard had a small shop for selling tobacco and a huge cutter for slicing it. A dressmaker lived there too and one lady went around the town doing the Gael Linn pools. A number of cattle drovers lived on the street. For many years a neighbour who drove a Honda 50 worked in Donoghue's electric shop piecing together and repairing all types of items and when he left you had no option but to buy a new one. Her big treat was a visit to Rooney's Tea Rooms. Her aunt would bring them down town and the big treat in the tea rooms was a bun. Although the tea rooms were only three hundred yards from her home it was such a great treat.

For one lady who had four children, there was a lot of moving from Brewery Lane in Cahir to the Square and then to Woodview. She never left the town but moved four times. She bought a house on an estate with an awful lot of children. There was plenty of housework to be done, particularly knitting. Her mother sold knitting and took in washing. Her mother was a children's nurse in Dr. Heffernan's in Cahir. The Dunnes' Stores Heffernans who had a house on the Mall overlooking the weir-the boy was a famous surgeon in Dublin. When the children were playing on the street all the mothers had chats. When you went to bed you stayed in bed although her sister of sixteen got out the window and climbed down a tree. Another girl whose father had a clothes shop and a mixed farm was busy in the evening with the milking-one sister did the milking and the other the separating. On Our Lady's Island in Wexford, ablaze with hurling in the fifties, seven children were reared on two acres along with a goat, a donkey and a cat. The passbook kept them going, knock a bit off it and go again. She really believed that half a yard of a counter was better than a year in college. In North West Donegal, they had the butter buses coming in from Derry, Donegal people would give the butter and they would bring in other goods that were not on ration. Her father was in the L.D.F. and she remembers the leather gaiters and belt and even at five, six or seven years of age she had to polish them up.

On the island by the Old Bridge in Clonmel there was just a creamery and a woman to whom they used to sell blackberries, put a drop of

water in the can or a few heavier berries growing wild to see would it weigh heavier! The Old Bridge was a small community on its own at the time - open air dancing in the night after the pubs closed in the summer when the emigrants came home. They played camogie using two stones as goalposts in the Edel Quinn Park near the bridge. When the houses were flooded the army would come and take them away in a big truck to Wolfe Tone Street. There, one woman would have a big frying pan with all the sausages and rashers from Burke's. There was a hall for ceilís and it was a threepenny bit in. They always had fresh trout from the river for tea when she came home from work as her brother used to fish. She loved dancing and would walk to the stages at the Rag Well on the Mountain Road - you took a string or a ribbon from your hair and tied it to the tree at the well. There was another stage for dancing at Knocklofty by the lime kiln. "We went up the High Road and came home the Low Road". One amazing aspect of living by the Old Bridge was that they had their own language when they were young. They called it Bog Latin and was used when her sister didn't want the children to know what she was discussing - to me it was absolutely unintelligible. She can still speak it today. When they were going to the dances they would use it among themselves and nobody had a clue what was being said. There was always a sing song in the house to celebrate family occasions and they often sang in the streets for pleasure. I was delighted to listen to a song entitled "Two Clonmel Smashers" and at over ninety years old she didn't miss a note. She got her first licence at fifteen when her father taught her to drive. Before that they had bicycles and there were great bicycle shops in Clonmel. You could hire a bike at Brady's for a half a crown a day and the same at Dom McCarthy's. Brady's would also rent you a television when they came out first.



On the farm, of course, there were plenty of jobs. In the early years they had to draw water round Tobin's Cross in Holycross - "We saw a fellow with a lot of churns and he was drawing water from the Suir - if you put it all out they would drink it all". Times were hard but when the television came there was a

big change. That was a cuardaíocht house and a man used to come every whole night. He always had a cup of tea and a full spoon of raw sugar. In Boyle, the first memory of the T.V. is the black and white test card. One man went to a friend's house to see Robin Hood. There was a T.V. in their pub and his father had the first colour T.V. in the west of Ireland which resulted in his photo gracing the local newspaper. People came from Longford and Sligo to watch the F.A. Cup Final. He will never forget putting up the aerial. A man from Ballaghaderreen called Gallagher put it up pole by pole and climbed with his climbing shoes. He put up one pole after the other and each was stayed until he got high enough to get a signal. People could see him on top of a stick! His grandfather spent his day looking out the top window at him praying on his knees that he would be safe. In Thurles, a lady describes the arrival of their first television - "You wouldn't hear a pin drop. Her father would be up beside it. Mother would be over from it and if someone appeared in the old films she would be shouting "Don't do that". Before television in Ravensdale, Dundalk they walked and they talked. Her father played the fiddle and her brother played the accordion and there were always people dropping in even at ten or eleven o'clock at night. They never had a car growing up but when she got married they got a car for £50-a Humber Hawk- a great car but she never drove. There were buses in the country and anyway all you had to do was go down the road and you got a lift and you would always have a way home. Another from Templemore remembers a rare **suret** journey on the train.

As the youngest of seven, certain jobs fell to a Thurles lady. She had to polish and shine seven pairs of shoes. They took it in turns to get the milk although her older brother gave her a few pence instead when it was his turn. When she arrived at the farm, the elderly mother would be in the dairy making farmers' butter, turning the pats. When she had it made she would go in and bring them all out a slice of brown bread, thick with butter and if you wanted a mug of milk you would get it. They also caught eels in the river and they often went out in the boat catching them with nets. They brought them home and they would be leaping on the pan - a real treat. She also had to draw water from the pump - the best one was up the lane and there were barrels of rainwater everywhere. The range was always going with coal and turf. They walked five miles to Connell's Bog in Two Mile Borris and cut and saved two lorries of turf, one of which was sold and the other kept them going for the winter. They tilled the garden and she remembered a huge pit of potatoes by the back door. There was an orchard and a hen run and generally an uncle or a son in law would kill a chicken for the pot. At Easter a big pot of eggs would be put down. The children would best each other to eat as many as possible-no such thing as Easter eggs, the war was on.

Finally, growing up for a lady who is now ninety-three, centred around music. Her mother was a music teacher but she learned up the road and then in the convent. A very nervous girl, she remembers the visiting examiner, a Dr. Larchey, reputedly very strict. She said she was nervous and he, having reassured her, awarded her first-class honours which led to a life of teaching music. She got her final results on the day of her twenty first birthday and she celebrated with a cup of tea and a small sponge cake with eight members of her family. Some were in the town band and dressed in his lovely green uniform on

St. Patrick's Day, he would always turn to look to see if the family were watching him as he marched past playing the saxophone along the terraced street.

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We finish this chapter with my favourite story about the first cars - the experience of a boy who one day heard a car from his garden coming up Carrig Road and he ran out to see it. Two people were in it and the younger one jumped out to see if there was any traffic coming and then waved the car on - so much for the era before traffic lights.

Tipperary, urban and rural, along with so many other places, seemed to have been wonderful places in which to grow up and all the care and the values learned stood everyone in good stead for the lives that lay ahead and gave them a store of memories on which to draw for the rainy day.

## Chapter 3 - Work days

If the range of households and styles of rearing varied all over the country, the work experiences of our contributors take us on many interesting voyages. The rural experience was categorised by hard, physical, seemingly never-ending work, the town and city experience shone light on far different areas of life. Working out of Coliemore Harbour in Dalkey and living nearby in a corporation cottage, the brother was an amazing man of great skills. Passing a penny halfpenny shop one day he went in and came out with a string bag and put it in his pocket. When his brother asked why, he explained that it contained a knot that he had never encountered before and when he arrived home, he took it apart and learned how it was made. When watching television, he would always be knitting a net. He was interested in everything but school, an avid reader, he read the local library out of cowboy books. He loved the thrill of making flies for fishing at the Workman's Club but never fished on the river. But he definitely built boats, one every two years, would keep it for a few years, then sell it and improve a few things in the next one. It would take two winters to build one in a shed belonging to a Big House on the Monkstown Road. He packed in the fishing at eighty-four because the steps at Bulloch Harbour have a tread of ten inches and are rounded with the tide. He never had a car, always a bike. He never went back to Coliemore and is still hale and hearty today at ninety-four. He had wonderful hands. When they changed the metric system, many builders were snookered but he had read up on it and would strike out the bases for them. Both brothers would sometimes go fishing together as the pots could overpower you if a blow was coming up from the south. There were good grounds for fishing lobster out past the Carrig and they would have three trains of twenty-four. If the weather turned, they would dump them overboard half way up the sound, take markings from landmarks in his head and return to pick them up three days later. Out fishing was where he was totally content. Most people's perception of a fisherman is a poor man but he made a lot of money-made his own traps, his own nets almost in total secrecy. He made little creels himself for the correct size of crab. When building a boat, he would go to the timber yards, knew exactly what he wanted - he might search for timber for a keel for a month. He heard at the fish market about the velvet crab and read up about it. Pound for pound you would get about ten times what you would get for a lobster. It was a delicacy and he stopped fishing for lobster and spent five years fishing for velvet crab. An exceptionable man in every respect-but not very sociable. Our contributor's son also worked at sea. However, his clients were those who bought a yacht, moored it in Dún Laoghaire, loved the idea of having a yacht but are afraid to go out to sea in case the wind will die. He would teach them how to work out the electricity and technology. Having been an electrician all his life, he then did a Teagasc course, ended up in the Woodstock estate in Inistioge and was involved the restoration of the gardens on the Tighe Estate. He moved to huge gardens in Waterford, became an expert in propagating cuttings and today at over ninety years of age, lives in rural Tipperary

surrounded by trees and plants and still with an eye for something new or unusual he might find in a ditch at the side of the road.

In total contrast was the man from Carrick on Suir who was thirty-one years in the army. The most dangerous assignment was Cyprus where he stayed twenty-three years keeping the peace in the 12<sup>th</sup> Battalion ,42<sup>nd</sup> Infantry. He still has the blue beret of the United Nations and fondly remembers comrades that were lost on several missions. There was great camaraderie among the men and still is today between the members of the O.N.E. and the United Nations Veterans. He proudly wore the light U.N. uniform in 110 degrees in Cyprus. Another job in Carrick was that of a messenger boy - the bike with the box in front. He delivered all over the town and sold everything. Carrick is an easy town to cycle around and he spent two years as a messenger boy until he got a job in the Miloko chocolate crumb factory.



When the young girl from Thurles didn't like her work in the Phoenix yarns she got an office job in the Gasworks. They were owned by a Major Anderson, an Englishman who interviewed her for the job in a lovely house on site. The wages were 8/6 a week when she started and when she approached Mr. Bruce, the son of the owner, for a rise, she got little hop. The gasworks in Kilkenny was linked to the Thurles gasworks and when her future husband balked at an order to go to Kilkenny on a winter's day on a Honda 50 to collect some item, the response was firm and immediate, "Miss, give that man his cards". The men working on the retorts, the small furnaces that burned the coal to produce the gas all lived locally and were on shift work as the retorts never stopped burning. Their skin used to be creased with black. Sometimes the system failed and the gas wouldn't be purified and she had to go to hospital. All the houses in the area had gas and a leather bag was supplied to collect the money. She then had to count the money for the bank. Interestingly, when the bank had old torn money they burned it in the retorts. A guard was always present and no fear that an odd note would blow onto the ground before hitting the flame. Some coal came from Newcastle but Polish coal was preferred and the cinders were used in the Agas and Jubilees in all the council houses - she remembers all the ranges being absolutely spotless. She had to give up when she got married but then got another job in the Castle Hotel.

In Cahir, another contributor started work at fourteen in a sewing factory at Walshe's in the Market Yard. She spent her life there until she was eighteen when it closed and she went to work in the Galtee Hotel and later in Cahir House. She set up and served at weddings and socials. The ballroom was full for big socials like the Galtee Rovers G.A.A. The Hunt Ball was in Cahir House and she loved the work but she too had to give it up when she married. Another lady went to Cathal Brugha Street and worked in the Royal Hotel in New Ross. She remembers them talking about the bombing of Campile during the war. There wasn't much work in Clonmel in the fifties so all the locals joined the army. Another lady's father had a general store selling everything from a needle to an anchor. She spent her youth putting different types of meal into 2lb bags, maize, oatmeal, wheatmeal and flour. Tea came in a tea chest and she weighed them all into brown bags. Biscuits came in tins with a glass lid if you wanted to display them. Bread was brown or white and Milford Bakery did a batch loaf-the top and bottom were crust, the middle open with country butter and jam. St. Louis had a domestic course in Bundoran and it was fabulous. A Templemore man who went to Dublin to work after secondary school found that food was basic and not always in abundance.



There was also a Travelling Van - most didn't need much as they were self-sufficient. In Lattin they had one shop, Ryan Shamrock's in Emmet Street. Micheál's was a shop in a house - in the sitting room and you could get small amounts of things like two rashers. They would break open the packets and sell small amounts and they would weigh the biscuits - she remembers Cleeve's Toffee, Bulls' Eyes, Peggy's Leg and Cloves' Rock. One man's first job was with the E.S.B. when the electricity was coming that way. He then worked in a shop in Butler's Bakery at the West Gate for £1 a week. Luckily, he was also playing music and got a lot of weddings playing the button accordion at Buggle's Hotel. He also worked in a grocer's shop "The Favourite's" in Mitchel Street from where he bought his first radio with batteries paying it off by the week. Coming up to Christmas, they would be wrapping bracks at Butler's Bakery. By then he was getting £5 a week and £10 for that week. When playing in Buggle's he would get a lot of silver, would throw them on the table at home and his mother would count it - better than two week's work. He played in Hayes', Buggle's and the Munster Hotel where weddings would have about fifty guests. Another man went to the E.S.B. after two years at the tech and served his time. There was a group of forty and the wages were 21/-of which 1/11 went to the cost of transport. When the apprenticeship finished, you were let go and after a year re-apply. This man applied for his last job at the age of seventy-two!

The fair day in Boyle on February 3<sup>rd</sup>, when the farmers were getting rid of their winter stock was a great draw for dealers and a lot of work for the grocery shop and pub. The Fair Green was the spot for the early fair and all the cattle lined up the main street, all looking in the window, all Aberdeen Angus. They would be walked into town from before dawn and the farmers would come in for a Bovril or a hot whiskey. There was sawdust on the floor, ham sandwiches and oxtail soup. Our contributor would sit on the window sill all

day watching the fair and when older he linked up with a dealer and looked after his cattle for a threepenny bit. His father bought a shorthorn calf from which he bred and won 400 guineas at the R.D.S. His mother said that the bull got an awful lot more attention than she did. It had to be trained to walk for the show and the customers also were very interested. The old shed had to be plastered in case the bull would injure itself. They were all shorthorns with a star on their foreheads and christened after the bar, Cresbar Jameson, Cresbar Gin etc. Monaghan was full of enterprise all the farms had an extra enterprise but Nenagh didn't get going until ten in the morning. You could double park on the street for an hour or two and not worry about it. Of course, there was a solid base of infrastructure in Nenagh - very strong farming sector, hospital, county council, Nenagh aluminium, Careys and well-off farmers with money in contrast to Boyle. The lake meant that people had to come to Nenagh. The co-op was fantastic and he remembers coming with a pony and trap as a young boy.



When the lady in Thurles began work in 1948, they had no electricity, there were no lights on the road and she cycled in to be there for nine. On her night off, she finished at seven but if she was on she finished at nine and it was often after twelve when she cycled home with a flashlamp - a long day on your feet serving customers. She had a half day at 1.30 on a Wednesday and she would cycle to Templemore to see her grandmother and be back at work for 6.30. There were about thirty passbooks to be totted up and be ready for pay day on Saturday and then the week started off with the messages again. If it were a bad payer a line would be drawn. The year the electricity came, she bought the first iron for her mother who up to then was using the stone from the fire, take it out with a tongs and put it into the iron. Because it

was a family of painters the whites had to be ironed - her mother bought these in Nenagh in a shop near the railway station – she went over on the bus. Only two people worked out of the 28 soldiers' houses, remainder had a pension. They didn't pay rent but they had to pay rates. Eventually her mother filled a jar with 6d's and 1/-'s and paid for the house-in her mind's eye she can still see the jar.

In complete contrast, another contributor worked for John Lewis in Oxford Street, London and they were excellent. The different departments had their own staff and she worked for the soft furnishing side including curtains and the factory was upstairs. A man went out the country to measure up and they made up the fabric. She remembers when stretch covers came in. She went to London in 1960. She also had an interview for a job in Canada but her friend said that if she wanted a job she didn't have to go half way round the world for it. Her father worked on the railway but was also a ploughman on the nearby estate.

The world of work in the middle of the last century, although dominated by farming, still had a wonderful variety where people were able to turn their hands to anything and very often prosper and thrive outside of the usual pathways of education and training. Most also seemed very content at their work although the marriage bar must have caused immense sadness at such a final break with so many friends at such a young age.

## Chapter 4 Marriage, relationships and friendship

Today we hear of the labyrinth that is socialising and making friends while the path to marriage seems to centre around swiping right or left on some screen. Certainly, social interaction is fraught with uncertainty and worry. It seems to have been very different for our participants.

One contributor got off on a sad note when he stated that he got married at twenty-four to get out of the house! One lady met her husband as he was only around the corner and there was always something going on in their garage like putting on chrome or spraying a car. They were at a dance and he asked could he see her home. She replied "sure you're going that way anyway" and that began a lifelong romance. Another lady met her partner at a hop in the South Tipp Tennis Club. You could go there because you didn't need a partner and the same with The Island but you wouldn't go to Conn's Hall on your own. Her sixtieth wedding anniversary was held recently and she still can't figure out how she is sixty years married when she is still only fifty-nine! Another lady's life was full of tragedy. Her husband died suddenly at forty and the man she then married died at sixty-one. Her late son was married only three years when he contracted M.S. and died. He used to say "mother, if you go again they will be digging them up". She used to do set dancing with him and they danced together all over the country for charity. Every Sunday afternoon they went dancing to Powers of the Pot.

There were some great positive stories. One woman married her second husband a couple of years ago-he was seventy-five and she was sixty-five. They went to singing pubs and Drumkeen and Dundrum for the big dances. She walked to Drumkeen, about twenty miles and the same back. At other times she had a boyfriend with a green Cortina and everyone piled into the car all smoking fags. People went to dance and meet. Drumkeen was only orange and seven up but it was the Ballroom of Romance. One lady recalled getting married young in Bansha with 45-50 guests. They put ribbons on his car and the reception was in Aherlow House. There were cans hanging on the back of the car and plenty of confetti. Another lady got married at eighteen in England and had a small wedding. One man did most of his socialising through drama doing plays during the winter in the old school. There were bus trips and mystery tours to Salthill and Ballybunion. One thing he regrets is that he never went to Knock. He met his wife when he was working in a grocer's shop. He was engaged to another girl at the time and he was so upset at breaking up that he went on retreat to Limerick and asked the priest's advice. Round Holycross the girls met people at the dances in Boherlahan and all the girls around would cycle. On one Michaelmas night, after being at devotions, the priest asked where they were going and when they told him he said "What's taking ye over to that cowshed?" They went anyway. When the Premier Hall opened in Thurles they were there for the first night. One night they were walking home with the bicycles in the pitch dark and they met a guard who told them they should be carrying the bike when they didn't have a light on it. Another contributor met his wife at college at a party. They were cruising around in a Morris Minor when they saw a lot of cars outside a house and the girl he met that night is still with him after forty-two years.

<b>Associated <i>AB</i> Ballrooms</b>		
Arcadia Cahir Burncourt Macra na Feirme Dance	Eddie Mack and <b>COLUMBIA</b>	To-morrow
Las Vegas Templemore	<b>DONIE COLLINS</b>	Sunday
Arcadia Cahir	Joe Dolan and <b>DRIFTERS</b>	Next
Las Vegas Templemore	<b>DIXIES</b>	Tuesday

<b>LAS VEGAS, TEMPLEMORE</b>	
NEXT SUNDAY, 11th AUGUST	
"Little Arrows" is on target for No. 1?	
BRENDAN O'BRIEN and that Clown Prince of Showbiz—	
<b>JOE MAC and THE DIXIES</b>	
Dancing 9 p.m.	Admission ..... 7/6
NEXT THURSDAY, 15th AUGUST (HOLYDAY)	
Back again on stage and so pleased to meet you—	
<b>JOE DOLAN &amp; THE DRIFTERS</b>	
Dancing 9 p.m.	Admission ..... 7/6

SUN. NIGHT, AUG. 11th THE <b>MIGHTY AVONS</b> Dancing 9—1. Adm.—8/-	<b>OYSTER</b> BALLROOM, DROMKEEN	THURS NIGHT, AUG 15th THE <b>ROYAL SHOWBAND</b> Dancing 9—1. Adm.—8/-
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For the girl living outside Thurles, her first céilí was a camogie céilí and she had to be home for eleven o'clock. Her uncle Jack was outside the hall and he walked her home. Her husband was a friend of her brother's and her sister went out with him one night. Another night he went to the pictures with her brother and she was allowed to go too. It was a Stephen's Night and now into her nineties, she has fond recollections of all the years they spent together bearing great tragedy and sorrow along the way. Nobody of her age going to school is alive now. Her best friend lived up the lane but then went to England when her mother died. She was let down in love and ended up in a mental asylum where she died. She worked in the clothing mills in England. One Sunday they were cycling to Fethard and when they got to Killenaule the friend got a puncture. She put her friend on the carrier and with one hand cycled all the way to Fethard while at the same time guiding the second bike with the other hand and the same on the way back. As she relates, when they got home they ate a full pot of potatoes.

For the lady in England who fortuitously got a couple of tickets for a dance in aid of a Down Syndrome girl and even though she got a waltz from a lot of men she got more than one from Jim and it went from there. You met your friends at work but in a different way. She has a couple of best friends since she was a toddler. Anne, whose father was very ill, was wrapped in a shawl and given to her mother to mind when the parent went out to help other farmers to plough and keep her own little farm going. She was the nearest thing to a sister, only six months younger. Another friend that she knows since she was a toddler suffered the loss through death of his father and her own father was his godfather. She has other friends since her first day at school including one who became a nun for many years and came out and worked with special needs children for the remainder of her life. Everyone in that community on the border was so helpful. Her father was friendly with the Protestants and so were the next generation. Her father said that if Percy isn't a Catholic who knows the rosary back to front he will never be because he always came in at the time of the rosary and joined in. She remembers him still when she says the rosary every night. In Convoy there was a village green and four churches, Roman Catholic, Covenanter, Protestant and Presbyterian. Her father would have to stand outside the railings for a funeral. Some of the priests used to sing the Sash and Dolly's Brae and their friend was Ian Paisley. Something happened in his church and the priests put on a concert for him and he reciprocated for Father Tom's church. A girl from the town lived in Belfast for a while and got into bad circumstances when her husband walked out. Paisley came to the door and although she said she was a Catholic he was very good to her.



Most of the contributors miss their childhood friends and partners terribly but still have all those wonderful memories to see them through.

## Chapter 5 Pastimes, social and sporting activities.

One man's father was a contrary man so there was no music, wouldn't be heard of so "we never went to dances". Having no electricity in the house didn't help. But he had a good pal John and when he got a half a crown and a penny they went to the cinema - the penny was for the fare. Their real love was picking mushrooms in the fields in Killiney. One of the most popular bands in Thurles was Joe Dolan and of course the Big Eight, the Capitol and Butch Moore. There was always a bus to Templemore and her brother had a hackney. She counted ten in the hackney one evening. They went to the Railway Dinner and Dance at the Confraternity Hall and the Teachers and Dwans dances were great favourites. There were two picture houses in Clonmel and then another one opened. Cinema and the Sunday matinee was very popular in Templemore with the children exiting re-enacting the heroics of the star of the film. The Casino in Clonmel was a hotel as well with a beautiful ballroom. They danced to Mick Del but were really into céilí. They never travelled out because there was no transport. If you came to Tipperary to the Tower Ballroom you had to be dressed up - no miniskirts. My mother would say "There's not a yard of material in that skirt". The showbands played for three hours 10-1.

**COLLINS HALL**  
**CLONMEL**

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**TUESDAY, 28th JAN.**

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IN PERSON . . . THE  
**CLANCY BROTHERS**  
AND  
**TOMMY MAKEM**  
WITH THE  
**Jimmy Wiley Showband**

Admission 10/- (Booking Fee 3d. extra) Dancing 9-2  
Booking at Corbett's Printing Works, Clonmel. Phone 160. (Outside Bookings Postage extra)  
SPECIAL ENTRANCE FOR TICKET HOLDERS.

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A couple of contributors played at the dances. One played céilí - the Siege of Ennis-a feed of ingens (onions) they called it. His favourite hall was in Ballacolla in Laois-he met the loveliest of people. The best box players he ever heard were Dermot O'Brien and Bobby Gardiner - he would be out three or four nights a week-times were hard. He got his first accordion when he heard a neighbour playing one - he went to Kilroys in Thurles and bought a small one for 2/6 a week and never missed a payment on it. When he sold it he bought a Paolo Soprano. There's a great lift in the box and the accordion has that cut that brings things to life. He also learned Irish dancing when he was young. Another céilí band leader played a lot of music at the Metal Bridge in Upperchurch on a Sunday night. One summer he went from May to September without a break in the weather. He hired a hackney to take the band members and their equipment and at the end of the week he might have a pound out of it-but then a pound was a lot of money. For another man, the music blaring until twelve o'clock on a July night at the carnival was the attraction. Jim Reeves was huge as was Dusty Springfield. He remembers the marquees where he was showband mad - always looking for photographs of which he still has many shoeboxes of autographed pictures. His father supplied the minerals for the hall so he was on first name terms with the Capitol, Miami, Freshmen, Indians, Philomena Begley and Big Tom. A great favourite in Tipperary was Brendan O'Brien and the Dixies, particularly the drummer Joe McCarthy. Another lady wasn't too happy with Elvis and neither were the nuns. Because of her circle of friends and the Irish language it was mostly Irish music and she didn't do a set dance until she arrived in Tipperary-it was all pure ceilí. Because she lived near the border she often went north to dance on her own on the bicycle. One night, going to Jonesboro, she got a puncture, called into the next house, got it pumped up and was given the pump just in case. There was no difference in the people or the dancing north or south. The Emerald Céilí Band from Meath was her favourite - she also liked the McCuskers.

In Donegal they had the travelling shows - one lady met Ruby Murray when her mother provided the table for the set. A George Daniels Road Show also came regularly as did the Abbey Players. The Bill Glowney travelling show came to Cappawhite. The circus was a great take. It set up in Thurles on the Racecourse, the outside hurling field or Rooney's field beside the hospital. Most people's favourite act was the trapeze. Most of them were from Eastern Europe. The circus had a special smell. Often a spinster aunt took the children to the circus for a treat. Another big moment in the year in town was the arrival of the carnival and for one boy, when Murrays Amusements came, they planked right outside the door. The chairplanes were really close and the cars went under them on the street. Murrays were from Portadown and they lived in caravans and the boy would go out to help them level up. There were swinging boats - large ones for adults and smaller ones for children and stalls where you knocked down stuff and they were always raffling china dogs for the mantelpiece. They lit up many a July night. There were also swinging boats at the races in Thurles.



Another great social activity was Macra na Tuaithe where even at the age of thirteen or fourteen one would be organizing buses for talent competitions and engaged in public speaking, crafts, proper formation of meetings with minutes and agenda and interacting with all the other towns throughout the county.

There were also fond memories of special characters in the community. The six-foot six Connaught Ranger, Bill the Black, who strode through Thurles wearing a white silk scarf, the old bearded man who rattled a tin can outside Spirella's, the lady who came back from America having met a bloke who promised to marry her but having taken her money, left her high and dry. She sat all day on her doorstep but the Gasworks men made sure she was never short of coal as they threw a few shovels over her wall every day. There's great sadness now walking down West Gate in Thurles when one lady remembers all the life that was in Pinch O'Peppers, Nellie Keane's, Lil Caplis' Cafe, Rooney's Tea Rooms all with their bustling door open then but now without a trace. In Tipperary Town the Arcade and O Dea's are gone and all the factories Atari, Lino, carpets, gloves etc. and in the country all the shops that sold everything from a needle to an anchor as mentioned so often belong to a time that is past.

Religion played a very large part in many lives. "Faith is very important. We came to the Cathedral-lines of students coming across from St. Patrick's College. You would have to stop to let the students pass. Religion was

everything. I never missed Mass and I say the rosary on my own every night to keep up the tradition. In my grandmother's house the trimmings were longer than the rosary". Another contributor felt that priests were on their pedestals and in GAA circles, the chairman was inevitably a priest. Sometimes religion clashed with other events and one contributor recalls the time of mass being changed so the men could go for a pint afterwards on a Sunday morning and then go home to the dinner. Yet they wouldn't change a thing - up and down learning the hymns. Anything about going to church you knew you were safe.

There were a few Irish phrases used in everyday life: - "Ná bac le mac an bhacaigh muna mbacann mac an bhacaigh leat" or running around ag buaileadh báisín.

Yet, despite the tribulations of a world war, savage emigration, the vicissitudes of an ultra-conservative and dominating society, personal tragedy and loss, each and every interviewee still had that light in the eye, that sense of fun and the willingness to share that makes them a select band that came through thick and thin to not alone survive but to flourish. We can but salute them and wish them many more years with us to brighten up our days with their unique stories.

It has been such a privilege to document their stories which like the old shops of their childhood covered everything from a needle to an anchor.

End

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With special thanks to all who took time out to share their stories and contributed to the making of memories of back in their day: -

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This booklet would not be possible without the contribution of the gifted story teller Jimmy Duggan. Jimmy is a native of Thurles, is a former primary school principal with an abiding interest in the history and heritage of Tipperary. On a personal level, he has found his engagement with this project to be a very enriching experience which has added considerably to an understanding of the social history of the period.

Image Courtesy of Tipperary Julia Walsh Drohan, Education & Outreach Officer, Tipperary Museum of Hidden History and Mary Guinan-Darmody, Tipperary Studies

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