

Living Memories

Warrenpoint Library March – May 2008



Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland



Project Partners: Cragavon, Derry, Newry Museum Services and Ulster American Folk Park

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Foreword

It is a pleasure to write the foreword for this booklet of reminiscences. When I began to plan this section of the Living Memories project in Warrenpoint Library I had no idea what a rewarding experience it would be or the wonderful people I would meet in the process.

The aims of the Living Memories project were to foster a sense of community, develop an appreciation of our locality and nurture respect for others. We hoped to achieve these aims through family learning, inter-generational work and cross-community interaction.

The reminiscence sessions, the fruits of which are captured in this booklet, incorporated all the aims of the project and everyone who was involved in them is to be congratulated on the tremendous work which has been done.

The library came alive when the group met for the reminiscence sessions. People were delighted to see their library working in the heart of the community. One person remarked:

‘What a great project – I would love to be involved in that!’

The volunteers from the Friendship Club and the pupils from the three schools got along so well: it was clear that each person was genuinely interested in what the others had to share. That sense of hive-like activity remained many hours after the children and volunteers had left as work was sorted out and photographs prepared to send to our Reminiscence Worker from Newry and Mourne Museum at Bagenal’s Castle. It truly became a community exercise as we had to commandeer the expertise of the staff in Walsh’s Chemist Shop to overcome a technical problem encountered when trying to send the photographs electronically!

We have all learned so much from this work and from each other, experiences that will remain with us for a long time. I will leave the final word to one of the volunteers from the Friendship Club who summed up the experience.

‘I knew I would enjoy this but I didn’t realise just how much I would get out of it!’

Anne Marie Quinn
Warrenpoint Library
May 2008

Acknowledgements

Very sincere thanks go to the volunteers from the Warrenpoint Friendship Club who gave so freely of their time and experiences and also to the teachers and pupils from St Mark's High School, Dromore Road Primary School and St Dallan's Primary School who worked so hard together during the sessions and then word processed and refined their work for this booklet.

A special word of thanks to Malachy Havern for giving so generously of his time and for providing us with artefacts which enhanced the sessions.

Sincere thanks are due to the Warrenpoint Library staff who kept the daily library business going while their Community Librarian disrupted everything around them.

Thanks are also due to the line managers in Library Headquarters for their support and particular thanks must go to Sean Beattie, Resources and Support Manager, who channelled much-needed funding into this project from a reduced budget.

This part of the Living Memories project would not have been possible without time and experience contributed by Cherith Fullerton, Reminiscence Worker in Newry and Mourne Museum at Bagenal's Castle.

Finally, we are much indebted to Reminiscence Network Northern Ireland for the sponsorship of this booklet.

Anne Marie Quinn
Warrenpoint Library
May 2008

Background

This project is a Partnership between Warrenpoint Library, St. Mark's High School, Dromore Road Primary School, St. Dallan's Primary School, Warrenpoint Friendship Club and The Valuing Heritage by Valuing Memories Project.

The aims of the Valuing Heritage by Valuing Memories Project to develop lifelong learning and reminiscence within the community combined with the Library Service's aims to explore local history, increase community involvement, enhance understanding of others and develop partnerships with other bodies provided the impetus for this work.

A programme was established involving:

1. Meeting with the children involved to highlight the key areas they are interested in finding out about and practice interviewing each other
2. Meeting with members of the Friendship Group to discuss the areas highlighted
3. Grouping together the young people with a Friendship Group member to undertake the reminiscence work.
4. Writing up the findings
5. Creating a booklet

At the first meeting the young people from St. Mark's High School took on the role of mentor to the Primary School children and 6 groups were established involving one child from each school and one or two Friendship Group members. During the initial process some of the Friendship Group members were concerned that they would not have enough memories of interest to maintain the young people's focus but this was certainly not the case as proved by the activity from each group during their working sessions.

Friendship Club Volunteer	Student	School
Sheila Willcocks	Barry O'Hagan Emma Gaul Laura Annett	St Mark's HS St Dallan's PS Dromore Road PS
Bridie Rooney	Niamh Fitzpatrick Jordan McManus Sarah Murphy	St Mark's HS St Dallan's PS Dromore Road PS
Martina Vallely	Olivia Clarke Chelsea-Lee Crangle Rachel Smith	St Mark's HS St Dallan's PS Dromore Road PS
Philomena Havern	Conor Morgan Conor O'Flaherty Toni Magee	St Mark's HS St Dallan's PS Dromore Road PS
Nancy Bourke AND Florence Hunter	Darragh Stewart Joanne Lee Sheree Wells	St Mark's HS St Dallan's PS Dromore Road PS
Patricia Murray	Deborah McKay Henri Aiken Adam Morgan	St Mark's HS St Dallan's PS Dromore Road PS





Sample Questions

The following were questions that the young people wanted to ask the volunteers. They designed their format during the initial reminiscence session.

Getting to know you

What is your name and where do you live now?
Where were you born and where did you grow up?
Were you an only child?
What sweets did you have as a child?
What is the best present you ever got?
What was your best holiday or your best day out?
Have you ever met anyone famous? Who would you like to have met?

School and work

What school did you go to and what do you remember about it?
What job did you do and what did you first earn? How did you travel?

Activities and interests

The students had a conversation with the adults about how they spent their spare time and their hobbies.

The Memories of Shiela Willcocks

Reminiscence undertaken by
Barry O'Hagan, St. Mark's High School
Emma Gaul, St. Dallan's PS
Laura Annett, Dromore Road PS



The woman telling us about the olden days was Shelia. Shelia was born in Belfast and then lived in Fermanagh. She now lives in Cherry Hill, Rostrevor. For most of her childhood she'd work on a milking farm. Shelia was an only child and her favourite sweets were brandy balls and chocolate. She had no holidays but really liked a trip to Dublin. Shelia has met Johnny Cash and she would like to have met President Kennedy when he was alive. Shelia has 3 sons and one played football and the others played chess. She grew up in 1930 with no electricity and had to use oil lamps and candles. They had no running water so they had to go to the well and get water but if the well got dried they had to run to the river and fill the well. Shelia's favourite food was strawberry and cream. Shelia is 75 years old. Her favourite film star is James Stewart and her favourite book is black beauty. Shelia has a dog called tramp and 3 cats called Pat, Bestin and Jeina. Back in the olden days the radio's were ran on wet batteries and dry batteries and they had to always charge the wet batteries but the dry ones went on for 3 months.

Sheila's first job was in the Civil Service she liked it. She started work at 18 and earned around £3.15. She lived in the country and helped out on the farm. She got married at 21 to Vincent Patrick and has been married 54 long years. She didn't do any sport. At weekends and after school she mostly worked on the farm but didn't really like it. She definitely didn't have a favourite year in primary school but in the convent probably her first year was her favourite. She has went to England on holidays lately. She went to public elementary school it was also called listed. There were no athletics. She didn't like it, it had no dinners and she had to walk there. They used to pull our hair, pull our ears and hit everybody with canes. The convent of mercy was another place she went. When she was growing up in the 1930s there was no electricity and no running water she had to go to a well and even then it wasn't very clean.

My favourite animal is a dog. If I won the Lottery I would go on holiday. As a child I liked to read and draw to keep myself busy. There were no projects in my school days. We wrote with slates and chalk. In the Civil Service we always used paper and pen. I had to walk then we moved so I had to take the underground train. I got a season ticket. My mother's name is Margaret Karen. We had no TV. Drawing was my favourite activity. When I was little I wanted to be an actress.

The Memories of Bridie Rooney

Reminiscence undertaken by
Niamh Fitzpatrick, St. Mark's High School
Jordan McManus, St. Dallan's PS
Sarah Murphy, Dromore Road PS



Bridie lives in Warrenpoint but was born and grew up in Burren. She has seven sisters and 4 brothers. Bridie can remember always having fudge and bulls-eyes these were the types of sweets children ate. The best present Bridie ever got was a doll with a delph face (china). Her best day out was to Croke Park when Burren won the All Ireland Championship. Bridie has also been lucky enough to meet Tom Selleck from Magnum. Bridie remembered the trains and travelled on them, she told us that it was great excitement for everyone but unfortunately they ended in 1962. She also remembers the baths that were then in use but not anymore. They were a great source of entertainment and a majority of people learned to swim in them. Bridie says that it is a pity that they lost them, as Warrenpoint really needs a swimming pool.

Unfortunately Bridie never got to stay in any of the hotels in Warrenpoint, as she lived in the point, but she remembers there being lots of visitors from England and Bolton coming to stay in them in the summer. She also remembers tennis being a very popular sport and very competitive one. Every summer children stayed in the park all day to play it. Bridie informed us that Warrenpoint was a thriving holiday resort. They had the jaunting cars and swings on the beach. They had Ice cream vendors that were sold from a bicycle. People dressed up in their good clothes for coming down, as it was such a treat. 13th July was always held in Warrenpoint, everyone came and had a really nice time. The 15th of August was the biggest day in the point. People opened up their houses as tea rooms, the boats would across to Omeath all the time. Some of the men came back in very good spirits.

Bridie went to Ballyholland Public Elementary School. She always remembered the lovely dinners that she never got, playing rounder's, boys playing with marbles and football. Her favourite subject at school was English. Every day she walked 3 miles to school, as there were no buses on the country roads. They all got a bottle of milk when they got to school and for some children who were very poor probably the bottle of milk would have been there only food. Some teachers were very cruel and were allowed to give children up to 6 slaps on each hand but others were lovely and very gentle. When we asked Bridie what her and her family ate she told us that they were very lucky as they grew their own potatoes, the cows gave them their milk and the hens gave them their eggs, they also churned the milk. People had to keep their food cool in the milk house and there were no take-away's everything was fresh and wholesome. Also there was no running water (taps) so they

carried the water from the well and there was also no electricity, which meant no televisions, washing machines or microwaves. They had a gas cooker and a small radio that was operated by a battery.

Lastly Bridie told us about her first proper job, she trained in hotel management, at a hotel in Rostrevor cooking. She earned £1.50, which would have been good, and also the hotel gave you a room so you didn't have to pay to stay in it. After she finished in the hotel Bridie then went onto nursing and loved it. She travelled by pony in trap and bicycle until she got car in 1950's.

The Memories of Martina Vallely

Reminiscence undertaken by
Olivia Clarke, St. Mark's High School
Chelsea-Lee Crangle, St. Dallan's PS
Rachel Smith, Dromore Road PS



My name is Martina Valley and I live in Warren point. I was born in Warrenpoint and I grew up in Warrenpoint. I had four sisters. I had sweet peanuts. A post office set was my favourite toy. My best holiday was when I once went to Birmingham on a ferry. I have never met anyone famous. I would like to meet Mary McAleese. The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe is my favourite book. I loved playing rounder's and swimming. On rainy days I would play with my sisters and dress up in mummy's clothes. I would go to the baths and the beach and visit Cloughmore stone and watched "Watch with Mother".

I went to Star of the Sea school before going to Our Lady's, it was a boarding school and was in a different building then and the dual carriageway was not there then. I was very scarred going to Star of the Sea but I didn't want to cry. If you didn't know your spellings you would get slapped. After Our Lady's I went to Newry Technical College.

My first job was a secretary in a solicitors in Newry and I travelled by bus. My first pay was £18 a week. Our Dallan Park was just a field when I was young as well as a lot of other estates Warrenpoint was countryside. Trains came into Warrenpoint and I went on it once. There were no computers when I was in school.

The Memories of Philomena Havern

Reminiscence undertaken by
Conor Morgan, St. Mark's High School
Conor O'Flaherty, St. Dallan's PS
Toni Magee, Dromore Road PS



Philomena from the friendship club lives at Pinewood Hill. She was born in England were Leeds is. Philomena was an only child. She had Spanish sweets, sherbet powder, liquorice, Pontefract, jelly babies and she only had one shilling once a week for some sweets. She went to Mount St. Helens School in Leeds and wrote in pencil all the time at school and feather pens. The school was just around the corner from her. The teacher would put her chair near the fire and would keep her warm and the pupil's cold. One teacher taught everything from 9 o'clock to 4 o'clock. You got severely punished if you didn't do your homework. They didn't get much for lunch – 3 carrots, spoonful of chips/potatoes, small amounts of ice cream and jelly. The toilets were outside and lunch was an hour. She left school in 1951. She loved playing hopscotch, spinning top, hide and seek and tennis. She had wanted to learn to play golf.

Her best present ever was a green sparkly dress, a teddy and a rag doll. Blackpool was Philomena's best holiday. Philomena would like to meet Mick Jagger, Cliff Richard and Elvis Presley. She liked netball, rounder's, drawing and books. She also liked Maths but it was hard. She liked climbing trees and her worst injury was a hurt limb because they used to push each other. She has three daughters in the U.K.

Her father was in war but her father died when she was little. She lived through the war and they kept trying to bomb her school but kept missing. They had to go to bed early and turn out the lights otherwise they would get bombed. They had a bomb shelter. She left school at 14. Her first job was in nursing she went out of the job because she didn't like seeing sick people. She was a merchandise buyer for 5 years and was paid £35 a week. She worked from 6am till 9pm she worked at C&A. You could buy a carton of milk for 4p Mars were 9 & 6. She also worked in Woolworths wages were £30 a week and this was her favourite job.

The Memories of Nancy Bourke and Florence Hunter

Reminiscence undertaken by
Darragh Stewart, St. Mark's High School
Joanne Lee, St. Dallen's PS
Sheree Wells, Dromore Road PS



My name is Nancy Burke I went to St. Clare's Primary School they had spelling on Monday & Friday. Her best friend was Melda Murray and they had lots of games She first got 21 shilling's a week when she went to work as a bookkeeper every year she got a bonus. Nancy lives at Ardkeen Court, Warrenpoint. She was born in Newry and grew up there. She had one brother and one sister. She had dolly mixtures, chocolate macaroons, bubble gum and boiled sweets. The best present Nancy ever got was a doll and cot.

Nancy likes to go around in a caravan mostly in the country. When she was 4 she met DeValera. She went to St. Clare's Primary School. She told us the toilets were outside. The radiators weren't very warm. She always had to walk to school but it was a 10 minute walk. There were nuns in school. Her best friend was called Melda Murray.

Nancy always walked everywhere – to school, to the pictures and to call for my friends. It cost 3p to get into the matinee. I had to start work at 9am and had to be home at 6pm. Nancy's favourite sports were mostly ball games. Nancy was a teenager before she got electricity. Nancy was 26 when she got married to Raymond Burke. Her favourite book was called Mad Hatter and then when she got older she liked anything by MP Simpson.



My name is Florence Hunter. I live at Forth Road, Warrenpoint. I was born in Enniskillen. I had two brothers and one sister. I had toffee bars and bubble gum as a child. My best present I ever got was a delph doll. We had a caravan and we travelled in it for holidays. My favourite holiday was to Rossnowlagh in the caravan. I haven't ever met anyone famous but I would like to meet the President of the U.S.A. I went to Enniskillen Model School. I walked to school which took 20 minutes or so. School started at 9.10am sharp. It began with

prayers and then classes started shortly afterwards. My favourite subjects were English, Spelling and History. Break was at 11 o'clock. I got a bottle of milk and a small snack. 12.30 was dinner time; we got this in the dining hall. School finished at 3 o'clock and of course I walked home. Then homework started. Good games were skipping and ball games. I was in my teens when my family got their first TV.

I have 2 sons and 2 daughters. As the years passed her job was looking after children which lasted a few years. Then she worked in Taylor Woods Nylon factory, until she got married and had four children.

The Memories of Patricia Murray

Reminiscence undertaken by
Deborah McKay, St. Marks High School
Henri Aiken, St. Dallan's PS
Adam Morgan, Dromore Road PS



Patricia went to Mayobridge public elementary school she loved it. She had to walk to school at only 5 years old! She loved reading. She didn't play outdoors and had no hall. She did a lot of subjects, mostly cookery. At 13 years of age Patricia left public elementary school and moved to sacred heart and when she left she got a leaving certificate. When she left Sacred Heart she went to St. Marys and then spent 1 year in Cambridge there she learned to play cricket.

After that Patricia got a job in St. Clare's, 5 years before she retired she was vice principal, she first earned 18 pounds each month. She travelled on a train to Warrenpoint then got a bus. Then she got married and got a car. At Mayobridge Public Elementary the subjects taught were reading, writing, arithmetic, needle work, cookery, geography, art, very little P.E and did not do nature study. Patricia had no homework other than reading. They read Shakespeare and Dickens and did singing and music. In her first teaching job in St. Clare's Newry, there were 43 girls in P4 class all subjects were taught, but more P.E. than in Mayobridge there was nature study too. After school she taught P.E. and games. In Sacred Heart Grammar school she used to travel to netball matches with the team, also introduced tennis.

Patricia grew up in Mayobridge, they had no electricity, just oil lamps. Water had to be carried from the nearby well. Most food was home grown, they had chickens and pigs and

cows. A mobile shop called every Tuesday and they could buy tea and sugar. In exchange her mother sold eggs to the mobile shop. Her father mended all their shoes. He played the accordion and people would come at night to Ceili.

The best present Patricia ever got was a bicycle. Her best holiday was in Canada. Patricia would like to meet Mary McAleese. Patricia went to Mayobridge P.E School. She loved it but, had to walk 2 mile each way. After she left Primary School she went to Sacred Heart. When she left The Sacred Heart School she went to St. Mary's for a teaching certificate. Then she went to Cambridge to do a P.E. course for a year. After that Patricia taught in St. Clare's P.S Newry. There were 43 girls in her P.4 class. All subjects were taught, but more than Mayobridge P.E School. Nature study was included every week. After school she taught P.E in Sacred Heart Grammar School. She used to travel to netball matches with the school.

Patricia likes all sport except wrestling and boxing she also played cricket in college. Her favourite T.V show is Coronation St. she also enjoys old films and watching cricket. When Patricia was growing up they had no electricity or televisions, they had a radio which ran on batteries. On the radio they listened to news, sports (football matches) and general interest programmes. After Grammar School Patricia did her homework and read on rainy days. She also worked on the farm. Her hobby was dancing. Patricia loved all types of dancing, and traditional music, both Irish and Scottish.

We could talk forever...

Some of the Volunteers submitted more of their memories to share...

Life during the Second World War – Florence Hunter

So the story I tell about the Second World War as I remember as a very young girl was the windows had to be covered, so as no light would show through. Homework had to be done by oil lamps, which hung on the wall, and as you can guess not the best of light. 'What also comes to mind is being carried in a blanket to the nearest field as I lived in the country. My aunt and uncle helped to carry my two brothers and one sister. This was a regular thing that happened as the siren went off. You knew the planes were overhead. It must have been an anxious time for my parents as we were too young to understand what was happening.

As the years went by I remembered my Father getting the house wired up for electricity. Then we were able to get a radio. Father had one of the radios you got in the planes and could pick up lots of countries. It was a great pastime as he was a great wireless man.

Food was also rationed. We had coupons in a little book E and D to get your sweets. One of these numbers was worth more, so you got better value. Father would bring back fresh eggs which he got from a nearby friend and Mother would have given us raw egg in milk beaten up to build us up. The clothes you wore were passed down from the eldest to the youngest, and Father would mend our shoes with leather he bought in the shop.

Threshing Day – Patricia Murray

This was one of the highlights of our rural farming community. The thresher would be booked well in advance and neighbouring farmers notified. It was the custom that all the neighbours turned out to help the host farmer. He, in turn, helped each of his neighbours. Sometimes the thresher would come to the farm the previous night, ready for an early start on the day itself. As the worker arrived they were given jobs by the host farmer, my father. Soon the work was in full swing. All day long our farmyard echoed to the noise of the machine and the cheerful banter of the workers. Meanwhile, my mother, helped by neighbouring women, was preparing dinner. Usually, they had boiled ham, cabbage and potatoes, followed by a piece of apple pie and a mug of tea. At the end of the day there would be large stacks of straw and endless sacks of corn, safely stored.

Growing up in the 1930s, early 1940s – Nancy Bourke

Growing up in the 30s were probably my earliest memories. I remember my first day at school my teacher was a nice lady Miss McAteer. We didn't have pencils, just crayons and plasticine (something like play dough). The school had no uniform. I remember wearing a skirt and knitted jumper and in summer time a dress. School was rather boring. You had to remain quiet for long periods. At break time we gathered in the school yard, ate our lunch and played all the childhood games. Home from school, it was out to play on the street. Our

house was lit by gas light and heated by coal burnt in a range, therefore we didn't have any modern equipment such as a Radio, Cleaner, Electric Iron, Fridge, and Washing Machine. All the cleaning was done by hand. Times were hard and there was very little money. Employment was very scarce. There were quite a few wealthy people but many more poor. Lots of women worked in the mills and commenced work around 7 am in the morning. Some had to walk long distances. The poorer men mostly worked at the docks which is now the Quays Shopping Centre. There was a shipping firm called Fisher's which owned a fleet of shipping vessels. The boats came in on a high tide and were unloaded manually by the dockers with shovels. They carried coal from England. There was very little leisure time for adults, just at the week-ends they went to the pictures. Newry had two cinemas, The Frontier and The Imperial. The Newry Musical Feis had just begun and we looked forward to it every year. Food was really basic, lots of green vegetables, potatoes, soups, stews, and my mother baked bread every day, and on special occasions apple tart, potato bread, scones. Porridge was a must every morning followed by bread, butter and sometimes a boiled egg (no toast). There were quite a few special events during the 30s and 40s. Dail Eireann was formed in 1932. In 1935 George V of England died and traditionally was succeeded by his eldest son Edward, but Edward was in love with a woman called Mrs Simpson who was already married and divorced. He had a choice to make – marry his love or give up the throne. In 1936 he abdicated and was known as the uncrowned King of England. His brother the present Queen's Father was crowned George VI. In September 1939 War was declared between England and Germany and that changed life for everyone. It ended in 1945. Rationing was introduced. Smuggling became a way of life between North and Southern Ireland. Many stories can be told about taking food and clothes North and South. I think the most important time for the poor in Northern Ireland was the establishment of the Welfare State in 1948. It gave poor people free Health Assistance and many other allowances, such as Family Allowance, Widows Pensions etc. These are some of my earliest memories and maybe I will write down later ones, but time is running out fast.

We could talk forever - Bridie Rooney

I had the pleasure of meeting with three local school children, Niamh Fitzpatrick, Sara Murphy and Jordan McManus. We were all discussing the olden days. When asked about food I remember going with my parents to Newry. Daddy had the horse and cart to carry home his purchases. In turn we had eggs, butter, apples and blackberries to sell. The shop was in Water Street. Every item bought was weighed and put in brown bags – no pre-packaging then. We bought large bags of flour, sugar, tea (this was tea leaves) – no tea bags). Also bacon and sausages. The flour bags were always put to good use, they were boiled and bleached. All the seams were undone for flour bags made terrific long lasting sheets. Mr McArdle owned the shop. He was a relative of my mothers. Gerry also had a van and delivered the groceries. All the fresh food was kept in the milk house. It was built on to the gable of the house. The windows were covered by fine mesh wire to let in air and keep out flies and dust. It was always kept spotlessly clean. Our milk-kegs full of milk for the Armagh Down Creamery lorry were stored there. The food was kept on marble table tops. The cold marble acted as a cold room. We also had a mobile shop that called at the house twice a week. Mr Thomas Treanor owned the mobile, and a shop at Carrick Crossroads Burren. This shop was a great asset especially to people with no transport. Thomas even sold paraffin oil. This oil was vital to country living. It provided light for the household. The

hurricane lamps also ran on oil. They were used in the byres during the night time especially at milking time. These people were also means of communication as transport was scarce, the baker, postman and mobile shop gave valuable service. If a neighbour was ill they were able to carry the news and get help. In actual fact many a life was saved thanks to these people. Neighbours were always looking out for each other. Once our family fell victim to a very bad 'flu. Austin Barry looked after the cattle, milked the cows and fed the hens and pigs, until my father was back on his feet. Of course if Austin had to visit Liverpool, his birth place, my father helped Pedar in Austin's absence.

Mount St Mary's School, Leeds – Philomena Havern

I started school (age 5) in 1942 at Mount Saint Mary's School in Leeds. It was a very old and large school. It was founded in 1851. It was a Catholic school run by the Sisters Oblates of Mary Immaculate. The school was from 9.00 to 4.00. The classes were large with approximately 50 children in each class. The lessons were a mixture of English, Maths, Religion, Dressmaking, History, Geography, PE, Cookery, Science, and Music. The teachers were mainly nuns and they were very strict. We were not allowed to talk in class, and we were not allowed to write with our left hand. We were caned if we disobeyed any of the rules. We were also punished if we didn't get our lessons right. In the infant school we used chalk and a slate to write. There was no heating in the school and in the winter there were icicles on the inside of the windows. I was at school during the war and times were very hard for children. The fathers had to go to war and the mothers had to work in the factories and do the men's work. Because we lived in a big city, the children stayed at boarding school for safety. There was very little food because all the food was rationed, and we were hungry most of the time. 'During the war, sirens would sound throughout the day and night. We had to go down under the ground into the Air Raid Shelters. They were long tunnels with benches, and we had to sit there until it was safe to come back to school. We used to think it was fun, but we didn't realise how dangerous it was. In the day lots of aeroplanes would fly over, and at night time everywhere was pitch black. Nobody was allowed to turn on lights and there were blackout curtains on all the windows in case the Germans spotted a city from the air and dropped bombs. I can remember hearing bombs exploding and a lot of Leeds was badly damaged. We also had good times in school. I used to love playing netball and rounder's. I also enjoyed singing in the choir and every Christmas we would perform a concert. We would spend weekends with our family and I used to love a treat on Sunday, when we were allowed a stick of liquorice from the sweet shop. I can remember when the war was over. There were huge Street Parties everywhere and everyone was happy again. Even the teachers didn't seem so strict, and school was better. When I went to Senior School we used pens and ink to write, but things were a lot different to schools nowadays. We did not have calculators to count, we had to memorise the times tables and work out everything on paper. After school we did our homework, then we played games like hopscotch and skipping and spinning tops, and we had to be in bed for 6.30 pm. I left school at 14, which was the leaving age. I then went to Pitmans Commercial College in Leeds, where I learnt Shorthand and Typing. After a year we moved to Sheffield. I started work at 16. My first job was in Woolworth's in the City Centre. I worked there for 6 years as a Counter Assistant. My wages were £25 and 8 shillings per week. I then went to work at C&A and I became a buyer for the Drapery Department. I earned £35 per week. I worked there for 6 years also. Then I moved back to Ireland with my mother, who wanted to live in

Rostrevor again with her family. I started work in Coffy's Drapery Shop in Church Street in Warrenpoint. The wages in Ireland were very different to England, and I only earned £5 per week from 9 to 6 o'clock.' Philomena went away from the sessions with the young people to research something about her school. She found both information and pictures at www.mountstmarys.org and brought to the library her own school photograph from December 1949. She didn't say which of the delightful girls in white blouses, pinafores and strapped shoes was her, possibly one of the many with carefully tied bows in their hair. All look happy and healthy – and the tall Christmas tree behind them with its boxes and balloons is very impressive.

Smuggling - Shiela Willcocks

During the second world war in the 1940's many items were rationed in the North of Ireland, so northerners crossed the border into the adjoining counties where goods were plentiful. This was illegal and called "smuggling". It was mostly for food but clothes were also rationed. We had a ration book each with coupons which the shopkeeper cut out when we bought something. The weekly allowance of anything was measly and lasted only a few days so everyone smuggled butter, cheese, margarine, sugar, bacon and meat. As I lived on a farm we had our own eggs and an occasional chicken dinner to eke out the tiny ration of meat. Sometimes we churned some of our milk and made our own butter – it tasted much nicer than bought butter. I used to take a little bit before it was salted, it tasted even nicer then.

I lived in County Fermanagh, only 10 miles from the border and most of it was across the mountain, so anything we smuggled had to be carried – not an enjoyable task! Police and customs men were always on the lookout for smugglers and took, not only the goods but also the bicycle on which they were carried. Very few people had cars but those who had, lost them as well. They were then taken to court and fined and occasionally sent to prison.

As I was young at the time my main worry was not getting enough chocolate and sweets! They came off the ration in the early 1950's. Meat was the last to come off in 1954.

Some Wise Words to end

Bridie A Rooney

‘Our group, The Friendship Club of Warrenpoint, were delighted to talk with the young folk and remind them that all water does not come from a tap in the kitchen or bathroom. A well was a much-needed asset. The children couldn’t believe we were able to exist without television, telephones or all the electric gadgets of today. We as children had great sport with our own ‘telephone’. It was two tin cans with a hole bored in the bottom. Through these holes you threaded a ball of cord. Mind you, there couldn’t be any breaks in the cord. The idea was that one child could stand on the front porch, while the other would travel as far as the cord allowed. You could talk into your tin, and hear quite clearly. All quite innocent, but fore-runners to communication. ‘Many thanks to Anne Marie, our local librarian, and Cherith, for the opportunity to relive some of our really happy childhood memories.’



Philomena’s husband Malachy brought some special treats for the young people to look at during the last session: boys’ and girls’ comics from the past, and an old-style wooden pencil case with its slide-aside lid, very much the ‘thing to have’ when Malachy was a boy. This pencil case he most kindly donated to the Newry and Mourne Museum Reminiscence Loan Box Service. As the Friendship Group members chatted at the end, Malachy revealed his view of life, about the importance of people above all, and about how we should all be considerate towards one another. It’s a pity he can’t be quoted exactly, because his words were wise and would make a fitting end to this record of shared memories in a fruitful project where people did indeed come first.

