



Mr. and Mrs. Alec Crothers outside lock-house (No. 7) around 1935.

used to gather to fish to play skittles or to play pitch and toss.

The one character that stands out was Johnny Minnis. Johnny had a grey donkey. I had a black donkey (some would say that was four donkeys)! Johnny worked around the country. On one occasion he was working at a house that was noted for a lack of quantity of the grub. The quality was always good but the helpings sparse.

One day after the dinner the lady asked Johnny did he enjoy his dinner. His reply was "I did Mrs. — if that was it!"

One night in Hudson's pub at closing time Johnny was in no hurry finishing his bottle of stout. The late Gerry Hudson didn't like to tell Johnny to "drink up" and go home, but he hinted at it. He looked into the fire which was nearly out and said to Johnny:— "That fire is very low." Johnny's reply was:— "If it gets any lower we're going to have to sit up with it!"

These are some of my memories of life on the canal and life along the towpath of the Newry Canal in the late 1920s and 1930s.

Since then the canal, which was so picturesque, has been allowed to fall into disrepair and has become a health hazard.

However, I would like to end on an optimistic note. The four Councils involved in the eighteen miles stretch of canal — Newry and Mourne, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon — are now making valiant efforts to restore it to something like its original beauty and interest in the canal and its restoration is increasing all the time.

Recently a sponsored walk from Newry to Poyntzpass along the towpath attracted more than 300 participants. The experience was enjoyed by young and old alike. The potential is there to make the canal one of the greatest tourist attractions in Ireland — let's hope it is fulfilled!