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HANNAHSTOWN HISTORY STORIES

SOME HISTORY OF TORNAROY RIVER FROM TORNAROY BRIDGE UPWARDS

No 1 on map *If you walk up river about three hundred metres from Tornaroy bridge, You will come to an area on the right side of the river bank which is relatively level, in the nineteenth and early Twentieth century. This was an area where un-baptized babies were buried. This information was passed on to me by the **Late, John Hannon. R,I,P,***

No 2 on map *If you continue up river for approx another five hundred metres you will come to an old ruins of what was a homestead, set back about fifty metres on raised ground on your left hand side, Now this was a thatched house which was burned down in the late nineteen hundreds with the loss of life, which then became the scene of a murder, How this was discovered was when the law of the time arrived, they discovered a severed leg outside one of the window's, this person was trying to escape the inferno and their leg was hacked off, and there was no burning to the limb, but the body was burned inside. (I think maybe this information may be confused with the hatchet field on blackmountain). This information was passed on to me by the **Late John Hannon R,I,P,***

No 3 on map *If you continue up river for maybe five or six hundred metres, you will come to an old broken down dam, this dam would be built around mid-nineteen hundreds, Say maybe eighteen and fifty's, This dam fed water to linen mills and flex mills in Belfast At that time there was an old coach road which ran from about one hundred metres on right before Tornaroy bridge and up the river valley to the dam, This was used by the Jentry and mill owners who were accompanied by their man servants who prepared their picnics while the squires had sail boat races on the dam, These boats would be replicas of famous sailing ships of the time*. This information was passed onto me by the **late John Hannon R,I,P,** (Whose farm included over half of the river section, for 150 years plus; * These were magnificent looking boats; I have seen these as an old uncle of my father had two of these which were kept very high up on the old open fire chimney breast so us children could not get our hands on them,) **This***

No5 on map Also the third field on the right along the river from Tornaroy bridge on John Hannon's land is known as the football field, football was played here from the 1930's or earlier to late 1950's

Also in the 1940's to the late 1950's Aeroplanes were used to fertilise Divis, land owned at that time by Kennedy's The planes landed and took off in the field on right just through the entrance gate of the National thrust,

Marked on map **1** / river marked by bending black line on left, **2**/ Coach road marked by second smother black line 2nd right, **3**/ Water race to Belfast marked by black dots 3rd right

Also marked on map, **No 1** encircled burial area, **No2** ruins of old burned house, **No3** encircled old dam area which fed mills in Belfast, **No4** The yard, **No5** the football field,

DAIRY YARD

Located about two hundred metres on left (towards country) from bottom of Divis road is a laneway which gives access to this property,

At one time Hannahstown dances were held on these premises, problie early nineteen hundreds up to maybe the nineteen fifty's (if anyone knows the dates I would be happy to make corrections) people were transported from Belfast by hackney carriage early on and later by bus possibly the old U,T,A,

This information was given to me by the **late Ernie Shannon RIP.**

Also these premises were the centre of a thriving diary business which spanned the early part of the **nineteen hunreds,**

THESE MEMORIES BELOW SUPPLIED BY ROSE ROGAN, who lived in the yard from 1940's to 1950's

The following is a brief history of the early owners and workers in this yard, On Christmas day Nineteen and seventeen, Paddy Dean from Tornaroy road, Upper Springfield road, married Catherine Neeson from Budore, He bought a

small holding of Henry Burns, also Dornans small farm, and he got a small piece of land that James Neeson, his father in law owned at Budore, In nineteen and thirty four he sold all three small holdings and bought McGowans large farm at Tornaroy where he ran a thriving milk farm, he had a large number of cows, and also had a milk run in Belfast for many years, many men worked for him in this yard, his main man was David McGarry, who married Catherine Neesons sister Isabella Jane Neeson, David done all his ploughing and harvesting, There was one medow at the bottom of Divis road called the Boolie field pronounced boalya, it was the best hay field in the country, Paddy Jordan married Cassie Dean and they settled at the white pillars at the end of Divis road, they moved there from the Rock, Paddy Dean owned a farm at the top of the lane down to the yard, he also owned the quarie at Catcairn, They would get a butcher in once a year to butcher the pigs for market, There was large outhouses and hay lofts, in later years they ran dances here and people came from Belfast and all around the country to these dances, When the war broke out Paddy let the refugees from Belfast convert the out houses to live in, Mat Press and his wife and family were among the first of the refugees brought to Hannahstown, when their homes were bombed in nineteen and forty two, other ones were housed in the school, Mat Press was asked by Paddy Dean to fix up the out houses and so about five families lived in them, there was Mrs Bates, McGookiens, Madines, McBrides, McGoran, Boylans, Duggans ,Maskey, Sadler, These family's changed around some, In nineteen and forty five Paddy Dean sold the Yard as it was known and farm to John Shannon, who continued the diary business for some time, eventually ready use bought the land and yard, Then a family called Hopper's Then Ray Robinson R,I,P, was the next owner, then Paul Young, who is the present owner, After Paddy sold the yard, his three sons bought lorries and went to work for Bamford's dairy's **This information was passed on By Rose Rogan who lived with her parents in the yard from the age of one year**

Also of note, there was a plane crash at Catcairn in 1943, also a plane crash on Divis in 1950,

The following is a brief description of the yard and diary

Mr Jim Neesson

These memories are from years 1940 through 1950's

Recently my sister Rose quizzed me as to what I knew or rather remembered about tornaroy. The following writings may contain some aspects of memories tinted through rose tinted coloured spectacles. Histories of areas if required to be technical historic documents sometimes turn out to be bland. I prefer the mode of the senachie as this is what legends are made of and far more entertaining.

Tornaroy is that area from hamills house now Joan and Danny Mulholand's residence to near Catcairn. The start is at what we called the back road, over the bridge and on up to at least the cottages on this road.

From the Springfield road there was Gregg's road to the junction of the back road and Diis road. The residents of this back road in my childhood days were the families of Ernie Shannon, John Hannon Davy McGarry, Jimmy Magee and John McGarrity. Mrs McGarrity had a sort of shop selling lemonaid. On Gregg's road lived James McLarnon and the Henry families and on the Springfield Rd and junction of Gregg's Rd lived Paddy and Cassie Jordan. At McLarnon's back was the "PUMP" the only source of water for these nearby houses. I always dreaded going for water as a city boy I never returned with a full bucket but managed to wet socks and shoes!!!

At the back of McLarnons but facing the back road was the home of Annie Jameson. On up the road on the lefthand side was a relative newcomer by the name of Kane's and just past this was McCartneys. Almost opposite were the cottages of Browns, Boylan and Paddy Gribben. On the Springfield Rd above Paddy Jordan's was the abode of Dan and Mary Flanagan. The next entrance was what became known as the yard and above that was the farm of Adam Brown.

From I was six weeks old until the age of five I was resident in the yard as the fostered son of the Dean Family who owned the farm known as the yard.

My sister Rose also resided in the yard as the fostered daughter of Jenny and Davy McGarry. I tell this because my earliest memory is of Rose and I and Laddie the dog in a photograph at the top of the lane into the yard. At the top of the lane lived Paddy Gordon and down in the yard were a number of "tenant's" houses. These were refugees of WW 2, and local families and became the back bone of the parish.

The farm had been owned by McGowans, then Paddy Dean who sold it to John Shannon. Coincidentally McGowans and then John Shannon were both butchers while Paddy Dean was a dairy farmer.

I will change track and remember fondly the Tornaroy of old. I believe the naming of families gives context to my memories. When I left to live in the City I then spent all of my school holidays at Tornaroy.

Let's start with the river, emanating from the top of Divis and ending in Dunmurry, it held for me the great attraction of two swimming pools. One just above the bridge was natural and had a rock from which we jumped or dived from. Well up the river Johnny Hannon constructed a virtual dam with barrels in it so that he could release the water to its natural depth when not in use. Johnny was an adept swimmer and may have played water polo with Cathal Brugha club at the Falls baths. Above this was the "Rabbit borrows" where there appeared to be hundreds of wild rabbits surviving in their natural habitat. On many Sundays there came Model aeroplane enthusiasts from the City and it was wonderful to watch the aeronautics displayed by these little machines.

On the lower stretches of the river just below the Springfield Road was the legendary "Rumbling Hole." This was, we were told a bottomless whirlpool and no one was to go near it at any time. Local legend had it said that a cow fell into the river at this point and Frank Grogan tied a rope around himself and entered the water to rescue the cow. Having secured the rope to the cow's head he swam to the bank and with the help of Ginger John McQuillan pulled the animal to safety. Naturally we went near this spot but not into the river.

Another great memory was picking Blaeberryes in the bushes on the Divis Road, taking them home and Jenny adding sugar and milk, I must have eaten millions

every summer. They may well have been blueberries I don't really know. Sadly they do not grow there anymore.

We, all the children, went on long walks and one in particular sticks in my mind and that was to Lucy McCartney's shop. We walked up the Springfield Road past Theodore Dickson's. Turned left at the Hairpin Bend and then up the lane to Lucy's shop. The prize for this long walk was to buy McGowan's Toffee, this was somewhat of a delicacy in those Spartan days.

Every person or family I mentioned earlier has their own story in my mind. Paddy Gordon who owned the Catcairn Quarry had the nickname Cromwell from where this came I do not know, lived in the lane into the yard. I was told he was a former coalminer who ended up owning the Quarry. A formidable man I remember who maintained there was coal to be mined at Hannahstown but it obviously never worked out. The exact location was at the river where the road up to the television mast is now it was the property of the Misses Morgan next door to Herbie Priors yard.

The yard as I remember it started at the garage on the right hand side which lead to the row of houses and ended at Matt Press's house. Here was a covered entrance sort of joined to the Dean family home. This lead to the dairy, byres and other outhouses. I can remember a massive vat in which the pig food was boiled. Another character was a tramp who visited the area called Davy McIlory. He was offered tea and bread but at times would throw it away in a bad temper, appearing very ungrateful. We have to speculate he was an old soldier and had suffered brain damage in the war.

At the top of the lane on the opposite side was a hay meadow called "The Bolya" I have never been able to spell this, as I have never saw it in written form and do not know the origin. I have a suspicion that it is Anglicised version of an Irish word. This may well have come from the Booleys in ancient times. This being an encampment of shepherds.

Anyway the cutting off hay, the shaping of rucks and then the ride on the Ruckshifter were all part of glorious summers. The tea and bread were great feeding. Watching Serena McGarry driving the wee Ferguson Tractor was also one of the highlights. The annual sports day was something different in the competition of Football, running and especially the Tug of War. The rivalry

between Hannahstown, The Rock and Aldergrove was intense and sometimes not all that sporting.

Paddy Dean was from the Catcairan area on the Springfield Road. Their family consisted of Hugh, Paddy, Cornelius (Nealy)Cassie, Ellen and Alice. Hugh emigrated at an early age to America. Alice died, I believe, in the Great Flu at a young age. Ellen married Mick Mulvenna, Cassie married Paddy Jorden, Nealy married Mary Mynes, and lived in the home place for many years. Nealy was employed as a roadman, maintaining the Springfield Road and the recesses on that road. The recesses, which seem to have become overgrown, were where the road menders broke the rocks to pebbles or screenings for repairs. I don't think Nealy broke to many rocks but he could talk about it.

Cassie Neeson married Paddy Dean. Jenny Neeson married Davy McGary. Minnie Neeson married Dan Liddy. Gerard Neeson married Sarah McIlhenny.

These memories were supplied by Jim Neeson

The Dairy Yard,

This dairy was equipped with all mod cons of the time, such as milking machines, sterilising facilities, also it had pumped water from a well on the premises, it also had flush toilets for the dairy hands, which would have been virtually unheard of at the time

*This information was given to me by the **late Ernie Shannon RIP.***

*Also in the late fiftys – early sixty's on these premises there was a number of family's some of which were occupied by the, **Mrs Moore, McAlleace family, Bates family, Shannon's, Press, Fallon, Mathews family,** lived adjacent to the yard, This would have been a desirable location back then, Other activities in this yard included, Meal store, Hay barn, Pig pens, Barn- loft & stables below, Store yard, Tubridy's grey hound pen, Pig house, back byre, Milk diary, boiler house, Stables, Diary house for washing milk bottles, Garage, Well, More stables, Main farm dwelling, Main cow byre, Calf shed, Manure yard, Main yard, Silo, Some of the information was supplied by Sean Shannon, Rose Rogan, and Billy Totten, more to follow hopefully,*

Tornaroy Road,

The premises which I now live at on Tornaroy Rd, had a dairy which I think was Shannons, Then Hopper's, when I was digging in preparation for my building I unearthed an old Alfalavelle vacuum pump and two milking buckets complete,

Englishtown where Hannahstown chapel stands, I was engaged in the preparation of the ground for the new extension, after demolishing the old parochial house which was built about 1896, I then began to demolish the old house/garage, when I removed the roof I found a hidden room complete with a little fire place, no one I spoke to knew anything about this room. Then as I worked on digging foundations I found another floor level about three foot below the floor level that we knew, I also came on a threshold stone which you can see going to the right hand isle in Hannahstown Church, where I removed this stone the walls around it had very clean and precise cut stone build, I think this may have been the old parochial house from about 1826, Also on my dig I un earthed old heating system that was sunken below ground level this was located near the grotto,

The following are some snippets of ancient history in the hannahstown and surrounding aria, Please feel free to elaborate, correct, or share on any subject.

Tornaroy clay fort, (where ?) they say that the hay harvested of this fort in the year of 1807, was swept away to Turnacrumble ? about one mile distance, by some invisible force, can anyone elaborate? ???,

Tornaroy standing stones, in the hills above Tornaroy, on one holding there stood a standing stone two foot six inches high by one foot six inches broad by one foot thick (-750m x-350m x-300m)

On the mountain in the same town land stood a three stone Colum's one of which is broken down and the other two which are lying down, one measure's 7Ft x 3Ft x 2Ft-2 In (2-200 m x -920 m x -630) the other measures 6Ft x 3Ft x 2Ft- 2 in (1-8m x -920m x -630), It is of local opinion that they were three finger stones cast there by the two Giant's, But what is clear is, that there is no rock in this area to match these stone's.

The gentle bush

In Tornaroy, on the holding of, widow Magaw there stands an ancient thorn, locally known, as the gentle bush, (or known as a fairy thorn throughout all of Ireland and other countries of celtic race) which is said in local lore, on occasions to be illuminated by night and have different sorts of music and rejoicing emitting from it.