PHOTOCOPY

The Markets Community

JOE MILLS
CHAIRMAN REDEVELOPMENT

At the beginning of the year I was privileged to record on tape conversations with some of the older generation in the Markets Area. I take this opportunity to thank those who related so enthusiastically their memories of life in the area.

Many interesting things were learned but one thing that was confirmed for me was the great affection that the older generation have for the area. Over the past 15 years I have spent a lot of my free time in the area and through conversations with old and young I am aware of the strong sense of community that exists. Some families have lived here for three generations and indeed one woman told me that her family have lived in the area for five generations. Within the past few months I have talked to a couple of hundred of people of all age groups in the area about redevelopment and how they viewed it. With few exceptions it was viewed favourably provided that certain safeguards were taken. These were that all the people would be rehoused in the area, that houses and not tall flats would be built and most inportant that people would not have to move out of the district during redevelopment. This latter point was stressed by all and they expressed the fear that if they were moved,even temporarily,that the authorities might not let them return.

Since my conversations I have asked myself why the people are so attached to the area. A variety of reasons present themselves but I think the strongest of these is the family tie. Grandparents,children and grandchildren live around the cornerso to speak from each-other. z

With the area being small regular visiting amongst relatives is easy. There is no necessity for transport to visit relations and this is particularily advantageous where many families are being reared and and where grandparents are aged, so neither the young nor the old travel far with ease. A further advantage is the lack of travelling expense particularily in an area where unemployment is high and wages are low.

Another characteristic of the family tie is the mutual care of dependants at both ends of the geeneration structure. For centuries this mutual caring has been an inbuilt function of most societies. Those rearing families can call on grandparents for help and advice and inturn are comforted by both children and grandchildren. Outside of this filial circle there is of course friendship which links the people of one household with another. Households share eachothers joys and sorrows.

As a result of these reflections I have become convinced that in the redevelopment area people are the priority. People are the community and to often in the past they have been ignored and planning authorities in many lands have imposed their solutions on them for rehousing etc.

In recent years there has been a change in attitude on the part of the planners and the people. More participation by the people has been encouraged by the planners and in their turn people have responded. People in some areas had to demand the right of participation. As I see it the purpose of redevelopment is largely to meet the needs of the people wiht particular regard to housing.

THE MARKETS

The Markets district of Belfast encompasses the area northwards from Ormeau Avenue to the City centre at Chichester Street and eastwards from the side of the City Hall to the Albert Bridge.

One of the earliest residences in this area was built in 1818 by James Hamilton near the present Cromac Square. When Hamilton Street was developed, it became number 3 and it stood until the redevelopment of the area in the 1960s - 1970s. The Hamilton's subsequently became the Dukes of Abercorn.

Other early 19th century buildings which remain to this day are the fine Georgian terraces in Hamilton Street and Joy Street which date from the 1830s. (Joy Street takes its name from Joy's Paper Mill, then in the district)

Cromac Street itself was mainly developed in the 1840 and 50s, though there were a few houses and taverns notably Lennons on it from before that time. The west side or 'high' markets was settled first with streets like Henrietta Street and Russell Street called after James Hamilton's daughter and Thomas Russell - the man from God knows where, respectively, Hamilton's two other daughters Grace and Eliza also had streets named after them.

Other streets now sadly all gone were Raphael St, McAuley Street, Riley's Place and Market Street to name but a few.

Cromac Square was the 'hub' of the area and here shops like George Gray's grocery, whose counter dated from 1818, Twinem's drapery, Barney McCoy's public house, and George Stone's bicycle shop, the second oldest in Belfast, remained until modern times.

Along Cromac Street were nine public houses, for example Mooney's, McEntee's, Maguires and the Golden Jubilee whilst McKnight and ~~Gamble~~ Co's was a rival to any down town department store with its beautiful double staircase reaching to the first floor. James Lundy ran a hardware shop whose sign outside informed readers that he sold everything from a donkey to a four engine bomber. The mineral water firm of William Corry & Co Ltd which was famous throughout the British Isles was established here in 1854 due to the proximity of the Cromac Spring which surfaced inside their premises. The bakery firm of John McWatters Ltd established in the third quarter of the 19th century won many awards down the years in many European capitals for its bread and pastries. The east side of the street and stretching back to the cowpens near the present Central Railway Station was known as the 'low' markets and in this part was situated the famous Inglis bakery. The Ormeau bakery, of course, had its first premises near Cromac Square whilst a very early branch of Stewarts grocery chain was on Cromac Street itself. The street had two distinguished pharmacists, Jim Acheson and John Cleary (Cleary's Medical Hall). John Boyd Dunlop who re-invented the pneumatic tyre in 1888 set up in business after qualifying as a vet, in the late 1860s in Joy Street and his is a famous name connected with this area.

Gloucester St

The oldest business premises which existed until modern times (1818 - 1975) was John Magennis, Hide and Skin Merchants, Welsh Street.
The markets area in the past had a strong connection with Queen's University stretching back to the days of the old Queen's College in that many of the country students resided with land ladies in the Joy Street district. A lot of the folk who lived in the area had connections with St George's Market which was built in 1890 by J. C. Bretland and the Fish Market (also by Bretland) in 1896. Consequently many dealers lived here. Indeed the markets tradition goes back much further than 1890 and the district derives its name from the proximity to the original Belfast Market at the beginning of the 19th century.

The rearing of horses was another tradition, the local family of Murdocks were known all over Belfast whilst the lending of handcarts and barrows on a daily and sometimes weekly basis to facilitate the markets trade was carried on for many years by Harry O'Hagan. Many families have lived here for well over 100 years.

Many celebrated names of the music hall lodged in the Joy Street area in the past due to the nearness of the district to the Empire, Grand Opera House and Alambra theatres. Charles Chaplin, G.H. Elliott, Dan Leno, Eugene Stratton and Vesta Tilley were lodgers in the Georgian houses once upon a time.

St Malachy's Catholic church, built in 1844, is the architectural gem of the area. It was completed to the designs of Thomas Jackson and has many very remarkable features not least its fine stucco ceiling modelled on the ceiling of Henry VIIs chapel in Westminster Abbey. It is undoubtedly one of the most beautiful churches in Belfast and the people of the markets have always been proud of it. It would need a separate article to do full justice to it. Until quite recently the last tree of the old Castle domain stood near the church.

In September 1858 the Sisters of Mercy were given charge of a school at 15 Hamilton Street and resided in a house in Bankmore Street near the present Ormeau Avenue. In a large house adjoining the school the Sisters opened, in March 1860, the Belfast Catholic Penitentiary. Eventually the care of the penitents was entrusted to the Good Shepherd nuns at Ballynafeigh from May 1867.

A new school was opened on the closure of the Hamilton Street premises on 24 September 1878. This school continued under the care of the Sisters of Mercy and was known as the Bowen School for Young Ladies. Its erection was made possible by the charitable bequest of Matthew Bowen of the Royal Hotel Belfast for religious and educational purposes in the St Malachy's district. A convent adjoining the school was erected in 1881 and the building is still in use today as a religious house. The school closed in 1988.

St Malachy's Christian Brothers school was opened on 1st October 1874 on Oxford Street near the Queen's Bridge. It closed in 1963 though the building modified for commercial use still stands. It is distinguished by an individual design, the architect being Alex McAllister with a handsome cut stone front. The cost of erection including the site was £2000. In its roll of past pupils it numbers very many names of priests and laymen who have held notable positions in church and state.

In 1905 St Colman`s Boys School in Eliza Street was opened replacing an older school on the same site which had been erected in May 1873. The cost of the erection was £1652-15s-0d. It closed in 1988 when all the parish children transferred to the new St Malachy`s Primary School in Eliza Street. building
In 1903 St Comgall`s Schools for Boys and Girls were opened in Gloucester Street. These schools, which continued in use until 1963, replaced an earlier school in Little May Street and cost £1104-13s-6d to build.

The St Malachy`s district has always had a strong sporting tradition dating back perhaps to the famous coursing greyhound Master McGrath which tradition tells us was kennelled in May Street prior to travelling to Altcar near Liverpool in the late 1860s. The 'Master' won the Waterloo cup - the Blue Riband of Coursing on three separate occasions.

St George`s Amateur Boxing Club in Catherine Street North was justly called the cradle of champions and produced many young men who went on to sporting glory, names like Jim McCann, Gerry Smyth, Paddy Graham and , of course, John Kelly professional British and European Bantam Weight champion spring to mind.

In this area was situated the famous boxing booth of Ma Copley in the Chapel Fields. This ran right through the 1930s and many famous fighting men notably Rinty Monaghan had bouts there In the 1890s Bob Fitzsimmons, the only British man to hold the World Heavyweight title, worked in John McKeown`s blacksmith`s yard in Eliza Street.

St Malachy`s too had a pipe band which was known throughout Ireland. It wore the Irish Kilt as a uniform, seen today on the regimental pipe band of the Irish Guards. Sadly it ceased to function in the late 1940s whilst the Cromac Dance Hall. which flourished during the inter war years, closed around this time too.

Today here, as in many other areas of 'Old' Belfast , there is, sadly, little trace of the past. I often walk down Cromac Street and as I do the words of the song by Thomas Moore come to mind.

Oft in the stilly night
Ere slumbers chains have bound me
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.

Jim O`Hagan
Vice Chairman
South Belfast Historical Society.

Chapter 1.

" Early History Of The Markets in the 19th Century. "

The district known as the " Markets " was once one of the most closely knitted and neighbourly communities in Belfast, in the sense that almost everybody there knows everybody else.

The area is bounded by May Street, Ormeau Avenue, Cromac Street, Albert Street, Central Railway Station, Stewart Street, Mc Auley Street and Raphale Street, it is a working class resedential inner city area with a very difinite identity of its own.

The land on which the Markets people live was reclaimed from estuarine flats of Belfast Lough in the late 18th Century, the community are very aware of the history of the Markets and the unique culture that has developed over the years on this precious picee of reclaimed land that was once part of the marshy estuarine flats at the head of Belfast Lough.

The people of the Markets have great respect for their own traditions and wish to see them survive, this self knowledge passed by the community is achieved through an intimate and personal relationship with history and stories from the past handed down from one generation to the next complementing and cementing the formed through family and friendship ties.

The Markets Area of the city holds a unique position in local history, its a stones throw from the City Centre it was a lively community with its own peculial atmosphere, the area originally began to expand durung the initial stocks of the industrial revolution and it is from this period of economic birth that much of it its character and many of its familiar institutions came into being.

A potlery industry was created,a glassworks flourished and trees from the banks of the lagan river a local manufacturing industry, the abattoir was built at Stewart Street, it opened in 1912 (see appendices 1) and the Markets became a centre for the sale of fruit produces, it was only natural that with the situation as it was that the area became the food trading centre of the city.

The result was the eruption of pig and chicken, eggs and fish markets with associatrd industries of hide and skin yards at Eliza Street, Stewart Street and Stanfield Street.

The Markets district is described by C.E.B. Brett in his book " Buildings of Belfast 1700 1914 "

> The leisurly development of Georgian Terrace houses can be instructively in the Area Joy Street, Hamilton Street and the district known as the Markets, most of which was built in 1830 and 1840 on land reclaimed either from the tide or from the former dam of the Cromac Paper Mill (see appendix 2). This district more than any other gives a vivid impression of Belfast as it was before the full gale - force of vivtorial industrial expansion struck, most of the houses are in fair respectable and care for by their tenants if not always by their landlords.

When the fifth Earl of Donegall visited Belfast in 1767 to carry out the reletting of the estates here Henry and Robert Joy obtained a lease of the Cromac property near the Blackstaff river where it flowed into the Lagan for the purpose and printing business.

The ground contained one acre, three roads and two perches at a rent of £3.0s 8d and herist of 10 shillings for a lease of 61 years and the mill was started about 1773.

In consequence of the searcity of water in dry seasons they found a larger dam was required for surpplying the water wheel and they obtained a further 7½ acres for that purpose at a yearly rent of £8. 35s and a heriot of £1 for a lease of 48 years to expire with the previous one.

This formed part of the early original outlet of the Blackstaff by an estuary into the Lagan which had been partially reclaimed by the Long Bank, it was constructed before 1675 by Arthur the first Earl Of Donegall. The dam formed in the enclosure by Messrs Joy was bounded in the east by the site of the present Cromac Street to near its Southern boundary with May Street and on the West in a line with the present Alfred Street.

The dam covered by region of which Joy Street is now the centre, but before the lease expired it was reclaimed for building purposes about 1812 when Mays Market was opened.

The site of the Cromac Paper Mill is now occupied by the Fire Service as a Station in Ormeau Avenue which is opposite Joy Street. The Blackstaff river entered the Lagan as it does now though an artifical cut created early in the 18th century by the third Lord Donegall as an unemployment relief scheme.

George Benn in 1823 worte of the Markets Area,

> " There was formerly an extensive wood principally consisting of oak reaching from Mays Market to the Lagan and along the bank of that river to the present new bridge (Ormeau Bridge) many of the old inhabitants will recollect this wood which was prencipally remarkable for the great number of swans which built their nest in it, the oaks alas have all gone but the swans stubbornly survive. "
>
> (A History of the town of Belfast from 1799 till 1810 Vol 11 1880).

The Upper Markets were built a little earlier than the Lower Markets and for a rather more prosperous class of resident, though there are some fine houses in the Lower Markets too especially in New Bond Street. (see appendix 3).

The large terraced houses in Joy Street and Hamilton Street were the homes of highly respectable people. The Duke of Abercorns town house at No 3 Hamilton Street was demolished in 1962 the Street bears his family name. (see appendix 4).

May Street, Joy Street, Russell Street, Grace Street, Eliza Street, Catherine Street and Henrietta Street also bear the names of well known Belfast families. Market people never lost their eye for fine horse flesh and to this day it isnot unusal for a family to keep a horse or two, families like the Murdocks have become known through out the country for the success of their trotting ponies and horses stabled in the shadow of the High Courts and while the last blacksmith shop closed down years ago it is not difficult to find a Marketman who can still shoe a pony or a horse, make a shaft for a cart or repair a wheel. (see appendix 5) .

Chapter 2

" Breif History Of Some Of The Streets Within The Markets "

JOY STREET,

Takes its name from Francis Joy who died in 1752 and who discribed f himself as a peace maker and a journalist. Francis Joy was descendant of Captain Thomas Joy who was a follwer of Sir Arthur Chichester the founder of Belfast for the service rendered, he was granted land on which the present Joy Street is built, his name is commemorated also in Joys Entry which runs between Ann Street and High Street.

Joy Street was taken up by business premises and the remainder of the street by residents and at one time it was known as "The Street Of Landladies " there were 22 Landladies who kept lodgers and some of those lodgers were celebrities in the entertainment world, such as Charlie Chaplin who lodge at 24 Joy Street when he was in Belfast in 1906 and 1907, other stars in the entertainment world to stay at Joy Street included G.H.Elliott, Dan Leno, Eugan Stratton and Vesta Tilley when they played at the Grand Opera House, Empire and Alhambra Theatres.

The Empire is now Iceland store and the Alhambra is now the British Home Stores, as the years passed the wealthier class of people tend to move to the suburb built on higher ground, the larger houses they vacated in Joy Street were well suited for use as respectable boarding houses.

After the foundation of the Queens College in 1849 this area became a favourite

Until the 1960s there was almost full employment in the area, you could always find something if you really wanted to work for a day or two at Inglis Bakery, the Abattor, Hide and Skin Store outdoor vegetable Market or Allams cattle market.

A drover was a common enough occupation when livestock sale market littered the area after the farmers had sold their animals, it was the drovers job to herd the cows to the abattoir or to the quay for shipping to England.

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tend to move to the suburb built on higher ground, the larger houses they vacated in Joy Street were well suited for use as respectable boarding houses, after the foundation of the Queens College in 1849 this area became a favourit place for Students to Lodge and after a few years they moved closer to the College (Queens University) as the Univerisity Road, Ormeau Road and surrounding areas developed in the 1850s 60s and 70s . The present day students still Lodge or have flats in the Holyland, University Road area , at one time the residents from the Markets Area attended the students sports meetings and cycling races, they cheered on the riders of John Dunlop.

It was around the Streets of the Markets that the whole development of the new Pheumatic tyres belonging to John Dunlop took place, John Dunlop was a veterinary surgon who had premises inGlouchester Street and Little May Street, he was a well known and popular person in the area.

In the 1964 Belfast Street Directory there were 13 different business premises in Joy Street, they rangeed from Tyre Depot, Corner Shop, Self Drive Car Hire Coach Trimmer, Upholisterers, Line Manufactures, Wholesale Electrical Contractor, A Bleach Linen Co and two Bars,the Joy Arms and the Grand Bar.

It was in 1982 when the Housing Excuitive bricked up the Grand Bar, it was like other bars within the Markets Area , they were not just watering holes, they were a vital part of the Community life, people would have met to have a chat, socialise, celebrate and drown their sorrows. The Grand Bar had a special box for the women to drink in and for privacy.

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ALFRED STREET,

It was developed during the latter part of the 19th century on the Mc Cleans fields, so called because the Mc Clean family owned a group of houses in Donegall Square South with land beyond Chaplefields which was a favoured of circuses and Ma Copleys boxing booth and side shows.

Ma Copley would have paid young fellas a few shillings to fight each other with the winner getting five shillings, one of the boxers who fought on Ma Copleys boxing bill at Chaplefields was " Bunty " his real name was Edward Doman, it was his professional fight, he knocked out a boy called 2 Young Row " in two rounds.

Bunty boxed for the Newsboys Boxing Club as a amateur and after turing Professionl he fought on many of the Boxing Bills for Ma Copley at Chaplefields.

Chaplefields was facing St Malachys Church, it ran from Alfred Street up Clarence Strees to Adelaide Street towards Ormeau Ave.

Alfred Street Presbyterian Church was at no 9, it opened in 1837, the Church replaced an earlier building of 1822 in Alfred Place which was taken over by two other congregations who eventually set up their own church elsewhere. The first Minister of both the original and the new Alfred Street Church was the Rev Dr John Edgar, he was a leading temperance reformer.

He began his drive for temperance in 1829 when he opened his parlour window and poured out the remaining part of a gallon of old malt whiskey purchased for family

comsumption. In 1872 the congregation moved to Fitzory Avenue and the Church in Alfred Street was sold, it was used for light industrial purposes before demolition.

(see appendix 7)

CHAPTER 5

" INTERVIEWS WITH SOME OF THE COMMUNITY,

The felling of the Community is very strong, many of the families have lived in the area for three or more generations, families like the Mudock, O Kanes, Raffertys, Ross, Bassetts and Donnelly but a few , there are families who have had stalls within St Georges Market for 50 years. St Georges Market is an important meeting place for the local people from the area it gives them the opportunity to meet old friends who used to live in the area and have a chat about the old times.

The area takes its name from the livestock, fish, fruit, cattle and variety markets which used to be the centre of activity during the week long since gone, they had served for many years to bring in trade and custormers alike and helping to prosper and grow.

One man who had vived memoirs of the old vegetable market was Paddy Mc Keown, he said it was a time of tension and during the parsing of the Home Rule Bill when the Ulster Volunteer Force used to do their drill in the old vegetable market in Oxford Street with their wooden refles. The Waterfront and the Hilton and B.T. buildings are built on the vegetable market site.

TOMMY,

AGE 70 plus

MARRIED WITH CHILDERN

ADDRESS CROMAC STRET.

Tommy was a business man who had a Bookmakers shop in Cromac Street and remembers some of the characters of the area, he went on to tell me about Barnie Ross who was a scrap dealer and a rag and bone merchant, men used to come to him with prams filled with rags or scrap. (see appendix 15).
Years ago most of the business community that lived and worked in the area,kept horses, butchers, bakers and delivery men all stabled their horses in the Markets, Tommy told me that there was always people interest in trotting ponies and racing wipts, the Morrison family were another family interested in wipit racing and when the grey hounds took over from the wipits the Morrison started racing greyhounds.

Another Markets tradition which almost disappeared was boxing, The St Georges Boxing Club founded in 1929 and named after St Georges Market, it was known as " The Cradle Of Champions " it rocked the amateur boxing world for over 50 years the Boxing Club produced some very good boxers in Barnie Ross, Paddy Graham, and Willie Rea but to name a few.

The Markets is known for the tough people who would fight with anyone, people like Silver Mc Kee and Andy Ireland who spent more time in jail than he did out.

When Andy Ireland wanted to go into jail for a rest he used to break shop windows, it took nine policemen to hold him down.

Tommy remembers the time when people went to the abottoir at Stewart Street to get sheeps blood to drink, it was a great cure, I myself took a drink of it and it has done me no harm, people would come from different parts of Belfast to bring their children who had whooping cough to the Gasworks to breath in the fumes from an exhaust pipe in the wall, people swore it did the child good.

There was a saying in the district " We were poor but not hungry " I did not belive in it I was poor and hungry , people would go to the pawn shop to pawn their clothes and other goods.

The Markets to day is not the same, most of the character and traditions have gone since the redevelopment, I don't know some of the street names the new houses are a lot better but lack the community spirted and closeness. The heart of the Community has gone. " The Markets is just one big housing estate.

(se appendix 16) .

MICHAEL , AGE 30 PLUS

LIVED IN FRIENDLY STREET

NOT MARRIED.

Michael lived in New Bond Street with his parents and brothers he says that he felf happy living there, like other young people we used to run about the streest and were like one big happy family,it give me a sence of security and there were willing to help each other out even though they hadn't much to give, they were good neighbours and friends.

From New Bons Street we moved to Friendly Street, it was a change from the old houses and it took us a while to settle into it. The redevelopment opened a new door to vandalism in the area,the young people now days see things being pulled down around them and have no respect for property or their homes.

Some of the young people when they get older will become vandals and get into trouble. I don't like the new houses, the atmosphere and the people have changed and this has an affected on the community.

EAMON AGE 40 PLUS

MARRIED

LIVES IN FRIENDLY STREET

Eamon lived at Verner Street with his parents, sisters and brothers, it was a two bedroom house with outside toilets. I feel that the Markets to day has lost both its character and self pride and feel that the atmosphere which excisted during my childhood give me a sense of security and friendliness within the community, that is missing now.

The Markets of years ago provided for every needs of the residents, work was stable due to many businesses being based in the area like Inglis Bakery, Fruit and Vegetable Markets, the Abattoir and the Cattle Markets, all these employed a lot of people of all ages from the area.

The district had virtually a Bar on every street corner and I used to go in and out of them looking for my uncles to ask them for some money.

Eamon finds that the redevelopment has brought obvious benefits,the houses are more comfortable, families enjoy the convenience of indoor toilets, hot and cold

water,gardens and more open space for the children to play. The troubles had a big influence on life in this area, there has been and is still a lot of paramilitary involvement which has led to people being more suspicious, less trusting of been their neighbours.

This has effected the family spirt that used to exist in the area and everyone knew everyone and friendliness of the people helped from the character of the Markets has gone.

FRANK, AGE 40 PLUS,

LIVED IN ELIZA STRET TERRACE

MARRIED WITH CHILDREN.

Frank lived with his Mother and Father and family in a two bedroom house without toilets, kitchen and living room in Bond Street.

Our house like the rest of the houses in Bond Street were over 100 years old and there were two families living in these small houses, both had a rent book and shared the one toilet and working kitchen.

The redevelopment in the area will do the people a lot of good and will make life more comfortable for the older people, the future of the area will gradually inprove because of the new industrial site at Raphael Street, the development of the Gasworks and the Laganside Development it will give employment to some of the local people.

Unemployment is high in the area but I am hopeful of our young people getting a job in the near future, I feel there is a lack of social facilities for the young people, most of them would go outside the area for their entertainment like going to North and West Belfast. There are young people who would spend their time hanging about street corners they are regarded as trouble makers.

TRANSCRIPTION AND SUMMARY OF A RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH MARY MORRIS AND JEAN ROONEY, MARKETS RESIDENTS, ON WEDNESDAY 20TH MAY 1992 CONDUCTED AS PART OF THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

Okay what is today's date do any of you know

I think that it is the 20th , near the end of the month,

I would say about the 20th.

Aye that's right, about the twentieth.

So, Introduce yourselves. Who are you?

I'm Jean Rooney

I'm Mary Morris.

Okay, so we have Jean Rooney and Mary Morris, being interviewed, two Markets residents So to start with we are going to have Mary singing us a little song about the Markets.

What are you talking about, I don't know any songs about the Markets.

Sure, you were singing one earlier on.

What was that?

The one about Joe McNally.

Oh Jaysus, Joe McNally.

What else will I sing?

Do you know any street songs? What did you used to sing as a small girl.

Oh aye. We sung anything. All the skipping songs. What is this it was? "Up the long leather, down the short row, etc." What is that next one...'Lady in the kitchen, doing a bit a stitchin, in came a bogey man and she ran out, and she ran out".

My mind's blank

So did you play any street games or anything like that?

Oh yes, We played marleys, you played ciggys on the window sills, blowies and marleys

What was marleys?

Wee round balls.

You put the ciggies on the windows. You got the ciggies in the cigarette packets. You see, and you put them on the window sill and you blew them, and if they turned over you had to give it to the one beside you or something.

They were just cards and sometimes they had film stars on them or photos on them. I used to save them up and we had loads and loads of them. I went out with a fella one time and he used to save them up for me too. They came in cigarette packets.

We used to play hopscotch. On the tiles and you used to jump into these squares. You played rounders. And hide and go seek and knocking peoples doors. You used to tie a string to the peoples door knocker and go away a bit and they used to come out and wonder who knocked the door. The times now are not the same. The childers not the same and we done with less money. All we got was five pence or a penny and now they're looking pounds to go here and there. They are terrible. Even now at Christmas what they get is near a hundred pounds, whereas what we got was something in Woolworths where nothing was over sixpence. Everything was sixpence and a wee doll and all that. Now its hundreds of pounds they're spending on their children. I used to go down to Joe Donnelys and they sold bread and the wee baps were only five pence. Now they're forty pence and more. And we used to sing, "Barney Hughes bread, it sticks to your belly like lead, not a bit of wonder, Barney's blunder, Barney Hughes bread" We all run for baps in the morning when they were five pence.

I went out every night in life. When we were children, we went out round Shaw's Bridge and the Lagan Towpath. We went round there with the pram with maybe three stuck in it, and seven of a family. (Mary Morris) And you see now, they wouldn't even take their children to the park now. I wanted even to bring the grandchildren to the park, but the daughter said, "Granny, do you want the child killed" Says I, do you think I'm dotin', you think I'm stupid. Sure you should have heard you crying and what I had to listen to when you were in the pram. I mind when we were up walking, I used to have to stick the dummy in your mouth, you were cryin' that much. But now you won't let me take your child, you think I wasn't wise. We used to go to Shaw's Bridge and Bellevue and Helens Bay. We went to Helens Bay on the train, Crawfordsburn and Bellevue in the bus.

Where did you both live. I will ask you separately a little about your own lives. So Mary what street were you born in?

I was born in Welsh Street in 1916.

So what is you first memory?

I loved taking my children out everywhere.

And Before you were married?

I used to go to the Plaza when I was a young girl. The Plaza was a quare place then. They used to come in their big long dresses in taxis. I met my doom (her husband) there and he shouted after my chum that was with me. Hey Maggie, come here I want you and Maggie came up to him. And he said he wanted me to go out with him the following night. And that's where I met my doom. He was a 'cowboy', working in Callaghans' cattle yard in Oxford Street. There was four generations of the family who worked in Callaghans'. Great men for cattle, they were from Tyrone. He was a cowboy.

So Mary, what kind of house were you born in?

I was born in a wee house with one room and a kitchen. We had no scullery, I had to make a

temporary scullery out of our yard. I had to get it boarded over. We had a bed settee down the stairs and the three lads lay in that one. The other four they lay upstairs, the wee girls; and me and him in the other bed. In one room, I reared them all.

What about yourself Jean. What kind of house were you born in and where was it?

A wee small house over here in Catherine Street. It's still there but its new houses now. My mother only had one room in the house. I was born in the house and I am now living in a house where I can look down into my birthplace.

Are there any of the old houses left in the Markets?

No. No old houses, they're all away.

How do you feel about that?

To tell you the truth, the atmosphere and all is different. You know, the people was different. And when we moved over the street at one time and if you only said you had a headache, the whole street would have been over and we were in and out of each others houses. It was almost a family thing, although we were all strangers to each other.

And that is all away now?

Oh, for goodness sake, I live over there in a flat and I am sitting like Benny Hill some day because there is nobody comes near you.

There was two died in our street one day and not wan knew they were dead. Nobody told us because not one comes near you.

So, did either of you ladies work. Mary?

I worked sixteen years at home help at five shillings a week and now they're getting three pounds fifty an hour and I was getting only five shillings. After the home help, I did lollipop woman for seven years over there in Cromac Street, and I might have at one time went up and cleaned someones' house for seven shillings.

What did your husband do?

I told you, he was a cowboy in Callaghans' Cattle Yard. They were all cattle men.

Mary, do you remember what your mother did?

My mother just looked after the family. She might have gone out and washed for people or went out and cleaned a wee chapel, her and some other women. She got about five shillings a week for all the washing she done.

That was five shillings a week?

Aye, they brought all their washing across for the week and she would wash them, boil them and bleach them and send them back.

And what about your father Mary?

He worked in Inglis' Bakery.

And what position did he hold there?

He was just a labourer. He worked in the Soda Farl room. He worked there, that's what they called it.

Jean, do you remember what your mother did?

Yes, my mother worked in a mineral water store down in Eliza Street. It was called Wheelers mineral water store. And she was forewoman in it and she used to get all the wee fellas and wee girls jobs in the store you see. My father died whenever I was only four. He was at the war. What other occupation he had, I didn't know that. When he came home and saw that my mother had a wee girl, you see the rest were boys, he was delighted. And oh, what he wasn't going to do for me when I grew up. But here he was coming home on leave one day and he was getting off the train. And there was a piece of metal sticking out and it struck him on the lung, and he took pneumonia and he died when he was home on leave. And my mother was left with seven of us to rear. She kept on working in the mineral store. She used to have to throw the mineral cases seven and eight high up. And when she came in at night, her hands were so cold from the mineral that she wouldn't even have been able to cut the bread.

What did you do yourself Jean?

I was thirty-three years in the one firm. I was shirt maker in Hague's in Bedford Street. My aunt before me, she was fifty-seven years in it. In the same place, we had over a hundred years between us. So Hague's had to close down you see. All the hankie and shirt factories around St Malachy's closed down. You would have seen all the people coming over the bridge, hundreds of them, to work in the shirt and linen factories around the middle of the town. I worked for seven shillings a week, catching hankies coming out of the mangle. Then I went on and learned on the machine to sew hankies.

Did you enjoy this work, or was it hard and tough?

The first day I started in it. My aunt got me started in it. And that first day I came home, my mother said to me, 'How did you get on?' And I said, "I'm not going back there, there's nothing but oul maids in it!". And I ended up an ould maid myself.

So you never married Jean?

No, I never married.

Did you ever meet a man who you might have married?

Oh aye, I had two or three offers and I never took any of them. I had to look after my mother you see. When the factory closed down, they tried to do me out of my redundancy and the fella came up and told me, bad news, 'You're not getting your redundancy" And I says "What?" And he says I was not getting it and I was the only one. "Because you've lost time in here by going to America two or three times". I tried to explain to him that I only went to America to see my two brothers, with my mother not able to go. They both died over there. And he just said that I wasn't getting it. I asked him who to go and see. I went down to Corporation Street and told them that I was entitled to it for working so many years. The girl there told me that it was in black and white that I wasn't getting the redundancy. So she gave me a form to fill in, and I gave it back to her to fill in. The rest of the workers all got theirs immediately but I didn't get mine until nearly a year later. But I tell you, I had to fight for it. And even the manager was pleased for me when I got it.

So how long did you spend in America?

The first time I went I spent five months, and the second time I went for three months. The last time I was there for only a few weeks.

So you were there for thirty three years and they were going to take your redundancy off you. Did you get leave to go to America?

Oh yes!

And they never said to you that this might affect your redundancy?

No, but sure Mr. Boyd said to some of the girls that I was the one that would deserve it the most. If my mother said she had only a headache, I would not have went to work. He said I was worth my weight in gold.

Mary Morris: I worked for seven years on the lollipop. I was getting old, about sixty five say and I had trouble getting my pension.

Jean: The few months I was in America they deducted it from my redundancy. I wouldn't let them away with it for all I got. I just got two or three hundred.

Mary, did you have any relatives in America?

I have a brother is a priest in America. He might be coming home on a holiday and it would be good to see him.

Lets talk about school. Where did you go to school Mary?

May Street School. School? I hated school and I was a dunce anyway. All my family were good writers and spellers, but you see if I had to write a letter, I had to write it a hundred times before I got it right.

So what age did you leave school Mary?

Fourteen. That was the normal age. I started in the Warehouse. For seven shillings a week. You worked Saturday and all. You never got Saturday then.

What about you Jean, where did you go to school?

I went to the Convent in Sussex Place. I hated it and it was a crying match every morning to make me go. I left school at fourteen too. It was the happiest day of my life! I was taught by nuns and it was terrible. They were very cross. They would have slapped you. They cut the legs off me one day standing over the sink getting a drink of water. They told me that if I didn't get my clothes lengthened, they were going to pin a bit of paper around it the next day I came in.

So you were showing a bit of leg then??

But my mother always kept long stockings on me. I was just leaning over the top and this nun came along and skilped the legs off me. She gave me an awful hiding!

Mary: Every Tuesday, about seven or half six in the morning, I lived in Welsh Street and Robinsons was down at the bottom of the street. Robinsons, cattle yard and Hide and Skin Store. They had two hides hanging outside to dry. Any stranger coming along that street would have had

to hold their nose, the smell of it. We were all used to the stink of the hides. All the cattle went there and all you heard was moo!. And all the big cattle motors lined along our street and you wouldn't have got a dry part, cow clap all over the place. They left it too late, when they were all going they started to wash the street when they were leaving. But never mind this, they said in Purdysburn that it was the most healthiest district in Belfast. There were not may children with Scarlet Fever out of the Markets.

Now, somebody described the Markets as dirty?

It got its name from the low Market. There was always less trouble here.

Somebody described it as the city of seven smells.

Oh aye, you had the cattle yards and the hides and skins and that was a smell. All the hides of the cattle that were killed were skinned. And the slaughterhouse where the cows were brought and killed, that was another smell.

Jean: We used to get milk from the cows when they were milking them before they were killed.

We were very poor, we went to the old gasworks for some coke. We got our coke in the gasworks. And we had the black soap for washing our hair. And when you had the whooping cough, the gasworks was a cure. That's a cure for the whooping cough for childer. The gasworks was another smell.

But it was the hide and skin that was the worst smell, in Eliza Street. It never annoyed us, but any stranger come in and smelt it, they near went mad with the smell of it.

The cow clap smelt awful too.

So, did you never think of going and cleaning up this cow clap, or did you just wade through it?

Men came along and cleaned it up with a big lorry with a watering can. And all the children run after it and had fun.

How long did you live in the kitchen house Mary?

All my day. I'm twelve years out of it now into the new house. All the people are less friendly now. All the neighbours used to sit out in the street and have a great time.

And do you think this is because people are afraid now?

Not at all! It's all grandeur and style now, and they wouldn't let you into their houses now. Its style and gallantry. That's all they think of their houses.

Jean when did you move from your old house?

I moved from Russell Street and came round here into a chalet and lived there for three years. It was a mobile home when they were building their new houses. It was lovely and comfortable.

There was a boy who sang 'I wouln't leave my little wooden hut for all the tea in China', but all the people lived in these wee chalets until they built houses for them.

So they moved you out of the old houses because they were in bad condition?

Aye my house, must have been over a hundred years old. But sure the new houses, some of them are condemned. And they will not even fix it properly, the Housing Executive .

Would the neighbours repair your house now?

Not at all. Only the boys from the Housing Executive and they never do it properly or on time! You know we wouldn't even have a fence around our gardens but Inglis' windows. The wire on the windows was used to separate the gardens. That's the kind of gardens you have.

So just to finish off, do you prefer the way you live now, or do you prefer the way you used to live years ago?

Oh years ago!

Why?

Young ones now, its terrible. They've nowhere to go. They've no life or nowhere to go, like a wee dance hall for the wee ones or nothing. The centre doesn' open every night now. There's nothing round here and if they go out of their own district they get into trouble. Look at them shooting the fellas up the Ormeau Road. They knew where they were coming from and they shot them. And the bookies, they shot them people too. You're afraid of letting your wee lad going out at all and you're wondering where they are.

Sure, years ago its far better than it is now. Really and truly, I've no life at all. Your'e afraid to go out. I used to go to the pictures and all, but I will not go anymore in case I don't get home again. And sure even now its two or three pounds to get in. Its too expensive. You used to go to the Alhambra and get in for 5 pence.

Do you enjoy getting out to the community centre?

Oh God Aye (in unison)

Sure it's great!

And we go over to St Malachy's hall and we play bingo and its great fun.

Would you have said the entertainment in the past was better?

Oh, I don't know.

I think now that just about sums everything up and I wish you all the best.

Sure its sad now too, all the old people are dead. They are all dying off and you don't have the same character as you used to have.

Mary Morris sings "Are you Lonesome Tonight

BELFAST'S ELIZA STREET

RESEARCH SOURCES - A SCHOLAR'S PERSPECTIVE

by Sean McCartan

Introduction

From the mid-nineteenth century, Eliza Street was a hive of activity. Its history and development coincided with that of Belfast. Its location, stretching from Cromac Street to the River Lagan, was central to the pulsating markets area.

In 1821 the population of Belfast was 37,117; in 1841 it was 75,308; and in 1861 it was 120,777. Just twenty years later there was a gain of more than 87,000. Eliza Street was first mentioned in the Belfast Street directory in 1836. As Belfast expanded it became surrounded with small industries and markets. Within a stone's throw of Eliza Street was Belfast abattoir, May's farm produce market, Oxford Street fish market, St George's general market, the variety market, the gasworks, the cross-channel boats, the navigable River Lagan, Telephone House, Belfast tramway, and a railway terminus. Eliza Street's location influenced both its development and also the occupations of its many residents. In consequence this street played a central role in the everyday life of Belfast for over 100 years.

In this essay I will suggest a path which will provide guidance to researching Cromas Street's past, which is now history to the new generation. Recent redevelopment has removed the street's memoirs of a city's past. Now it is left to researchers to preserve this important phase in Belfast's history. The best place to commence a research study of the area is with maps.

Maps

In the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI), Balmoral Avenue, there is a map of Belfast, dated 1818 (T/1556). This shows the markets area pre being built up. At the same location there is the first Ordnance Survey map of Belfast, dated 1838 (T/1541/10). Another interesting map was produced in 1846 (T/1541/14). This is the first street map of Belfast. The latter two maps display Eliza Street in its infancy. Just four houses are recorded with a large vacant area towards the River Lagan. Ever since Ordnance Survey maps have been updated at regular intervals and through them an accurate record of expansion, down the years can be made. Best archives for maps are, PRONI, Ordnance Survey Office, Linen Hall Library and Central Library. Whenever maps have been scrutinised, I would suggest visits to libraries in search of information on

local history.

Libraries

Local History

All libraries have a section devoted to local history. There you will find a valuable source in local history publications. In recent years local history societies have increased in number. Usually their publications contain information on local characters, historical events, folklore and anything else in relation to the local community. Importantly these articles are usually written by members of the local community who are approachable for further information. Always tell the librarian the purpose of your visit and ask for advice. This should get the project off the ground.

Autobiographies

Ask the librarian for names of local-established authors. Some of their works could be autobiographical and include useful information on the area and its people.

Special Collections

The Linen Hall Library has a special department devoted to the 'troubles'. Publications, newspaper cuttings and posters of every description have been archived and are available to researchers. Information on events in the markets area from the start of the troubles can be found here. Other interesting books and collections can be found in the Irish section of both the Linen Hall Library and the Central Library. The Francis Bigger collection, in the latter, has many interesting books on Belfast.

Church Histories

Not only do they relate parochial matters, they often are a valuable source for local history.

Street Directories

This source is most likely to be productive and yet easily accessed. Dating from 1809, street directories, are available with open access in PRONI and the Linen Hall Library. They give names of streets, names and employment of occupiers, and local industries. The 1831 directory does not mention Eliza Street whereas in the 1849 Henderson's directory its rapid growth is revealed. Also various trades are mentioned: sawyer, dressmaker, builder, carpenter, carriage manufacturer, bootmaker, painter, coachman, publican, and gasfitter. To quench their thirst, Cromac Street had 12 public houses. the urbanisation of Belfast triggered a boost in population and trade in this area.

The 1852 directory gives details of further expansion, with more small industries such as manufacturing of agricultural implements, bobbin manufacturers, a flax mill, an iron works and a silk manufacturer. Street directories have been published annually. In general, their contents are sure to give leads for further research.

Schools

The street directory of 1863 gives Eliza Street National School at number 38. After 1900 the directories refer to this school as Saint Coleman's and mentions the name of the principal. Both the male and female school registers are available in PRONI. They give each pupil's date of commencement, age, address, father's occupation, previous school, results of tests and date of leaving. Attached inspector's reports are also worthy of perusal. School records can be a vital source for genealogical and historical research. Through them, information on the formative years of residents can be found.

Church Registers

The two main parish churches in the markets area are St Malachy's in Alfred Street (Catholic) and May Street (Presbyterian). Parish registers for both can be accessed in PRONI, giving baptismal and marriage records. This is also a great source for genealogy and historical research.

Census Records

The first properly organised census in Ireland was in 1821. Since then a census has been taken every ten years. The returns for Eliza Street area between 1841and 1891 were destroyed. However the census for 1901 is available on microfilm in PRONI. The 1911 census is available in the National Archives, Bishop St, Dublin. Both of these give useful information on residents: their names, relation to the head of the house, religion, literacy, occupation, age, marital status, county of birth, and ability to speak English or Irish. Census records give comprehensive information on Eliza Street from 1900.

Registry of Deeds

Pre-1929 memorials of deeds are available in PRONI. More recent memorials can be found in the government registry of deeds office in Great Victoria Street. The procedure to research this archive is straight forward. Just fill in a form with the property address and an assistant will bring a book with its record. Copy deeds can be provided for a small fee. Ownership of properties in Eliza Street can be established through this source.

Valuation Records

Through valuation records it is also possible to ascertain ownership of lands and dwellings. The early valuations give only a few names. Then between 1848 and 1864 the primary valuation of Ireland commenced, which became known as Griffith's valuation. Records were arranged by counties and within counties by the Poor Law Union Divisions. Within Unions the divisions are by parish. In Griffith's valauation there is a record of every household in Ireland giving name of occupier, name of owner, description of the property, acreage and valuation. Griffith's valuation is available in manuscript form in PRONI. Also, bound and printed editions are available on the shelves of the public search room. The maps that accompanied this valuation are also available. After 1864 properties were valued annually. These annual revision lists can also be researched in PRONI. A catalogue list of the series is listed under VAL.

Business Records

Several factories, bakeries and other industries were located in Eliza Street and adjacent thoroughfares. At least one of them, Inglis's bakery have records deposited in PRONI. To find what is available, one should look at the subject index books. In these volumes, subjects of every description are listed in alphabetical order. Inglis's was by far the largest employer in the area with a workforce exceeding 1,000 at times.

Wills and Testamentary Records

In most cases wills provide important and interesting information about people and locations. Not only will you find the name, address and occupation of the testator but also names of other members of the family. Many also include the addresses and occupations of the beneficiaries, witnesses and executors. PRONI has in its custody all probated wills for Northern Ireland 1900-1995. If a person did not make a will there may be letters of administration that could be equally useful. There are bound indices to the wills covering the years 1858 - 1986 on the shelves in PRONI. Most pre 1900 wills were destroyed in Dublin in 1922. Luckily the local registries had copies of most of them. Information on some of Eliza Street's deceased residents can be found in these wills.

Court Records and Legal Documents

Unfortunately much of this type of information is not available for public inspection. PRONI has Belfast court records starting from 1890. A thirty-year rule on access applies at present. Also all sensitive cases are withheld. The Courts Record Office is devoted to recording the whereabouts of files related to all court cases. Through a solicitor you can apply to discover the location of a particular file.

Some solicitors have deposited legal documents of historical interest in PRONI. These can be searched through the subject or name indices.

Belfast Corporation Records

Belfast Corporation is responsible for the development and running of the city. Some years ago the city's fathers appointed an archivist to catalogue and preserve their records. Now they are all deposited in PRONI. They are listed as follows:

Health and welfare records.

These give information on epidemics, such as cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis. All of these caused deaths in the markets area during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Housing standards improvements

From 1878 all new houses in Belfast were required to have access from the rear. This greatly influenced the design of many houses. Good examples of this policy were to be found towards the lower end of Eliza Street.

Public baths and wash-houses

Most houses had no bathrooms. From 1880 the Corporation provided public baths and wash-houses throughout the city. One of them was in Ormeau Avenue, which was most convenient for Eliza Street residents.

Rubbish Collection

Since 1845 the Corporation had responsibility for street cleansing and disposal of household waste and rubbish. Eliza Street in its hey-day would have kept employees busy.

Social Services

After the Second World War the Corporation took responsibility for a wide range of services including residential homes for orphans, industrial schools and residential institutions for the elderly. Many from the markets area were accommodated in these institutions.

Public Parks

A public park Act was passed in 1869 and Belfast benefited with ten parks. The largest of these inside the city boundary was the Ormeau Park. As the crow flies it is just a few hundred meters from Eliza Street, but separated by a broad expanse of the River Lagan. Down through the years many of the locals are known to have swam across. This

resulted in several drownings.

Cemeteries

The corporation provided space for burials throughout the city. The City Cemetery was opened on the Whiterock Road in 1869. Dundonald cemetery was later in 1905 and Roselawn was recent, in 1954. Many Eliza Street residents were interred in these cemeteries but generally speaking those of the Catholic religion were interred in Milltown cemetery, which is owned by the diocese of Down and Connor.

Emergency Services

From 1893 the Corporation provided fire brigade and ambulance services.

Gas Works

Belfast has its first coal gas-works in 1821. Soon after the Corporation made efficient use of this supply. Included was street lighting and domestic use, both of which greatly helped the balance sheet.

Electric Lighting

The Corporation provided Belfast with its first domestic electric supply in 1895. The first recipient was a house on Balmoral Avenue.

Transport

An efficient transport supply is important. From 1872 a horse-tram system flowed past Eliza Street. Then came the electric trams in 1905, the trolley bus in 1930 and thereafter the petrol and diesel engines took over.

Markets and abattoirs

From 1847, the rights of the markets, previously owned by the Marquis of Donegall, became the responsibility of the Corporation. Their content should be a valuable source for economic historians and genealogists.

Education

From 1901 the Corporation was responsible for technical education. After 1923 the Education Act it also shouldered the responsibility for elementary education. Then in 1947 secondary education was added to their list. Eventually in 1973 all responsibility for education was transferred to the Education and Library Board.