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Miss Sara Irvine Savage

1902 - 1995



On 11 December 1999 to mark the return of our society to the new Credit Union premises we put on an exhibition. On display was a collection of photographs taken around the village and district two years earlier, but the main feature of the exhibition was a collection of models depicting farming methods of long ago. The models were created by the late Sara Savage and kindly donated to the Society by her sister Minnie. The Society also received the contents of a small museum, previously held by the Miss Savages in their home Laurel Hill at Cullentragh, Poyntzpass.

Apart from providing a pictorial record of times past, they are a reminder to us, who had the privilege to know her, of the artistic skills of this most talented and gifted lady. From the ploughman working two Clydesdale horses behind a swing plough, to the crouching dog carefully shepherding a flock of sheep through a gate hung between two round stone pil-

lars, Sara captured, in great authentic detail, farming activities no more than a memory to us now. She closely observed the scenes of her youth and skilfully constructed these magnificent models with whatever material was available to her. She gathered the sheep's wool from the thorn bushes, while her sister's velvet cord skirt provided the material for the farm workers' moleskin trousers and a missing belt would re-appear as harnesses for the horses.

The Savage family have lived at Laurel Hill since 1849 when Sara's grandfather came as a Covenanting Minister to Ballenon Church. Throughout her long life Sara cast a loving and perceptive eye on all around her as she observed and recorded, with a sense of history, the changes occurring in country ways. Perhaps, as a young girl, on her weekly walk to Poyntzpass for music lessons with Mrs. George White she noted country scenes that would later form a tableau in one of her models or provide the inspiration for a poem. A quiet, reticent lady she spoke so eloquently through her models, her poetry and the plays she wrote for local dramatic groups. She loved the people around her and her compassion for the less well off is evident, in her poetry. Sara's poem "The Hirin Fair" was prompted by seeing little girls of 13 or 14 making the tearful journey to Edward Street Station, Newry, at the end of the hiring day while their mothers looked on:-

*"Her shawl my eye could follow
On the journey as before
Then with turnin' for the station
Sure I seen her plaid no more"*

Sara kindly agreed to her poems appearing in earlier copies of this magazine. The talents and gifts of this gentle caring lady will continue to be recognised and valued.

She lived a long and full life and accomplished much. As a local history society we know that it is in the appreciation of the works she has left us that her memory will live on.