



Dennett Valley White Trout and The Men

Every May the white trout swim up the Foyle
Turning left up Dennett Valley their summer to enjoy
On their way up river they explore each pool and stream
Two different paths in Donemana as they fulfil their dream
Some to Ogilbys Castle others to the Ness

**All persons should enjoy a clear and healthy mind
The only way to ensure this is always be kind**

Every Saturday morning they come to the men's shed
To take part in all activities not staying in their bed
Gardening, woodwork, planting hedges, seeds and trees
Walking on a Thursday in Dennett Valley delight
Singing on a Monday, fly-tying Tuesday night

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In the beautiful Dennett Valley where we have made our home
The white trout for the summer, the rest of us stay on
In our fleeting meetings on the river we both love
Cleminson and **Dennett Red** are the flies that we have tried
To entice the wily white trout over to our side

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The white trout love the river as indeed do we
But for all non-fishermen the shed is the place to be
Where we can come together and enjoy the space
Something for everyone, community for all
Lovely Donemana, Dennett Valley and our Hall

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We had Covid where we could not go out the door
Now every week a crisis of some sort or another
This really is the time we depend on each other
In the lovely garden gifted by McGills
We come together to talk of all our ills

**All persons should enjoy a clear and healthy mind
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Like the white trout on the river and us men on dry land
When we work together we have the perfect plan

**All persons should enjoy a clear and healthy mind
The only way to ensure this, is always be kind**

A Browne 2022



A Song of Sion

(Joint writing by Sion Mills group for the Here & Now Festival)

As I wandered by the Derg's green shores,
One lovely summer's day,.....
I chanced upon a maiden fair
She walked along my way.....

We stood and talked of days gone by
Of times way back in years.....
I watched her walk through Sion's lanes
And I was close to tears.....

That night I dreamt of her again
So vivid and so real.....
And when I awoke, I made my plan
Her heart I'd try to steal.....

So I went back back to the Derg's green shores
And walked the lanes again.....
But alas, this time there was no sign
My heart was filled with pain.....

I walked here, and I walked there
Along by fishing streams.....
Down by the Mills and the cricket ground
But I was left with dreams.....

So if perchance some day you see
My maiden from the Mills
Tell her that I love her.....
And that I'm yearning still
Tell her that I love her.....
And that I'm yearning still



The Little Village I know So Well

I Love this little village of Sion Mills
And I know it oh so well
It was born from the Linen Mill
With many a tale to tell
Filled with, history of time gone by
Of sport to suit all ages
From football to cricket
And dramas filled the stages
The community of the village
Live in accord & have special grace
My Sion Mills is a wonderful village
Held in my heart this special place

Ann McGavigan



Bob's Your Uncle!

Rosie Houston from Sion Mills had two uncles who fought in and survived World War 1. Their names were Willie and Bobby Coyle. Willie managed to return uninjured but Bobby had a miraculous escape when a bullet went through the back of his head, missed his brain but came straight through his eye, and knocked it out.

He had a glass eye inserted and when he returned, his mother asked him innocently was he able to see as well through it, as his other eye. *"I do indeed, Mammy"* he reassured her. Consequently, Mrs Coyle went to her grave content in the knowledge that her son could see equally through both eyes!

In later years, when he was married with children, he got a sty in his good eye and went to the doctor. Doctor Sullivan treated it, put a patch on it, and asked him if there was anything else he could do for him. Bobby replied, *"You can, doctor, for I can't see now at all!"* *"Why"* asked Doctor Sullivan, unaware that Bobby's other eye was glass. Whereupon, Bobby removed it and said, *"That's why!"* Consequently, Doctor Sullivan had to drive Bobby home, where he remained impatiently, until such time it was safe to remove the patch.

Uncle Willie worked on the railway, until he was transferred to Dundalk, where he remained the rest of his life. Bobby was a painter by trade, stayed at home and on occasions talked about the regiment that he and his brother had joined, and would have loved to return to the post-war front, but affordability was the problem. Both lived to almost 90 and Bobby loved to sing a song in French he had learned...Rosie thinks it was 'Ooh la la' and there's an old recording of him singing it somewhere!

Bobby was a loyal member of the British Legion in Strabane, and made it known that nobody would stop him attending Remembrance Day, November 11th. He played cards in the Legion 'Wee Hall' on the Derry Road on Monday nights and was there when it was bombed in 1976, but was uninjured. Rosie worked in Herdman's Mill and recalled wearing a poppy as it was compulsory...indeed, her mother sold poppies and said *"You should be proud to wear one!"*

Another vivid memory of Rosie's was that both her uncles got home on leave during the war, and went to Marshall's for a drink. This was during the time of the Black and Tans, who had imposed a curfew at 10pm, and consequently, the brothers were stopped by the Tans as they walked home. Just as they were about to be arrested, Mrs Coyle bravely confronted them, reminded the Tans that her sons were British soldiers, and they were allowed to go.

Since talking with Rosie, I have discovered that Bobby was declared as "missing in action" in May 1918 and Willie had been a Prisoner-of-War in Germany! Mercifully, both lived to tell the tale. Indeed Bobby is mentioned as the MC for a fundraising dance in June 1919 in Sion Mills. A remarkable story... thanks so much, Rosie.



The Magic Shop

On a frosty halloween night
Children dress up to cause a fright
From draculas,witches, and devils galore
Wandering around from door to door
They would call out TRICK OR TREAT
For nuts, apples and perhaps a sweet
Now to refuse, you were dismayed
A trick on you, would be joyfully played.

One Halloween, there was this little lad
In dracula clothes he was clad
Whitened face and fangs to impress
He was the best in his halloween dress
Down a street he skipped along
Joyfully singing a Halloween song
All of a sudden he came to stop
He was standing outside a magic shop

He peered in through the window-pane
A horrible face stared back again
The monster glared with an icy stare
The little lad wished he could move from there
With only the window to divide
The lad on the street and the monster inside
His legs wouldn't move, they were stuck like glue
And the lad didn't know what to do

With a tear stained face he was a sight
With black and red, mixed in his face so white
He looked again with a terrible dread
He realised now it was himself instead
The little lad now fled away
And he made a promise and to this day
The little lad swore, he would never stop
On a halloween night outside a magic shop

Ann McGavigan



Quis Separabit

I felt the pain, I heard the shot
I couldn't catch my breath
I wondered in that second
Was it life or was it death
The bullet struck me on my side
Just right above my belt
The shock the burning and the pain
Were nothing like I'd ever felt
I tried to get back on my feet
And wondered if I could
Make my way across the open ground
And find some cover in a wood
The firing still continued
I was caught within their arc
The bullets tore up stones and clay
And cut through branches, shredding bark
Their weapons were superior
We'd known that all along
Our Mauser's rate of fire
Couldn't stem their Enfield's chilling song
I must have passed out with the pain
And woke to see two boots
Just right at my eye level
Khaki puttees, khaki suits
A prisoner now, though wounded
I was dragged behind a bank
I could see a first aid station
To my right behind a tank
British medics with red crosses
On their helmets and their packs
Dressed the wound and gave me morphine
As I lay against tank tracks
I could read Quis Separabit
On a medics bandolier
But I didn't know the meaning
Though the words were stark and clear
I'm a P.O.W, now, in France
Just outside Picardy
But everytime I go to sleep
The only thing I see
Are the words Quis Separabit
On that medics bandolier
I must find out their meaning
And what made him hold them dear
Just this morning I got talking
To a nurse who tends to me
She said, "what is your trouble"
She said, "what did you see"
I told her of the words I saw
Now imprinted on my brain
I see them every single night
And forever they'll remain
She returned to me days later
As I played patience, with my cards
She said "the words Quis Separabit
is the motto of the Irish Guards"
The jigsaw was completed
My mind forever now at rest
The Regiment we fought that day
Were Irishmen, the very best
I'm back home now in Bremen
With my family, with my wife
But I'll not forget that fateful day
When Irish Guardsmen saved my life.....



History of Cricket Club (Sion Mills Chit Chat Club)

Sion Mills Cricket Club (SMCC) is a cricket club, currently playing at Holm Field in Sion Mills in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland. Holm Field is located directly beside Herdman's Flax Mill. Founded in 1864 under the patronage of the Herdman Family, the Cricket Club celebrated its 155-year anniversary in 2019.

Holm Field achieved legendary status in the cricket community in Ireland on the 2nd of June 1969 when it was the venue for Ireland's famous win over the West Indies.

The West Indies were on a tour of England and during the break period between the Second and Third test matches, they were scheduled to play Ireland. The day before, the West Indies played in Lord's Cricket Ground in London where the match resulted in a draw. Due to arriving late that night and staying in Lifford, County Donegal, West Indies did not have time to inspect the grounds or pitch until they arrived the next morning to play.

Overnight, there was heavy rain and the wicket had not been covered. The West Indies were not used to playing in these conditions. Within the first 60 minutes, the West Indies were bowled out by 25 runs. Doug Goodwin alone managed to score 19 runs for 1 wicket before the lunch.

The West Indies team, led by Basil Butcher, had left 5 of their top players behind in London, presumably to rest them for the next game with England. The Herdman Family gave all 700 employees the day off to watch the match and there was an estimated 2000 in attendance that day. The Ireland team was led by Doug Goodwin.

Due to the turnout, both captains agreed during the lunch break to play until the end of the day, regardless of the score. After lunch, Ireland scored 7 runs which meant they had won but continued to play on until they had reached 125 for 8 when they declared.

The West Indies played a second innings as 85 minutes remained. After excellent bowling from Doug Goodwin, the West Indies only managed to score 78 for 4 before close. This meant the West Indies had 103 runs against 125 for Ireland – an incredible defeat for the West Indies.

The second day of play moved to a venue in Belfast and this match resulted in a draw.

In 2013, Margaret Loughrey won a £27 million lottery jackpot and then went on to acquire the pitches as part of her purchase of the Herdman's Flax Mill site.

In 2014, Sion Mills Cricket Club were forced to forfeit its last game of the season due to being locked out of the pitch by Ms. Loughrey. This was the first time in the club's 150-year history where a match had to be forfeited.

Ms. Loughrey said she was perfectly within her rights as the landlord and only took the decision to padlock the gates as she could not access the grounds and the club had not met her.

Ms. Loughrey said: "Where it sits is this: it's my land and I was locked out of it. All they had to do was meet with me, because I'm very easy worked with."

In September 2019, extensive damage was caused to the site when vandals broke in and set fire to pavilion building causing thousands of pounds worth of damage. Vandals used ladders to scale the roof before entering the building via a hole on the roof. This pavilion contained equipment such as ride-on lawnmowers, a grass roller, strimmer's, and other general maintenance equipment which was all badly burned and put beyond use during the arson attack. The letters HRY and "Hoods Run Young" was also graffitied throughout the grounds.

Work started in 2021 to restore the pavilion to its former glory.