

Wearing a Dickey, there was no need to change a shirt every day (or every month for that matter).

When the Dickey got soiled with dust or tobacco juice, it was washed in a basin with Sunlight soap, rinsed with a solution of Robin starch and allowed 10 or 15 minutes to dry, and "hey presto." you could have gone to the Newry Bachelors' Ball!

When old Mr. J. R. died, his son Joe became Inland Inspector.

There were usually about six or seven full-time men employed on the maintenance staff of the canal. At that time they were as follows: Peter Campbell, Willie Crothers, James "Buffer" Burns, Hugh Convery, Frank Cross, Hugh Burns, John Waddell (my father) and Paddy Hanratty (casual worker).

Paddy was one of the "rare ould characters" in the rare ould times. He couldn't read, write or count, but he was endowed with a ready wit. One time while working for Frank Monaghan, he was coming across the yard after forking hay all through a hot summer day. It was now around 10.30 p.m. Mr. Monaghan said to Paddy "Are you finished, Paddy?" Paddy replied "I don't know sir, but I'm quit."

Looking back to those far-off days, I became very annoyed and depressed at the environmental changes. Small holdings have disappeared, taken over by big concerns. Hedges and ditches have been levelled. The small fields of the old days each had its own name, each had its own bit of history. The habitat for wild life is fast disappearing. The cuckoo, the corncrake, the yellow hammer, the kingfisher, to name but a few, have almost gone. The rivers and waterways are polluted. Fishing in the canal was once a major tourist attraction. Visitors from Manchester, Liverpool and Bolton came on holiday each year. Guest houses around the 'Pass were booked out from year to year. One family I remember very fondly, was the Fairhurst family from Manchester. Old Mr. Fairhurst loved to fish the canal at our lock No. 9. He always came from the village early each day. Coming each year, he became very well known to ourselves and to all the neighbours.

The Crack Bridge, below our house, was the meeting place for all the local characters. Bob Whiteside, Bobby Sterritt, Frank Monaghan (of Athletic fame), "Crab" Kelly, Tom Sterritt and Johnny Minnis. Young and old



Maintenance workers pictured at Crothers' locks (No. 7) around 1935.
 From left, front : Not known; Joe Monaghan, Inland Inspector Newry Port and
 Harbour Trust; Hugh Convery; Peter Campbell.
 Back : James Burns; John Waddell; Willy Crothers.