



Remembering Eddie Quinn

At the Civic Heritage
Event dedicated to him,

The Refurbishment of the
Horse Watering Trough.

Old Dublin Road, Newry,
Saturday 11th September @ 2.30pm.

Text by, James Mc Arevey.



Remembering Eddie Quinn

Eddie Quinn was born in Fathom in 1924, one of a family of five, and post-partition, times were tough for their parents, Peter and Annie Quinn.

Peter availed of an opportunity to obtain employment in America and took the hard decision to emigrate, like so many more, to support his family. One by one, the siblings left the family home.

Eddie's brother, Felix, like generations of Fathom men, answered the call of the sea and eventually became a Merchant Navy Captain.

Eilis, Conngla and Nan became nurses in England with Eilis and Conngla later emigrating to Australia where they raised their families. Both are sadly deceased now and interred in their adopted home whilst Nan, now a widow lives in St. Helens in Lancashire.

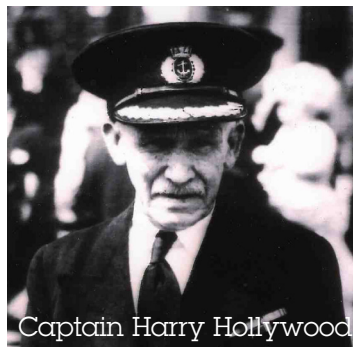
Eddie remained at home, farming with his Mother and acquiring land when the opportunity arose. Living in close proximity to the Border presented opportunities to supplement his income which the young entrepreneur happily embraced !!! His life took a new course of direction when he met and married, Ann "Queenie" Mc Conville and moved into her family home in the tight-knit Rooneys Terrace / Thomas Street community. Here, the majority of the men were employed at the Port or were seamen whilst the women worked in the many mills.

Eventually, Queenie got Eddie a job in Horrockses factory where she worked and Eddie coupled his farming at the opposite end of his shift pattern, farming by day or night as required. Never a car driver, he was a familiar sight riding his bicycle down the Omeath Road even at the worst of "The Troubles". Following an unpleasant incident with the British Army in Fathom Wood, Eddie was issued with a permit by the RUC authorising his safe passage through the wood on his farming duties.



Remembering Eddie Quinn

Eddie had a great interest in the activities of NMA and was the last of our "Walking reference books", being an authority on the seafarers of Fathom. I recall a conversation at an event that he had with Captain Kenneth Hollywood (RIP), Captain John Mc Parland (RIP) and Captain Tom Ramsey. Eddie told them he recalled nine "Captain Hollywoods" at sea at the same time and asked them to name the nine. Collectively, they eventually got 8 but Eddie named the nine!!



Captain Harry Hollywood

He always had fascinating anecdotes such as one from his employment with Horrockses. The Manager, Mr Stribling, was a native of the state of Virginia which seceded from the Union in the American Civil War. Every morning, prior to work, Mr Stribling raised the Confederate flag and saluted!

He recalled working at the home of the legendary Captain "Wee Harry" Hollywood. Harry had a career spanning 63 years with the famed Fisher Fleet and earned the nickname "Wee Harry" because at 5ft tall he needed to stand on a box to see over the ship's wheel. Eddie received sixpence a day for his labours and one task was cycling to Mc Cann's pub (Daveys) for a bottle of whiskey and tobacco. He also got his first pair of long trousers when "Wee Harry" gave him a suit.

Probably the worst period of life in Fathom was the 10 months when two ships from the Fisher fleet disappeared and 19 men were lost in the Irish Sea. On 5th December 1940, "SS Privet" disappeared on passage from Birkenhead to Belfast and 2 men from Fathom drowned. On 27th October 1941, "SS Walnut" disappeared on passage from Birkenhead to Newry and this time four men from Fathom were amongst those lost including Eddie's neighbour, Tom Mc Ardle. In just over 10 months, 6 close neighbours had perished and Eddie described the period "As if a black cloud had descended on Fathom creating an atmosphere of misery and dread as nearly every house in the townland had at least one sailor and in the case of the O Keefe family, 6 brothers were at sea"

Eddie's proudest moment came on 30th April 2016 when the gates from his homeplace were erected on Cloughogue Roundabout. The gates had been made by a blacksmith, Tommy Connolly, who had a forge at the bridge, over a century previously for Annie. It was a long-held aspiration of Eddie's that the gates would return to their origins and we were delighted to refurbish and resite them, making his dream a reality.



Remembering Eddie Quinn

Eddie passed away on 28th December 2020 and I was very proud, and indeed privileged, to read his reflections on growing up at home in Fathom at his funeral Mass.

My Fathom Home.

As I sit here sadly thinking how the years go swiftly past, my thoughts go back to my childhood days when I was but a lad. We a happy family gathered round the turf fire bright, and the fairy tales Aunt Mary told on those cold dark winter nights.

My brother one is married now with a family of his own, my sisters live in Australia in their new Adelaide home. They pay a visit now and then, to greet us one and all, still their thoughts go back to their childhood days in their dear old Fathom home.

Fathom home lies empty now, no clock hangs on the wall. The old rocking chair is no longer there with no key in the door.

With the roaring seas and the winter winds and the seagulls weary cry, no fire burns bright in our home tonight as it did in years gone by. So farewell to my Fathom home where I spent many happy years, and so farewell to my friends so dear who have crossed the ocean waves. May God protect and bless you all wherever you may roam, for Fathom was like Heaven to us in our dear old Irish home.

Edward Quinn.



We wish to thank Kevin Clarke and the team at KC Hire who donated the equipment for the refurbishing project.