

Callan Memories

Carmel Kealy

Callan and the surrounding districts were all part of Lady Annely's estate. Each year, on the 29th September, "Gale Day" we got our demand note for rent and taxes, it came as sure as day and it had to be paid or sent in by the 1st November. Mr. Maude would come out to the town hall, he was the estate agent and a very considerate man, he would take for the ½ year, with a promise to pay by March. The land from Callan to Bowers Wood was all her's until the land commission took over in 1904, due to the plan of campaign, but she held on to the town. If the poor could not pay the rent the big neighbour next door would buy over your claim and collect 2/- each week. Our house and 2 acres were within the town boundary. When we wanted to improve the buildings we had to buy out from the estate and we had to pay as much, as when invested would bring in what the rent was worth. We did not want to improve the property as there were never any repairs done for us. It meant big expense in very bad times. Besides paying rates, people had to pay Borough Rates to the town commissioners for cleansing and lighting and 1p in the £1 to pay the debt on Waterford Bridge and before that there was a levy for New Ross Bridge. People were very poor at that time, but had to pay this way.

There were all kinds of trades and crafts in Callan. Some grand work was done in the Parish Church, the Porch and Confessionals, also work in the Convent Chapel and a stand in the front hall of the Convent for a statue with all the work done by the Holden family whose descendants are still here. The Clooney family were great painters and did free hand sign writing and decorations. Coach builders, wheel wrights, black smiths, coopers, saddlers, (I remember Joe McLean and Dooleys), several dressmakers all got plenty of work to do, as there were several big houses (Gentry they were called). They employed groomsmen, herdsman, plowmen, etc. and also servants for upstairs and downstairs.

In the mid 1800s, the Great Southern Railway wanted to run a line to Carrick-on-Suir through Callan, but the business men thought it would destroy their businesses and said Inisnag and

Kells would be a much better line. At that time there were plenty of ways of travelling, by horse and car, there were three Livery and Posting establishments with carriages, Cover Cars, Long Cars, Side Cars and Hearses for funerals. All had a plentiful supply of horses for driving and hiring out to farmers who could not afford to keep two horses, so at plowing and hay and corn cutting it was cheaper to hire a horse. They also supplied horses to Bianconi, as a horse could get a loose shoe or a stone in the hoof and could not afford to wait to have it remedied. There was Gormans later Washes (Jenny Hourigan was a Walsh), Kealys and Casses. At that time the hearse was decorated with black plumes on each corner, but if it was an unmarried female or a child, then white plumes were used. At that time too, people were nursed and died and waked at home. The priest would come to the house to celebrate Mass and all the friends, relatives and neighbours would call and offer sympathy. Graves were dug by neighbours. There were always great visiting picnics and shooting parties. Kealy's Long Car, which would carry 12 to 14 passengers, got plenty of work during the shooting season, to Garryricken and Ballyknocken shooting lodge which is on the slopes of Slieve-na-mon. It was a beautiful place with natural waterfall, rustic bridges and lovely flowering shrubs, etc. One could get permission to visit there on certain days from agent A. G. Davis, Kilkenny. Kealy's had a Day Car to Kilkenny. It used to be the 9 o'clock car, but the driver was a very obliging man and would wait for a customer. People used to ask "when is the 9 o'clock car going Johnnie", it very seldom left at 9 o'clock. It was called the Day Car. All the gentry hired cars regularly. We have the accounts books with orders from Lord Clifton, Lord Desart, Major Gregory, Poes, Harleypark, Major J. Poe, Graigue House, Samuel Lane, Shipton House, Major Grant, Hilton Marquis of Ormonde, the Augustinian Friars who travelled all of Kilkenny and a lot of Tipperary doing the Quest. The long car was used for taking the choir on day outings and also the altar boys to some historic place.

There was a tannery in West Street owned by Mr. Patrick Cody who engaged a lot of workers. In 1912 Mr. Pilworts bought it for a corn store and Mr. Cody managed it for some time. They sold Flour, Wheatmeal, Indian Meal and all Cattle Meals, Cotton Cake and Oil Cake. There was lots of employment in the

fall of the year when the thrashing was done. The farmers brought in the corn and it had to be transported to Grennan Mills by horse and car. They had three or four horses and as many car men.

In the livery stables the coach men were kept busy grooming the horses, polishing the harness and looking after the cushions. They also made oil covers to cover the passengers knees to keep them from the cold and rain. Blay calico used to be steeped in parafin oil for a week, then dried and painted with Brunswick Black and lined with dark warm flannel. All the cars had to have lamps lit by candles. The lamps for the carriages and hearses were very fancy.

At that time there was very little water or sewerage pipes. There was a town pump in Green Street near the A.I.B, another near the Creamery in West Street, the Abbey well supplied the people of Bridge Street, it had lovely pure clear cool water. Every night people had to get a supply of water for the following day with buckets and cans. In fact it was a great meeting place to exchange news and the boys and girls sat around the walls singing. There were beautiful singers in Callan. I remember when I came to Callan, going down to the river with my aunt to lift water for the cows and hear the singers as their voices floated up the river in the twilight and felt lonely for my own family. There was nine of us in it and we often sat on the wall around our house and sang.

I forgot to mention a great sculptor, Edward O'Shea, Monumental & Architectural Sculptor, whose business was established in Callan by his father Mr. P. O'Shea and taken over by Edward. Medals were awarded in Dublin in 1882 and in Cork in 1883 also in Boston the same year. He exhibited Celtic Crosses in London in 1885 and also in 1888 and got medals of merit. He moved his business to Station Road Kilkenny. He worked on Black Kilkenny Marble and Blue Limestone. He owned quarries in Bonnet's Rath, Holden's Rath and Ballydonnel, he also quarried some in Bohernoe. He made a fireplace for the Bank of Ireland. In Kilkenny he derived water power from the Nore. In all he employed about 50 men. He still kept his works in Callan and Mr. Pat Molloy served his time to him. Pat Molloy opened his yard near Skerrie's Castle and was very successful.

There were chandlers down Mill Street who made candles and

rush lights. The rushes were dried and dipped in tallow a few times and hung up to dry, they were called $\frac{1}{2}$ dips. There is a rush light holder in Ignatius Rice's House. Sugar stick was also made in Mill Street. It was made with sugar and treacle and called "Peggie's Leg".

There was a mill down at the end of Mill Street which was worked by a grand old gentleman who wore a long white beard. He was very tall and stately looking. He also wrote poetry one of which is the following.

When the miller leaves the mill
 And the dripping wheels are still
 When at night this humble heart prays fervently
 Lord when Life's short round is over
 And my heart shall beat no more
 Grant that with Thee I may rest eternally.

He was one of the last groups of day scholars at the Augustinian Convent school. He wrote many more poems. He had a son a priest in Mountmellary. He was a grand old man and a great favourite, as also was his son Dick who used to play the violin and do Irish Step Dancing. His granddaughter and her mother lives in Dublin. James Cody was married to a grand niece of Charles Hickham.

Before the creamery came to Callan, the butter was made at home when the cows were in full milk in April and May. The butter was packed in firkins (small wooden tubs with fitted lids) and brought to the market. I used to hear my mother say that my grandmother used to walk the 12 miles to Kilkenny with a firkin on her head. She would start off about 5 o'clock in the morning to get to the market in time and before the sun would be full up. If she did not sell she would leave the contents there as it would not hold in the heat of the day. It was also the same with the eggs as they were forbidden during lent and eggs would be plentiful. So that is why you would get eggs for a penny and butter for nothing at all. They sometimes filled a ferkin and buried it in the shade of the house in a hole packed with straw. It could then be used in the winter when cows were dry. Butter did not keep too well, as all the butter milk should be washed out clean, if any was left in it, it would get sour and destroy the butter.

Where the Civic Guards houses are in West Street, there was once a distillery (Maher's). There was also a house there called "Ivy Lodge" owned by a family by the name of Curran. One of the male members of this family became a teacher in Portlaw and one of the female members married a Chief of Police who joined the Civic Guards when the change came in 1922. When Currans left it was bought by Canon Carrigan, P.P. to be used as a curates house. Where the curates house is now, was owned by Mrs. O'Mahony. There was no water for cattle at this house, so water had to be drawn from the river. The P.P. made a swap and Mrs. O'Mahony got a house by the river where her cattle had a plentiful supply of water.