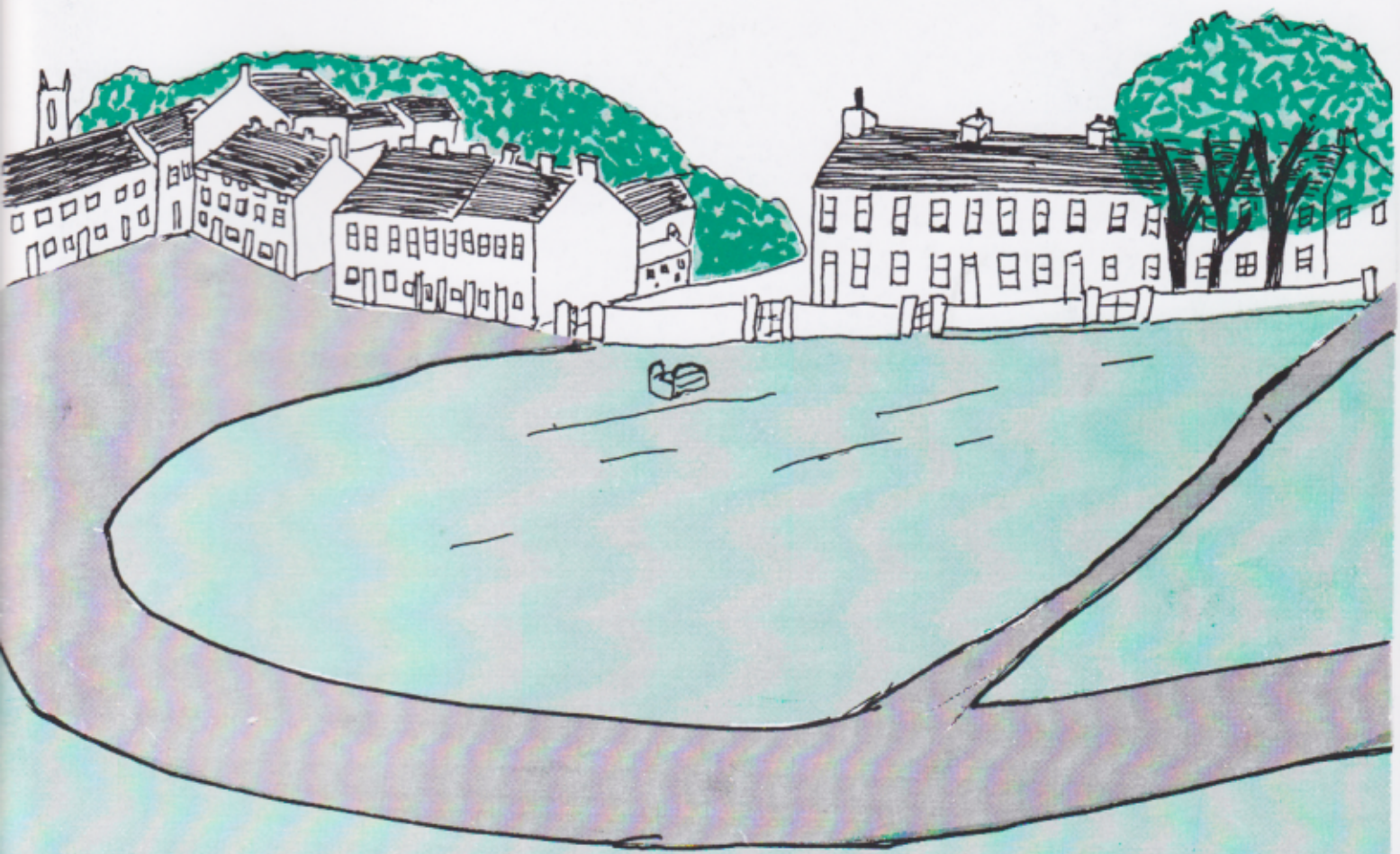
Saintfield my Saintfield



An illustrated walk down memory lane

by Rodgers Dickie

To Herbie

from

Rodgers

Saintfield my Saintfield

The proceeds of this book are being donated to the Cancer Research Campaign.

An illustrated walk down memory lane.

Rodgers Dickie

Front covers: Saintfield Fair Green as it was about 1910.

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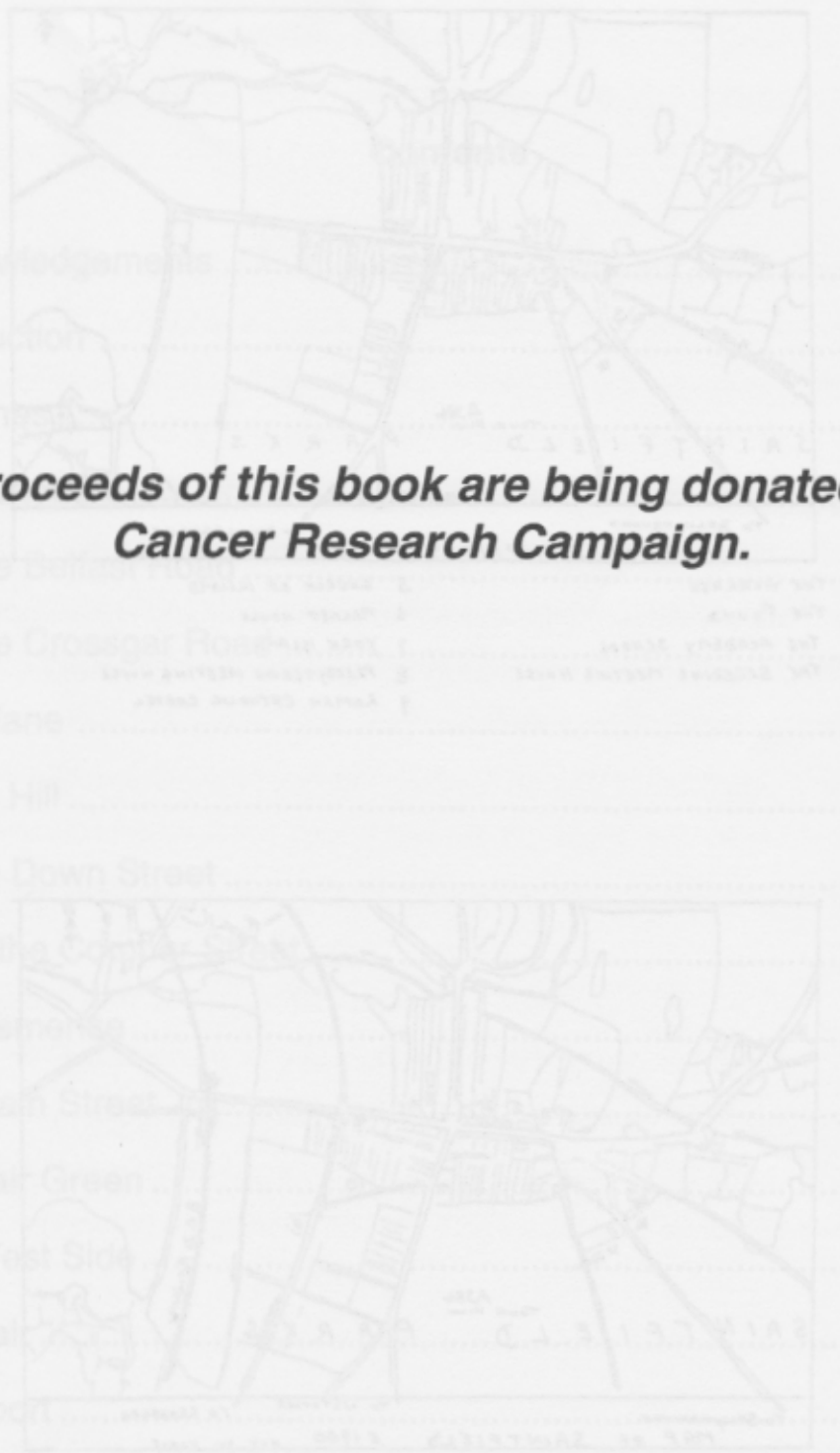
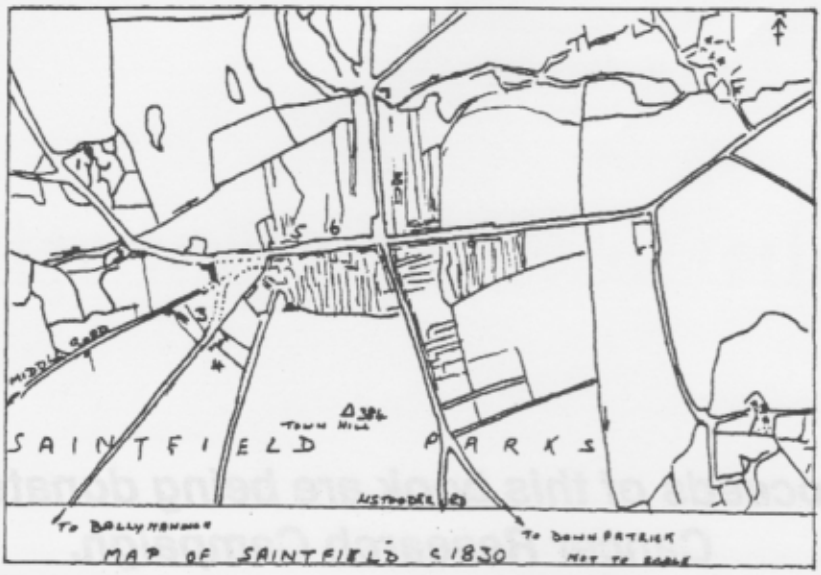


Front cover:- Saintfield Fair Green as it was about 1910.



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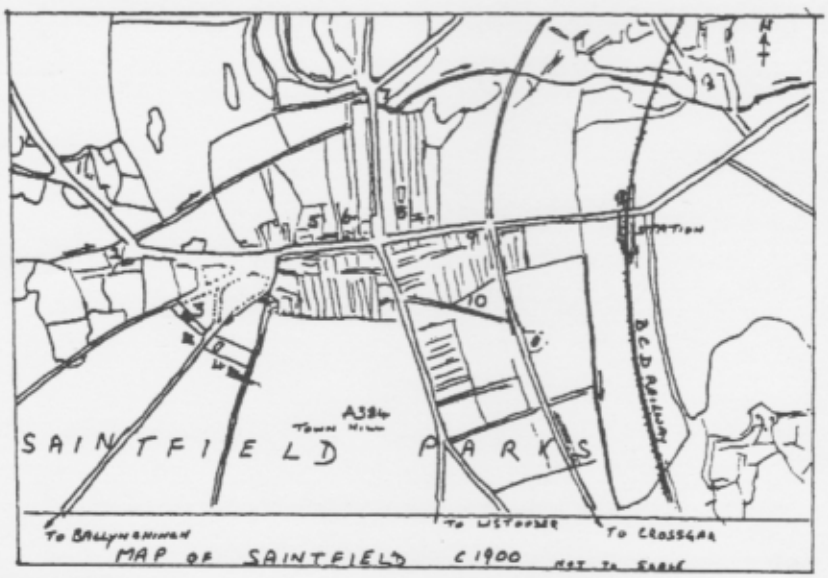

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My wife Irene and brother Wilbert for their help and encouragement.

Derrick Smith who helped with the preparation of the script for the publishers.

Introduction

Saintfield lies in the drumlin country in the north of County Down. It is situated half-way between Belfast and Downpatrick and half-way between Lisburn and Newtownards.

Those of us who were born and brought up in Saintfield in the years between the two World Wars have our own memories of that period. Some of us are sure to see more mud and less sunshine than others as we go down memory lane. I don't mind if our memories differ. I am, however, writing about Saintfield - my Saintfield.

This is a community which has grown up over many years. It is a close-knit one. The hard times before the Great War of 1914 - 1918 and the sudden depression which occurred after that war drew people together. It created a friendship born of necessity. It was quite common for those who had a little to help those who had nothing over a bad patch. State help as we know it today was non-existent.

The population in 1851 was 923 persons. That was after the Great Famine of 1845 to 1847 had taken its toll. Since then some had left the district to find a better living elsewhere; others became the victims of tuberculosis, the killer disease of those harsh days. Before the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, the population had dropped to 533. In 1961 it had grown to 702 persons.

In 1830 much of the commerce in Saintfield was carried on up the Down Street (Downpatrick Street). The main route from Saintfield to Downpatrick was up the Down Street, down the Old Grand Jury Road to the Crossgar Road and so to Downpatrick. There was no Belfast road from this point through Saintfield to the Comber Road. At that period goods were delivered to and from Saintfield by horse and cart. The stage-coach from Belfast came via Carryduff and along the Old Belfast Road to Saintfield, stopping at Price's

Arms Hotel. Then it proceeded up the Down Street and down the Old Grand Jury Road to the Crossgar Road. The New Line did not exist then.

The Belfast and County Down Railway did not extend to Saintfield until 1858. It was looked on by some as the Devil's Stage-coach. They refused to set foot on this iron contraption.

Old buildings seem to absorb much of the character of those who lived in them. These and the old landmarks gave a feeling of permanence to the place. However, it was after the end of the last world war that some of our beloved landmarks began to disappear. This gave me the notion to record some of them with pen and ink drawings. Some friends gave me or loaned photographs of pre-war Saintfield. Others helped by giving me a verbal description of some of the buildings. Other drawings were done entirely from memory. This turned out to be a bigger exercise than I had anticipated.

I am not an artist but some of my friends suggested that I should make a book of these drawings and have them published.

The Churches

A Presbyterian community was established in Saintfield in the late seventeenth century. Their church was built in 1692. It was sited in the Fair Green and, being in the parish of Tonaghneave, was known as the Presbyterian Church of Tonaghneave. The exact location of the church building is not known. It was probably in that area where the clinic and library are sited and possibly where the stables for the second Presbyterian Church stood. The church was stone built with a thatched roof and an earth floor. It is not known if it had any heating system. There was a severe winter storm on the night of Christmas Eve 1775, which completely destroyed the church roof. It was then decided to erect another larger church on land off the Main Street. The new church, known as the Presbyterian Church in Saintfield, was opened in 1777 (now the First Presbyterian Church in Saintfield).

The Presbyterian Church in Tonnaghneive

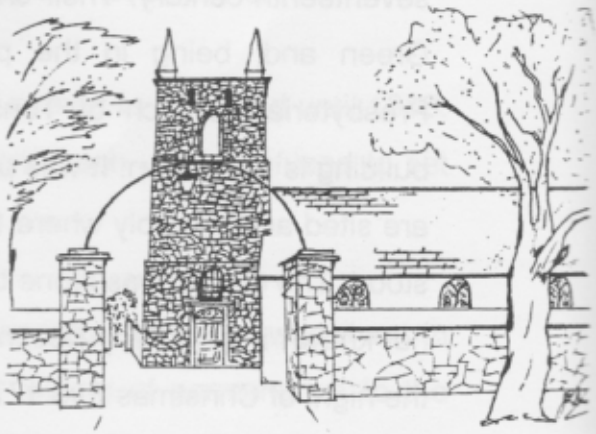
First Presbyterian Church, Saintfield
No. 2 National School in background

During the ministry of the Reverend Mr Birch (in the Presbyterian Church) a growing number of people objected to his political opinions and to his preaching. Some left and went to the Board Mill Church. Others banded together to form the Sessions Church in 1796. They built their church on the same site where the present Second Presbyterian Church stands today. However, after the passing of time, it was found that this building was no longer safe. In 1892 the church was pulled down and the present church erected on the same site.

The Parish Church was built in 1776 at the top of the Main Street. The Catholic Church was opened in 1787. It was built at the bottom of the Main

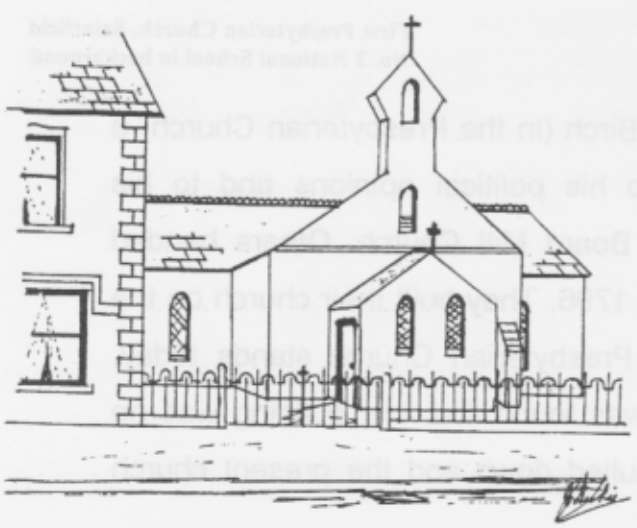
Street near M'Ilwaine's Corner. Presbyterians in the Saintfield, Ballynahinch and Dromore districts were among those who contributed towards the cost of building the chapel.

The Secession Presbyterian Church



Church of Ireland

Reverend Mr Cosgrove was in charge of the Parish Church in the 1920's. He was followed by Reverend Charles Gorman in the 1930's. He and his wife and family resided in the old Vicarage on the Lisburn Road. It was a massive three storey building with a basement. Mr Gorman was a friendly person and held in high esteem by the whole community. He did his visitations on a bicycle. He had a peculiar way of sitting on the machine. He gave the impression that he was seated comfortably on a two-wheeled mobile armchair. He raised his hat with a flourish, arm extended, in greeting to anyone he met.



The R.C. Chapel - Main Street

The Second Presbyterian Church - Ballynahinch Road

Father Shields was the parish priest at this time. He would be seen often in Saintfield driving a pony and trap or a horse and cart. He was a keen

horseman and a good judge of equine livestock. He had a pet theory that the internal combustion engine was the cause of so much unemployment in the country. He argued that these machines should be done away with and replaced by horse power. He argued that if this was done unemployment would become a thing of the past. He also objected to girls coming to chapel with their heads uncovered. They rectified this by covering their heads with scarves and tying the ends together under their chin before going inside the chapel. Father Shields had also the reputation for locking the chapel doors when all his parishioners were inside. He would then hold forth for a couple of hours giving his reluctant listeners a theological tirade.

During those years between the two world wars the Reverend Stewart Dickson was the minister in the First Presbyterian Church. He was known and liked by everyone. He visited his congregation on foot. He wore a strong pair of leather leggings. He knew all the footpaths, lanes and byways in his parish. This saved him much time walking from one house to another.

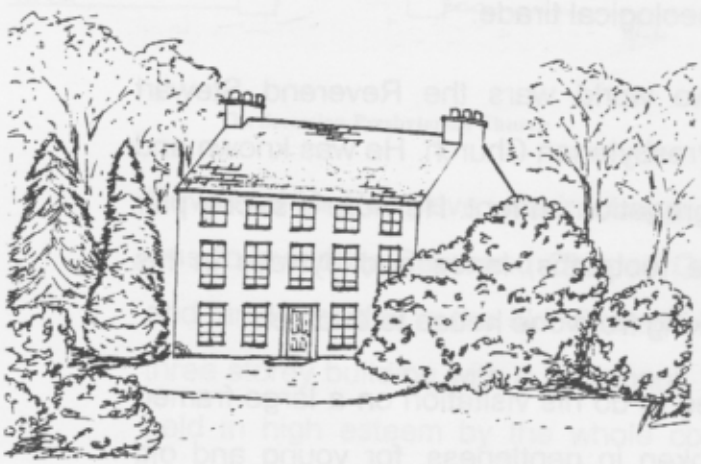
The Reverend William Dickie preferred to do his visitation on a large-framed Raleigh bicycle. He had a word, spoken in gentleness, for young and old alike. Although he took possession of a motor car in 1926 he still did most of his journeys on bicycle. He was not a keen motorist and used this vehicle for the longer journeys or when the weather was inclement.

A certain Reverend W. P. Nicholson was in great demand throughout the district to conduct evangelical missions. He was a fiery preacher. If he was unable to convert anyone from the errors of their ways by gentle persuasion, he was sure to tell all and sundry that, if they did not mend their ways, they were sure of an eternity in hell with all its torments.

It was the spiritual friendliness of these ministers with each other and their Christian life and example, along with that of a number of godly people of all denominations, which had a steadying influence for good in the whole community.

The Vicarage was situated on the right hand side going up the Lisburn Road from the Pound Bridge, above the present Vicarage. It was a large grey three storey building with large rooms, each with a high ceiling. The house was

designed for a period when travelling was difficult and visiting clergy and others had to be boarded and entertained overnight or for longer periods. Servants were easy to come by. They had their quarters at the rear of the house. The bedrooms were situated on the first and second floors. A large sitting room was situated on the left of the wide hall. On the right was an equally large dining room. Underneath the whole house was a large dimly-lit basement. Because of the near constant temperature, both by day and by night and also throughout the year, the basement was ideal for storing wines and foodstuffs. Refrigeration was unknown when this house was built.



The Vicarage

The Manse - First Presbyterian Church - Crossgar Road

The two Presbyterian manses, although large, were of a more modest size. They were less demanding on outside help for their smooth running. Reverand Stewart Dickson was a bachelor and employed a housekeeper to look after his needs. Mrs Dickie was able to look after the Second Presbyterian manse with a little outside help.

The two Presbyterian manses had one thing in common. They were built facing their respective churches.

This seemed to be a common practice before 1900. The siting of the manse was of less importance, in many cases, than erecting it facing the church.

The Manse - Second Presbyterian Church - Ballynahinch Road

Father Shields was in charge of Carrickmannon chapel as well as the one in Saintfield. He felt that each chapel should have a suitable dwelling convenient.

Tom Mullan was a bachelor farmer. He resided in a double-fronted house at Carrickmannon cross roads. The house was about two hundred to three hundred yards from the chapel and had a commanding view over the surrounding country-side and his farm land. Father Shields realised that this house would make an ideal dwelling for a priest. Or maybe his first thought was that this was an ideal farm for grazing horses. He approached Tom Mullan and pointed out to him that his house would be an ideal dwelling for a priest, for it was near the chapel. There was a farm with a cottage dwelling on the market on the Listooder Road near the Rowallane Gardens. He persuaded Tom to exchange his farm for this one. Father Shields moved into the house at Carrickmannon. Tom moved to the Listooder Road and the curate moved into the house beside the chapel on the Main Street. Father Shields now had grazing for his beloved horses.

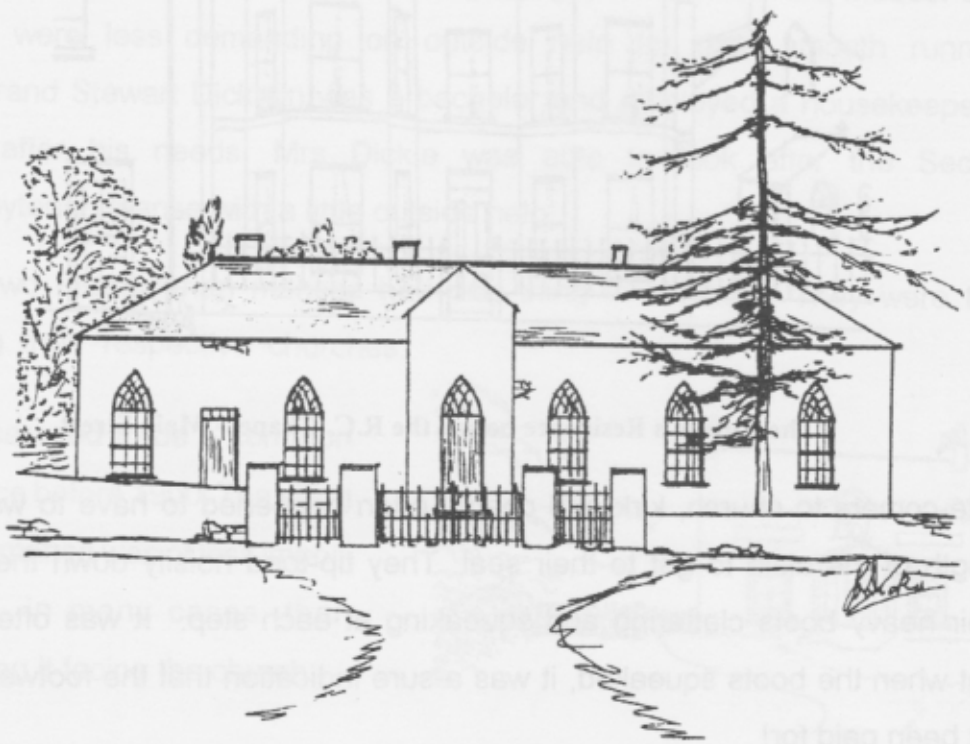
The Curate's Residence beside the R.C. Chapel - Main Street

Late-comers to church, kirk and chapel often happened to have to walk the length of the aisle to get to their seat. They tip-toed noisily down the aisle, their heavy boots clattering and squeaking at each step. It was often said that when the boots squeaked, it was a sure indication that the footwear had not been paid for!

THE SCHOOLS

In the 1920's two schools were in existence in Saintfield. The No. 1 National School, more generally known as the Academy School, was founded in 1823 by public subscription and gifts from Nicholas Price, the landlord at that time. He had the vision that this school would become the educational centre of Ireland, on a par with Eton and other famous seats of learning in England. The Reverend James Phillips from Glasgow was its first principal. Apart from the 3 R's, Greek, Latin and Hebrew were also taught. This ambitious programme was aimed to give the scholars a sure foundation for more advanced education. The school became known as the Academy. The primary school on the Listooder Road which replaced it is still known as the "Academy".

The school was built at the top of the Fair Green between the Ballynahinch Road and the Middle Road and was surrounded by a stone wall. A rough stone path beside this wall connected the two roads. Robert J. Matchett, known as "The Master" was in charge until his death in 1917. In his day, farming parents would take their children away from school to help to put in



The Acadamy - No. 1 National School - Fair Green

the crops in the spring and to assist with the harvest in the autumn. However, the children were sent back to school, long after their age group had left, to get as much "learning" as possible. This was to make up for what had been lost when seed time and harvest demanded their attention at home. Many of these older boys were bigger than the majority of the children. Therefore, to keep order, Mr Matchett, who was of small stature made free use of the cane.

A story is told about two boys whom Mr Matchett had reason to keep in after school. Mr Matchett had to leave the room for a time. The two boys decided to gain their freedom. They pushed up the heavy window sash. They pecked and heaved themselves on to the window sill. Just as they were about to begin their freedom Mr Matchett returned. He said nothing, slipped across the room and brought the heavy window sash down across the shoulders of the two boys. They were unable to move. The master rolled up his sleeves and, with his best bamboo cane, administered six of the best to each on that part of their anatomy which nature had designed for this purpose.

Master Kingham followed Master Matchett as principal of the Academy. He lived in the residence attached to the school. Miss Stevenson taught the infants and Miss Haye the more senior pupils. Spellings were taught with the pupils standing and rhyming over each word letter by letter. Arithmetic tables were taught in the same way. Singing was an important part of the curriculum. The lesson was taught with the children standing. A tonic sol-fa chart was hung from a nail on the wall. It was very indistinct, faded partly with age and partly with much hammering from the teacher's pointer. The tune had to be note perfect using the sol-fa system, before the children were allowed to sing the words of the song.

One of the children in Miss Stevenson's infant class was Jackie M'Clenaghan. He had the gift of being able to keep the class going. He was always up to some sort of mischief. One morning Miss Stevenson arrived at school hardly able to speak because of a cold and a sore throat. She explained this to the class and hoped the class would be as quiet as possible. She told my mother afterwards that she was agreeably surprised by Jackie. He was not up to his usual chatter and mischief and was the best pupil in the

class. He also made sure that the others were behaving, too. He was five at the time.

Miss Haye was a different type. Her tongue was as wicked as her cane which she used unsparingly.

After the sudden and tragic death of Master Kingham, Victor Coulter took over the position of master. He was an army captain during the Great War of 1914 - 19. During his period of office the school was enlarged twice. First the teacher's residence was turned into classrooms and the windows were enlarged. Later the school was extended towards the Ballynahinch Road by the addition of another classroom. This was undertaken in 1930. At the same time, the wall and gates in front of the school were demolished and the walls at the side of the roads were extended to enclose part of the Fair Green to enlarge the playground.

The No. 2 National School was a beautiful brick building with a matching teacher's residence, situated beyond the Guildhall and beside the Presbyterian graveyard in the Comber Street. The school was an unique building. The gable nearest the road was extended to form a bell-tower. My generation who were brought up in Saintfield and many a newcomer felt that this beautiful building should have been listed and preserved for posterity. However, the school was demolished and in 1964, was replaced by a new school at the bottom of the Old Grand Jury Road. Some said the old building was structurally unsafe.

The original school was built and opened in 1873. It was known as the No. 2 National School, St Mary's R.C. school and also as the Monaghan School, (after Master Monaghan who was the first teacher in the school).

No. 2 National School or St. Mary's R.C. School - Comber Street also known as The Monaghan School

The Female School - Middle Road

Miss G Fitzpatrick was the head teacher there before the Second World War. She was brought up on a farm in the townland of Aughnahaory, outside Kilkeel. The farm is at the end of a long lane and is farmed by her nephews today. This is a home where the typical generous Mourne country hospitality is the order of the day. (If you were to ask for a drink of water you would most likely be set down to tea with a fry). Miss Fitzpatrick married Bob Deignan from the Main Street, but Bob died while still a young man. Miss Fitzpatrick was well liked inside and beyond the bounds of the school.

One of the more famous of the pupils who passed through this school was Daniel Mageean from the townland of Leggygowan on the Listooder Road. He was later to become Bishop Daniel Mageean. I wonder if he made a permanent record of his stay there by carving his name true and deep into the desk where he sat.

The curriculum was similar in both schools and the method of teaching the same. Faded maps hung wearily from the walls. Some might have been there from the foundation of both the schools.

About the middle of the afternoon, during school term, those passing near the Comber Street would have heard a distant rumble like thunder. They would have seen a human avalanche emitting from the door of the Monaghan school, big boys to the fore, girls and smaller children behind. Most of the boys would head for the Main Street. There was an occasion when some of the boys reached the Main Street and saw Father Shields coming up the hill with his horse and cart. They stopped, turning to their friends coming after them. "Come on you fellows. Here's the old bugger coming. He'll make you hold his horse!" This was not meant as disrespect to the reverend father. It did not matter how long one had to hold his horse, the gratuity was always the same. He would pat one on the shoulder saying, "Bless you my son" - worthless for buying sweets in Victor Reid's wee shop!!

George Bates was held in fearful respect by parents and children alike. He was the school attendance officer. Many a parent was brought before the magistrate and fined because their children were not attending school. Children, whose parents were fined, were justly fearful of George Bates. They

were sure to get a severe belting from their unfortunate parents and ordered to attend school in future.

There had been a third school in Saintfield. It was known as the "Female School". It was built in 1825 up the Middle Road, backing onto the Academy School. In the 1920's it was converted into a private dwelling. George Burns lived there. The school was very small consisting of two wee rooms. George was a lean tall man, with exceedingly large feet. Every spring he obtained a load of farmyard manure from a local farmer. He dug over what had been the girls' playground. He applied the manure and planted potatoes.

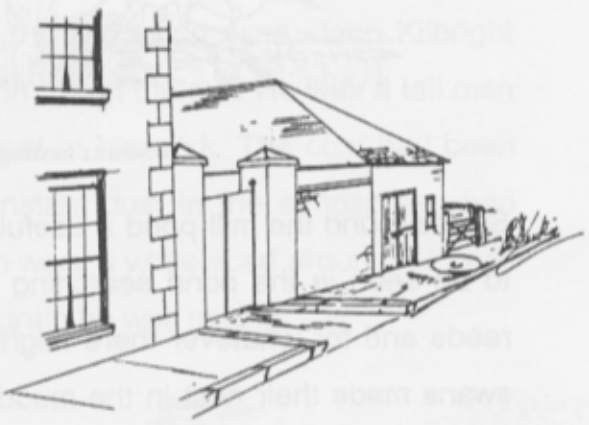
On those rare visits when George made his way with slow ponderous steps up to our house, he would climb up the two high steps to the front door, rap it hard, then climb down the two high steps. He then stood beside the bottom step, cap in hand, waiting for the door to open. Then "Your Reverence, your ole hens are harrowing the moul' off my putters". Before George had retraced his steps half-way down the drive my brother and I would be dispatched in haste to make sure that our hens were prevented from harrowing the mould off George Burns' putters. No one could blame the poor wee hens for trespassing, for here was a rich source of high protein feed in the shape of large fat worms, to augment their sparse diet of house scraps and bran.

OUT THE BELFAST ROAD

The Belfast Road begins at the Low Corner where the traffic lights are today. Boyle's corner is on the left, Murray's corner is on the right.

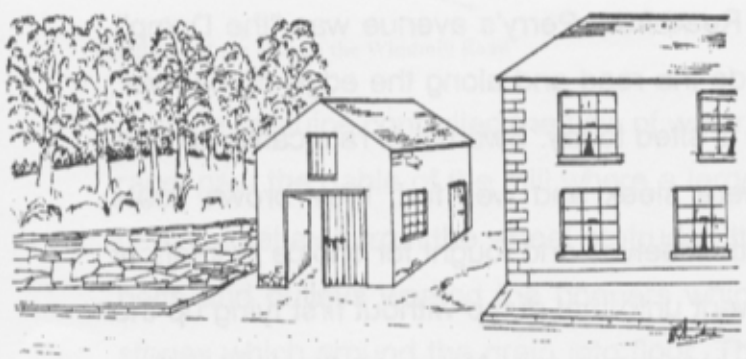
Mr Boyle was a dealer in poultry. These he brought round the country. They were culls and hens which were no longer profitable as egg producers. He used a spring-cart and pony to go round the country and for taking his purchases to Belfast, where they were sold to retailers and in the market. Mr Boyle was also the owner of a jaunting car. This vehicle was capable of carrying at least eight people: two on each side on seats over the wheels; two facing the rear and two facing the front, one being the driver.

Boyle's yard was beside Sammy Smith's forge. This shop was smaller than Joe Burton's in the Down Street. The layout of both shops was the same. Sammy had to give up work for health reasons. The forge is no longer there. This had been a collecting point for passengers waiting for buses to Belfast.



Sammy's Blacksmiths Shop - Belfast Road

Across the road from Sammy Smith's was a barn with a loft over it. This barn was rented to Tommy Hill. Tommy had a small workshop in the Main Street, where he repaired bicycles. These larger premises enabled him to launch out and include motor car repairs in his business. This barn which belonged to Dan Murray has now been demolished.



Tommy Hill's Motor Repair Shop
Murray's Corner Belfast Road

A short distance from Tommy Hill's workshop was the avenue to Martin Perry's residence. This was a large double-fronted house with a superb view over the mill dam and the water-mill, the station and the surrounding

countryside. In the hot summer evenings, boys from the Down Street found the mill dam a useful place to cool off. They would congregate in the field near the outlet from the mill dam. They would strip off with much chattering; then enter the water in the bathing suits supplied by mother nature. They would swim like trout. They were oblivious of the fact that they could be seen from the road and from Perry's house.

Swans nesting beside the Mill Pond

Swans found the mill pond a useful feeding place. There was always a pair to be seen in the pond searching for tasty morsels among the weeds and reeds and for whatever there might be in deeper water. A breeding pair of swans made their nest in the muddy corner of the field near the main road. The nest stood high above the water. It was built from reeds and debris from the ground near by. It took about five weeks to incubate the swan's eggs. During this period there was always one bird on the nest covering the eggs. One or two cygnets were raised at a time. They would be looked after by the parent birds until their plumage changed from a dirty brown colour to white. Then the parent birds forced them to leave the safety of the pond and seek sanctuary elsewhere.

On the other side of the Belfast Road from Perry's avenue was "the Dump". This was an area of ground beside the road and along the edge of the river. This is where the Cotswold Drive is sited today. Swarms of rats came up from the river to feed there. They were sleek and well fed, their brown coats shining. They squabbled among themselves and fought for choice morsels of food. No self-respecting person went unto that dump without first tying up the bottom of their trouser legs with string or twine. Not even the best ratting terrier in the district would tackle that mob of rats.

Across the river in the townland of Glassdrummond were two large watermills and a windmill. Only the stump of the windmill remains standing today. One of the watermills was in disrepair even before the Great War of 1914 - 1918. After the war all that was visible were three main walls, a lesser wall and a pile of rubble. This building became a hazard to modern vehicular traffic and was pulled down. The two mill dams remain today, but are in need of cleaning out.

The Windmill Stump - Windmill Road

The other watermill was in use between the two world wars. John Kilbright was the miller then. He was the last person to run the mill. He was a tall man of lean build. He wore a swallow-tailed coat at his work. The coat had been black at one time but grime and the constant dust in the atmosphere had changed its colour to a mealy khaki. John wore a white scarf around his neck but it, too, had taken on the colour of the grain he was milling.

The Ruins of the Mill on the Windmill Road

Saintfield Watermill - Belfast Road

Outside, a sluice controlled the flow of water from the mill dam down a narrow race, past the gable of the mill where a large water-wheel was activated. The heavy steel axle from the wheel protruded through the stone wall, a series of belts and pulleys worked the hoppers which supplied the grist to the great stones which ground the grain into flour. The mill-stones were about six feet across and about six inches thick. The bottom stone was in a fixed position.

The stone on top of it was rotated slowly by a series of belts and pulleys driven from the main axle. Dust-laden cobwebs hung from rafters and stationary pieces of equipment. They were ideal for staunching a bleeding cut! I have never known anyone who used this remedy to suffer any ill-effects from it. There was a number of small rooms where incoming grain and the milled meal were stored. The ceilings in them were seldom more than seven feet above the floor. The rooms were dimly lit by small dust-covered windows.

At the end of the mill furthest from the great water-wheel stood a tall brick chimney. Beside this was a small room with a steel floor. Damp grain was spread over this floor to a depth of about six inches. A fire was lit underneath this floor which heated the steel and dried the grain on it. The grain was raked over a number of times to help the drying process.

In 1935, on the Saturday of the Killinchy "100" motorcycle road-race, storm clouds began to gather throughout the afternoon. That night a severe thunderstorm erupted. The mill chimney was struck by lightning. Six feet of brickwork at the top of the chimney had to be removed to render it safe.

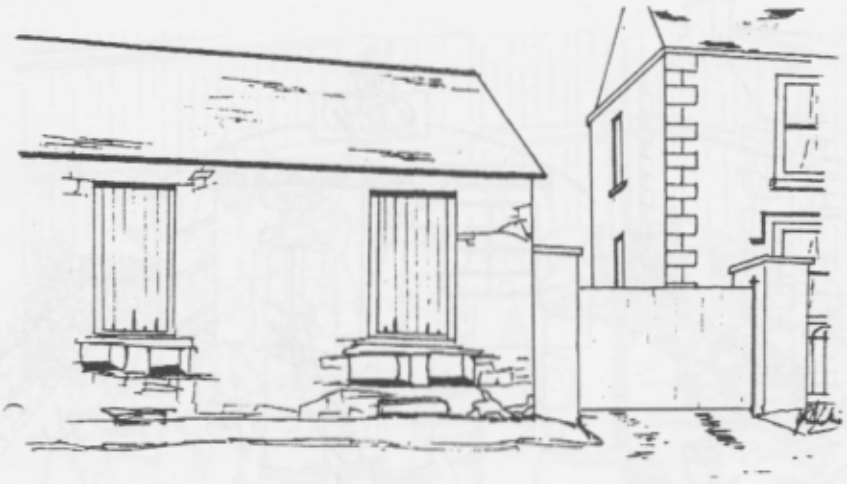
Orr's farm on the edge of Ballygowan village was a tidy well-kept place. That year the field in front of the cottage had been planted with potatoes. After this storm there were a dozen or more large burnt areas where the potatoes had been struck by lightning. Ready roast potatoes for sale!

These three mills in Glassdrummond, one in Ballyaugherty and one in Carsonstown were built by the M'Burney family. They were millers and agents for the Price estate. These mills were built between 1777 and 1815. The mill in Carsonstown no longer operates and has been converted into a substantial dwelling house. Of the other four only the windmill stump in Glassdrummond remains today.

Further out the Belfast Road two gate-houses and a stone wall mark the boundary of the Price estate. The first has been demolished and the second one has been enlarged. These had been notable landmarks for anyone travelling towards Saintfield from Carryduff.

OUT THE CROSSGAR ROAD

I wonder how many people, who have come to reside in Saintfield since the end of the second World War, have taken time to find out what the two holes under each of the doors in M'Ilwaine's store are for. How many, who drive daily by car along the Crossgar Road, have even noticed these holes? This feature was to be seen at one of Minnis Bros' stores and also at the water mill on the Belfast Road.



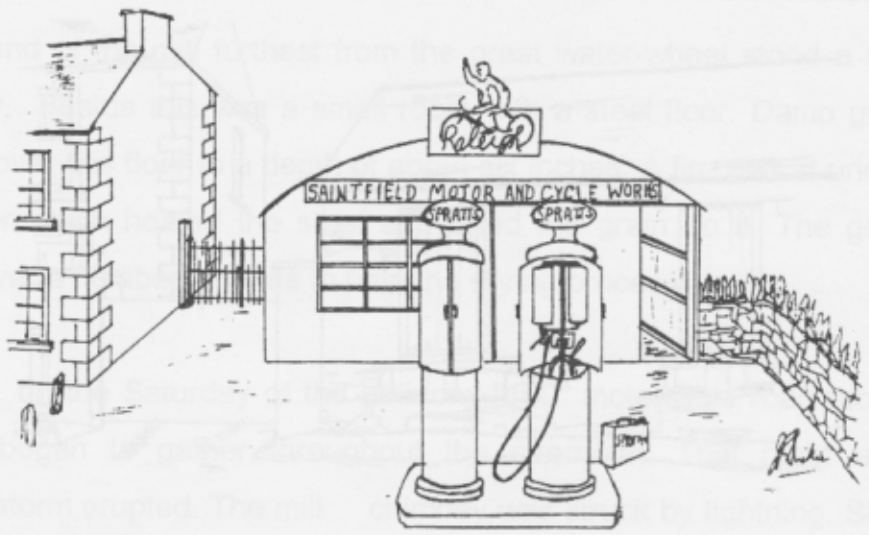
McIlwaine's Store on Crossgar Road

In the period between the two world wars horse and cart transport was common. To load a cart with material from M'Ilwaine's loft (usually feeding stuff for livestock, or flour etc. for human consumption), the horse would have to back the cart up to the appropriate door in the loft. The ends of the cart shafts extended for fifteen inches beyond the end of the body of the cart. Without these holes in the wall into which the ends of the cart shaft are backed, it would be impossible to load the cart with heavy material. When the horse and cart were in the loading position, more than half the road was blocked to traffic. This did not cause any inconvenience or annoyance to other road users, for road traffic was not very dense in those years between the two world wars.

Tommy Rice (Postman Tommy) moved from his small workshop at Boyle's Corner in 1927 to new larger premises on the Crossgar Road. This was where the Esso service station is sited today. The new building was erected by M'Kelvey of Tullywest. It was about forty-five feet by twenty feet. Half the front gable was a doorway. There was a small office in the left hand front

corner. There was no fixed closing time, but it was usually about 11.30 p.m. Lenny Kingham was employed by Tommy and soon got the name of being a very good motor mechanic. The garage became the focal point for those who just wanted an evening's crack.

In the forecourt were two manually operated petrol pumps for the supply and the sale of Spratt's petrol. The two pumps were identical and were about six



Tommy Rice's Work Shop - Crossgar Road

feet tall. The petrol was drawn from the storage tank by a semi-rotary hand pump. Above the pump was a regulator which was set for the amount of petrol required. At the top of the pump were two glass jars, each of which held one gallon of petrol. The petrol was pumped into one of the glass jars. When this jar became full, a valve opened to transfer the petrol from the storage tank to the other jar. At the same time as the second jar was being filled, the petrol from the first jar was being transferred by another pipe to the waiting vehicle. Tommy had made a hook on which to hang the nozzle of the pipe from the glass jars. This hook was fixed above the two glass jars. Should the petrol tank in the vehicle overflow, all that was needed, to prevent further spillage, was to place the nozzle onto this hook. After the vehicle departed, the surplus petrol in the pipe and the glass jar could be transferred to a suitable container. Petrol cost 11½ pence in those days (5 new pence a gallon)!

A large sign was fixed to the front gable of the workshop, indicating that Raleigh bicycles were for sale. A new Raleigh roadster cost £4:19s:6d. A

Humber bicycle cost a little less. They were robust machines which gave their owners many years of useful service. Second hand bicycles could be purchased for a few shillings.

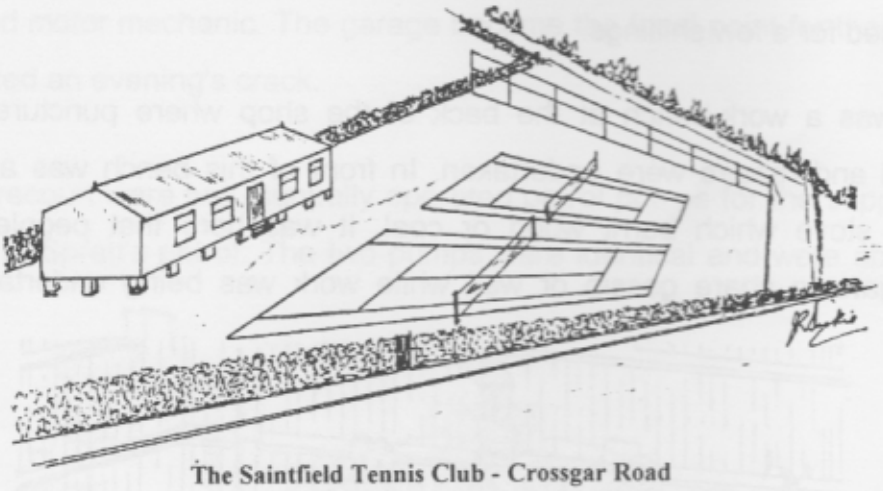
There was a work-bench at the back of the shop where punctures were mended and repairs were undertaken. In front of this bench was a barrel-shaped stove which burnt wood or coal. It was here that people would congregate to share gossip or wait while work was being undertaken for

A Game of Checkers (Draughts) in the Saintfield Motor Works

them. Saturday evening was a favourite time for people to call in for a game of draughts. Among those who played were Charlie Burton, Herbie Jackson, Addy Craig, David Marshall, Martin Deignan; others came to watch; others to make complimentary or uncomplimentary remarks. One person liked to sit on the work bench, some on empty oil cans, others stood to watch the games. Lenny was quick witted and enjoyed taking part in the gossip. Lenny spent many a Sunday afternoon visiting old people at home or in hospital. He was a gifted story teller.

The Saintfield Lawn Tennis Club was situated where the outdoor Bowling Club is today. There were two grass courts and a small shed about ten feet by eight feet which acted as a clubhouse. This shed was replaced in 1930 by a larger building which had three rooms, ideal for entertaining visiting clubs. The club opened for the first Saturday in May. This often turned out to be a wet or showery day. Soon the club got the name for commencing its summer activities on the first wet Saturday in May.

Friendly tournaments were held with neighbouring clubs. These were usually in easy reach of Saintfield.



The Saintfield Tennis Club - Crossgar Road

I remember one Saturday afternoon in 1925. A neighbouring club was invited to take part in a tournament. The visitors arrived. Play was about to commence when down came the rain. The nets were quickly lowered and everyone made a dash for the clubhouse. There was standing room only. The rain persisted for some time. When the rain finally stopped, the courts were found to be too wet for play. Someone suggested we have tea first. This would give the courts time to dry out a bit. After the tea some of us went and examined the courts. It was agreed they were still too wet and not safe for play. The visitors were thinking of packing up and going home. Someone said, "Let's play on the road". There was a sudden surge of enthusiasm. A net was hauled out and onto the road. One end was made fast to one of the gate posts. The other end was fixed to the hedge on the opposite side of the road. Whenever any vehicle appeared (and there were not many of them) one end of the net was lowered and replaced after the vehicle had passed. Everyone enjoyed playing tennis on a "hard" court. The rest of the day passed quickly,. To use those famous last words - "a good time was had by all".

Further down the Crossgar Road, there is a small field beside the Rowallane Gardens. There was a small disused quarry in this field. Convicts from the Downpatrick prison were brought to this quarry to serve out their sentence of hard labour. The convicts were supplied with picks and heavy fourteen-pound sledgehammers to quarry out and break the rocks into small stones. I have no idea what these stones were used for or where they went.

The Belfast and County Down Railway line from Saintfield crossed the Crossgar Road near the Rowallane gates, on its way to the Ballynahinch Junction. The road twisted into and out from the bridge, creating a couple of awkward bends. The masonry of the bridge obstructed much of the view of the road under the bridge. Motorists found the easiest way to negotiate these bends was to keep to the centre of the road under the bridge. With the innovation of white lines to mark the centre of the road at dangerous bends the local police had a field day. A policeman on duty at one end of the bridge could be hidden from the view of a motorist approaching from the other. The unsuspecting motorist would be well over the white line, when he would be stopped by the constable. It was a clear-cut case for a summons to appear before the R.M. on the third Tuesday of the month and pay the fine for crossing the white line.

When the County Down Railway ceased to operate, the bridge was demolished and the bends removed.

ROWALLANE

Rowallane Gardens

Rowallane lies half a mile to the south of Saintfield in the townland of Leggygowan, with its main entrance from the Crossgar Road.

Leggygowan Railway Bridge and the Entrance to Rowallane Gardens - Crossgar Road C. 1920

Around 1860 the Reverend John Moore bought a farm in the townland of Leggygowan extending to some 56 acres. The soil is boulder clay, medium and acid. The underlying rock is never far from the surface. Reverend Mr Moore named his property "Rowallane". He enlarged and improved the dwelling and added a walled garden and built a farmyard. The house was referred to as Rowallane House, sometimes as Rowallane Cottage. The garden walls were erected to a height of approximately fourteen feet. This was found to be an ideal height to deflect the winds away from the garden. If the walls were too low the wind would rise up above the garden, then swirl down suddenly, causing considerable damage to young and tender plants.

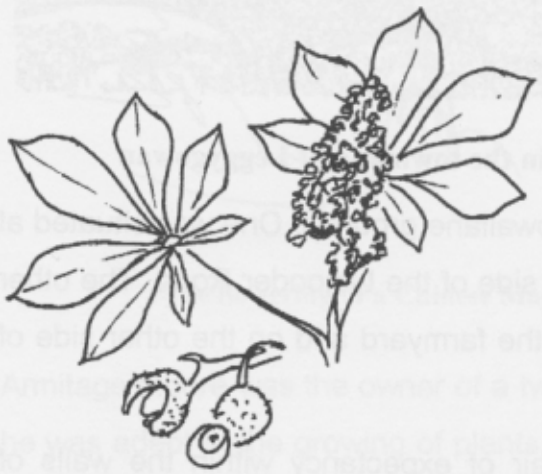
Rowallane House C. 1935

These high walls were ideal for supporting espalier fruit trees; apples, pears and plums.

Reverend John Moore planted shelter belts of beach, holly, pine and laurel. In 1903 Hugh Armitage Moore inherited the estate from his uncle and came to reside in Rowallane House. He was a plantsman of considerable ability. He redesigned the garden. He took advantage of the carboniferous slate rock outcrop to create a garden of outstanding beauty and world-wide renown. He planted rhododendrons and azaleas which burst into bloom in the spring. They thrived in the medium-light acid soil.

Armitage Moore was a very friendly person, his outgoing disposition winning him many friends. He was always delighted and willing to show people round his beloved gardens. The gardens were of world-wide fame. They were visited by royalty and dignitaries from far and wide.

Armitage Moore took advantage of the wind-breaks planted by his uncle. He used them to give shelter for specimen trees and shrubs and to give them room to develop to their full potential. One such specimen was known to Mr Moore as *aesculus hippocastranum,* but to most people as the horse chestnut. We preferred to call it the 'conker tree'. This tree was tall, fully developed and not snarled by intruding timber.



Horse Chestnut
Aesculus Hippocastanum

The Conker Tree

I was nine or ten at the time, when, along with my brother and David Carser, we went one autumn to pay homage to this sylvatic noble. There were four unwritten rules regarding such a pilgrimage. Not more than four or five should

go at any one time; make a noise quietly; have one's line of retreat planned out in advance; keep eyes and ears alert for the sound of the approach of James Hanvey and his assistants. Underneath the wide-spread branches of the conker tree we bowed, our hands outspread in an eager search for alms, the conkers hidden in the grass below the branches. We had hardly a pocketful each of choice conkers, when we heard the approach of James Hanvey and one of his assistants. We split up each on our own. Never retreat by the wee path beside the laurel bushes. One is sure to run head on into one of the other assistants. At best one would receive a clout on the lug or a kick on the back-side, at worst both. We grabbed our bikes and made a dash for it. We came out unscathed and rejoined each other near the big house. We then sauntered casually past the north gable and down the main drive to the Crossgar Road.

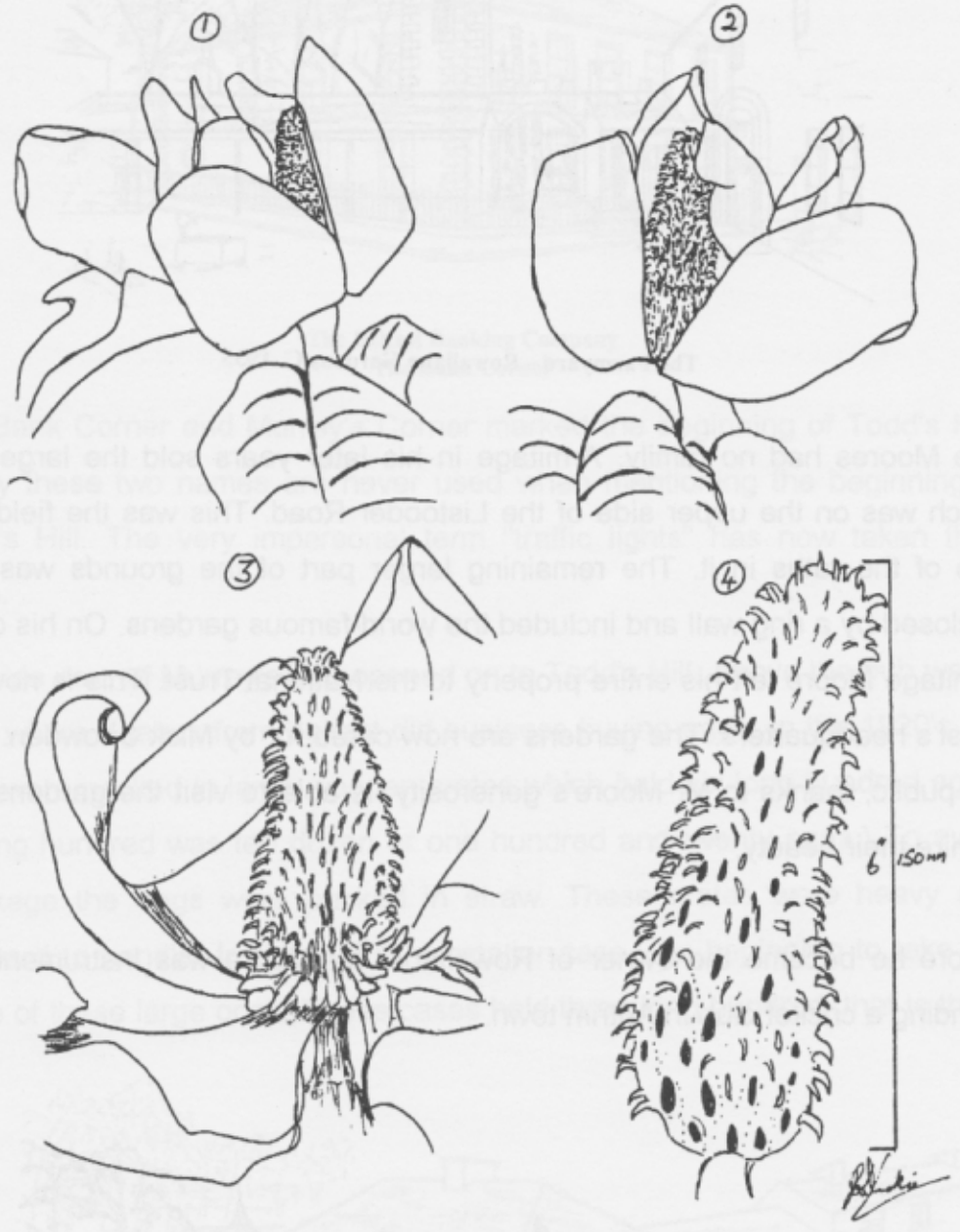
Mrs Moore was seldom seen beyond the confines of the house. She had not the friendly disposition which endeared her husband to those he met. Mrs Moore preferred the company of a few friends.

The Two Forths in Rowallane - in the townland of Leggygowan

There were two raths or forths in the Rowallane grounds. One was situated at the top corner of the field on the upper side of the Listooder Road. The other was in the middle of a large field near the farmyard and on the other side of the Listooder Road.

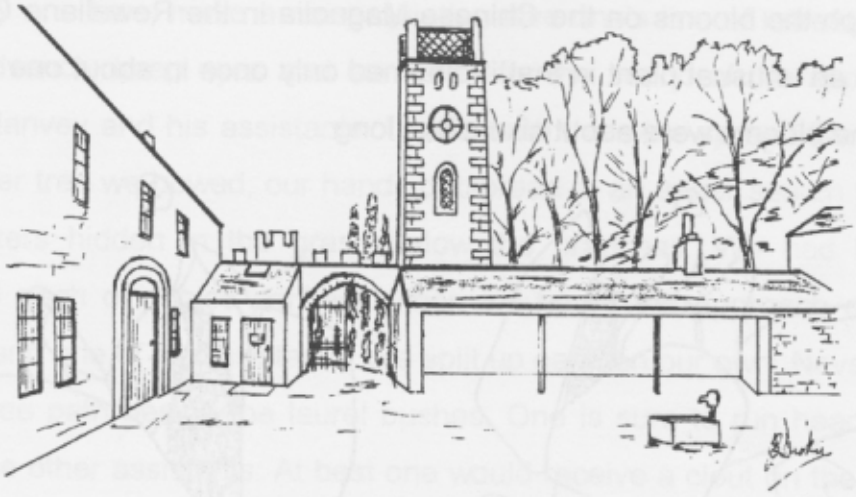
In the spring of 1935 there was an air of expectancy within the walls of Rowallane House. It was like waiting for the arrival of the first born and next in line to the hereditary title. James Hanvey made frequent trips to and from the house. Then Mr Moore sent for Gordon Lewis. He was a friend and worked in the Saintfield branch of the Belfast Banking Company. Gordon was a keen amateur photographer and Mr Moore had asked him to come and

photograph the blooms on the Chinese Magnolia in the Rowallane Gardens. This was an unusual plant in that it bloomed only once in about one hundred years. The blooms were about six inches long.



The flowering of a Chinese Magnolia in Rowallane Gardens in 1935.

Armitage Moore was the owner of a twelve horsepower Wolsey car. Although he was adept in the growing of plants, the working of the internal combustion engine was a mystery to him. The car was purchased about 1920 and was the only car Armitage ever owned. He depended on Leonard Kingham who worked in the Saintfield Motor and Cycle Works to service the vehicle and to keep it in a road-worthy condition. The older the car got, the more frequent Mr Kingham's visits.



The Farmyard - Rowallane Gardens C. 1935

The Moores had no family. Armitage in his later years sold the large field which was on the upper side of the Listooder Road. This was the field with one of the raths in it. The remaining larger part of the grounds was now enclosed by a ring wall and included the world-famous gardens. On his death Armitage Moore left his entire property to the National Trust. This is now the Trust's headquarters. The gardens are now cared for by Mick Snowden. Now the public, thanks to Mr Moore's generosity, is able to visit the gardens and admire their beauty.

Before he became the owner of Rowallane, Mr Moore was instrumental in founding a cricket club in Antrim town.

The Pool in the Rowallane Gardens

TODD'S HILL

The Belfast Banking Company
The Bank Corner

The Bank Corner and Murray's Corner marked the beginning of Todd's Hill. Today these two names are never used when mentioning the beginning of Todd's Hill. The very impersonal term "traffic lights" has now taken their place.

The side door of Murray's pub opened on to Todd's Hill. Above the pub was a store where dealers from Belfast did business buying eggs. In the 1920's the eggs were packed in large wooden crates which held six long hundred eggs. (A long hundred was ten dozen or one hundred and twenty eggs.) To avoid breakage the eggs were packed in straw. These crates were heavy and awkward to handle. In the 1930's a smaller case was beginning to take the place of these large ones. These cases held three long hundred, that is three

Murray's Corner

hundred and sixty eggs. The eggs were placed in individual cardboard compartments called fillers, each filler holding thirty-six eggs. These were separated from each other by plain cardboard "flats". To test the quality of

these fillers, a board was placed on top of one and the heaviest person available stood on the board. If the filler remained intact it was deemed to be of perfect quality. In 1936 the government introduced the 'Quality Egg Act'. The large wooden crates became obsolete, their place being taken by the smaller handy wooden boxes holding thirty dozen eggs. It also brought to an end the habit of some unscrupulous folks of boiling the eggs hard when the price was poor and selling them when the price improved. These eggs were classed as rejects and were worthless. The boiling prevented the eggs deteriorating in quality! The eggs, instead of being bought by the dozen, were with the introduction of the Egg Act, bought by weight and quality - first quality, second quality and rejects which were not paid for. Boiled eggs were classed as rejects.

Above this store was the home and workplace of Samuel Kingham. He was a tailor by trade. In his day and before his time, paveys (or pack men) used to

Todd's Hill - Looking towards the Main Street

travel round the country selling cloth of varying quality. They were welcome visitors in the days when travelling was difficult. People would buy a suitable length of cloth. A handy needle-woman would make the garments herself. More often a tailor would be employed. In the 1920's there were a good half dozen of them in and around Saintfield. Tailors hated working with inferior cloth, for it was difficult to handle and to keep in shape. With better transport and the availability of off-the-peg ready made suits, at a reasonable price, the country tailor was becoming less and less in demand.

Samuel Kingham's family were brought up in Todd's Hill. One son Walter emigrated to America. Lenny worked for Tommy Rice in the Saintfield Motor

and Cycle Works on the Crossgar Road. He soon made a name for himself as being a first class mechanic. Lenny's sister Sylvia was a first-class cook. She made dinner for my brother and me, when our parents were on holiday.

There was a garden at the gable of the Kingham home where the pub car park is now. This garden was Ernie Kingham's pride and joy. Ernie, Lenny's brother, had little power in and use of one hand and one leg, but he managed to cultivate that plot of ground, keeping it tidy and weed-free, better than many an able-bodied person.

The side windows of the Belfast Banking Company across the road looked out on to Todd's Hill. At one time Mr Carlisle was manager. He lived in the attached house with his wife and family. Addy Manoun and Gordon Lewis handled the cash and the clerical work.

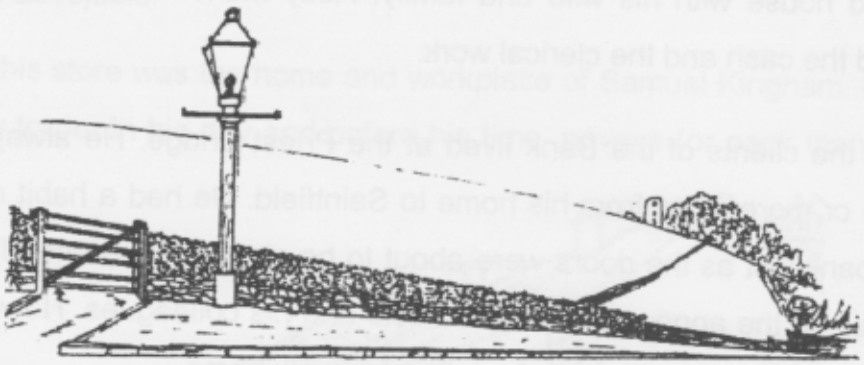
One of the clients of the Bank lived at the Priest Bridge. He always walked the two or more miles from his home to Saintfield. He had a habit of arriving at the bank just as the doors were about to be closed at the end of the day's business, to the annoyance of Mr Carlisle and his colleagues. However, they took pity on him, knowing how far he had to walk home.

One morning Addy happened to glance out of one of the side windows. He remarked to the others, " There's our friend from the Priest Bridge, coming into Saintfield. He will be early at the Bank today for a change". The day wore on towards closing time. Mr Carlisle noticed their friend from the Priest Bridge crossing the Main Street towards the Bank. "Quick!" he called to the others, "get the door closed immediately!" Gordon was quick to respond and had the entrance firmly closed and secured as their client came to the steps. Gordon saw him through the window, shook his head and returned to his desk. That was the last time their friend from Priest Bridge arrived at closing time.

Master Adams lived in the house beside the bank. He was a retired school teacher, hence the title of "Master". I think he had been in charge of the Doran's Rock School before Charles Marshall. He was slightly lame. He loved to fraternise with the members of the Lawn Tennis Club. Although he did not play himself, he took pleasure in and was willing to coach, any beginners.

A couple of spinsters lived in the house at the other end of the terrace. From their front room they had a commanding view up and down Todd's Hill. Their remarks about those they saw were not always complimentary.

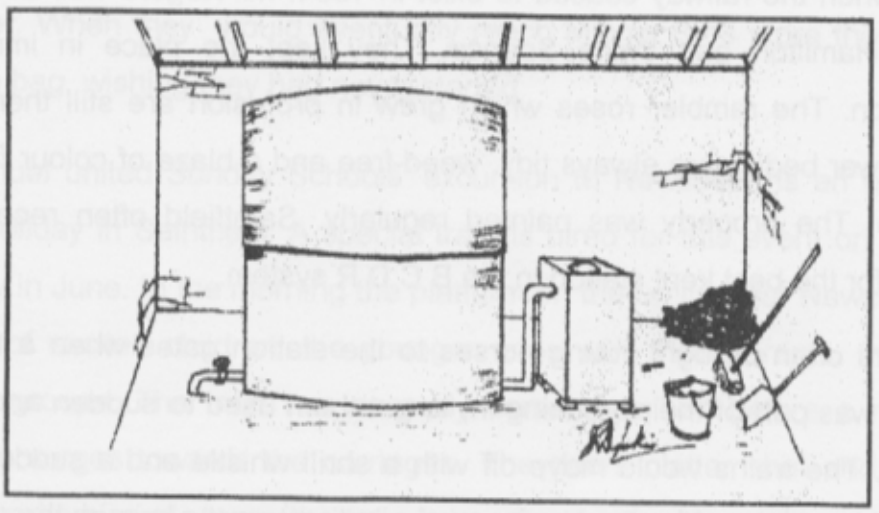
A number of outbuildings belonging to Darby Cottage back onto Todd's Hill. The cottage cannot be seen from this road. It was somewhere about here that gas was generated to supply street lighting to Saintfield. This was done in a barn belonging to someone called Moore. Gas has no longer been produced here since about 1920. The only evidence of gas lighting between the two World Wars were the gas lamps in front of the three churches in the Main Street and a number of wall brackets which held the lamps up the Main Street and to the bottom of the Fair Green. There was also a lamp standard half-way



The Street Lamp between Todd's Hill and the Railway Station

between Todd's Hill and the station. It was beside the footpath beside Martin Perry's field. It remained there for many years after the last World War. It stood opposite the Station Mews. I never liked that name. When building started the site was referred to as "Todd's Hill Park". I think if the inhabitants knew the meaning of Mews (a street or yard where horses were stabled, the yard containing a steaming pile of fresh horse manure), they would demand the name be changed to the more respectable one of "Todd's Hill Park". This lamp post now stands in a private garden, a reminder of those days when Saintfield enjoyed gas street lighting. A similar lamp post stood on the footpath outside the Second Presbyterian church. The post had to be removed for many people objected to apologising to a cast-iron post when they bumped into it in the dark. Others objected to getting their knuckles skinned when they clouted the offending post in the dark, when they thought it was someone who refused to get out of the way.

There was a large metal gasometer in Moore's barn to contain the gas produced there. The top half fitted over the bottom part. Beside the gasometer was a small container made from heavier metal. A metal pipe joined the container to the gasometer. Chunks of dry carbide were placed in this small container. A predetermined amount of water was added and the lid



The Saintfield Gas Works - Todd's Hill - before 1920

clamped down and secured as quickly as possible. The water reacted violently with the dry carbide, producing a gas which was forced along the pipe into the gasometer. If the lid on the small container is not secured properly or quickly, anyone standing near was sure to be clabbered with the slurry which would be forced through the join of the lid with the container.

The Belfast and County Down Railway Station was sited a short distance from Todd's Hill. It relied on paraffin oil for the lamps there. In 1869 the railway was opened between Belfast and Newcastle. The original buildings

Saintfield Railway Station (B.C.D.R.) before 1900

are still there. The station and the station master's house are now listed buildings. The pillars along the station platform support the original beam

which carried the roof. This beam had been wrought from one tree. It is about eighty-five feet long (twenty-six metres) and fifteen inches by fifteen inches.

George Rogers was station master for most of the years between the two World Wars. He was followed by Mr Fleming and by Mr Black who was still there when the railway ceased to exist in 1954. Mr Rogers was assisted by Frank Hamilton and Willie Spence. They kept the place in immaculate condition. The rambler roses which grew in profusion are still there today. The flower beds were always tidy, weed-free and a blaze of colour from time to time. The property was painted regularly. Saintfield often received the award for the best kept station in the B C D R system.

Farmers often brought young horses to the station gates when a train was due. It was part of their breaking-in, to get them used to sudden and strange noises. The trains would move off with a shrill whistle and a sudden hiss of steam, the driving wheels spinning and grinding to get a grip on the rails.

The goods yard was across the road from the station. This is now the premises of Blair Bros Ltd, the builders suppliers. There was a platform along the Saintfield side of the yard. On the last Wednesday of every month (fair day), cattle trucks would be shunted along-side this platform to load the cattle and horses, purchased by dealers, to transport them to their final destinations. When the County Down Stag Hounds were holding a meet near Saintfield, hunt horses were brought to Saintfield by rail for their owners.

Cement, timber, coal, animal feeding stuffs as well as sugar, tea and flour for human consumption were transported by rail to the goods yard. As well a great variety of other merchandise was transported to Saintfield by rail. From here the goods had to be transported by horse and cart to their final destination. Road haulage traffic, which was on the increase in the 1930's, put an end to much of the railway's freight traffic.

From time to time, some men have decided to show their strength, or have taken a dare, by carrying a two hundredweight (hundred kilo) bag of feeding stuff from the goods yard to Minnis Bros store in Comber Street. Those with more wit than strength usually left the bag down before reaching the yard gates. Those, with more strength than wit and with a stubbornness not to be

beaten in front of their friends, would set off with the bag placed firmly across their shoulders. After leaving the yard they would turn left and trudge up Todd's Hill and down the other side. Then, with the bag feeling more like a ton weight, they would cross the low corner and proceed up the Main Street and into the Comber Street. By this time they could hardly drag one foot past the other. When they would eventually reach Minnis Bros store they would drop the bag, wishing they had never started.

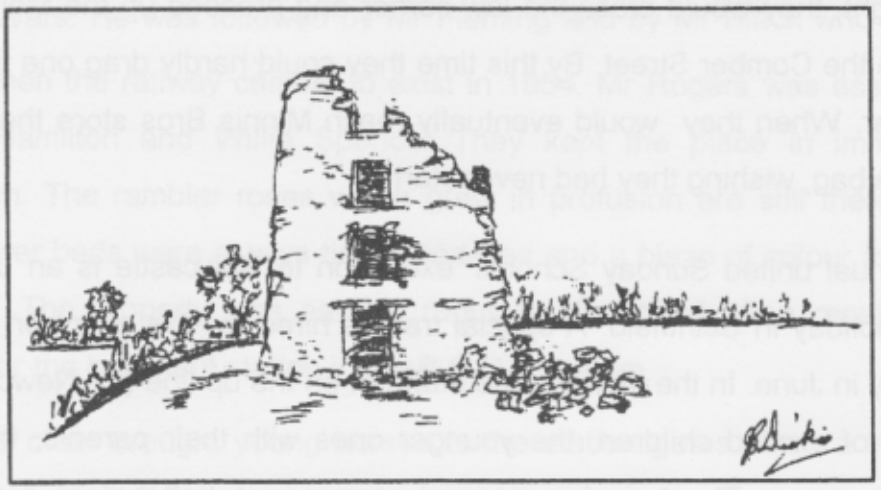
The annual united Sunday Schools' excursion to Newcastle is an unofficial public holiday in Saintfield. A special train is hired for this event on the last Tuesday in June. In the morning the platform on the up line (for Newcastle) is a mass of excited children, the younger ones with their parents, the older ones in groups. The train has scarcely come to a halt before a mass of humanity surges towards the carriages. The doors clatter shut and, with a whistle and a hiss of steam, the train is heading for the Mountains of Mourne. Saintfield is now a ghost town, at least until the excursion train returns in the evening.

Station Master's House and Station

Originally four gates guarded the level crossing. These were replaced around 1900 with two gates. These gates were easier to handle. Around midnight the goods train arrived. Wagons were removed from the train, others added to it. All the time this was going on the gates were closed to road traffic. This operation lasted from three-quarters of an hour to sometimes well over the hour.

Beyond the station the road passes along the foot of Ballyaugherty Hill. At the top of this hill was the remains of a windmill. It is no longer there. This was one of a number of mills built by the M'Burney family around 1800. This windmill

stump was clearly visible from the Station Road in the 1920's. It stood about forty feet high and twenty to twenty-five feet in diameter. It was reported that someone took a horse and cart up to the windmill and began to load stones



Ballyagherty Windmill - about 1925

from the mill into the cart. He had the cart about half full when a local approached him .

"You'll never have any good luck, if you pull down those walls".

" For why?"

"The fairies live there, thats why".

"Your head's cut if you believe them yarns about fairies".

He had hardly the words out of his mouth when the horse fell down dead between the shafts of the cart!