

to the Mayo newspaper, "The Western People" by Tom Healy's mother — Granny Healy, that wonderful woman; she was trying to get in touch with the irregular commandant who set up the ambush:

Angler's Hotel  
Pontoon

An open letter to the Western People.

Owing to the Post Office strike and not knowing your present address I am addressing you through the Press. If, in the terrible shock I received on hearing of the death of my son I said unkind things, pray forgive me. Next I thank you or the man instructed by you who shot him and hope God will forgive you as I do. It was hard to lose him so young but God is the best judge and welcome be his holy will. I left a message for you at Glenossa Lodge but don't know if you received it. It was to ask you if you would kindly return to me the rifle, revolver and other things he wore when he was shot — not for use but as a souvenir to be kept here. I am sure you could spare them for me. We went down to the scene of the tragedy to put a cross to mark the spot where he fell, and to take up the green sod soaked with his blood to lay it on his father's grave in Foxford cemetery. To the parents of the other boys who fell there I offer my sympathy — may God give them grace to bear the cross.

Next, I would ask you to instruct your men to respect the people here. They are afraid to open the door at night if any one knocks. It is a shame to see so many young lives taken. You leaders say you love Ireland — why turn it into a shambles. I pity the poor boys who are led away by you — they should be at home helping their parents to build up a comfortable dwelling for them and not to be burning other homes.

I thank all the friends for their kindness to me and mine in need, and I forgive my enemies and those of poor Ireland,

Sarah Healy.

The tragedy of Tom Healy's passing was lessened to some small degree by the discovery, after his death, of one of his light hearted pranks. Some of the citizens of Foxford, fearing their community was not being adequately protected, voiced their concern to the garrison commander; twenty four hours later, the belfry of the Protestant church in the centre of the town was bristling with guns of every calibre, covering all approaches. When they were being removed much later, it was discovered that they were old iron pipes of every conceivable diameter and length.

\* \* \* \*

Nature, which had been so cruel to its people in providing sustenance, relented in endowing the land around Foxford with a majestic and rugged beauty. Nephin mountain was to the west where it heaved itself almost three thousand feet into the sky; its symmetrical shape stood behind Loughs Conn and Cullin. In the long winters it scowled when misty rain clung to its majestic head, or when the rolling grey clouds before the atlantic winds buffeted its mass, but on a summer's day it stood like an Egyptian pyramid in bright and proud relief, jealously guarding the beauty of its lakes and yawning with soft pleasure in the warmth of the sun.

Pontoon on Lough Cullin was the focal point of nature's artistry and the ANGLER'S HOTEL was its centrepiece. The hotel was set between Granny Healy's garden of rhododendron bushes and shrubs and the rising ground to Coryosla, it faced the rush cluttered bay, already too deeply invaded by sand, the boat slip was over to the left, and the full panorama of the lough was dotted with rocks; those that lay beneath the surface were known in size and depth to every gillie.

They were all fishermen in Foxford, the young and the old, and whilst most of them tried their luck from the picturesque foam flecked on pools or the weirs or the silent water down the Green, the dedicated plied the long waters to the lakes. The men that fished from the falls or the bridge were never to be seen up the town or down the Green; each had a time to fish; some early in the morning before work, others late at night. The professionals used the handmade fly, but the majority picked their bait from the rocks as required or stocked it away the day before in a nail pricked cocoa tin. Many stretches of water were privately owned, and the salmon poached from them were acquired by a variety of methods; simple fishing, or other less orthodox but more rewarding techniques.

As in every rural community the people in Foxford knew everything of each other. News was eagerly received, relished, digested, and finally passed on to the next, suffering little in the telling. Every pattern of behaviour was known and felt, and each daily sight or sound conveyed not only a meaning but a character. Each member of the community had a role to fill, no matter how small: the opening or closing of doors, the clamour of cows coming down the street, the tone of a car horn and the way it was blown, the tremolo whistle, the half known song, the noisy bicycle, the barking dog, the rattling trap, the laughing lilt of a woman's voice, the metallic clank of the pump and every morning, particularly in the vicinity of our house as they made their way to the brook — the loud and very clear quackle of Baby Glover's ducks. All of these noises were part of the life and roles of the people, and an absence or an