

Portrush

Princess Street and Beyond ...



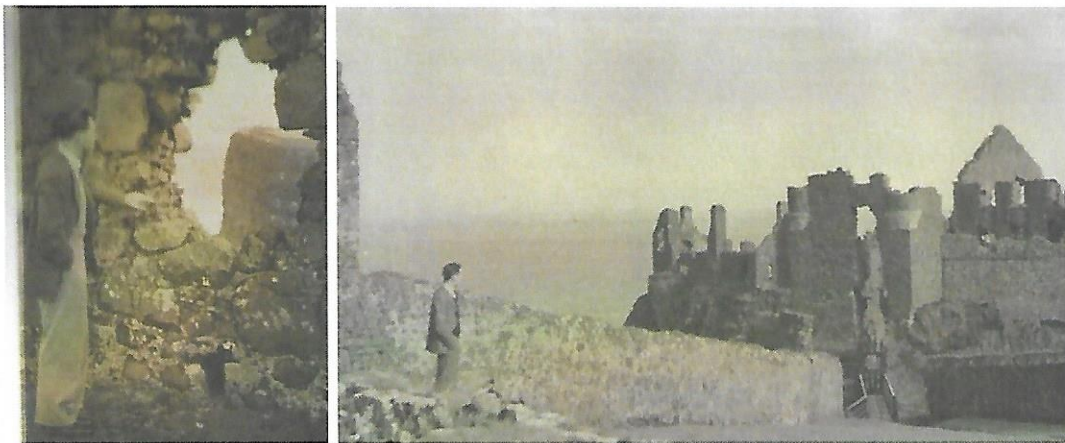
Photo: William "Speedy" Moore, Coleraine Chronicle

John Logan

Best Wishes,  
John



The "Wee Strand" at the harbour (early 1930s): Johnny Logan (Daddy Two), Emily Logan (Granny), Daisy, Billy, Audrey and Victor.



1940. Jack Logan (left) and Billy Esdale at Dunluce Castle.



## The Signal Box

Since the commencement of the refurbishment of Portrush Station, each time my train has pulled in I have been delighted, relieved and somewhat amazed to see that Charlie Morrow's signal box remains "untummelled", standing as it does in splendid isolation and in somewhat faded glory

This iconic building has a unique way of engendering trains of thought which in turn often take me back after to the 1940s and the early 1950s. About that time 15 Princess Street was my second home and I spent as much time as



possible with my grandparents, Johnny and Emily Logan. Each of their children was born and raised there: Jack, my father, Daisy, Billy, Victor, Audrey and O'Hara. Although my father lived and worked in Londonderry (hereinafter sometimes referred to as Derry) he, like his siblings, his parents and at least one of his children, had a heart firmly anchored in Portrush.

Each of the Logans, in his or her own way, contributed tremendously to my life. Each deserves special mention but for the moment generalisations will suffice. Before and during my father's illness and ever afterwards they, like my mother and sister, were important elements in my life. They showed their love in the support, encouragement and guidance they gave as well as through their patience and continual concern for my welfare.

The same can be said for the McClures, Ernest who became my stepfather and his children Judith and Alan. Ernest's wife had died at about the same time as my father and, after much discussion and planning the two bereaved adults decided to unite the families in the hope, far from forlorn, that the union would be of great benefit to each of the individuals involved. It helped greatly that my mother and Ernest were given great moral support in their venture by Granny, Daddy Two and the Logan family as well as by many, many others.

Charlie and Sadie Morrow lived next door to the Logan family, in Number 17. Sadie ran a fine "boarding house" which was particularly popular with her fellow Scots. Sadie herself was more Scots than an Islay Single malt. She seldom had a vacant bed, even outside the "Glasgow Fair". The Morrrows were great neighbours and it was worth remaining out of bed on December 31<sup>st</sup>, even as an 11 or 12 year old, to witness Sadie's "firrst futtin" of Number 15.



## Number 15

Time spent in number 15 itself was seldom dull. Neighbours, friends and family were frequent visitors and there was always a kettle of well stewed tea on the range. There being no fishing from September through to March my days in Portrush, weekends, half terms, Christmas holidays, were spent largely in the "back room" where Daddy Two, Granny and I played Lexicon and draughts and where I worked on my personal projects including drawing fast jets of the day (Gloster Javelins, Hawker Hunters, F86 Sabres, MIG 15s, ...) in my Air Spotters notebook, a prelude to the acquisition of my Boy Scouts Air Spotters' badge.

Running alongside this was my love of building models of the aeroplanes named above. These were normally 20 inch wingspan and consisted of balsa wood fuselages and wings covered with tissue paper which was then "doped" to stretch it and to strengthen the structure. On one occasion when I had nearly completed the skeleton of a Fairey Gannet

Daddy Two, unable to contain his impatience and pride, said, "Right, John, bring that plane with you. We're going to see Hughie!" Johnny Logan had himself been a joiner to trade and could see that my work was, in his opinion anyway, worthy of display to a wider public.

Hughie, proprietor of the garage opposite our back door, heaped praise upon both model and modeller as Daddy Two wiped away a tear.



1952 Keil Kraft  
Fairey Gannet

I believe I gained my love of radio from evenings spent in the back room. Saturdays at 5pm saw Daddy Two extract his football pools coupon from his jacket pocket (he kept his unending supply of dulce in his "wiscit") and we would

hunch ourselves over the radio to catch the scores which, unfortunately, never seemed to correspond with Daddy Two's predictions.

We would keep tabs on the McCooeys and their "veg dibittle soup", on Dick Barton Special Agent and, of course we would seldom miss the lively jigs and reels provided by David Currie and the BBC Northern Ireland Light Orchestra, their programmes opening with the iconic "Irish Washerwoman."

Iconic also was the BBC Home Service reporting of the SS Flying Enterprise drama. The ship, England bound from the USA with a cargo which included thousands of tons of iron, was hit by a severe storm on Christmas night 1951 as she approached English waters. Losing way the Flying Enterprise eventually succumbed to the weather but not before the heroic Captain Kurt Carlsen had ensured that his crew were delivered safely into the hands of a rescue tug sent from Falmouth in the vain hope of saving the freighter. The tug's mate, Kenneth Dancy, put his own life in considerable danger as he boarded Flying Enterprise to give support to Carlsen. Realising that there was nothing he could do, Dancy rejoined the tug. Carlsen himself remained on his bridge until the last possible moment then put his own life in the hands of the tug crew who, once again, displayed bravery and skill of the highest order - pure heroics all round. Supplemented by aerial photographs in the "English papers" the images created by the BBC's reporters over the drama's 4 days were vivid and are long lasting.

From time to time Daddy Two would entertain us with songs, his repertoire based around "If I Were a Blackbird" and "The Day We Went to Rothesay-O." Simple pleasures are often the best remembered!

My father and I visited Princess Street every Sunday, sometimes accompanied by my mother and Elizabeth. On these latter occasions a chorus of "I see Por - trush, I see Por - trush" would echo through the car as we passed Carnalridge, Magherabuoy Cross and down the Coleraine Road with Bertie Boyd's garage on our left. On the other hand when time came to leave for home in Derry, spirits were not normally quite as high although my father's renditions of "Westering Home" did lift some of the sadness felt at having to leave Portrush .



## The Back House

In mid June each year the Logans "flitted" from the main house into the "back house", a jumble of rooms which were, in their heyday, workshops and stores and were part of the overall structure of the house. When holidaymakers, usually Belfast folk, moved in for the summer, the two doors which normally allowed movement between the two residences were locked. That was it until September.

No electricity; one "jawbox" in which, at various times, dishes and vegetables were washed and which served as sink, bath and shower for the inhabitants. Billy slept on the ground floor, one "wall" of his room being the partition between the backhouse and the scullery of main house. The stairs began their steep, wooden ascent near Billy's door or, rather, curtain. At the summit of the climb were three "bedrooms". Granny and Daddy Two slept facing the stairs: Aunty Audrey's room was off Granny's room and Uncle Victor and I slept in a room to the right at the top of the stairs, Victor's bed was next to the external wall while mine was at right angles, under the window.

Many vivid memories remain of the summer sojourns off Causeway View Lane:

Granny's 6am wake-up call for Audrey and Victor, a cacophony of voice and walking stick;

listening to Radio Luxembourg's Top Twenty on Victor's clandestine radio at 11pm on Sunday nights. Would Petula Clark still be number one with "The Little Shoemaker?"

reading Uncle Billy's cast-off cowboy books under candlelight;

Lighter moments, and there were many, included fishing, cycling, boating and visiting Hughie Stewart's (later Gordon Bell's) garage. This was located opposite the "backhouse" front door - at other times the main house's back door ... Hughie enlisted me to "help" fix punctures, change oil, bleed brakes, replace cylinder head gaskets, ...

Frequent visits were made to Norman Cameron's butcher's shop, normally to buy beef sausages; to Knox's for a variety of groceries; to Farquarson's bakery for buns (bread came via the Ormo electric breadcart), to the Misses Hales' dairy (when Jimmy Irwin's supply of buttermilk failed to satisfy three large Logans.)

## Jack

Jack Logan and Betty Porter



The death of Mac O'Neill was for many in Portrush the end of an era. For me it was something deeper, Mac having been the last direct link I had with my father. As a boy Mac would catch prawns and dig ragworms as fishing bait for my father. To my continual pride and pleasure Mac referred to me as "Jack" and so I assumed that after his death I would be "Jack" no longer. So it was until one day on the prom at the West Strand when I encountered Richard McKay, one time Harbour Master and good friend of Mac.

I greeted him with "Hello Richard!"

The response?

"How're you Jack!"

Amazement, delight on my part!

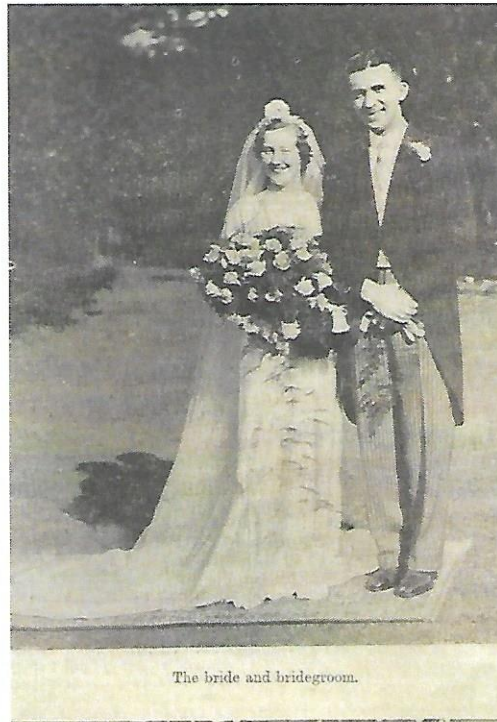
More recently, at the Old Dock bridge, when conversation was ending and we were about to go our separate way I bade Richard farewell with:

"Safe home Richard, see you soon."

"Right you are Jack!"



1938. Betty and Jack Logan (Londonderry Sentinel 29 Sept 1938)



### The Sea

My father's best friend was Billy Esdale who lived with his parents near the Antrim Gardens end of Princess Street. Billy was joiner to trade and, like my father was a keen sea angler. Billy acquired a beautiful, double ended clinker built boat of about 20ft and, if conditions were right, the two of them would row out towards the Skerries on the hunt for mackerel, the length of each expedition depending upon how much time my father had to spend in Portrush before heading "home" to Derry.

Billy's iconic craft had been nameless until, on one fishing trip, while potential names were being discussed, my father spotted a grey seal on one of the Wee Islands. That was it.

The Grey Seal, as of 2018, is in the hands of Mac O'Neills family and, despite breaking her back when a storm blew her off her cradles, her name remains proudly displayed on the stern quarter.





1948. "great, but where's the stroke oar?"

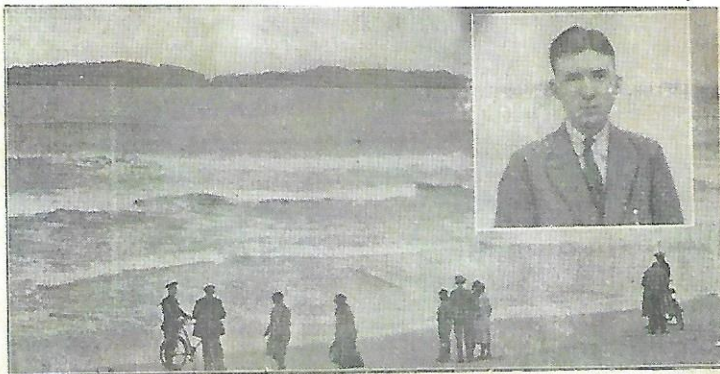


Some 60 years later another O'Neill pulls Grey Seal towards the Harbour.



1942. Jack Logan and 10 month old son at the "Wee Strand"

The Derry and Antrim Yearbook of 1932 makes reference to Jack Logan's bravery in trying to save his two friends whose canoe had capsized off the Curran Point. The rescue was unsuccessful but my father's courage was recognised and appreciated in Portrush and beyond.



The Curran Point, Portrush, with the Sherries in the background, where Robert and Reginald Lee, sons of Mr. Robert Lee, Main Street, Portrush, were drowned through the overturning of their canoe, 10th April, 1931. (Inset) Mr. Jack Logan, who made two heroic attempts to save the victims.



The canoe from which the brothers Lee were drowned.

Other Logans, too, have been involved in maritime dramas, O'Hara leaving his sunbathing spot behind the bathing boxes on the South Pier to pull a bather from the dangerous tidal pool at the Pier's bend.

Daisy, too, entered the water fully dressed, near the same place and pulled a struggling bather to safety.



Daisy Logan (later Moore)

Just as these interventions were successful so was that of a third Logan, Victor. He and O'Hara crewed for rival skippers in the National 18 Dinghy (Portrush) Series, racing being held in the West Bay on Tuesday and Thursday evenings in the season. Possibly the biggest highlight of the sailors' season, however, was the voyage across to Moville and Greencastle for their regattas: westward on Friday evening, eastwards on Sunday evening, quite often the worse for social wear.

Victor crewed for Sammy Neely and was aboard the dinghy on one particular trip to Donegal. The flotilla of National 18s left Portrush, all going well until they reached the Tuns Bank where Sammy's boat went over, the 90 degree flip meaning that the sails were lying on the surface. Sammy, unfortunately, had been thrown from the boat and was trapped under the mainsail. Clutching a knife, Victor dived beneath the sail, manoeuvred himself towards Sammy and cut an opening to allow the skipper to get his head above water. Some of the other crews, aware of the drama, altered course and came to the assistance of the stricken dinghy's crew.

The dinghy was righted and the flotilla, including the Neely boat, sailed on to Moville. Amazing by any standards.█

My father, being a Portrush man through and through, had long had a desire to own his own boat and so it was, in 1949, that he bought a traditional, square transomed workboat of about 20 feet with a substantial beam. The boat was transported to a garage near Portrush Technical School and work began on



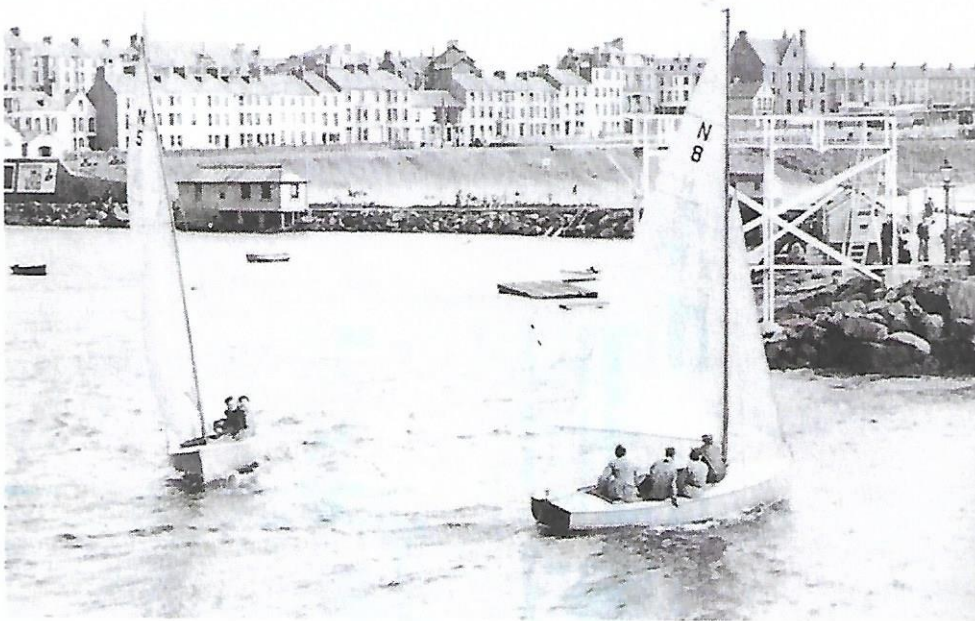
installing an engine. I remember that the engine, by some means or other, had been liberated from an Austin Seven car and that much discussion had taken place amongst my father, my uncles Billy and Victor and a mechanic as to how best to set up the cooling system and how to adapt the gearbox to suit the propeller shaft.

Eventually all the work was accomplished and the boat was pushed down Kerr Street on a trailer, through the Lifeboat House gates and down the basalt-cobbled slipway to the Wee Harbour Strand. The launch was a success and it wasn't long until three Logans had rounded Ramore Head and entered Port an Dhu harbour. The return journey also went well and all seemed to be in order until, some weeks later, the boat was brought into the Wee Strand so that some work could be done. Daddy Two and I watched proceedings for a while then wandered off across the sand dunes towards Castle Erin. At one point I turned round and saw smoke rising from the area of the little beach. I ran across to the wall, peered over and saw flames shooting up from my father's boat. Running over to where Daddy Two was now sitting, I shouted, "Daddy Two, daddy's boat's on fire!"

"It can't be", was his response but as he got up he too saw the smoke. Together we ran to the black wall from where we could see down upon what was happening. We arrived just in time to see Uncle Billy use the butt end of an oar to hole the boat. Water rushed in and, of course, the boat went down albeit in about 3 feet of water. The fire was extinguished, whether or not through Uncle Billy's intervention which, at the time was considered by some as being possibly over extreme.

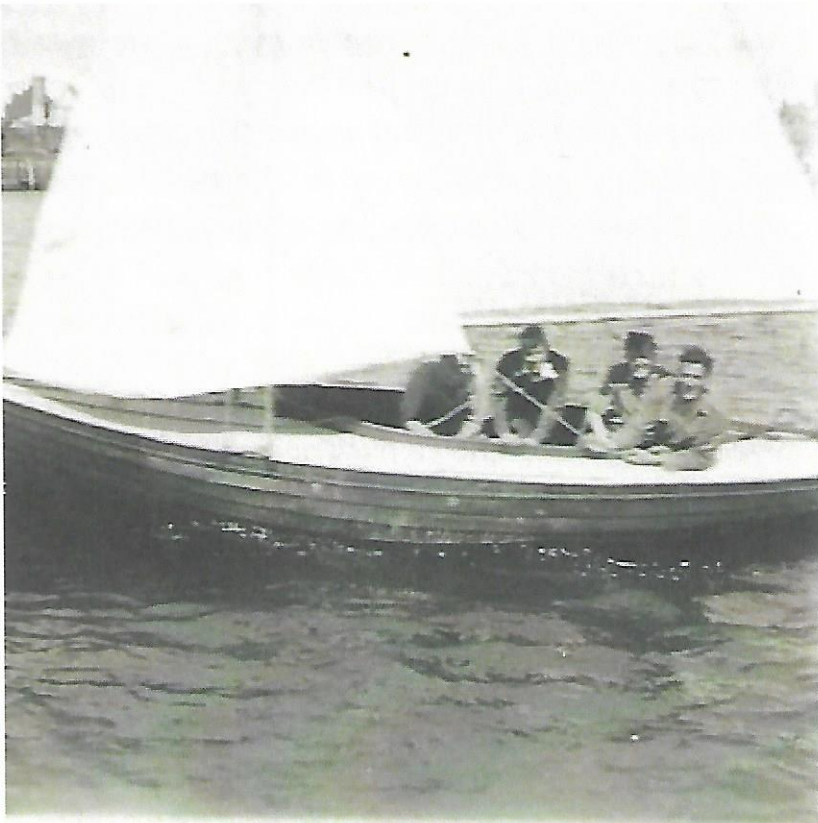
My father's boat was later salvaged with some difficulty and the hole stopped temporarily. With considerable sadness all round, the vessel was towed out into the West Bay and the repaired section holed once again. Somewhere on the seabed, about 200 metres north-west of the harbour mouth, lie the shattered, sunken remains of a dream.

## Days of the National 18s



Yacht races in West Bay. The races took place in 1949. The yachts that took place in the races were called 'aces'. The following persons participated in the races: W. Murdoch, S. McNeilly, A. McDowell, B. Lee, F. Eastwood.

(McNeilly or Neely?)



Any familiar faces?



## The Harbour Head

It was not the watery sun hanging mockingly above Dhu Varren in December 2018 inspired further thoughts. Rather it was the Harbour Head from where the photograph was taken. Back in the 40s and 50s this lofty location was Portrush's Forum attracting as it did such worthies as Johnny Logan himself (famed for many things: photo 2<sup>nd</sup> left middle row), Davy Wilson (of hire boat fame) Johnny Doherty (of Queen Elizabeth fame) Tommy Patton (of plumbing fame) and Bobby McMullan (of trawler fame),



A very young John Logan (of no fame at all) might also have been found in the company from time to time. Discussions varied greatly although they were always centred on local matters:

"I hear the boats from the County Down had half a ton of skate."

"Boys a-dear."

"Charlie says there were 8 excursion trains in on Saturday."

"Ye tell me that now!"

"Mrs Mac has flitted from Garden Court."

"Is that a fact?" (not really a question ...)



"Who's master of thon coal boat?"

"Willie McMurtrie."

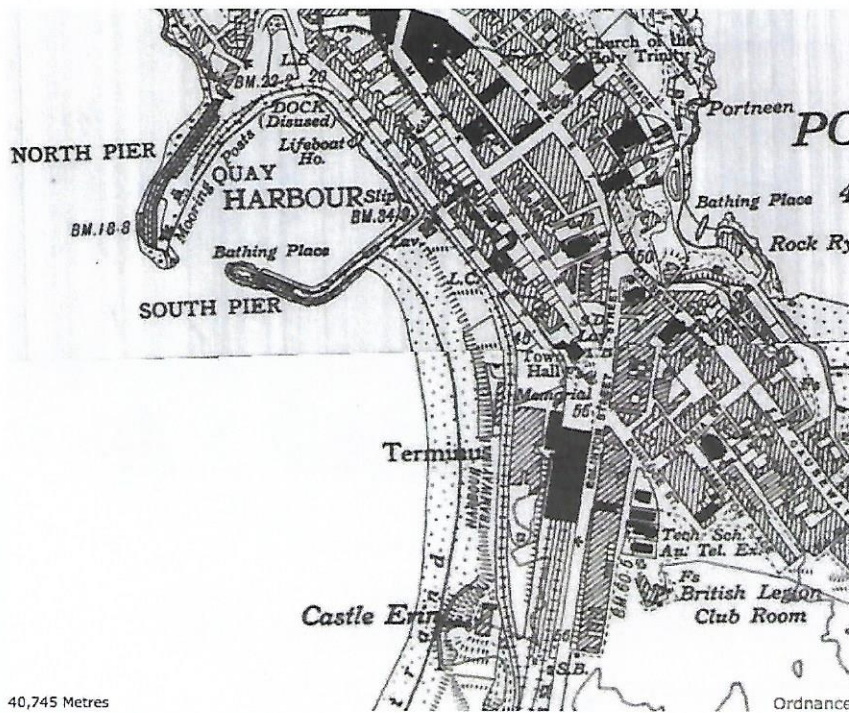
"Wee Willie? I thought he'd gone to Burns 'n' Laird."

"He didnae like it. Kelly's took him back, he prefers Portrush to Derry!"

On occasions these redoubtable and respected locals would gaze down on a scene of great activity. A collier with a load of Cumbrian coal would be tended by two steam cranes, one working the for'rd hold, the other working the aft. These cranes would clank, steam and smoke as they extracted the coal from its



seagoing pit, their jibs describing semi circular arcs as their buckets swung landward loaded and seaward unloaded. They made their ungainly way on railway tracks, for short distances, as drivers manoeuvred them to positions adjacent to the remaining piles of coal in the dark depths of the ship, the hold crew with hands, arms, faces, necks and goodness knows what else caked with black icing, a creation of sweat and coal dust.



Map: PRONI (OS) 6"  
3<sup>rd</sup> Series 1905-1959

The cranes had their own dedicated track and the same was true for coal wagons. These were shunted down from a siding at the station passing Barry's, the old lifeboat house and running parallel with Kerr Street on their journey. They rattled and spragghelled over the Old Dock

bridge and lined up on the inside of the cranes which would feed their eager open mouths with food for hearths, fireplaces and ranges both local and further afield.

Further seawards, nearer the harbour mouth, another small freighter might be moored. This vessel would have come in unladen, would take on a cargo of basalt chippings and transport them to northwest England where they would be use for metalling roads. It was said that "there's a layer of Craighulliar in every road in Cumbria." Well....

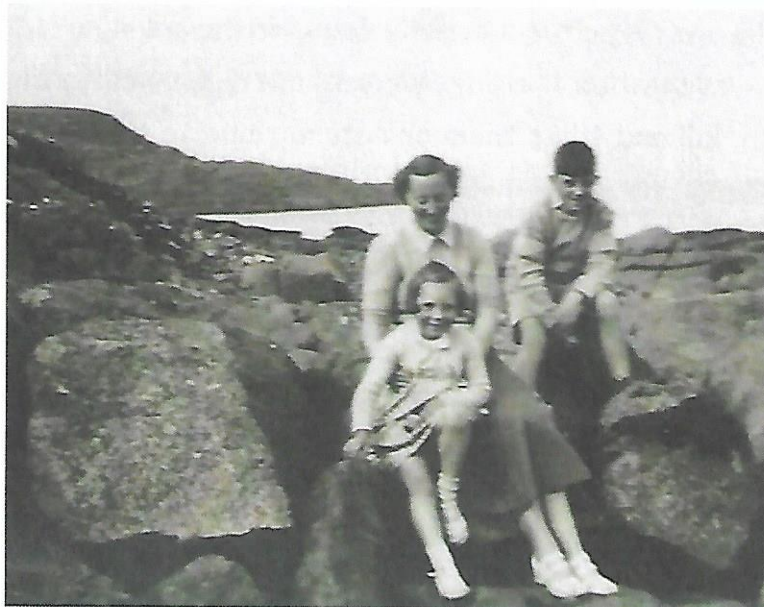
The basalt chippings were drawn to the bins by lorry, often one of Taggart's for whom Uncle Victor drove from time to time. The stones were tipped into a hopper at the rear of the gigantic concrete cylinders, were raised to the open top of the bins by clanking, grinding, dusty conveyor belts set at about 70 degrees. They fell into the recesses of the bins and then entered the ship's hold via a chute located at the bottom of each bin - gravity at work.



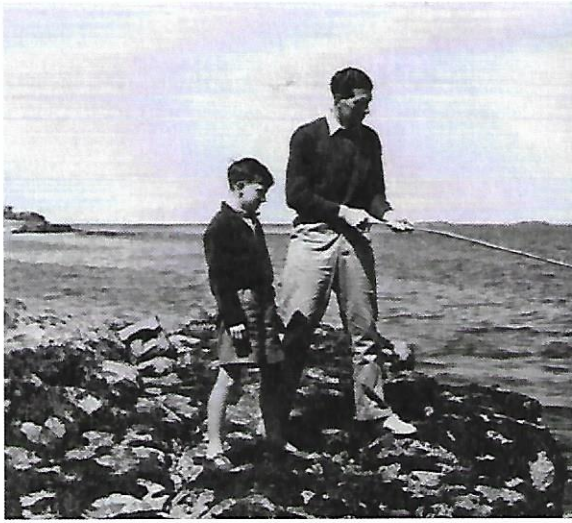
## The Rocks



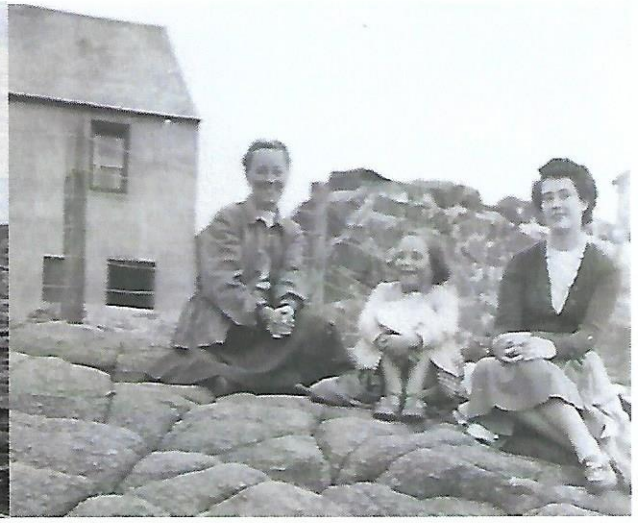
1951 With Elizabeth and Daddy at Esdale's Pool, Reviggerly



1951 near Portscadden. With my mother and Elizabeth



1952 Murty's Mouth with O'Hara.



1952 Salmon House Rocks.

Betty and Elizabeth Logan, Kathleen McCullough (later Logan)

My memory, unfortunately, harbours few memories of fishing expeditions with my father. O'Hara and, in particular, Billy found in me a willing learner and a keen participant - even when the days were blank. I learned to dig bait, shape lures, unhook fish, kill and fillet them or return them to the sea.

Traditionally we fished the Salmon Rocks for sea trout in spring and for plaice or flounder in summer. Murty's Mouth was glasson and mackerel territory; at the Leeragh there was always the chance of a mackerel or a lythe as well as the ubiquitous wrasse (locally known as "merrin"); Portscadden was known for its garfish locally called "horned eels"; many a conger was extracted from Port an Dhu; Taylor's Rock, at the "Back of the Hill" was renowned for big lythe, particularly in the long, warm calm evenings of June and July.

A phenomenon which remains vivid in my memory is the "kill" at Port an Dhu. I happened to witness several of these events which occurred in July or August when shoals of mackerel and Glasson would corrale vast quantities of herring fry in the waters of the harbour, quite a confined space. The frenzied fish seemed to spend as much time in the air or on the jetty as in the water feeding



ferociously with no concern for their own welfare . So it was that locals made their way home with strings of fish over their shoulders or in any receptacle that came to hand. Some folk, well organised, scooped fish out in wicker fuel baskets. Others sent "runners" to the trawlermen's dump on the north pier with instructions to "bring back a brave bit of net."

I witnessed a similar "kill" in Porturlin, north Mayo, in 2003. The sight and sound still filled me with wonder.

### Off the Rocks

Come all ye sea anglers and listen to me,  
Some fish tales I have for to tell  
'Bout glasson and lythe, 'bout mack'rel and wrasse  
And the odd giant conger as well.

But the king of the fish that appeared on my dish  
Was the sea-trout, a creature with class.  
You knew without doubt when you'd hooked such a trout  
(And the same could be said of the bass.)

In the spring of the year we readied our gear  
And made for the Salmon House rocks  
Where we knew there were trout - we hadn't a doubt,  
But, good grief, they were so hard to fox!

With Tazzlers we tempted them, copper spoons too,  
With our own home-made brass lures so fine,  
The trout led us a dance but aye gave us a chance-  
As long as the sun didn't shine.

From March until May we fished the East Bay  
And the back of the South Pier as well.  
Where sand-eels abound those trout can be found-  
Blackrock, too, with its dangerous swell.

Uncle Billy's tuition and my own strong ambition  
Allowed me to catch 'bout my share  
'Twas a life by the sea, which just suited me,  
Real freedom and endless fresh air. JohnL



1951 From Portscadden. 'Twixt Reviggerly and the Wee Islands?!

### The Open ....

...of which my memories are sketchy to say the least. My father, after yet more major surgery in the Royal Victoria Hospital, was fit enough to take me to Royal Portrush for a day in July 1951. While I cannot remember any golf I do remember the plus-fours and other exotic items of clothing worn by Max Faulkner, Bobby Locke, ...



Royal Portrush 1951. Max Faulkner driving.



## The North West

My introduction to the North West 200 began when my father took me to a meeting of the City of Derry Motor Club in the Melville Hotel. There I met Danny Gallagher, a good friend of nearly 70 years' standing. Danny's father was Clerk of Course for the NW and each race weekend I would move into Number 15 although the only thing I did there was sleep. Danny Gallagher, despite his busy-ness, treated me as a son and ensured that I was fed, watered and that I entered fully into the race environment.



1958. Jack Brett (Manx Norton) at Metropole and at Quarry Hill on his way to winning 500cc Race.

"Ah, a blattering four-stroke single could set senses all a-tingle  
As the fragrant Castrol R hung in the air.  
That's all we bikers need - sights and sounds and smells and - speed  
And I'm very pleased to say that - ...

I Was There!

(A Biker's Ballad)

Come all ye brave bikers and listen to me  
A legend I have for to tell  
'Bout Norton and Matchless, Gilera, MV  
And men like our own Artie Bell.

The North West began in the year twenty-nine  
(One thousand nine hundred that be),  
And the course? Well it took in three neat little towns  
And a beautiful stretch by the sea

Magher'buoy was the start in those earliest days  
With a straight run to old Metropole  
Then a left up to Church and a right to Black Hill -  
A bend which can still take its toll.

Past Juniper, Primrose then past York Hotel,  
'Round Henry's and up to Town Hall,  
Mill Road, Agherton, Drumslade and Millburn  
Then right/left at Shell Hill's stone wall.

Ballysally townland now well left behind  
Mather's Cross was a fast sweeping right,  
Then a left just above the Carnalridge school  
And once more Magh'rabuoy is in sight.

On the Triangle's roads, the beach at Benone,  
One man cut a figure of fame.  
He rode Wall of Death while we all held our breath  
Yes, George Brockerton was his name.

In a green hut of wood two schoolboys oft' stood  
Equipped with black Bakelite phone.  
They'd call up HQ when riders came through:  
"Juniper: Bell's out on his own!"

Norton's "Kneeler" appeared in the year fifty-three,  
Its rider the brave Raymond Amm  
Who set fastest lap but had a mishap  
Despite double overhead cam.

The era of fierce, red Gileras then came,  
Four cylinders spread 'cross the frame.  
With Geoff Duke and Reg Armstrong a-scream round the course,  
But Norton the red beasts could tame.

This wasn't to last I'm so sorry to say  
For the singles just had to give way  
And soon did the four strokes when "two-smokers" arrived.  
This sure didn't brighten my day.



Many features, of course, have changed o'er the years -  
Start and Finish now on the coast road,  
Chicanery, we feel, has become the new deal  
Justified by today's safety code.

Those were the days, remembered so well,  
But the story is far from complete.  
An author is needed - a poet indeed.  
Until then we will just have to wait.

John Logan March 2016



Impressive sea ....!



Colmcille launch June 2003.



Another impressive sea ...!





Glenvale c 1960



Principal Boy Audrey Logan ...Oh yes it is!

Lansdowne Rocks 1937



Jack Logan died, aged 37, in Westbank Nursing Home, Londonderry, on 16th June 1952. He predeceased his parents who were later laid to rest in the same plot at Ballywillan, a plot which overlooks the Logans' beloved Portrush.