

Tommy Kerrigan, Pulgloss

Interview with Pat Conway

Tommie started school in 1928. Accompanied by his older sisters they climbed up the brae beside Berry's and then cut into Garri Uir (Sammins' field) for a shortcut down to the Askelane road and emerged at O'Malley's house. The journey home took a different route. Tommie and his siblings turned at McDonagh's house and travelled out by Pat Durkan's and crossed over the heighth to emerge once again at Berry's house, a few yards from their own home

The teachers in the school at the time were Sean T Morahan, Mary O' Reilly, and Aggie O' Toole. As the small one roomed building barely catered for the excessive number of pupils some of the classes had to remain standing while the others sat down. The situation altered every half an hour or so with the classes with writing exercises sat while reading classes stood. On a fine day in early summer and early autumn, Mary O'Reilly took the pupils out along the road. Roads were safer then, no speeding traffic. Often their roadside session ended in the saying of the rosary.

Maths was by far Tommie's favourite subject. In those days, maths was taught through the Irish and English language. Tom remembers with fondness, the "ceisteanna beal", an oral maths examination, which did not cause him any bother, as he was very quick in response to the tricky questions. The "sixth standard course" exam at the end of sixth class went on for three days and even though Tom passed, he waited on at school until he was fourteen, a legal requirement at the time.

Emigration was the only option that faced most pupils on leaving school. One family member remained on the land. Most holdings supported three to four cows and all holdings were self-sufficient. Flour for bread and pollard for fattening cattle were the only commodities that were not produced on the farm. Cattle were raised until they were two years old. The fair in Westport attracted large numbers of buyers. In a spring of bad weather with farmers anxious to sell, the cattle were brought on foot into Westport the night before the fair, in autumn, the day before. A good beast fetched between five and six pounds. Transaction completed, it was time for the long bicycle trip home! Dick Michael's (Accony) Aberdeen Angus was the dominant bull breed in the early days. Later, Paddy O' Toole RIP, of Moneen, introduced the Hereford breed.

When Henry Gill's thresher made it's initial journey around the farmyards of Askelane and Pulgloss, the unit was towed by a local horse. Tommy Burke's (Askelane RIP) little black horse was the one chosen for the task. Small in stature, the little



JAMES (MARTIN) BURKE, ASKELANE



CATHERINE, MARY, NOREEN AND JOHN KERRIGAN. ALL TOGETHER IN ACCONY SCHOOL.

animal came into it's own in soft ground and small haggards. Crops grown were oats, barley, wheat and rye.

Entertainment came in the form of visiting, card playing, and house dances. Anne Gill's RIP, Askelane, was a popular visiting house. Mikie Tiernan RIP, Doughmakeon, Maurice Durkan RIP, Askelane, played accordians and Johnny Gibbons Furmoyle, played the fiddle at the packed house dances. The entrepreneurial spirit was never too far away. Once a group of the young men chipped in together and bought a set of hair clippers. Michael Casey from Gibbons's (James Tommie's) house was the "barber" and the "salon" was located in James Martin's RIP house, Askelane.

Tom tells a unique story of romance and marriage involving former pupils of Accony School. Tommie married Mary McDonagh RIP, Tommie's sisters Nora RIP married Tom McDonagh RIP and Rose Anne RIP married James McDonagh RIP. Tommie and Mary had four children. Catherine, Mary, Noreen and John were among the last pupils in Accony School when it closed in 1971.

An Old School tells its Story

by Mary Kerrigan
(nee McDonagh) R.I.P., Pulgloss

Mary wrote this beautiful short essay in September 1937 as she watched the new school been built. This is the old school telling its story.

I well remember when I first saw light ninety years ago and I was built on the brink of the sea. I am afraid that I will soon die because I see a young giant growing beside me, much larger than I am.

Accony's new school is looking good, it has three rooms where I have one and three doors to my one.

The first teacher to teach in me was Mr Pat Heraghty from east of Louisburgh. Then there was Jeremy McEvilly from the town of Louisburgh. Then Jerry Gibbons from Accony and Mr John Morahan from Louisburgh and Mr G Gibbons from Lecanvey. The first three teachers named are dead.

The first two scholars were Mrs Prendergast and Mrs Kerrigan from Accony. One of them still lives.

The scholars now are very small as formerly, the scholars were big because they were confined to attend until they were very big or seventeen of age.



MARY, JIM AND BEASIE McDONAGH, PULGLOSS ON THEIR CONFIRMATION DAY



TOM AND MARY KERRIGAN'S WEDDING DAY WITH SPONSORS ELLIE GIBBONS, ASKELANE AND JOSIE KERRIGAN, FEENONE



PAT AND ANNE McDONAGH (R.I.P.), PULGLOSS.