

A MEMORABLE FUNERAL

BY JESSIE KIDD

(The late Jessie Kidd wrote the following account of a funeral she attended some years ago)

A funeral is a solemn, sombre time, although perhaps not so much now-a-days as long ago. Then, horse-drawn hearses were used. They were always black horses and everything went at a slower pace. There were certainly no dinners in hotels and no teas in church halls. Now-a-days, I think some of them are more like wedding receptions than funerals!

I do not remember my father's funeral for I was only seven months old when he died, but I know that there were as many Catholics as Protestants at it. Father Pat McConville, who was the Parish Priest in Barr at the time, was there. The Sunday after the funeral, Fr Pat, in his sermon, told his congregation at Mass in Barr Chapel that, when my father was in hospital, someone had asked him if he was suffering much. My father's reply was, "Not as much as Jesus suffered on the cross." Kathleen Boyle, who was in the congregation, told this to my family.

One of the more memorable funerals I recall attending was that of 'Aussie' Lindsay. Aussie was from Easkey near Sligo and he came to work at Kidd's during the war. He had a cousin, a retired police sergeant in Caledon, and he got Aussie a 'Resident's Permit'. Aussie was a good-looking fellow with lovely black curly hair. He was a great worker and when we came to Hillhead in 1947, Aussie and Eugene Cranny came too. When he left us, he went to John Shannon's. His people were Protestants but Aussie never went anywhere.

His family were very decent well-respected people. They had a farm and a nephew of his ran the Post Office in Easkey. We fixed up a room in the loft over

the boiling house and made it very comfortable. He had a big old armchair and a wireless and loved to listen to music. He was very clean and tidy and did his own washing and ironing. He got all his food in the house. Later on, he got a motorbike and after that a small car.

However, after a few years he started to go to Omeath, sometimes with Geordie Hudson, and got to be very fond of drink. He became a frequent visitor to the Bronte Tavern and, as years went by, his health suffered greatly. Eventually, because of circulation problems, he had to have a leg amputated.

Robert and I cleaned Shannon's house and made it very comfortable for his coming home from the hospital and Mrs Wellsby, his home help, was extremely good to him. Later he got a pensioner's house in Loughbrickland but he wasn't content. Then Robert brought him to his home in Easkey, thinking he would maybe be happier there.

But he couldn't settle so Robert and Mary went and brought him back here again. However, unfortunately, a while after that, he had to have his other leg amputated and died in Banbridge Hospital in 1980.

His brother and an undertaker from Sligo came for his remains and John Grattan, Robert, and I went in to the removal from the hospital. There was no service at the hospital, and I regretted I hadn't thought of asking Rev Little to come with us.

Anyway they eventually started off for Sligo. I believe it was an epic journey. At some point they stopped to get a new set of tyres on the hearse and called at several pubs along the way. Eventually, however, they landed home and Aussie's remains were left in the church.

The funeral was on Sunday and Robert and I went. Early in the morning we collected Mrs Wellsby and her mother in Lurgan and set off for Sligo. We had brought a snack and stopped on the way. When we arrived at Aussie's brother's house, a fine new bungalow, his wife Lucy had tea for us. Their old house was still there. It was a public house and the '*drinks were on the house*'.



The river at Easkey Village, Co. Sligo



Easkey Village in Sligo, now a popular holiday centre

We then went to the church. The church was packed and the funeral service was lovely. The graveyard was some distance away it was very big. A young lad of about fifteen drove the hearse, for all the men had had too much to drink. The Lindsays were long-

established in Easkey and I remember that the family had a fine black marble headstone.

After the funeral Lucy insisted that we go to the local hotel for a meal. Many of the men folk went to the bar while we went to the dining room. There was just one very elderly man who was *'run off his feet'*. He appeared to be doing everything-. He was chef, waiter and barman. After a while he served the soup to start and then there was a very long delay for the main course, which was roast beef. The sweet was supposed to be rice and pears but it never arrived and, after waiting for great length of time, we gave up and, as it was getting late, decided it was time to go.

All hands came out of the pub to see us off and after much hand shaking and *'Thanks for coming'* and *'Make sure you come back to see us!'* we started for home. We left Mrs Wellsby and her mother in Lurgan and were home at about nine o'clock, So saying *'Farewell'* to Aussie was a day to remember. It was like something out of *'The Quiet Man'*!

JOHN ALDERDICE OF BALLYREAGH

John Alderdice, a farmer who lived in Ballyreagh, had a considerable reputation locally as a poet. He wrote humorous rhymes about mishaps and local incidents. Locals were afraid of becoming the butt of his humour and tried to keep secret any little mistake or indiscretion that might have occurred. If they were involved in some unfortunate incident, their biggest dread was that John Alderdice would get to know about it and make rhyme about them. Of course, neighbours often *'made it their business'* to make sure that John Alderdice *did* hear about it and there grew up a virtual network of informers bringing titbits of gossip to him. These incidents were invariably very trivial but seemed important at the time. The late Vincent Marks of Gilford, who as a young man, lived with his grandfather, Paddy White, in Ballyreagh, recalled one such incident. It concerned a neighbour of theirs, Tommy Galloway, an ex-railway man, who lived in the house opposite Pipe's Lane on the Markethill Road.

In 1935, a group of tinkers came to the area and Tommy Galloway allowed them to camp in his field and graze their horses, while they were working for various locals. They undertook to pay him by making him a few tins

and cans. They stayed there for some time but one morning when Tommy got up he discovered that the tinkers had left during the night, without giving him any cans! He was quite cross and went and told Paddy White about it. Apart from the non-payment, he said that his chief concern was that John Alderdice would get to hear about it.

Paddy White appeared to be very sympathetic but, as soon as Tommy Galloway left White's to go home, Paddy White said to Vincent Marks, *"Get you on that bike, you boy ye, and go to Alderdice's this minute and tell him what happened."* So Vincent Marks brought the news to John Alderdice, and shortly returned with a rhyme that was circulating the area that very evening much to Tommy Galloway's amazement.

It was:

*"The tinkers came and took the grass,
With tin-ware they would pay,
But the lazy hallion lay in bed,
'Til the tinkers got away!"*

John Alderdice died around 1950.