

DAVY'S MEMOIRS



By David Quish

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FOREWORD

1978

It is my privilege and pleasure to write these my cherished memoirs which form a brief account of my simple life among the gentle peasantry of Cush and Ballinreena as well as depicting our colourful association with the people of Kilfinane, Martinstown, Knocklong and Glenbrohane.

Contemporary historical events both local and external as well as localised folklore form a narratively picturesque background into which the memoirs are entwiningly moulded.

It is my joy to impart these memoirs for the benefit of those who wish to read them especially to the young folk that they may retain a glancing impression of how simple it is to write one's own memoirs. When their youthful years will have flown away and mellowed into a calmer age they too may be inspired to write their memoirs and thereby convey to future generations a picturesque cavalcade of folkloric history.

Finally with a note of appreciable gratitude to the Galtee Printing Press and to all who have graciously contributed to the production of this Souvenir Booklet I gratefully impart my cherished Memoirs to the pleasurable enjoyment of all who read them.

DAVY QUISH.

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DAVY'S MEMOIRS

The late twenties, with their still fresh remembrances of the Black and Tan War and the tragic Civil War, were slowly drawing to a close when my life as a little peasant boy in the cherished company of my mother and my uncle Denny, began to unfold itself in a little way-side store beside the deeply carved glen at the foot of majestic Slieveriaibach overlooking the marvellous landscape view of the Golden Vale. Not yet being of school going age, I had very little impressions of early childhood days as young children at that time were not at all as intelligent as they are today. Actually, my first impressive memory of the outside world was the knowledge of seeing the local postman, Andy Dwane, at the door threshold for the first time while resting amazingly in my mother's arms. His image really fascinated me, dressed in a three-quarter length black oil cape, as it was raining, peaky cap and the customary mail-bag of letters. As I became a little older, I began to get to know the boys and girls who daily frequented our little shop, and at night time who remained seated around our warm kitchen fire discussing local topics, story-telling or playing cards in the lamplight as the case may be. Gradually I became attracted and developed friendships with my nightly guests playing games with them such as, "Jack is alive and alive still", building card houses, being lifted up by my ears to see Cork, and playing hide and go seek under the chairs, such being the attitude of a child at play.

These early formative childhood days passed away and I gradually grew a little older and developed a bit of curiosity to explore my yet unknown surroundings. My mother used to take me by the hand and take me for a pleasant stroll along the road. It was indeed a most enjoyable experience. Plucking the daisies and the pimperns and watching the coloured butterflies fly past was something really worth never forgetting. In those days I used to love to watch my uncle Denny, who used to collect and deal in eggs for a living, pack dozens and dozens of eggs into timber boxes with layers of oaten straw to protect them from breaking. Sometimes a few eggs would crack and create a terrible mess. He used then set off to Knocklong with these eggs in a brown pony and car to sell them at the market. Common practice of mine in those far off days was to go with my mother everyday to Canavour Well when fetching pails of water for domestic household use.

Gradually as I grew older I used to travel out with my neighbours, out into the open fields, especially at the time of hay saving. I used to love to help in the making of sugans, and in taking them around the meadow to tie the wynds of hay. Travelling up the mountain was another pleasant experience. At that particular time and for many years later turf was cut and saved by my neighbours on the mountain-side. The turf when dried was drawn by horse and dray to which were attached skaters, down the mountain and made into large reeks for winter storage. I used love to avail of drives on

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the dray of turf. At this particular time when this operation of turf cutting was in progress, the Eucharistic Congress, the 1500th anniversary of the coming of St. Patrick to Ireland, was being held in Dublin. It was the month of June 1932, and the weather was really beautiful and warm. Celebrating flags in honour of the Congress were to be seen everywhere. I remember the neighbours had a Flag also furling on the horse drawn dray of turf coming down the mountainside. I really felt thrilled with the novelty of riding on the dray of turf with the colourful Flag furling in the warm summer breeze.

Late Easteride 1933 my school career began. My mother dressed me up in my first school outfit and took me by the hand and we both walked along the dusty road, the three long miles that led to Kiltinane Convent National School and there she handed me over to the charge of Sister Francis, who placed me in the infants class with all the other little boys and girls, who were now my new, but strange companions. Gradually I grew to like and love my new companions and to love my highly esteemed teacher, Sister Francis. Daily I walked to and from school, sometimes in the company of other classmates and sometimes alone. Sister Celius, cherishingly dear to the heart of everyone and renowned for her love of children, prepared me for my first Communion. Then it became necessary for me to enter the Kiltinane Boy's National School where I, with all my classmates, spent seven long years with Thomas Lyons, Michael O'Donovan and Eugene O'Sullivan as our excellent and most efficient teachers and I must happily confess that as teachers they were ever so kind

and nice to me during all those years the reason being I suppose that I maintained the happy standard of being the second best in my grade of classes.

In passing, it is well to mention that the average number of boys on the school roll during those years was actually one hundred and thirteen. The fact that I had to walk to and from school every day, except when I was offered drives from neighbours taking milk to the creamery on donkey carts, did not in any way interfere with my education, but gave me an excellent opportunity of rehearsing my lessons along the quiet cheery road on my way to school.

During my youthful school life I must recall that home life was much the same as it had been from the beginning. My mother kept the little shop going all the time and I am happy to relate that though money was indeed scarce, and the people were really poor due to low prices for farm produce and lack of employment, our neighbours gave us continued excellent support in our little wayside store. At night-time the neighbours and all the young boys and girls who were employed with neighbouring farmers used to come to our homestead to enjoy the few hours of homely social activity such as chatting round warm turf fire, story-telling, playing cards, rings and draughts, and playing music, singing and dancing on our kitchen floor, such being the rural custom of the time as urban entertainment was confined mainly to Sunday nights. My uncle Denny continued as a dealer in eggs, a trade now unknown. In the late thirties the market for eggs in Knocklong ceased and so it became

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necessary for Denny to take the eggs to a market place owned by a Mr. O'Connor in Tipperary town. His only transport at this time was a donkey and cart. So once every two weeks he used travel with the eggs by donkey and cart the long journey, twenty-six miles, to and from Tipperary. It used take the donkey four and half hours to travel the thirteen miles, (modern plane speed 1400 miles per 1 hour). I recall travelling with uncle Denny on his first journey to Tipperary. I thought we would never reach the town the pace was so slow. We had to have our donkey reshod with shoes at a forge in Tipperary town for our journey homeward. At that time passing through Ballywire with its forest of trees on either side of the road and the moonlight streaming down through the leaves on our slow journey homeward seemed to me like a picture taken from some classical novel. Tired and sleepy, I was glad when we arrived home. This journey on donkey and cart to Tipperary town Denny continued to fulfill once every two weeks for twenty years.

Returning to my school days I am happy to relate that on completing my national school life I had the privilege of Secondary Education at St. Andrew's Boy's Classical School under the guidance of highly skilled efficient teachers: Mr. O'Hara, Miss O'Hara and Mr. Garry all of whom were most courteous and kind to me. Actually the most of my early teenage life was spent at school and even though my standard of learning was good still like all classical students I shared all the nervous and difficult mental strains that education and preparation for exams entail. Though of course teenage life in those years was not at all as gay and glamorous as it became in later years due to the fact that World War II was in full progress and had cast a depressive gloom over the whole world. Food, even the bare necessities of life, became very scarce and had to be rationed. Clothing also became very scarce. Timber soled boots were in those days very popular. I enjoyed the privilege of this type of footwear for two years and I can assure you walking six miles a day to and from school on these solid soled boots the going was really tough on the feet. In those years the only light available in rural homes was candlelight and this made the learning of lessons at night far from pleasant. Despite the ill effects of the war, social life was not altogether too bad. There was the occasional film, play, circus, concert and carnival in the summer. Dances were rather limited and showbands scarcely known. So with school life absorbing the most of my teenage years, in a rather grim environment, I did not knock the sparks and cracks out of teenage life that a modern school going teenager can do today. So with World War II closing the chapters of its history as it were my school life came to a close. But with the ill effects of the war still rampant, jobs were scarce and hard and difficult to come by, so I really had to paddle my own canoe as best I could and avail of whatever jobs I could manage to procure with neighbouring farmers.

In relation to world events and home events, the first twenty five years of my life was indeed very colourful. Practically at the commencement of my life the strike procedure became known in Britain for the first time- the General Strike

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in support of Miners. In Ireland the birth of the Shannon Scheme at Anluacrusha marked a turning point in Irish History. The launching of this scheme by the Irish Free State Government ensured the provision of electricity and the guaranteeing of a brighter future for Irish people. The formation of the Fianna Fail Party at this time was a stepping stone in Irish Politics. The Irish

Eucharistic Congress of 1932 marking the 1500th Anniversary of the coming of St. Patrick to Ireland was a most notable event in Irish History. The accession of the Fianna Fail party to power with Eamonn De Valera as leader in 1932 changed the political Irish scene though the years that followed were depressing for the Irish people through the ill effects of the economic war.

On the world front the dark clouds of war began to cast their gloomy shadows over the earth. The year of 1935 marked the death of King George V, the accession of Edward VIII and his subsequent abdication, and the enthronement of George VI as King of England. The same year also marked the declaration of war by Italy on helpless Abyssinia and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, with General Franco as leader of the Catholic Forces who eventually defeated the Communist Party. It is also worthy to note that a detachment of Irish Forces or as I should have said of Irish Volunteers under the command of General O'Duffy, (former Commissioner of the Garda Siochana during the Free State Government) went to the aid of the Catholic Forces in Spain and fought bravely under the Catholic Spanish colours. On the home front the Irish Constitution of 1937 was formed by An Taoiseach Eamonn De Valera with Dr. Douglas Hyde (An Craobinn Aoibinn) inaugurated as First President of Ireland. At this particular time in my own home locality the Cush Archaeological Excavations under the direction of Professor Sean O'Riordan were in progress. The purpose of these excavations was to discover and verify the historical background of the resident tribal Tuatha De Dannan settlement in this Temar Erann area in pre Christian times. The location of urns, querns, ring forts, circular underground tunnels confessed the truth that a large tribal race of the Tuatha De Dannan resided on the sloping hillside of Cush Mountain. Many of the objects found at Cush are now on display at the National Museum. In early 1938 the world mourned the passing of Pope Pius XI from the See of Rome while on March 2 of that same year the world rejoiced on the election of Eugene Pacelli as Pope Pius XII. He was destined to guide the Catholic Church for a span of twenty years and can now be claimed as one of the worlds' greatest Popes.

Then the world was rocked by a conflagration of desolation with the outbreak of World War II on September 1, 1939. I can still picture how suspenseful my school mates and I felt on that particular morning when our confidential teacher Mr. Eugene O'Sullivan, revealed this tragic news to us from the morning Press and how eager we felt to discover more news about the terrible catastrophe. Later on the same day it was announced over the radio, though few households had radios at that time, that Adolf Hitler, champion ruler of the German people in full military command of the German Forces had crossed the Polish Frontier

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Davy Quish at Cush Archaeological Excavations in 1935

and within a short time the Polish People lay vanquished before him. England and France declared war on Germany while Italy joined forces with Germany. Soon Russia and America entered the war on the side of the allies. This desperate World War with the loss of many millions of lives raged for over six long years until the surrender of Germany and the onslaught of the Atomic Bomb on the Japanese by the Americans. Then followed the Cold War with England and America keeping Russia at bay. The formation of the United Nations and the advance of nuclear energy helped to bring about a more realistic peace that helped to form the modern world we know today. With the continuation of guerilla warfare in the Congo, Korea, Vietnam and the Middle East for really the world is never at peace.

Having briefly glimpsed the course of world events, it is well to remember the great leaders who shared in the framework of these events, and carved their names on the Pages of History, like many great leaders in former centuries, before departing into the Great Unknown. First of all we think of Adolf Hitler, that powerful military champion, who like Napoleon Bonaparte dreamed of world conquest. Sir Neville Chamberlain who strove to appease the greed of Hitler. Sir Winston Churchill the great war leader who rallied the people of England to challenge the might of Hitler, President Roosevelt who came to the

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aid of the allies with men, wealth and power, Signor Mussolini the Italian leader a pawn in the hands of Hitler and finally Marshal Joseph Stalin, the great Russian Leader who allowed the forces of Germany to advance as far as the blazing inferno of Stalingrad before exercising the secret power of Russia. It is also fitting that we think of our own beloved Taoiseach Eamonn De Valera who maintained neutrality for Ireland against the grim wishes of the allies and this proved to be right. General Franco of Spain followed the same course of action in maintaining neutrality. We think of our Holy Pontiff Pius XII who spared himself in no way in his efforts for peace and who was at all times prepared to impart all the help that he could offer to the helpless refugees.

It is also well to picture the great generals who emerged to fame during those war years Field Marshal Rommel, known as "The Desert Fox", the greatest of all German Generals, Field Marshall Montgomery, the greatest English General and the only General capable of out manoeuvring the military strategy of the "Desert Fox". We think of Commander Eisenhower, the great American General who was in full command of the entire allied forces and who was later destined to become the President of America. We think of President Truman whose final decision sealed the fate of Japan, when at his commanding order, the first atomic Bomb engulfed the city of Hiroshima in a pall of death and destruction. Marshall Petain the Hero of Verdun in the first World War and General De Gaulle, both of whom were less fortunate in World War II, carved their own niche in the pages of history. In later years we think of our own beloved John F. Kennedy President of America, who saved the world from the tragedy of a Third World War during the Cuban Crisis and who was later destined to become the tragic victim of an assassin's bullet at Dallas, in an episode that rocked the world with sorrow.

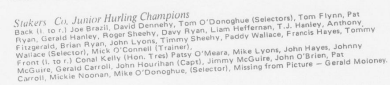
The Polish invasion, the Conflagration of war in Europe, the retreat from Dunkirk, the bombing of London, the missionary errand of Herr Hess on peace terms, the submarine warfare on the atlantic, the sinking of the Royal Oak, the scuttling of the Graf Spee at Montivideo, the shortage of food and food rationing, the scarcity of practically everything, the endless trek of refugees, the horror of the concentration camp, the blazing inferno of Stalingrad, the tragedy of Pearl Harbour, the bomb attempt on Hitler's life at a conference table, the herald of peace, the Marriage of Hitler to Eva Braun and their subsequent suicide, the unconditional surrender of Germany, the holocaust of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the unconditional surrender of Japan, the formation of the United Nations, the Berlin Wall, the Nuremberg trials, the Korean War, the Congolese War, Vietnam, the Suez Canal Crisis, the Cuban Crisis, the Conquest of Mt. Everest, the conquest of Space, the flight to the moon, the horror of Budapest, the Middle-East guerilla warfare, the oil crisis and our own troubled Irish situation maintain a perpetual glow before the mind like the continuation of a film that never ends.

Forgetting world affairs for the present it is well for me to return to the

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continuation of my memoirs in relation to myself. As I had already stated the early part of my life was rather reservedly quiet until I dramatically became acquainted with the Staker Wallace Band for the first time on the 30th June 1952 an event I will always cherish with fondest affection. On the request of Patrick Vaughan, Leader of the Staker Wallace Band, I was admitted as a member and enjoyed the privilege of playing with the band for an Taoiseach, Eamonn De Valera, at a political meeting held in Ballylanders during an East Limerick by-election campaign. The Staker Wallace Band played a splendid selection of Irish Marches, "The Dawning of the Day", "The Mountains of Mourne", "Kelly the Boy from Kilbane" and the National Anthem while on parade with an Taoiseach through the hard crested street of Ballylanders and many of our members including myself were greeted with the warmth of a friendly handshake from an Taoiseach Eamonn De Valera, remembering of course that his hand grasped the hand of every leader in the world in friendly handshake. I enjoyed my association with the Staker Wallace Band, and played as a drummer in the Band at many and varied functions the most notable being during our presence at Pairc Na Gael, in Kilmallock, the unveiling of the Memorial to the Volunteers by President Sean T. O'Ceallaigh in Ballylanders in August 1954 and the unveiling of the Memorial to Staker Wallace in Martinstown parish in 1955.





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While associated with the band I became cherishingly endeared to all its members so much so that for a brief period they elected me as their chairman. The members of Staker Wallace Band include Patrick Vaughan, Leader and Secretary, Michael McAuliffe, Bandmaster, and John Kearney were all most sociable, friendly, courteous and co-operative and made every function at which we attended highly enjoyable and successful. The first of these was the Staker Wallace Christmas Pageant, Christmas Eve at Martinstown Parish School, which was packed to capacity and at which I was privileged for the first time to deliver on stage the ill-fated story of "Lord Ullin's Only Daughter". In passing it is well to note that the Staker Wallace Band has done tremendous work in perpetuating the memory of Staker Wallace and his family. It is a credit to the band leader, Michael McAuliffe, that the Stakers memory in a glorious and victorious fashion so that the Staker will as has always been endeared to the heart of every person living within the realm of the Staker Wallace Community.

In parsing it is well to give a brief account of Staker Wallace who was really a great fearless Irishman. He was a United Irishman, Whiteboy and one of Grattan's Volunteers. Staker Wallace being a native of Martinstown parish took his name during his career in the Whiteboy organisation. The whiteboys took their name from the whiteboys' lands, the lands around the bog which were the lands of the poor. Staker Wallace became a leader of the well trained and armed defenders who succeeded Grattan's volunteers, and who made two successful deliveries, led a company of yeomanry to arrest Wallace in his home. Wallace fled for his life across the bogs which the Yeomen's horses found it difficult to travel. Dogs were sent after him but though an old man of 65 years he was able for three miles before being captured. He was strapped to a tree and the head of the Yeoman's horses sent in this dog but regretably another yeoman succumbed in catching up with the Staker. The old patriot was captured and arrested. The Staker refused to turn informant. He was stripped to the waist, tied to a tree and was again flogged at the Ballinacree. He was then taken to the Kilbrannigan and was kept in the Kilbrannigan for some time. Finally he was publicly hanged in Kilfinane square. His head was cut off and placed on a spike over the market house where it remained until it was blown down. The head was then buried in the Kilbrannigan and the Staker was interred in a family burial ground. In recent years the Staker Wallace Memorial committee erected a Memorial to Staker Wallace in Martinstown parish and this Memorial was unveiled by Ald. George E. H. O'Mahony, M.P. and Ald. Alexander O'Mahony, M.P. The unveiling was by Professor Owen O'Mahony U.C.C. It was a very colourful ceremony and had an excellent attendance of people present. The Staker Wallace File and Drum Band and the Kilbrannigan Brass and Reed Band were present. The ceremony was held in the Kilbrannigan and was very interesting, thus bringing to a close this memorable function in the parish of Martinstown.

A little later in the same year of 1955 exactly on August 7 on the invitation of

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Stoker Wallace Memorial at Martinstown

Martinstown Guild of Muintir na Tire a very distinguished personality in the person of Very Rev. Canon Hayes P.P., Bansha, paid a courteous visit to the Shrine of St. Molua, a saint who is fondly revered by the people of Martinstown and the surrounding parishes. This Shrine and Holy Well to the memory of St. Molua is situated in the centre of a large field about a mile and a half north eastward from Martinstown Parish Church. During the pattern season, August 3 to August 15, each year this Shrine attracts the attention of numerous pilgrims who do rounds by reciting prayers and rosaries at this holy well year after year as pilgrims have done for untold ages and may I here add that the Ballinvreana Youth Club since its foundation in 1970 are contributing in their own simple way to the preservation of this pious traditional custom. I am happy to relate that his reverence Canon Hayes visited the Shrine. A large memorable Sunday that I was present and were greeted by a selection of hymns and gathering of people were present and were greeted by the Killiney Brass and Reed Band. Canon Hayes appropriate music rendered by the Killiney Brass and Reed Band. Canon Hayes while present at the Shrine delivered a short address to the people, thanked them for their courteous invitation and reminded them to be ever faithful to the true ideals of Christianity.