



Remembering Dowra

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DOWRA IS the first village on the lordly Shannon, only a few miles from its source in the Cuilcagh Mountains. The village is divided by the bridge which spans the River with Co Leitrim on one side and Co Cavan on the other. The larger part is in Co Cavan, which is the parish of Doobally, while the other section is in the parish of Ballinaglera. The two counties intermingle throughout the surrounding area divided mostly by streams and the Owenanayle River, tributaries of the Shannon, which in turn flows into Lough Allen.

The first time any of us would have visited Dowra was to visit the doctor for our vaccinations at various times.

Gradually as we got older and more mobile we went with our mother or grandmother, to do some special errand or shopping. A trip to Dowra was not a spontaneous decision. It was something mentioned as necessary a few days previously.

The prevailing weather had a bearing on which route we took. If it was wet, it necessitated going around the road, a much longer way whereas in better weather we had a choice of taking short cuts. When we went those routes we often passed very close to peoples homes. Invariably the people of the house came out and asked us in for tea and a chat. I recall being particularly interested in the interiors of these houses as I had pre-conceived ideas from the outside.

My mother had limited time to spare but my grandmother could take the journey more leisurely. She had a friend who owned a pub there, but as it was usually a social visit, we

went into the kitchen.

There was always a cup of tea for her and I got a lemonade. No self-respecting woman would be seen going into a pub then. During our visit sometimes news was exchanged which was considered not for my hearing either because it was a bit lurid or something that should not be repeated. This was conversed about in whispered tones. What few people seem to realise is that whispers can be heard more easily than very low tones!

However this was a regular visit that I shall always remember my visit as the landlady was a rather colourful person and a great lady indeed. She was generally known by a nickname, as were most people in the area. She detested being called anything but her real name which my father always insisted we used. One day she said to me "Caddie, what is my name?" On cue, I replied correctly. My parents were commended on my rearing and I got a second lemonade that day.

On exiting from one of the short cuts there was a country pub where, as a special treat, my mother sometimes brought us for a cola. It was spic and span with a gleaming flag floor. I remember it was always a Cola we got there, an inky black cola, slightly lukewarm with a very frothy head. Delicious!

Depending on the main purpose of the journey the treat might have been attended to without delay or else we waited until the end of the trip so as not to have to carry heavy shopping around. Generally we walked back home, but sometimes we would get a lift in a passing horse and trap. Oh, the exhilaration of being transported along at a steady trot with

the wind on your face and the ability to see further afield than you could normally! We had a horse and trap at home but as the mare was considered frisky, it was only used when my father was there.

The Fair Day was truly a day when the village came alive. The women were there with the turkeys, chicks, laying hens, or geese, depending on the season.

The main business of buying and selling cattle was mostly done on the Fair Green. Towards evening cattle spilled on to the Main Street. What a din, lowing mingled with cackling and bleating, and what a mess too! The Drover was in existence in the very early days, bringing the purchases of the cattle dealers to the more fertile plains of the Midlands, or to the train in Carrick-on-Shannon for export.

There were stalls selling second hand clothes, tools and childrens novelties also a magicians stall and card tricks.

The deals that were struck there were truly a lesson in bargaining and tenacity. The traders never got the price they asked. Presumably they marked their wares accordingly as it was par for the course.

The fair was a great social occasion too, where people from neighbouring areas met. News was exchanged and its said that in earlier times matchmaking took place as well.

Dowra may be small but it is widely known. So many people seem to have some association with it. All agree it is a place where the people are most friendly and hospitable.