

The image features a central collage of four rectangular paper samples with different textures and colors, ranging from light tan to dark brown. The top-left sample has a perforated pattern, the top-right is a smooth gradient, the bottom-left is a vertical wood-grain texture, and the bottom-right is a mottled, aged paper texture. Overlaid on this collage is a quote in white and dark brown text.

“We all get  
on well,  
but...”

# Stories & Poems

from the Darkley area

Collected and edited by

**The Restoring Hope Project Team  
at Crossfire Trust**

# Introduction

**“We all get on well, but...” is a collection of stories from the Darkley area.**

We, within the Crossfire Trust Restoring Hope project, are very honoured to be able to capture just a little bit of this history, culture or personal journey and are very grateful to our neighbours for their willingness to participate and share with us. During the experience of collecting the stories, I became aware of the central theme of getting on well, but at the back of my mind were imprinted some of the worst atrocities of the conflict, and I wondered how they happened to people who shared the same school, a dance on the street or work in the mill. People obviously did get on well... but perhaps if we can learn anything from this, we need to get on even better if we are to prevent anything like the Troubles from happening again. The good relations were not enough; we need to value and defend these relations and not take them for granted, otherwise sectarianism, like a weed, will creep and choke the life and the love we all need to get on even better than before.

Some of these stories come in poem form. Some of them were gathered through interviews and we have put them down onto paper, writing them very much as we heard them in a way that, hopefully, conveys the spirit and the manner in which they were told to us. We hope that you enjoy reading them and that it gives you a clearer picture of life in Darkley, then and now.

Ian Bothwell  
Crossfire Trust Director  
and Restoring Hope Project Leader

**“In Darkley Row, where they don’t keep Sunday, and every day’s like an Easter Monday.”**

**“It’s a very difficult thing for to tell a person much about Darkley if they never were in it.”**

# Story 1

**This is the story of an elderly lady, now in her nineties, who lives in the village. She told us:**

I've lived in Darkley all my life. I was born here. I was born in a house in the top street. I was all my life in Darkley.

As a child, I was kept at home raising childer, that's what I was doing. There was nine of us. I'd go to school a while and the Master used to say, Master Clark, "You're welcome back, Mary, you're welcome back!" I got no schooling at all! Darkley Primary School - it was all right. The teachers were Miss McGurke and Master Clark - he was a nice man. He was always laughing and if I'd do something wrong, he'd say, "Oh Mary, you've got a whole lot of marks agin ye!" The school was heated by just a fire, a big stove, you know. It would have heated all the rooms.

Och, living in the village was all right. Fellas used to play at the corner there, after they all come from Mass of a Sunday morning. On Sunday they were playing there until dinner time. You know, up the steps where you go to High Street. It was lovely there.

There was no running water in the houses in those days. You had to go to the spout down here, d'y'see, for to carry the water. It's at the dam there, a wee tap. On the Sunday nights they used to help me carry water from the dam in a bath to wash with Monday morning. And at that time you only got two stone of coal, that's all you could buy. I used to go up to Patterson's there and get two stone of coal and carry it down on my back for the fire and my father would gather sticks and cut trees. At that time you could cut and gather sticks out of the Planting to make the coal last.

I worked in the mill from I was fifteen, I was a spinner. I got thirty bob! And out of that, two shillings was all I got for Saturday night to go to Keady. When I was fifteen us girls all used to go to Keady. Went up in a wee old shop, Boyd's; an old woman had the shop near Dr. Johnson - we used to go and get sweets there. All the boys used to come from Granemore and laugh and talk and craic and pass the night. In the mill my boss was Johnny Ewart. Oh, Johnny! Johnny watched you like a hawk. He was worse than Harold Calvert! He was worse! He used to come in and he'd say, "Have you the rent today? Have you the rent?" "I haven't it, Johnny; you may wait 'til the middle of the week." And every time I'm late and I wait 'til the middle of the week and then it goes up, and then it goes up.

Sometimes you'd be a-feared of him putting you out or doing something to the house. This is the house I lived in, and my uncle lived in it, and my mother.

There used to be a horn for the mill. They used to blow the horn in the morning. It blew three times, the last one blew at half-eight. And you'd have to get down the brae. I had to run down the brae; down and away across where the office was. Away on to that site there where the spinning mill was. I don't think I was ever late; no, I don't think so, now. We'd all have hurried to get in because if you'd seen Johnny, he'd follow you into the loom, into the mill, and give you a telling-off: "What'ya up to? What're you doing?"

When the mill closed, och, what could we do? Oh, I worked in Bessbrook and Milford, aye it was Milford. A couple of us. Me and my granddaughter there worked in Milford, and worked up in Newry, in Bessbrook. We got the bus.

During the Troubles, oh, I remember the Black and Tans coming to the corner there. And the Specials, too. But what could you do? You wouldn't go out at night; after dark nobody would be out. Nobody was allowed out or anything, you know? And there was no border, not at all – no border till this trouble all started, you know. It's the ones that's going about with nothing to do that's the cause of it all.

There used to be a dance, at the hall there. It would be Sunday night and anybody at all could go to it. I used to go with Mrs McClean up at the high corner there. Mrs McClean lived in those big houses up there, and her daughter and all. And we used to go round the lough for a walk every evening. Mrs McClean – she was an awful nice woman. I used to help with Mrs Mark; she lived up where Malachy Powell lived. She lived up the stairs and I used to carry her water in the morning before I'd go to school and fill a bath in the thing for her. And she'd say, "You go to school now, when you're finished with me." You'd be making excuses to stay at home – "oh my skirt's wet and it was in the bath, when I carried the water." But she'd put you up to school!

And then we went to Mass in Keady – a couple of us went to Keady – and you had to walk to it. And you had to go to Mass, we had to walk to Mass, too, so we had. We used to go to Keady, a couple of us all, and we'd all get together coming home. We had to walk it home – no buses or anything. We had to walk to Keady – two mile there and two mile home again.

What do I like about Darkley? Och, I wouldn't like to leave it now; I'm here a long time. I'd go down to my son there, in Craigavon, but you like to get back to your own place, so you do.

# Story 2

## Mr & Mrs Pattison

I have lived in Darkley all my life. I was born here and then we moved down to the shop. I've been here all my life, like.

I went down to Darkley Primary School. It was mixed Protestant and Catholic, like. And when you had Religion you were separated. The Protestants went into the Master's in the morning for Religion. That was Master Knapps and then Master McCall. Darkley School was a great school; you know, nobody ever mentioned religion, never.

We walked to Armaghbreague Presbyterian – there was no transport out to there. There was a bus left Darkley for Keady at I think about ten thirty in the morning. But we walked down the Black Path – what they call the Black Path – up the Slither Steps and up the Slither. The Black Path is just from Darkley House - there's a path down and onto the Slither.

We didn't feel any different when the Troubles came. We never let anything bother us really, like, and nobody ever passed any remarks, and I worked down there at the egg factory in the canteen and Neville worked with his firm and in both cases, well, I would say, it was about 98% Catholic, and nobody ever, ever said anything. The Troubles were never mentioned. Like, it was a Roman Catholic firm, and they were the best to be in than anybody. They'd be as good as a Protestant. Like, there was no difference, really. And, funnily enough, when we go to Australia and when we were away for about three months at a time, a lady, Mary Jordan from Darkley, looks after here and she does it really well and I trust her completely.

My parents' shop was between the two bungalows, down the road there beside Keenan's. It was my grandfather that started it because he worked the Co-op in Darkley. There was a Co-op in Darkley; my grandfather worked the Co-op and him and old Calvert fell out and then he built the shop up here. You got your groceries and all in it. But, like, I mean that was a long time before our times. I don't remember it, but I remember my father telling me about it. My father worked in the shop – he never worked in the mill. He sold meal and all the rest of it, and coal. And then he'd a horse, and Master Nugent, he went round the country with the meal and the coal. His name was Matthew – known as Matt.

There was one, two, three, there were four shops in Darkley. We were quite busy. There was Leers had a shop, Ena Douglas had a shop, Peggy McGee had a shop, and the Post Office. There was a general store in the Post Office. I remember the Lockharts were in it, and then Billy Flanagan and then Pat Mackin got it. But, sad to say, Darkley has deteriorated since then.

There were four shops and then there was a cinema – where someone came to show pictures on a Friday night up in what was the school. There was a school down in the Main Street where there are two big houses now just as you go into the village. Health and safety wouldn't let it now. And then of a Sunday, Johnny Ewart would have a Sunday School up there too. Johnny Ewart would have been a shareholder in the mill, I would say, in the time Darkley was going.

I remember the mill going. I served my time with them, well, a bit of my time with them. Ah well, I served my time to be a joiner, a carpenter. I fixed the houses up round Darkley, you know, because Darkley mill owned the houses, and you done things in the mill, too. You had a lathe and you done the wheels for the spindles, and all stuff like that. When I worked in Darkley I had sixteen shillings home with me for a week's work. You had to do five years before you were qualified. I was only in it, well it wasn't that long; and then I went to Belfast. An uncle of mine, my father's brother, was in Belfast. So I went. I was away when the mill closed. I went to Belfast there, after that. It closed in 1959.

I don't think relationships were affected during the Troubles, not really, no never. A UDR man lived in the village, that's right. He was shot. He was shot down the Annvale Road. It had some affect, I suppose. He was an awful, awful nice man. But, I mean, he had quite a big funeral from Darkley from both sides. And now, look, our children went to school up in Darkley all through the Troubles, and nobody ever said, like anything to them – which was good.

When the Mountain Lodge Church was attacked, that was bad. We were at Armaghbreague that night. It was the Revd. Lynch who was the minister then. But the service was cut short, because the police came in and told us to get out because there was a shooting at Mountain Lodge. Oh, it was tragic. I think there was three men killed. Harold Browne is buried up in Armaghbreague. His wife, Elizabeth, is buried there beside here husband. His son was at our church that night; his youngest son, David. And I remember there was a memorial service for Elizabeth down in the big house. Victor and Sandra Johnson were at it and they came up here after, and said it was very nice. Victor would drive now and again for William Browne, for Bill Browne. Ruby was Johnson before she was married.

The border road was never closed - you could've went over. Well, there was Customs. But you could've gone over unapproved road, no trouble! Just immediately after the war – you know, it was a good while before the rationing went and we were all very, very young. You'd walk up to Nesbitt's shop over the border and it was funny and there'd be gangs going on a Friday night, and like you would bring back sugar and tea. I remember my mother buying a set of china.

There were three shops just there. Nesbitt's was the main one. She was a very nice lady. My nieces had a shop just over the border. But I remember a crowd of us going. You know, if you'd have met the Police or anything you were laughing, trying to hide on them. They never said anything, because, I mean, you weren't really doing anything wrong you were only bringing back your own supplies like a pound of butter. I mean, it wasn't for the black market. Times were hard. I'd say it was a long time before sweets or anything went off ration. Everything was rationed for a long time.

We were born here, and I've lived in Darkley all my life, too. I lived up in the village, like. We would never think of moving. It's funny, all my sisters and brothers still say they come from Darkley, like though they're away for years and years and years out of it. I don't think of Darkley being isolated – no, not really. Funnily enough, when you've lived in it all your life you never think of it. No, you never think – feel isolated, no. Not when you've a view like that!

I don't honestly know what could be done with Darkley. 'Cause like, I mean, I would go down to the village now very seldom, because I used to walk down to the Post Office, and now there is no Post Office. That's what we could do with!

Everybody's friendly, like. They all know you. There was never any difference. Yes, and if you needed anybody to help you there is never a problem. They all seem to be so glad to see each other even if they haven't been in touch for a long time.



# Story 3

**Some recollections from a lady who is now in her sixties and who grew up in the village:**

## Memories

I remember...

- ... Nathaniel Moorcroft – or Thenny, as he was known – switching on the water at the lake for power in the mill at half past four in the mornings.
- ... The cricket club playing down on the cricket field by the “Slither Steps” and the Black Path. And then later on the B-Men used the cricket field for their target practice.
- ... The Darkley houses being sold after the mill closed for five pounds and two pounds ten shillings!
- ... Darkley had shops and petrol pumps and a taxi company! And cinema shows sometimes on Friday nights in the Old School.
- ... the cold “Spout” beside the big chimney. And the hot “Spout” from steam from the factory.
- ... women queuing with buckets to get hot water for washing clothes.
- ... that school was mixed all through the sixties and seventies and eighties and all the children were very happy together.

# Story 4

## **This lady, also in her sixties, told us her story:**

Well, I've lived all my life now in Darkley – 64 years. I went to school here and I have good memories of the school. There was Master McCall – he was the Principal; and the other teachers – well, there was a Mrs Renaghan and a Miss McGurk and a Miss Rafferty. There was a stove for the heating; it was solid fuel and it was in Miss Rafferty's class and it had to be lit every day. The caretaker would have done that. I remember once going to sports in Armagh, and we went on a lorry till Armagh. Now, what I can remember about it was, it was on the Mall, it was sports on the Mall, and we all went. I didn't do any exams though; I just came out of school at, what, fourteen or fifteen.

My parents worked in the mill. It was all right, but it was hard, y'know. My mother worked in the spinning room, and my father worked – now, it was at this front end of it – I think it was the weaving he was at, or the bobbins or something like that. But I know my mother worked at the spinning. They got a house with the job, y'know. Whenever they got married they would've got a house out of it.

I remember the dances on the main street of Darkley. It would be outside Malachy Toal's house as he was the one with the light so you could see what you were doing. The love chair would be pulled out - a long kind of seat with a low back - and the music would begin. The cards would come out and the craic would be mighty. There was no difference in anyone's lifestyle, we all lived simply and I remember my Father's favourite dinner. He would warm the blue and white bowl and put a chopped onion in the bottom, cover it with potato and a slice of butter. It was his kind of Sunday dinner. He drove for Tassagh creamery for 37 years while my mother worked in the mill.

I remember, during the Troubles – I think it happened about '68 or '69 and we were only married, y'know, and starting a family. And I remember my third boy was born and we were coming up the road in the ambulance from Lurgan Hospital up till Armagh and there was another woman in the ambulance with me and there were a lot of soldiers on the road. They didn't annoy me, y'know, but this woman, she says, "What are we taking our children into this world for?" That was one thing that stuck in my mind, and that was my third boy, y'know. But I never had any qualms with it.

I remember when there was that bomb that killed the young people walking back from Keady. It did affect me, surely. That would have been '79? That was '79 that happened. That was an awful thing on everybody now; you know it did affect everybody. But you had your faith to get you through; just your faith, really, y'know; it kept you going.

I don't know about the future for Darkley, now. We'd need a shop, wouldn't we, in Darkley? We need something. We would need a shop – if only to run for a pint of milk, y'know, or a paper. There was a time, like, when there was an awful lot of shops in Darkley. But that's a long time ago.

The relationships in the village are very good, very good with everyone, y'know. I just think there's good in everybody, y'know; really, there's good in everybody. I would trust everybody, I would – one hundred [per cent]. Round here would be one hundred.

# Story 5

## Mr Hogg

**The man who told us this story now lives in Newtownhamilton, but his father grew up in Darkley and had many stories about the village, as you will read.**

My grandfather worked in the mill. I don't now remember what his job was, but he worked in the mill. I had this photo and in it he had these like webs or something, over his arm; he was hanging them up. But there was a time when the shaft of the mill was exposed – the cover had been taken off it. And his arm in some way got caught and got pulled completely out of his body. And he walked down the stairs into the boiler house, and he sat down. And his words to the boiler man – because this was in the paper, I remember this bit – he said to the boiler man, whoever it was, “My God, I'm done!” And when he looked round, you could see my grandfather's heart. And they took him to Armagh County Infirmary, which later became Armagh City Hospital, which is now defunct, and they just packed him round with cotton wool, for they couldn't do anything. And he died the next day – he must have been a strong man. And before the coffin was closed, where he lived in 82 Moss Road, Darkley, one of the neighbours had the arm wrapped in a tarpaulin in their house and they just went up and set it in beside him in the coffin. I don't know that my grandmother maybe saw that being done, but she knew what had killed him. And the mill owners were totally and utterly at fault.

It went to court, it did, of course. And my grandmother was offered eight hundred pounds in the court, and the Judge spoke down to her from his chair and he said, “Mrs Hogg, this court has given you the maximum that it can give – eight hundred pounds. But do remember, there are higher courts.” In other words, putting it in my grandmother's mind to take it to the High Court, but Mr Best, her solicitor advised her that she could lose it. She'd already got eight hundred, and my grandmother was an uneducated woman, worked in the mill and had three or four small children to rear, and she was afraid.

My Grandmother went back to work in the mill and she reared her children as best she could. And then, she had a niece she was fond of, and she loaned the money to the niece to buy a farm.

The niece's husband paid her every penny of it back, but she said herself, she never got the good of the money – now that'd be the wrong way to put it – how would you ever get good of – as the old people would call it – 'blood money'? But the niece's husband paid her back, as Grandmother said, in dribs and drabs. He paid it all back to her, but it wasn't the same. However, she didn't regret doing it and he did awfully well in the farming world, but it was Grandmother who helped the niece.

My father had a great fondness for Darkley. He just loved it, and my uncle was more so. He'd gone to Canada, but when he came home from Toronto, in the airport he was ranting and raving about getting to Darkley. He would just have actually loved to have lived in it. And to me, I detested the place; it was awful run-down. Yet my father, he loved all the people in it, he knew them every one; he could have told me all sorts of things that happened. There was an old lady called Bella Gibson, she was very dirty and she had a jug. And my father had gone to her house as a young boy to do messages. You see, his father was dead of course. And Bella, he said, put the jug to her mouth and drained the last of the milk out of it and sent him to the dairy to get her a jug of milk. And when he arrived at the dairy, there was a queue of young people waiting to get their milk for their father or their mother or whatever, and he was going to be the last, but what did he do? The jug was stinking! And what did he do? He held it up in front of their noses, and they all went away! You see? And when the hatch went up, so he said – the dairy maid was Nessie McAnally, but that's just a fluke that I can remember that name! When Alec Hogg handed in the jug Nessie immediately said, "Alec Hogg, that is not your mother's jug! That's Bella Gibson's." Alec Hogg – that's my father. She said immediately, "Alec Hogg, that is not your mother's jug! That's Bella Gibson's." And she put it under the steam power wash that she had, boiling water, and she washed it to perfection and then cooled it and gave my father the milk. So Uncle Bill, his brother, the one that went to Canada, he went home and said how embarrassed and ashamed he was – told Granny that my father had went down pretending, you see, that the jug was his mother's and got everybody out of the place because of the awful stink of it!

But those are small things and they were true stories. And two old ladies one day were fighting, on the street, and my father said it was dreadful. One was hammering the other one down; she was hammering the daylight out of her. And he was coming from, what they called The Spout. It was a pump, but they always called it The Spout, where they got their water. And he'd a can full of water, and the one that was hammering the life out of the other one, he just threw the can of water right round her, and she jumped up, and she jumped onto his tin can, for he dropped it and she put it into pulp. But two or three days later, he was going down, you see there was Mill Row, there was Shuttle Row, there was Low Row, there was Quality Row, there was Moss Row, there was Brick Row; but one of those Rows he was going down, and she talked with a southern accent, the lady that he had defended, and she says, "Child dear, come in," she says. "That old rascal would have killed me only for you!" And he said she put her hand

up behind the clock on the mantelpiece and she took him down ten Woodbine and he said, "You know, I think I'd've cut her throat further if she'd asked!" He was that mad for cigarettes. And that was his payment, although he'd lost his can.

And there was, what I never knew in Darkley, there was flats. They must have been houses split in two, because my father told me – again, he gave the names, but the names have now left me. One old lady, she was angry with the ones downstairs, and she knew where the lamp hung in the ceiling. Remember, there was no electric. And she used to go to the exact spot where the lamp was, and she started to dance, and she'd have shouted, "Dancing o'er the lamp. Ha ha ha!" And the lamp would've been – you know, going up and down! Again, he gave me the names of the people, but I don't remember. He was full of stories, my father was. Well, if he was here he could give you far more, but they've left me now. I always felt depressed about the place, you know?

My father told me one time – it was Mr Calvert who owned the mill, and he was ill, and they had decided they wouldn't use the mill horn, so that it wouldn't annoy him, or wake him if he was sleeping. The horn must have blown at different times. So it wasn't being blown, and this old character – or maybe he wasn't so old at all! – but somebody said, "Why isn't the mill horn blowing?" And he said, "Mr Calvert's ill, and they're afraid of the devil finding out where he is!" Well, the old rascal recovered and he sacked that man! My father, again, could have given you his name.

And Johnny Ewart was the manager of the mill. He lived – I always believed until of late years that the real name of that row of houses was Quality Row, but it's not, it's Mountain View Terrace. But that was called Quality Row, because you've the manager and you've a Miss Russell, who was one of the secretaries in the mill – she was living in one of the houses, you know; you had people who had more money lived in those – they were bigger houses. But it was very, very tough times, you know, and like the people were exploited, they really were. But there it is. And it's still one of the places where the chimney's still standing.

When the mill closed, well, my uncle used to laugh because, you know, the mill houses were sold off – what was it? – for three pounds, four pounds, you know. My father was friendly with a man called Conn, in the Breague, and his wife was from Darkley, and he says to my father one day, he says, "You and my wife needn't be blowing your loads 'cos you were both reared in five pound houses!" Oh, it was a joke, but it was true! It was just to make the sale legal and to give them to the people. Five pounds – there was no way – they were worth more than that!

My father was fond of all his Catholic neighbours and Protestant neighbours; it didn't matter to him. He spoke with great fondness of them all. So I don't know. Mr Clark – he was very fond of him – he was the schoolmaster. And then there used to be an evangelical meeting held; it was by a Canon Hogg. Now, he was no relation of ours, this Canon Hogg. And my grandfather must have been interested in that, and it was held in the old schoolroom in the evenings when, naturally, the school was closed for the evening. And he would have lit the fire for Canon Hogg so that he could have this evangelical meeting. He was Church of Ireland, naturally. And my father told me that Canon Hogg had one only daughter and she was very gifted, an opera singer, and he disowned her because she took to the stage; and many a time I would have loved to have know who she was or where she went. Canon Hogg had this one only daughter and he disowned her.

But anyway, my father, he just loved Darkley and he loved the people in Darkley, and my uncle was the same. They had great fondness for one another, seemingly. There never seemed to be any talk of Catholic or Protestant fighting with one another, or anything like that. They always seemed to help one another, you know. There was quite a spirit amongst them all, you know.

# Story 6

## Directions

“Darkley House – please can you tell me?  
I’m lost and looking to find.”

“I’ll give you directions,  
even though I’m only nine.”

“Do you know there, by Molly’s shop,  
Next to the Bullock Lane?  
Or do you know the New Road?  
It will take you there the same.

Or what about the big chimney?  
At Shuttle Row it stands so great.  
It’s just beside the Dam Road  
that takes you to the lake.

Or go down by the ‘Slither’  
and come out at Clarke’s egg store,  
then up past Ginny Allen’s,  
though she doesn’t live there any more.

Then you’ll see the ‘big house’  
and the banks where we all slide.  
You’ll always find an open door  
and a warm welcome to all inside.

Noeleen Leyburn



# Story 7

**This lady, who is in her fifties, lived just out of the village, and she told us:**

I was brought up in Aughnagurgan, just over there; you see the trees there and McGills? Well, just the next house. I knew all the neighbours, oh, I did. We helped them gather in potatoes and the hay and everything. You didn't get paid for that, no – you were just neighbourly and that was it. All around us was all Protestant neighbours and mixed school and everything and, see, to this day I never heard anybody ridicule any religion. We were brought up like that; you didn't know anything else, y'know? The McGinns, they were lovely – Mary and Meta and Bob.

I went to Darkley School. I remember the teachers. Yes, there was Master McCall and Miss Rafferty was there, Mrs Renaghan and Jimmy Murphy from Granemore – he died there a while back – he came to take over from Mrs Renaghan. I started school at five year old; my Aunt Margaret took me and my sister, Mary Teresa and Josie Connor. Och, I trailed right round the lough and everywhere with them. They were all after boys and that was it.

I had a happy childhood, yes. We used to have to carry the water from the bottom of two fields for 'mummy for clean water, and then wheel creamery cans of water from the river for her to wash – no washing machines or anything in them days. We'd walk back to Darkley from the neighbours in the evening and you got a thrupenny bit – that was money then! It was great! And a Mrs Shortt lived up on the row in Darkley, and my Granny McDonald, she lived up at the quarry. We used to go in there at dinner time, because she'd be in with Mrs Shortt – we were smart enough – and Mrs Shortt would send me to the shop and she would say, "There's tuppence, get yourself a Lily Pop" as she called it. I always remember that. A Lily Pop. She meant a lollipop. And you had one of them, like, for a penny.

For food we had the normal, just – beans and potatoes and cabbage and bacon and turnips and all that. You never saw beef much. But, at Christmas there, we had turkey and that. Steak – mummy always done steak for Christmas morning; we had that and it was lovely for our breakfast. We had a garden where we had potatoes and all, and cattle and cows and all, and a pig. A pet pig! We used to ride about on his back. The cow, she died over in the rigs in the field. And things like that.

Why did we have the Troubles? I don't know. I just don't know why. I just think it all over parades and things like that – both sides, like. I think that's the whole thing – if it was all just scrapped.

But I remember the B-men doing their practice in the field, down there in the meadow. And we used to walk down the Black Path, home from school in the evenings and they would stop and all, till we got up the Slither Steps. I remember them vividly, down there in that meadow down there doing their target practice and all, when we were kids.

My husband was from Keady, aye. He rode the bike up from Keady till Aughnagurgan there, and back to Keady in the evenings. We walked down to Keady to go to the pictures and all. Got the bus from Darkley into Keady sometimes. We were married, what, forty five years next year.

It was desperate when the Darkley church got attacked; I thought it was just desperate. See like all this nonsense now with all them dissident republicans, sure people doesn't want the like of that. The Queen coming and all, it's great for the community and all too, people mixing and everything. I just couldn't find any difference. I watched it on television. And her appearing in green for Ireland and all, too, like. That was a good thing, too. But I wouldn't bring the children up to be sectarian, not at all.

In the future, well, I hope this all stops, this ol' dissident nonsense so people can live in peace, like, and enjoy life and go where they like and not be afraid of going where they want.

# Story 8

## Mr Robinson

**This gentleman is nearly ninety and was born and brought up in the village.**

I was born in Darkley, in this house. The very house I'm in here now. I didn't travel too far.

I worked in the mill. I was a fitter in the mill. Textile fitter. I went to serve my time when I was fifteen and I was there till it closed. I have been working for fifty years, and I was only idle in four months. I was in the hospital twelve weeks actually. I was in for an operation and I was off for twelve weeks, and that's all the time I was off, excepting maybe a day or two. I got my holidays, you know, the same as everybody else in July and Christmas and Easter. I got them holidays, but for working, I never was off.

Well, there was nothing wrong with the mill to work in, but at the very start of it the money wasn't big, like. Well, the wages weren't great anywhere, I suppose. I know James Calvert's time – it was his time I was with. But the old man, he was a very difficult man to work with. There was a man one time came here to look for a job and he said, he thought that this man Calvert owned the air that you breathe!

When the mill closed, well, you weren't too happy about it, I suppose. In a way, like, it was handy to go to work so close and you had to go somewhere else, like. I went to Milford after it closed.

I went to Darkley Primary School. It was all the school I ever was at. And well, it was all right at its time, like. It was good, wasn't bad at all. But I started first in the old school, y'see, down in the front of the Main Road there. This one now is a new school. The old school was there in Main Street – that's where I started, like. There was three teachers. There was a Miss Russell, she had the infants. Maud Russell, I think they called her. And then there was a Miss McGurk – she had the third, fourth class. And then there was the Master – Clark – he had on up to five, six and seven.

Well, I wouldn't say we had a big lot of social life in those days. The only time I enjoyed it was when it would be snowing. When there was plenty of snow you had a sliding cart and you went out and enjoyed yourself on it. But you'd hardly go down the hills now with the traffic, like!

On Saturdays at that time, there was a few other people, even Roman Catholic fellas as well as me, and we sometimes went down to Keady there of a Saturday evening. It would only have been a matter of walking round it, for I don't suppose you could have got the price of a fish supper between us all! Aye, we went for a bit of craic, just for a change, you know?

On Sundays, there was a bus from Darkley. Well, it was the chapel it took the people to. A bus, or two buses, took the chapel people for a long time, and some of the Church of Ireland people would have went down on the bus if the time suited them. But I walked it – there and back again – any time I went and I never missed, like. And even Sunday School, we had to walk it too, for Sunday School.

Sometimes I swam in the lake, I did indeed. The water came down from the lake – see in Darkley mill they had two turbines there, that were run with the water; and the race came down by and we used to bathe in the race. Y'see, it was really good – it was clean, it was flowing water all the time. Nowadays, the race would only be partly there, but y'see it's like everything else, the banks and all have got bad and the water could have got away since the mill was stopped. When the mill was going they were kept and fixed and the water came down. They were a good width, y'see, and a fair depth too. And there was an overflow – a by-wash, they used to call it – at Kelly Hughes's there, and if it was too high, it would have run over there and down into the Callan River, y'see. That was the race coming from the lake, that was Tullynowood. And when the mill was off at holiday time, they had to let two inches go over the by-wash all the time for to suit the mills on down the line.

There was no running water in the houses then. The clean water was carried from right down at the chimney there. And at that time, when it started first, it was just the one tap, and after a number of years, d'y'see, they piped it. There would nearly always have been a queue at the Spout. You'd have had to wait on your turn. But that was only for the clean water, now. But if you had to get water for to wash, people washing clothes or anything there, you could've went up a wee bit further and there was a path down into that race, there was a tree that went over and there was a place where you could've lifted the water, you could've lifted a bucket or two of water there, and you'd've carried from there then up home. That's the water for washing, now, that's not the water for drinking. But that water for drinking was great water – they had a well; it was a hundred feet deep – spring water. And that well, it's where the water went down, d'y'see, through and into the race, that's where the well was. And there was like a frame round it, nearly like a barrel, d'y'see, right round, and there was like a pipe come out of the centre of it there; that's where the water come up. Now if you had took a cup, you could've took a cup of that water out of that there. But you wouldn't have drunk it, I don't care how dry you were – it was like ice, it was great water!

But I remember that there was a Post Office down there in Darkley and there was a man called Bob Semple had the Post Office. Now, he was an ex-service man, but he started a grocery shop in it as well. And it's where it is yet; that's where it was. And it was a grand shop and a grand Post Office, well run and everything else. And he had a girl working for him, Cassie Feghan they called her, and Cassie could've done it – and did do it – as well as he, for if he was away anywhere, she looked after it just as well as if he'd been there. And as well as that shop being there, up the road there where Keenan's is now, there was another shop there, called Patterson's. The whole building's wiped away now, but there was a shop there – a grocer shop, too. And Patterson was in it. Tommy Patterson and his son, Ben, was in it. And they were there until the trade got bad and then the father died, and later on Ben had to quit, too, for it got not much good, I suppose. But from that, then people took over the Post Office after Bob Semple was there. The shop stayed on very good on up till the last, till they only had the Post Office. It's closed there now, too. And at that time there was several people up along – there was a wee woman had a shop – Kate Duffy; it was only in the house she had. She only had small items, like, but you could've got a drop of milk or you could've got a loaf if you had wanted it, for the bread-man come to her everyday too. The bread-man used to come with a big horse-drawn cart. And then there was some other people had wee shops too, and you couldn't've gone wrong for getting any at that time. Now you couldn't buy anything in this place. There's nothing!

It would be good to have a shop – but sure, they've tried it here. A shop's no good and I'll tell you for why, and you know as well as I do – they have these supermarkets now, and when you go into a supermarket now, you can get everything you want all under one roof. And they tried a shop here, and it wouldn't do, for in the first instance they couldn't work with the price. That was one of the things that was wrong. And then, as I tell ye, most of the people have cars now and they go out to the supermarket to get their stuff. And so the shop closed eventually. Aye, it's a pity it didn't work; we could do with a shop. But I tell ye, there's no such thing as running a shop in it now, because Keenan tried it there. Keenan took over after Patterson quit, and they had it for a number of years, but they couldn't make a go of it either. It done for a while all right, but it eventually went out too. It'd be the same if you started up again now.

Mind, wait till I tell ye, we are living here in this village here nearly a lifetime and at the present time, I suppose, there's not an awful lot of Protestants in it. But we can't say nothing; we're well enough done for. I'm not saying if a young person came in here, a stranger, I'm not saying they'd get as good attention, they may not be looked after as well, but as far as we're concerned, there's nobody interferes with us or bothers us; they'd do any help for us as we want. Good neighbours. We can't complain at all. Well now, I'm happy to live in Darkley, and I couldn't be any happier. And I tell ye, if I live to next month I'll be ninety. So I have come through wonderful.

# Story 9

## Life Around Darkley

I grew up on a farm in South Armagh -  
Five girls, two boys, Ma and Da.  
Not far from the village of Darkley we were;  
A few mile over the hill, we were there.

Back in those days with not much money,  
We were still happy to play a game of footie.  
No designer clothes, all hand-me-downs,  
But it's not like now – no-one frowned.

Mountain Lodge Church up the road a few mile;  
Dad being the Pastor, he always wore a smile.  
People would come from near and far,  
Distance to problem when they had a car.

They came to the church and often to our home,  
Seeking for prayer – they were never off the phone.  
Dad prayed for them all, he had great faith in God.  
Many miracles happened but we have to trust God.

In the village of Darkley stands the big white house.  
Crossfire Trust is its name, there's no doubt.  
Ian Bothwell and Pauline answered the call,  
Many years ago now, give God their all.

They give of their time and give of their lives,  
To foresee in the future the needy people around.  
The house in Darkley is still open today;  
It's home away from home and there you can stay.

People can come and take time to Chill Out  
And think "Well, what is my life really about?"  
With no purpose in life and no meaning to live,  
Within a friendly environment it just means everything.

So many people out there are hurting today,  
They just need someone to show them the way.  
Life for some people seems cruel and unfair -  
Let's get alongside them and show them we care.

God is the only answer in our world today,  
May we take more time out to read and pray.  
Leaving aside all your worries and fears,  
And God will hear us in the midst of our tears.

DARKLEY

A small place on the map  
But each one's important to Him  
GOD CARES

Minnie Morton (née Bain)

# Story 10

## Megan Murphy

**Megan is a teenager who now lives in Keady.**

My name is Megan Murphy. I lived in Darkley for about eight years when I was five.

I remember going to school in Darkley which I enjoyed. We use to sit on the wall and play on the footpath. Sometimes we went up to play in the park at the edge of the village.

I used to go down to Darkley House Fun Days and got my face painted, and there was a big slide – the Water Slide. That was fun! And I used to go to the Nite of Light that they had at Hallowe'en and get dressed up. I remember dunking the apples and getting wet. I met Jordan McGleenon there. He's ginger and he's fun!

I would recommend people to come to Darkley House and to the Fun Day because it's peaceful and it makes everyone love each other.



# Story 11

## Rodney Wilson

**Rodney is in his forties and has always lived in the area.**

My name is Rodney Wilson. I grew up on the family farm with Dad, Mum, my sister Esther and Auntie Yvonne just 2 miles from Keady. Now I live there with my wife Hilary and our 3 children, Leah, David and Joshua.

My childhood days are filled with happy memories of school life and helping Dad on the farm. I would go with him at any opportunity to the livestock markets in Keady and Newtownhamilton to buy cattle and pigs and often we enjoyed a cup of tea with the many farmers he knew there. The summer holidays were always busy making hay and silage, reseeding etc., but we always managed to get a family holiday to Portstewart for a few days in August before the new school year began.

The troubles were rife as I grew up and as my Granddad and Granny's farm was on the border I still remember the sights and sounds of the big green army saracens, the chopping of the helicopters overhead, the regular army checkpoints and the many news reports of shootings and bombings which unfortunately in those days became "the norm".

In the late 70's Dad looked seriously at selling up and moving to Scotland to farm, just as many of his friends and relatives had done. This never materialized and now I often wonder how different life would have been if we had relocated at that time.

I was blessed to have been brought up in a Christian home and as a young boy I came to a personal faith in Jesus Christ for myself. This decision would be the foundation, comfort and hope that would enable me at the age of 17 to face the days, months and years that would follow the dark night of November 20th, 1983 when Dad and his 2 friends were suddenly and unexpectedly taken into eternity by gunmen while attending a service at Mountain Lodge Pentecostal Church.

I will always be grateful for the help and support we received from neighbours, friends and relatives which enabled Mum to carry on the farm business while I completed my studies in Queens University Belfast. We were always conscious of being carried by prayer from the many churches & prayer groups throughout the land and further afield in those dark days.

Since leaving university I have been working for The Ulster Farmers Union in Armagh. My job has enabled me to meet and do business with lots of people in the area. People who knew Dad often talk about his Godly character and how he always had time for everyone. He had many friends from both communities and I am often heartened by many of the stories they share with me while visiting their homes.

There are many “**why’s?**” that remain unanswered and one that is often asked is - “Why kill innocent people in a place of worship?” And although I have many questions left unanswered I rest in one of the key principles of the Christian faith - that is “**forgiveness**”. Jesus in the Bible taught us to pray using the Lord’s Prayer. It contains the phrase “...**forgive us this day our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.**” I have found by dealing scripturally with the situations and problems in my life my painful experiences can make me **better - not bitter**. Today I enjoy the freedom that comes from the power of forgiveness and letting go of the past, whilst I will never forget Dad who gave his life that dark night, I have decided not to dwell there.

A favourite quotation of mine is by Eleanor Roosevelt - “*Yesterday is History, Tomorrow is a Mystery, Today is a Gift - that’s why we call it the present.*”

My thanks to Ian and Pauline and Crossfire Trust for allowing me the opportunity of sharing this short story with you. I trust that you will be blessed and encouraged as you read it and find faith and hope in Jesus as Lord of your life.

# Story 12

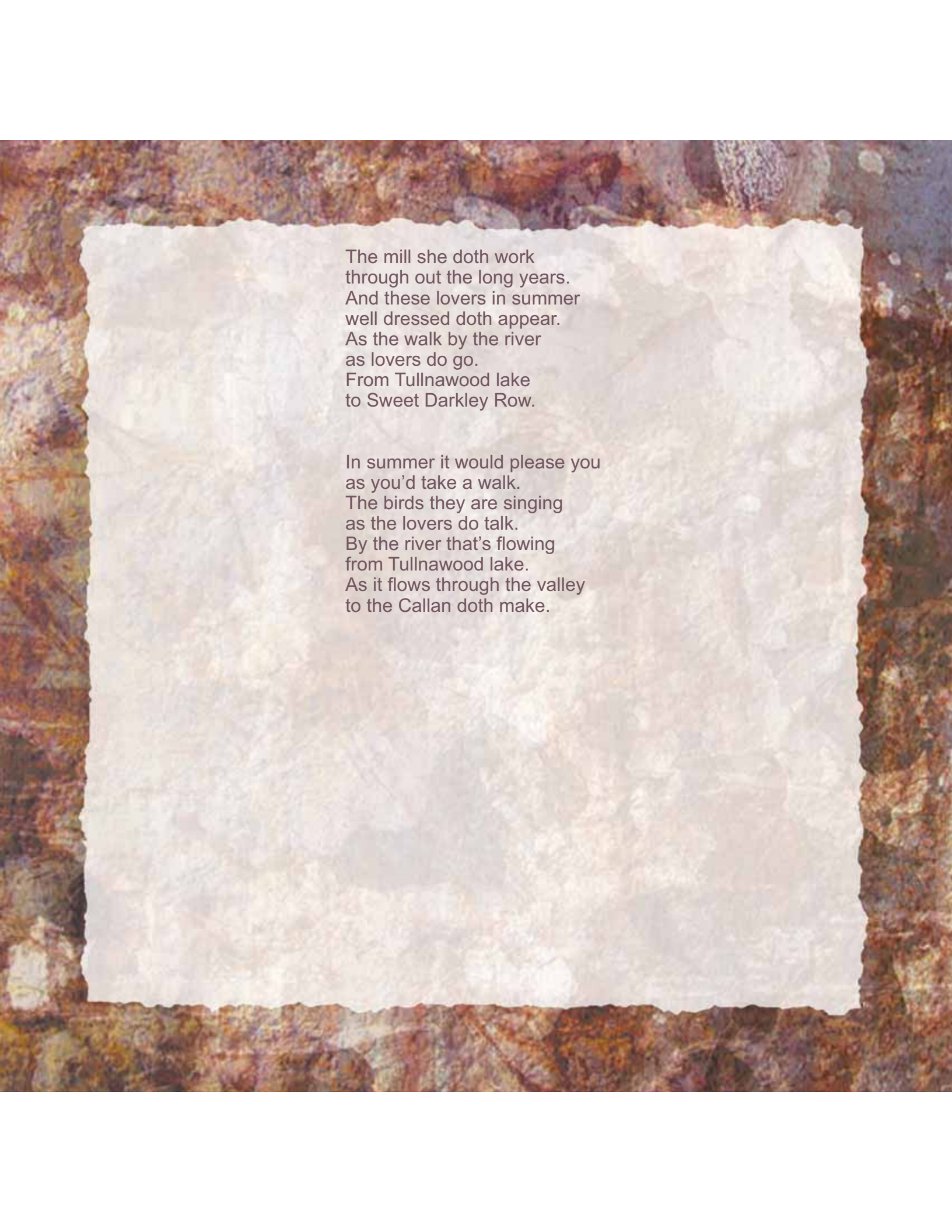
This poem is from the collection of local historian, Trevor Geary.

## Sweet Darkley Row

I was born in a village  
in the County Armagh.  
It's the nicest wee village  
that ever you saw.  
Where the boys and the girls  
well they all do agree.  
And the dance to the Fiddle  
with mirth and with glee.

### Chorus

Here's a health to the girls.  
Here's one to the boys.  
Long may they be able to  
share others joys.  
And dance to the Fiddle  
through rain, hail or snow.  
And keep up the name of  
Sweet Darkley Row.



The mill she doth work  
through out the long years.  
And these lovers in summer  
well dressed doth appear.  
As the walk by the river  
as lovers do go.  
From Tullnawood lake  
to Sweet Darkley Row.

In summer it would please you  
as you'd take a walk.  
The birds they are singing  
as the lovers do talk.  
By the river that's flowing  
from Tullnawood lake.  
As it flows through the valley  
to the Callan doth make.

# Story 13

## Dave Masters - An Englishman in Ireland

Dave has lived in South Armagh and worked at Darkley since moving from England in 2002.

Well, where to start? With hindsight I can see God's leading through every stage of my life. At the age of 47 I was declared redundant, which can be a scary thing, but I soon saw that this was essential to God's plan for my life. The opportunities that came out of this are things I would not want to have missed. Even the difficult learning times have paid off in the longer term.

In 1997 I had the opportunity to join a working party of twelve volunteers from Reading in England (my home town) to come and paint the outside of Darkley House. At the time that included the old stables and coach house, now replaced with luxury flats and business accommodation.

I was moved by what I saw here at Darkley and in the surrounding area of South Armagh. There was great physical need, and riches too if you knew the right people. There was also spiritual poverty, despite the great heritage of the various flavours of the church which I saw manifest in Armagh's two cathedrals and the local church where I worshipped occasionally in Darkley.

I noticed groups of people in the community who were not at peace with each other, despite professing to love the same Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. The passage of the Bible beginning at 1 Corinthians 1:10 warns us against divisions within the church. We must not let political differences or differences of faith come between us; Jesus is central to all.

I noticed a man in Crossmaglen recoil a clear 3 metres when I was introduced to him as an Englishman. Was there really that much fear in this community? I wanted to do something that would show him that we English were not as black as we had been painted in the past. Now I don't profess to be of same stuff as the biblical Paul but you will recall from Acts 16:9 that he had a vision of a man saying "Come over and help us". Well, I got the same sort of vision and God showed me over the next few years that He wanted me to "come over".

I noticed a couple, Ian and Pauline Bothwell, who were putting their whole lives into helping to resolve these issues. God made it clear to my wife and myself that we needed to align ourselves with this work. So in 2002 we sold up our house in Reading and moved into South Armagh to work with Crossfire Trust. We've seen the work change and develop in the short time we've been here. It is a joy to see Crossfire Trust able to provide luxury accommodation for some of those who for whatever reason have fallen on hard times. For those who will put in the effort this is a huge step on the road back to a fulfilling place in the community. It is a joy to see the trust's new business units and to think how they will help Darkley and the surrounding area to get out of the current recession when the time comes.

On a personal level, God has confirmed that our decision to relocate to South Armagh was exactly what He wanted us to do. Shortly after our arrival here my wife was diagnosed with life threatening bowel cancer. If I had decided to remain in our comfortable life in Reading, and not relocate to our present address in South Armagh, our circumstances would have been such that the diagnosis would probably not have been made, let alone operated on with 24 hours notice! That was eight years ago and all indications are that she is now clear of the cancer. I don't always do what God tells me to but on this occasion I did and He has rewarded both of us for our obedience.

At the age of 66, we are now asking God what sort of retirement He has planned for us. Maybe this will involve a return to England – who knows? We have enjoyed our time serving the community here and trust that God will continue to bless you all.

# Story 14

Another poem from the collection of Trevor Geary.

## The Lighting Scheme of Darkley

They blow about the Shannon  
How it was a mighty scheme  
But the lighting scheme of Darkley  
Sure twas just as big a scream.

There is nothing there but cookers now  
And the meters and the like.  
For it's rumoured that the stones and grates  
Are all going out on strike.

The real old way of making tay  
Was always thought the best.  
Of hanging on the kettle  
Rinsing tay posts and the rest.

But now they switch the current on  
And the boyo starts to boil  
But they tell you up in Quality Row  
It's useless buying oil.

Some boys drop in from Keady  
Now and then to have a chat.  
For the Darkley girls are comely  
But I'll add no more to that.

It's a hilly road and loan some  
But they greet you with a smile  
And an egg boiled there by electric  
Makes your journey worth the while.

With all these new inventions  
Not knowing where to stop  
An enterprising smart young man  
Could open up a shop.

They could do a most amazing trade  
Selling cookers and what not.  
They say it pays like fish n' chips  
Strike while the iron is hot.



# Afterword

We hope you have enjoyed the read, and perhaps by now you have started to think how we can prevent bad things happening in such a good, friendly, open space, where we all get on, but... Nevertheless, we allowed very bad things to happen.

We are grateful to the Community Relations Council, who read about this idea, thought it was a helpful community procedure and have assisted financially in the production.

If you would like to visit, volunteer or support this developing work... do get in touch and together we will enjoy the journey.

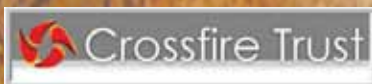
*“A little bit out of the way for alot out of the ordinary.”*

*“I like going down to the Big House for a wee bargain.”*

*“I’m reluctant to go to Darkley House because I don’t know who I would meet or what I would face in myself.”*

Thanks to Community Developer  
**Keith Hamilton**  
for the idea to produce local stories.

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**RESTORING**HOPE



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