

Growing up in Poyntzpass in the 1930s

By Tommy Morrow

I WAS born in the house that Peter Rooney lives in today, half way between Poyntzpass and Acton. My three sisters and a brother and I were born in that house. My father and mother were both born and brought up in the village of Acton, so Acton is as much home to me as is Poyntzpass or the 'Far 'Pass.' What have we got in Poyntzpass and Acton today in the 1990s? We have 21 businesses. 21 businesses may seem a lot for Poyntzpass. Well whenever you go to spend money, wherever you go to get a purchase or a service it is a business, wouldn't you agree?

Well today we've got 3 public houses, 3 general stores or grocers, 1 drug shop, 1 doctors office, 2 garages, 2 butchers, 1 electric appliance shop 1 hairdresser, 1 drapers shop, 1 tyre store, 1 insurance broke, 1 milk business, 1 post office, 1 tile supplies, 1 coal merchant, so that makes 21 businesses in Poyntzpass today. When I was a kid there was no estate where Aughan Park is today, there was no Hillside Crescent, no bungalows out the Bann Road opposite Hughie Downey's. There are now houses, new bungalows all over the country. There were none of them when I was a kid. Now maybe I'm wrong, I don't know but there seems to me to be a lot more people in Poyntzpass than there were in the 1930s.

How many businesses were there in Poyntzpass in the 1930s and 40s?

Well by any figuring and I could be 1 or 2 short, there were 82 businesses in this area then and as I say there were a lot less people. Why? I'll give you a run-down of the businesses there were then. There were 6 taxi owners — Felix Daly, Willie Bicker, Hugh Rafferty, Sam Hudson, Johnny Little and Davey Alexander — there were 2 blacksmiths' shops, 2 banks, there were 6 restaurants, 8 general stores, 1 doctors, 1 dentists (he came once a week); there was 1 post office; a court house with monthly Petty Sessions; there were 4 bootmakers, cobbler's shops; there were 4 drapers shops — Morrows, Clarkes, Watt's and Mrs. Loughlin's; there were 5 tailors; 2 joinery workshops. 3 coal yards/merchants; 10 small shops. 3 undertakers; 2 bicycle shops; 2 hen and egg merchants; 1 corn mill; 2 barbers shops; 1 concrete block maker; 1 fruit and vegetable shop; 3 milk businesses and 2 hotels.

Why have we only 20 businesses today instead of all those we had then?. Well there are several reasons. Number 1 is no support from the public - the people who live here. I don't know why people decide to come and live in a little 'one horse town' like this and they

jump in their car and they go to Banbridge, Newry or Portadown or wherever the heck they go, to buy nearly all they need for their households.

When my wife and I came back to this country, we decided that if we were going to live here, we were going to deal in Poyntzpass. Everything that we eat in our house is bought in Poyntzpass. Sure occasionally my wife like any other woman will be in Portadown and Newry and she'll bring home a cake or fish or something but if more support was given to the local store we would have more businesses.

You know, if you go down to Tom Clarke's or the VG or Danny Trainor's and you order your groceries, they'll pack them for you and they'll deliver them to your door.

But people decide to go to Newry. They save 10p here or 5p on something else, but if they count the cost of wear and tear of your car and petrol there's an awful difference in favour of the local shop.

Donal O'Neill here, the chemist over here, you can go to Donal if you're sick, your dog's sick, your cat's sick, your kids sick or whatever the heck is sick. Donal is as good as any doctor, and he's very obliging. He'll do anything for you at any time. Yet people will go into Donal for their drugs, but go to Banbridge or Newry for their toiletries and the rest of that sort of stuff. It's really not fair. When you live in a community, you should support the community.

The same thing applies to the care of the village. If you go into other villages they have flowers and trees. We need to take more care give more support to our community to make it better. I often hear people saying 'Ireland is the most beautiful country in the world' Well I've worked all over the world and I can tell you that there is beautiful scenery everywhere — in USA, in Canada, Australia, South America, the Middle East - there's beautiful scenery in them all, breathtaking. But Ireland is special to us all — it's where we come from.

Now my upbringing, I don't know what it was like. I don't know if I was 'brought up' at all. But you have to grow up some place and you've got to compare it with some place else. When I was growing up in the 'Pass, at one time I'd think I was the most fortunate kid in Ireland and later on the same day, I'd think I was one of the most unfortunate kids in Ireland.

I'll give you the reason for that. My mother died when I was ten. She died at childbirth. There were five other children — six altogether - 3 boys and 3 girls.

My father looked after us for about a year and after that he couldn't cope and the family was split up. My mothers' family took the three girls and my fathers' family took the three boys. My oldest brother and I were brought up in Acton, in the house where Mrs. O'Hanlon lives today. Well my grandfather, no disrespect to him, and my uncle, were strictly religious and I was about eleven when I came to live with them. That lasted about a year, through the influence of a few middling boys around Acton. One night I was out with a few of the boys, and I shouldn't have been, and when I got home, I got a thump on the ear and I got told off. I didn't like that and I left and I finished up in McComb's hay shed. I spent several nights in McComb's hay shed, until May Magill, who was about the same age as me, told her father, Eddie Magill, that I was living in the shed. Eddie called me down to the entry one day and told me that I could go into a wee house he owned in Chapel Street. We agreed on a rent of 9d a week (3p).

Now 9d a week in them days was something like a 'fiver' the day. But anyway I went into that wee house and there was nothing in it — it was empty, but I slept there.

Well things got worse and things got better. I got something to lie on. I got boxes to sit on. I stole wood and stuff to make fires. It became the house for the boys of the village for a few years. Then I got a little older and I went to work. Incidentally, I didn't go to school anymore after that — I left school when I was 12.

I remember Terry Murray and Tommy John McSherry and Mick Loy and all them going to school and I was in the field where my home is today, feeding hens. There was a row of hen houses and I fed the hens for Mrs. McComb. Now Billy McGivern, Eddie Welsh, John Meade and old Mrs Allen lived in a row of wee houses in Chapel Street. I used to go up to feed the hens and collect the eggs, and when I'd be coming back with a bucket of eggs, I'd stop for a chat with Billy McGivern. Billy would take an egg or two, Eddie Welsh would take 2 or 3, Mrs. Meade would take 2 or 3, and Mrs. Allen would take 2 or 3. So one morning I came along slowly giving them all eggs and Mrs. McComb was at the gate. She says: "Tommy, how many did you give away this morning?" Luckily for me she didn't know that Billy McGivern had asked me to get him a hen for boiling and I had pulled a hen's neck and hid it for him up the back of McComb's.

Anyway I got started to work. I was working about McComb's and about Tom Loughlin's and about Eddie Magills. Now there were three wee houses in Chapel Street, where John Trainor lives today. They

belonged to Mrs. Loughlin, Jim's grandmother. So I milked her goat for her and did all the little chores for her. I was the 'boy' while Hughie Downey was the ploughman. Mrs. Loughlin used to boil us eggs. She put the eggs in the kettle and when the water was boiling, the eggs were boiling. The kettle was for the tea. That was the way she boiled the eggs. But she always picked the smallest eggs she could get, the bigger ones were for sale. But anyway one of her houses became vacant. I had gone up in the world, I was about 14 and I moved into Mrs. Loughlin's house in Chapel Street, where John Trainor lives today. Later John bought the house. When I left in 1947 I owed John about a year's rent — I sent it to him from England.

Now there were a lot of great nights in that house. Terry Murray, Jim McComb, Seamus Magill, Dan Magill all the boys were in every night. Some nights I would come home and the house would be full. There was no furniture, no pots, no pans. I made the odd drop of tea some nights. It was rough - it wasn't easy, but I can laugh at it now. Many a night I went to bed and as I say I thought myself the most fortunate kid in Ireland. I lived alone. I could come in and go out when I liked. I could do as I liked, but then when the boys would say "It's time to go home to get the porridge" or "to get a drop of tea", I had nothing "to get", only what I stole and I was good at stealing! — when they went home, I thought myself the most unfortunate, for I had nobody.



Chicken soup!



Back (l. to r.): Oliver Mackle, Hamill Morrow, Bill Morrow.
Front: Bob Morrow, May Clowney, Tina Gavin, Gertie Wilson,
Cissie Morrow.

I'll tell you one of my stealing 'episodes'. One evening, I smelt a chicken boiling in a neighbour's house and I said "I'm going to boil a chicken" I had a big old pot that Seamus Magill had given me (I think his mother, God rest her, is still looking for it!) Anyway, I decided I would boil a chicken. At that time McComb's had in their back yard what they called a 'safe' the kind people kept meat or pigeons in before refrigerators. Mrs. McComb kept onions and potatoes and carrots and everything like that in it. Now in my house that night there were, I think, Dan Magill, Seamus Magill, Tom Canavan and Tommy McComb. I had a rule with them guys. They were all, a few years younger than me and if they wanted to come in to my house they had to bring something with them. I said "I'm going to make soup and you guys got to get the ingredients" (I didn't know what 'ingredients' were in them days). They said, "Where's the chicken?" I said, "Don't you worry about the chicken, I'll get the chicken."

So they went to get the ingredients out of McComb's safe and I went out the back of the house. I crossed the river and mind you there was a fair bit of water in it. I slipped quietly into Peter Gribben's hen house. I watched and listened and I opened the door and I got this hen by the head and wings to it couldn't make a noise and I out and across the river again. I sat on the steps with my feet soaking and I clubbed it. I Cut of

the head and feed and plucked it well and put it in the pot. The boys had brought the 'ingredients' so we put onions and carrots and everything in and put it on the fire. After a while it began to smell really good. And then after about half an hour it exploded! We forgot to open it up! We didn't know you had to clean it out. That was my first cooking of a chicken, one of poor Peter's hens.

After that there were lots of good feeds. The younger fellows, as I said, had to bring something to get in. They'd bring some tea or sugar or bread or eggs and mind you it wasn't easy stealing out of their own houses. There was a while when I didn't work, I was a 'hippie' I suppose standing at the corner and I didn't want to work. It was a phase I was going through. All kids go through phases like that.

Now at that time in the village there was Mrs Eddie Magill, Mrs Rafferty, Mrs John McComb, Sarah Conlon, Phil Monaghan's aunt in Acton. All those old ladies knew I was a little 'bum' round the corner not working, raggedy and skinny, a long haired hippie.

Now I could have gone into any of their houses — only when the men were away - for the men had less sympathy for me. Mrs. Magill would have come to the entry. I can see her yet about the corner, going round the entry, and she'd give me 'the nod.' And as soon as I would walk down and round the entry she would have a big fresh wheaten farl and butter and a

mug of tea ready for me. Mrs. McComb did the same. Rose and Sarah Conlon, Mrs Rafferty all did the same for me a thousand times. Another great woman who did the same for me, and she had very little, was Mrs. Mary Gribben, a lovely beautiful lady. But those women as I said wouldn't have given me anything if their husbands were around. The reason for that was, I was caught a couple of times in eating when husbands came home and their attitude was "That lazy son of a bitch he should be out working, a big strong fellow like that" — And they were right for I was big enough and strong enough and ugly enough to work. But I was rebelling against work, I was rebelling against society. I didn't care about religion or nothing else. I was just 'doing my own thing.'

I remember once during the early part of the war when things were rationed. One night we were sitting round the fire. We had boxes and bits and pieces for furniture and when the fire got low and fuel got scarce, the furniture went into the fire. Anyway there was a noise outside and we looked out. It was a big coal lorry full of loose coal. There were no street lights in them days but right at my door was this big lorry full of coal. The driver and his helper went into Sarah Conlon's. Sarah had a cafe at the time. So Joe Boyle, he was Sarah's nephew, he went over to see if they were sitting down — that they hadn't just gone in for a packet of Woodbines. They were sitting down. So everybody came out of my house and for the next half hour we

all solidly carried coal off that lorry. Well that load of coal was nearly gone down the steps into my back yard by the time them guys came out. Nearly the whole load gone. We just threw the coal down the steps. It was pitch dark and they came out, got into the lorry and took off. I don't know where they went but I'm sure they got an awful shock when they got to Portadown or Belfast or wherever they were going. We had a winter's burning.

After that I started doing a little bit of work with cattle. We all did. I 'walked' cattle with Jim Lennon, Jim Pat McSherry and others. You would have walked to Markethill with cattle and then walked back to the 'Pass.

Later on during the war I joined the 'Home Guard'. One night there was an awful bunch of boys in the house and Jim Lennon came to the door. He says "We've got to walk to Markethill with 15 head of cattle in the morning and you need to be ready at 5 o'clock." You see you had to walk the cattle slowly and let them feed on the way. So Jim says "Be up and ready at 5 o'clock." Now in the Home Guard they had given me a rifle and bullets as part of my outfit. So I said to Jim, "I'll be ready" and I said to the boys, "Right that's it, everybody out, I have to be up at 5 o'clock the morrow morning." But they passed no remarks — it was only about 9 o'clock at night.

I remember Terry Murray was sitting at the fire and Frank McCourt. I told them 3 or 4 times but nobody



Back : May Clowney, Hamill Morrow. Bob Morrow.
Front. sitting : Cissie Morrow, Gertie Wilson.



"Time to go, boys!"

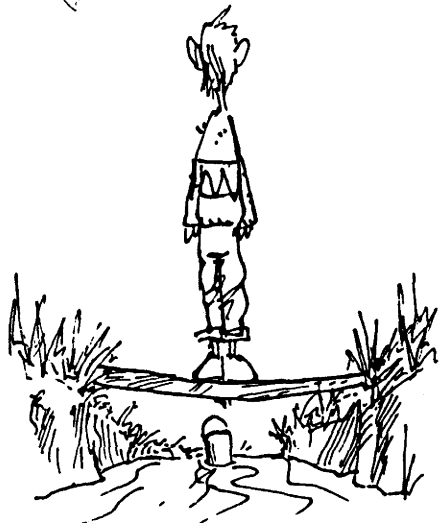
paid any attention so at last I said "Well I'm going to bed, shut the door behind you." I went up the stairs and loaded the rifle, I had no intention of going to bed, and I literally came down the stairs shooting. Well they went all roads and directions. McCourt got stuck in the fence and Terry ended up in the river. That was the end of me and the Home Guard.

In the early 40's there was a great craze for 'Pitch and Toss'. They started to play 'Pitch and Toss' in the ball alley and they 'pitched and tossed' there till dark and then they came to my house to do the 'two ups.' I made a few bob out of that.

I was working in McCombs' for a while — back and forward in McCombs. Mrs. McComb was very strict and maybe when I'd worked for her for a month or two we'd fall out for a while. I remember one time her husband John bought a new bucket, a brand new bucket for washing the byre. It was my job to wash the byre. Well that wee bridge across the river - the river was full right up to the bridge, so I went out. About the second or third day I had the new bucket. It was a big bucket, it came up to my waist and when I went to fill it in the river the force of the water took me bucket and all in. Away went the bucket down the river. Well here I am — what am I going to do? A brand new bucket. In them days a new bucket was 'something else.'

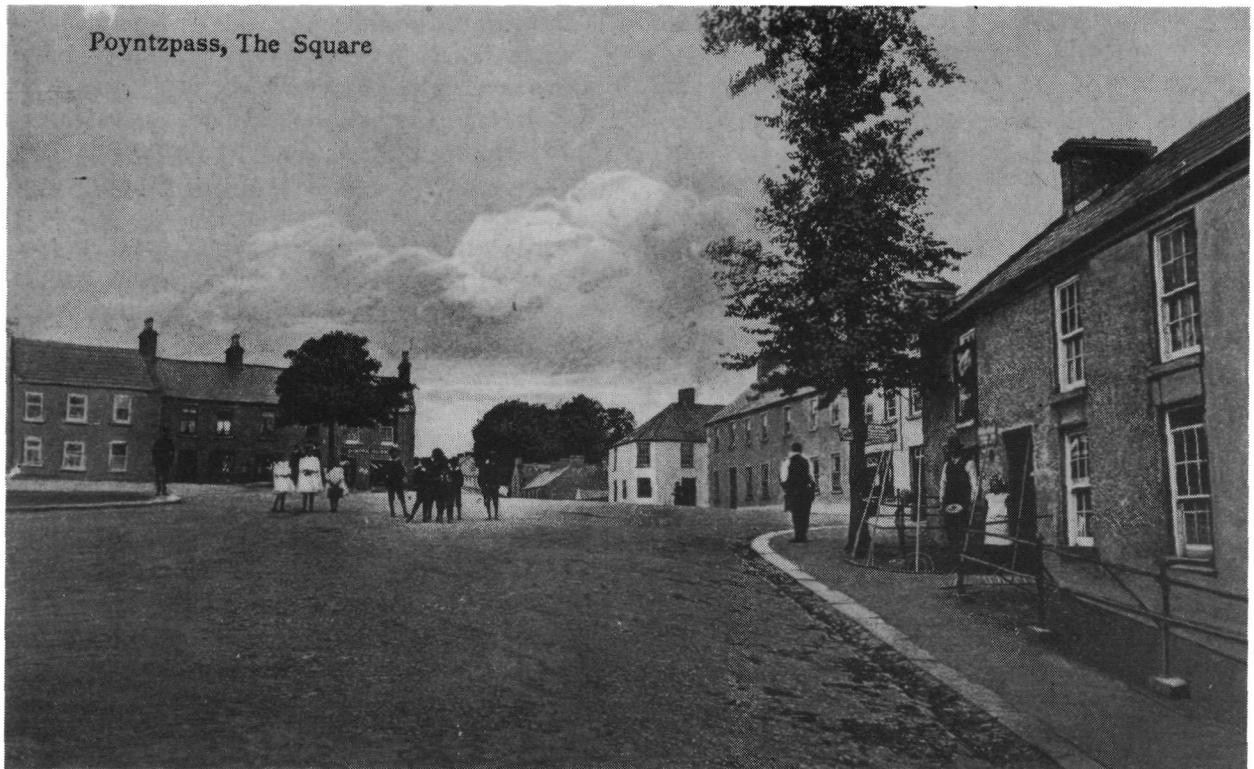
I remember when we were kids we used to gather blackberries. Gathering blackberries was easy - but to find something to gather the blackberries in was a really big problem. There was no such thing as plastic then. There was just those old galvanised buckets and every farmer put a wooden ass in them when they were done and when they were completely done out they were thrown in the hedge. So you could have gathered blackberries if you had something to gather them in and that's no joke - but a new bucket in them days was pricelss.

So here I was, I'd lost John McComb's new bucket and what was I going to do. Well the day before I was up at McComb's hay shed and I saw a nice new bucket outside Peter Gribben's house that Peter had bought in Harry Waddell's at the same time as John. So I crossed the river, walked right up through the bridge underneath and road and up to Peter's. Poor Mary was running around so I waited for her to go in and I took the bucket. I was back in the hay shed a couple of hours later and poor Peter comes to me and he says "Have you seen anybody about?" and I couldn't admit it so I said "No I haven't, what's wrong?" and Peter said, "They took my wee bucket."



"Away went the new bucket ..."

One night I was standing at the corner when Jim Pat McSherry came down the street whistling. Now there's another thing. You knew every man in the country in them days by his whistle. You never hear a man whistling now. Have they lost their whistles or what? But anyway Jim Pat came down to the corner and he says "I have a job for you." Now Felix Rafferty had bought a brand new pony's cart and he had it locked in the wee yard in Meeting Street. I was about 10 years



Poyntzpass, The Square, 1920s.

younger than Jim Pat but I was a big strong kid of 16 or 17. Jim Pat says "Follow me," so we went up Meeting Street and got over the gate into the yard. So anyway with my help he got a wheel off the cart and lifted it over the gate. We took it up the back loanin' and through the church graveyard. There was a hole in the hedge and there were nettles and stuff and that's where we put the wheel.

Now Jim Pat lived directly across the street from Felix and Felix was an early riser. He used to be up at 6 o'clock every morning to bring in the cows. So next morning when Jim Pat came out, Felix was sitting on the summer seat across the street. "There's some smart alec" says he "Has took the wheel of my new cart. Keep your eyes open." "I will indeed" says Jim Pat. Do you know, that got so bad the police were called in and because of that Jim Pat couldn't return the wheel. And eventually Felix had to buy a new wheel. The old wheel lay there for three years until one day Davy Cairns was in there for something and found it. That's the sort of 'joke' there was in them days.

I'LL TELL you a few more later. But things were rough in them days — because we had no money and not an awful lot of food. But when I left home and went abroad in the early 1950's, I saw poverty I couldn't imagine in places like Algeria and Ceylon. Compared

to them places we were well off but we thought it pretty rough at the time.

On a Friday and Saturday night you wouldn't want to leave the 'Pass. They were here in droves. Women from Ballyrgan, Glenn, Tyrone's Ditches, Tannyokey, and Drumbanagher, all in the 'Pass for their groceries — in ponies and traps or walking or on bicycles. On a Sunday morning there were ponies and traps everywhere - at the chapel, the Church of Ireland, at the Meeting and the Baptist church. All the ponies were tied up. Billy McGivern used to go up to the chapel wall with a bag and gather the manure for his garden. Lots of people did that.

We thought we were badly off but when you look back at it, we hadn't a worry in the world. We didn't know what money was. I feel sorry for kids now-a-days, they have so much pressure on them. We had nothing and we wanted nothing because nobody else had anything. In my case it was my own fault. I had Hamill Morrow and Robert Morrow there, and I could have gone in anytime but I wouldn't. Sometimes I would sneak in when they were away. On Sunday's after the service in the Baptist Church, they always went straight to Clowney's in Acton for their dinner and when they went up the Chapel Hill, I went into their back yard and into the house - the door was never locked in them days. I would have a great feed of buns



On a visit home in 1950 (for Bob Morrow's funeral) Tommy Morrow, Jack McComb, James Shevlin and Tommy McComb.



Tommy Morrow with Frank Lennon and daughter Mary, 1956.

and cakes for Mrs. Morrow was a great baker.

In the 1930's there were very few wirelesses around the 'Pass. I remember Rev. Dodds had one and Canon Nelson and they used to get their batteries charged every week in Daly and Griffith's Garage in Church Street on a Friday. They were very great with Fr. Gallagher and many a time the three of them would be talking at the garage door for an hour or two. Now old Joe Lennon was a great character. He knew the Bible from start to finish and he used to debate religion on a Saturday night with the preachers in the street.

Well one day the three clergymen were standing at the garage having a chat when old Joe came down the street. Well he put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and took out a chew of pigtail tobacco and put it in and he said to the clergymen "Will you answer me a question, men?" "If we can, Joe, we will." "Well", he said, "If the news came over on that wireless of yours, that the Devil was dead — would you fellas get the brew?"



Tommy Morrow and Kevin Loughlin (1950).

9 o'clock at that time and they'd come down to the corner. It was too early to go home and there'd be a great night's crack.

They tolerated me there because I was a sort of little orphan and an errand boy. I'd stand in at the back and it was sheltered, but when they'd had a few pints and had their pipes going it wasn't a good idea to be "down wind" of them.

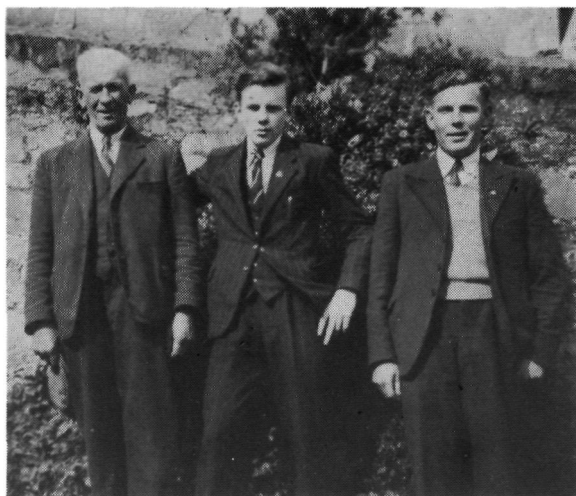
I remember one particular night that there was a great bit of crack and at the end of it all, they began to go off in ones and twos. Eventually there was just Paddy Watters, Hugh Rafferty and me. (Paddy could tell some lies — like myself). Well as we were parting Paddy put his hand on my shoulder and he said, "Young Morrow, you could get an education at the 'Pass corner, that would take you anywhere in the world." You know I thought of that many's a time in many's a place.

I remember one day Francie McSherry, Brian Gribben and me were sitting on the wall at the river in Chapel Street. Well Hughie Downey was working in

"If the Devil died — would
You fellas get the brew?"

As I said there were some great characters around at that time.

When I was a kid I used to stand at the corner with them characters — Eddie Magill, Hugh Rafferty, Paddy Watters, Billy McGivern and an awful bunch of them old timers. Usually a young buck wouldn't have stood with them. A lot of them chewed tobacco and if you were told to go, you went, for they'd think nothing of spitting in your eye. It didn't matter how cold or wintry the night was, they were at one of the four corners — which ever one was sheltered. They would go up to McCavanaugh's pub on a Saturday night for a couple of bottles of porter. The pubs closed at



Billy McGivern, Maurice McSherry and Tommy John McSherry (1948).

Tom Loughlin's but he was going down to Mick Canavan's. We were cocky young fellows of 15 or 16 and we thought Hughie was an old man. So we made some smart remark to him. Anyway he chastised us but went on his way. A while later he was coming back again and we thought we'd "take the mickey" out of him again. We were fast runners - or so we thought, so we said some other smart remark to Hughie. Well he came across the street and we ran. We thought we were smart but we were stupid - we ran, into the Ball Alley and we couldn't get out. He came down and caught us one by one and threw each of us head first into the river and he walked about his business.

Now there were four brothers Willie, Henry, Barney and Davey McSherry lived in Tullynacross. Henry and Barney worked at quarrying and did small road repairs. They used to go to Hugh Rafferty's pub for a drink at dinner time. Anyway the story was told, I heard it a hundred times, that one day a young fellow from the South of Ireland came walking into the 'Pass. He met Henry McSherry at about Joe Hall's and he said to him, "I'm travelling through. Is there any chance of a bit of grub? Do you know anybody looking any work done? Any chance of a day's work?"

Well Henry was quick to see the possibility of 'taking a hand' out of him and he says "Yes, do you see that big man standing at the door of the pub?" (Hugh was an usual standing at the pub door with a white apron on him). "Yes" says your man. "Well" say Henry "Go down to him and tell him I sent you down for his 'round square'" "Who is that man?" says the young fellow "He's Hugh Rafferty" says Henry. "And who will I say sent me?" "Tell him, Henry McSherry sent you."

So the young fellow went down to Hugh and he says "Henry McSherry has just given me a job and he sent me down to get a drink — a bottle of stout and a glass of whiskey." Well Hugh loved a bit of crack and he would have talked all day. So after a while the fellow said "Give me a couple of packets of Woodbines and I'll have another bottle of stout."

All the time he was keeping an eye on the street. Now Henry couldn't understand what was happening. So after about half an hour he walked down to the pub. When he saw Henry coming the young fellow says to Hugh "I'd better go and make a start. Here's Henry coming, he'll settle up."

He met Henry at the door "Well" says Henry "Did you get the 'round square?'"



"I got the round - you can do the squaring!"

"I got the round" said the young fellow, "You can do the squaring."

Do you remember Arthur "Dusty" Miller? Well Dusty used to work with old John Dinsmore. Old John kept a lot of chickens and he used to sell them at Christmas time. Anyway one night he forgot to lock

the henhouse and Dusty stole the whole lot and put a notice on the henhouse door.

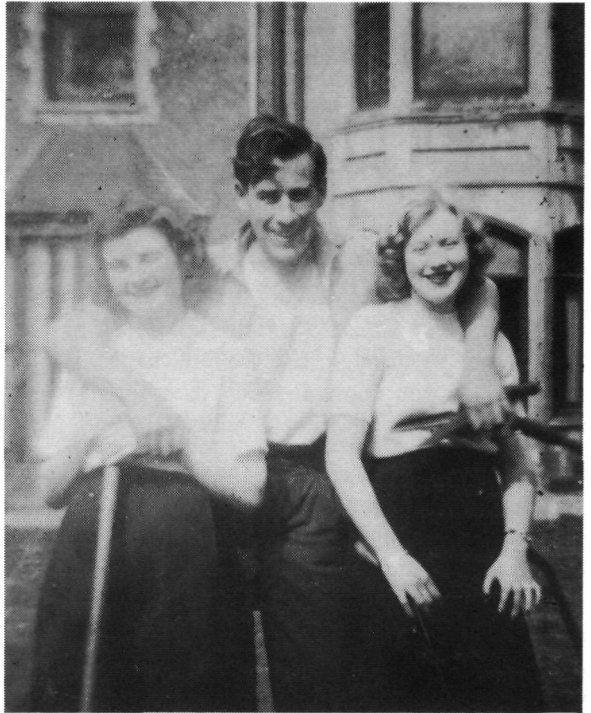
*"Good morning John,
You hens are gone,
Your cock will crow no more.
You went to bed,
You sleepy head,
And forgot to lock the door!"*



John McComb was a very quiet man. He bought a wee 'Prefect' car and he kept it up in Meeting Street in Joe Harcourt's yard. His sons Bill and Jim used to 'steal' it to go courting to Clare. So one evening Paddy McDonald, (he was in Best's at the time) and Bill McComb were taking the car to go somewhere and they told me to come up with them and "keep dick." I opened the door and Bill got into the car. Paddy was standing at the corner watching down the street and he shouts "My God, here's John McComb coming." Bill run the car back in and I closed the door and ran. Bill hadn't time to put the hand brake on and just as John came round the corner the car knocked the door off the shed and came running out onto the street. That took a lot of explaining. John himself couldn't drive, so he came down to the corner and got a few of us (I had got round to there by that time) to push the car back into the shed. They had to put concrete blocks behind the wheels for none of them knew how to put on the handbrake!

Jack McComb, John's son was another character. One of Jack's jobs was to wash the byre and I had to help him. John was always insisting that it had to be done better. We had to carry that water from the river. One day Jack said to me, "We'll do it really well today, We'll show him. You carry the first ten buckets and I'll carry the next ten." I agreed with that. So when I was coming in with the last of my ten buckets, I met him coming out through the door. So I said "Where are you going?" He said, "If you carry anymore water you'll wash the byre away!"

One day we were gathering spuds for Clowney's up the Connywarry Lane, and it came on a very wet day. So we brought the spuds home and we finished up in Acton ceilying around Clowney's. Pat McCavanaugh's, I don't know where myself and Tommy John McSherry. Well we were heading down Acton Street and it was pitch dark and the rain started again, bucketing down. Andy Heak was standing at the door and he said "Come on in, you'll be soaked" So we went in. Mrs Heak was sitting in the corner sewing and she had a big pot of rice on, and it looked great. So after a while she told Andy to stir the rice. I was sitting up to the fire and I said I would stir the rice. So I stirred the rice and I picked up little bits of slack and dabbed them in the rice. By the time I had finished I must have had two handfuls of slack in the rice. Finally Mrs. Heak finished her sewing and got up. She put out plates on the table and a big jug of milk. I said



From left : Mollie Nolan (an old flame!), Tommy Morrow and his cousin Winnie McCulla.

to Tommy John "We'll have to be going." Mrs. Heak said "Not at all, wait till you have some rice, there's plenty for us all." But I couldn't stay — I didn't want to be eating the slack. Tommy John cursed me all the way to the 'Pass, for we were starving and he would have loved a plate of rice. A few days later I met Andy Heak. All he said was "Morrow, you're a bad article!"

I remember another time we were thinning turnips for Loughlins. There was Kevin Loughlin, Tommy Loy, Tommy John McSherry, Tom Burns and me. At dinner time in those days it used to be for who could eat the most potatoes. They threw out a big pot of potatoes and butter and you ate till you could eat no more. Ten or twelve potatoes would have been common enough. After a feed like that you weren't fit to move, never mind thin turnips. Now Tommy Loy was an awful man for the baking soda. He suffered from heartburn so after this big feed of potatoes he wanted baking soda. So Kevin said to me "Go in and get him some baking soda - put a couple of spoonfuls into a glass of water." So I put four or five spoonfuls in the glass of water and I brought the spoon and the baking soda out to the field. Tommy put another couple in and do you know it nearly killed him. He blew up like a balloon. It was no joke. We can look back on it now and laugh, but it wasn't funny at the time.

After the war things got very bad. There was no work and less money so eventually Tom Burns and me

decided to go to Scotland to the coalmining. So in March 1947 Tom and me set off for Dalhousie coalmine, near Edinburgh. Tom came home after four days but I didn't really return to the 'Pass again till 1988 — 41 years.

I stuck at the coal mining for a while. After that I got a job as "Head-cow man" for a man n Coventry and then I worked for a few years in Birmingham Co-op Dairy. Then on 6th February, 1952 — the day King George VI died — I set sail for Australia. From then until 1988, I travelled and worked in construction all over the world. I spent a few years in Australia, and a lot of time in USA and Canada. I worked in 26 states of the USA, particularly up North in Alaska. I married in 1957 and after that my wife and children travelled with me. I worked for three years in Israel and for two years in Venezuela in South America. But all that time I had one ambition and that was to come back to the 'Pass. There's no place like home - what is it they say about home? "The place where you grumbled the most and were treated the best."

I didn't come home because Ireland is the most beautiful country in the world — there are other places just as beautiful. I came home because of the love and respect of those old ladies 50 or 60 years ago. It took a long time to fulfil my ambition but in 1984 I bought McComb's field where I used to feed the hens. I built a house there and in 1988, I returned with my family "to my roots" in the 'Pass.



Tommy Morrow and Jack Purdy, members of Poyntzpass Conservative Flute Band (1946).