



# *Tidy Towns Tales*

*A Tidy*

*Collection*

*of*

*Poetry, Prose*

*& Photos*

*December 2021*





Welcome to our collection of poetry, prose and photographs that have been submitted during the last couple of years from members of the wide and growing TidyTowns family.

We hope you, the reader, find these enjoyable and through provoking and many will take you down memory lane. We thank those who took the time to put pen to paper, or to capture that moment in time in a picture and for sharing them with us all.

We wish you all the very best this Christmas and hope that 2022 will be a year of good health, good fortune and a time when we can all get back to normal. Best wishes from John, Helen & Anne in the TidyTowns unit in Ballina.

## Christmas in the Sixties

Denis Heffernan – Emly TidyTowns



Oh how I remember Christmas 1969 my mam had died on Christmas Day 1968. So a year later I was still very lonely and living on my own. The year had been okay I had got a job as a gardener in Kilfrush Estate, I had good wages and got on well and was looked after by Jack and Sally Barlow RIP, they treated me like their own son they had no family. When I told them I was going to England on holidays for Christmas they weren't happy, still I decided to go I was only 19 years of age and I had never been further than Knocklong.

A friend took me to Shannon airport the excitement was wonderful. The size of the airport was amazing or so I thought until I got to London. The crowds of people the moving stairs, the big buildings I was afraid of my life I would get lost. Then I saw my brother Ailbe with a big smile, he had lovely red hair groomed well with byrlcreem, and a smile that would charm the birds of a bush, he always wore a collar and tie, He died at the young age of 42 RIP. Anyway he whipped me off in a black taxi through the streets of London. The motorway and the sight of Christmas lights and decorations were overpowering this was the life to live. Back to his flat 4 blocks high I felt I could see the whole of London.

Ailbe's wife Pam and 3 children made me very welcome, the whole room was heated with the press of a button not like home, where we had more smoke than heat. The next 5 days, they took me to London and on the underground to Kew Gardens, Buckingham Palace, Oxford Street and Madame Tussaud's Museum where the statues were so real looking you would salute them. I kept my money in my top pocket of my shirt and I put a safety pin on it to make sure it stayed closed, I checked it often to make sure it was still there I always heard London was full of pick pockets. Then it was time to move on to my sister's home out in Surrey for the Christmas Holidays.

I got a coach from Chiswick Station, Pam made ham sandwiches for me to have on the journey. Every town and village was full of Christmas lights for the festive season. The public houses and the country side is a memory I will never forget. When I got to Camberley my stop was the Jolly Farmer, I sat up near the coach driver to make sure I wouldn't miss my stop. My 3 nephews met me, where they lived was a very big estate set in the middle of wonderful woodland, where you could walk for miles. My sister Bridie and her husband Battie had been in England for a very long time. Both have passed on now and are laid to rest in Emly and Abby graveyard Ballyorgan.

They made a big fuss of me while I was there. They had a lovely old record player so I played Jim Reeves Bridie Gallagher and Céilí music every time I was

indoors. Battie Hayes my brother-in-law was a very pleasant man with a great sense of humour, he liked his few pints of porter.

On Christmas Eve we were all up very early Battie said he would take me to the market in Aldershot about 20 miles away so off we went on the Coach. There was a light sprinkling of snow the night before so everywhere looks so Christmassy. The pine trees along road were tipped with snow and an east wind blowing a cold chill. When we got to the market place it was packed with people of all colour, I had never seen a coloured person in my life before.

My sister gave me money to bring back a chocolate log and to be home for our dinner by 4 o'clock. Battie said we would go to the Blue Kettle pub for one drink and then we would take a look around the market. Several hours later and many pints downed by Battie we were still in the Blue Kettle, myself drinking lemonade. Battie was worse for wear and it was getting dark. Anyway we left the pub and had to go and get the chocolate log. So we found a cake shop and the fattest man I had ever seen was inside the counter. He had a black moustache as big as a yard brush and a white hat on his head. What can I do for you my friend says he. Can I have a chocolate log says I. Well says he you are just lucky I have one left and says he you left it very late as you can see the shop is nearly empty. The log had a little Santa Clause and a bit of fresh holly, it looked lovely. He put it in a white cardboard box and tied it up with a tartan ribbon. Have a great Christmas he said as I paid him and the same to you sir I said. Battie then was bursting to go to the toilet I was frightened he was worse for wear and he laughing and cracking jokes. We finally got to the coach and headed home.

Well Bridie wasn't impressed when we got in, she said the dinner was gone for nothing, sure Battie just laughed and said give us a kiss. Bridie replied I will give you the saucepan down on your head keeping my poor brother out in that cold all day long. Well Bridie said she would make some ham sandwiches for us, even though she said the ham was still hot, well we ate them down sweetly. Battie was coxing her to give us a bit of chocolate log well with reluctance she got out the bread knife and opened up the white box. She said it is a pity to cut it. Will you come with it says Battie or it will be the New Year. Well she stuck the knife in the log and what do you think, it was a log alright, a log of wood, well my sister was in a right fodder, Battie just sat back and laughed and fell asleep.

I gave them a present of a hedgehog clothes brush that Christmas, it was still there many years later on the sideboard, small things often meant more than we think. We had a great Christmas and indeed I went back many more times after that. But the memory of 1969 is still very precious to me. I suppose Christmas has changed since then. Nowadays the whole meaning of Christmas is sometimes lost in the hustle and bustle of the modern world.

# Inch Abbey - Mainistir na hInse

Mary Flynn – Adjudicator

## *Prologue*

Lauds breaks the morning air  
as I shuffle bare-sandaled  
along the stone-flagged cloister.  
I pull my cowl around my shoulder.  
I sense Lord Abbot's disapproval  
of my late arrival.  
The ebbing moon ponders my dilemma  
as stars contest the sunrise.

De Courcy's missal is not complete.  
I must make haste  
by Terce he will knock at Scriptorium door  
attended by his retinue.  
"What's happened Brother Conal?"  
The dye's run out; the day is dark  
the west wind rushes through lime-mortared walls  
my eyes tire and the vellum is ill-prepared  
under Patrick's eye.

## *Epilogue*

Another dawn, another bus.  
They troop through chapter house and cloister,  
sleep walking through Day Four  
of this all-Ireland journey.

The silence is broken by  
the clicking of a shutter.

What do they know of frozen mornings  
the whims of vellum, the foibles of quill  
of dark pre-dawn in tower and choir  
of ghosts that hover in nave and chancel?

Nor can they plumb the depths  
Of Golden Age and Dissolution.

Try they may, but Wikipedia nor tourist guide  
can re-engender the Pascal Alleluias  
on Easter morn - at Matins  
when earth's and heaven's antiphons rang out  
and awe-struck monks filed in to honour Him  
for whom they toiled and sang  
under Patrick's eye.





# Repair and Reuse

Ken Duffy – Swords TidyTowns

Did households recycle, yes they did  
It was normal, growing up as a kid  
No plastic bags, cluttering things up  
Nor a discarded takeaway, coffee cup

Bicycle wheels, they got used for a toy  
In Finglas West, where I grew as a boy  
Go carts were made, from an old pram  
Onto which, all your mates would cram

Socks weren't dumped, yer ma did darn  
Keep that door shut, you born in a barn  
If shoe was worn down, hole in the sole  
Cardboard we used, to plug up that hole

Hand me downs, from cousins and bro's  
Accepted gratefully, no stuck-up nose  
Torn trousers, got patched by your mum  
Her repairs saved the family, a tidy sum

Jumpers were unpicked, then knitted new  
Some garden plots, where vegetables grew  
For fresh eggs, a few chickens were kept  
Overcoats on beds, in winter as we slept

Yer ma cut your hair, be quiet don't sob  
Buttons were saved, for a future repair job  
Bath water we shared, to cut down on cost  
Skills now forgotten, to a generation lost

## Going for Gold!

Marion Rose Horgan – Cobh Tidy Towns

The Tidy Towns Team had a vision, a dream,  
To conquer the skies and win the big prize

A decade ago, we were quite low  
It's a hard place to start but twas done with a heart.

Twas steady, twas tough as we climbed our way up,  
And at times it was rough as we cleaned our town up.

This group was no quitter they tackled the litter  
And soon there were flowers hanging from bowers

The team made decisions with pride and with vision  
And a swarm of TTs were as busy as bees.

The buzz in our town began to abound  
And the medals arrived amid joy and deep pride

Cos this is a goal for body and soul  
So much to achieve when we start to believe.

It's more than just optics and image, and box ticks  
It's awareness, it's giving and a new way of living!

We are now on the breach, the goal's within reach  
It's a noble endeavour, we can do this together!

Let's squeeze the last drop and aim for the top  
With passion and zest let's give it our best

As we rise and we rise, towards the coveted prize,  
Let the next stage unfold, we're going for gold!

We recall this being recited at a TidyTowns event some years back and it is so fitting, in the current climate. The very talented Edgar Albert Guest penned the poem. It really captures the can-do approach, the determination and resilience of TidyTowns volunteers. Not just those who are dealing with the challenges we face with the pandemic, but all those volunteers who put their shoulder to the wheel over the past 64 years, many of whom are no longer with us. You should all take a moment to read it and think of all you and your previous members have achieved, and yes, perhaps at times, you or others might have thought, "it couldn't be done", but you went and done it.

### **It Couldn't Be Done**

Edgar Albert Guest - 1881-1959

**Somebody said that it couldn't be done,  
But he with a chuckle replied  
That "maybe it couldn't," but he would be one  
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried.  
So he buckled right in with the trace of a grin  
On his face. If he worried he hid it.  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.**

**Somebody scoffed: "Oh, you'll never do that;  
At least no one ever has done it";  
But he took off his coat and he took off his hat,  
And the first thing we knew he'd begun it.  
With a lift of his chin and a bit of a grin,  
Without any doubting or quiddit,  
He started to sing as he tackled the thing  
That couldn't be done, and he did it.**

**There are thousands to tell you it cannot be done,  
There are thousands to prophesy failure;  
There are thousands to point out to you one by one,  
The dangers that wait to assail you.  
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,  
Just take off your coat and go to it;  
Just start in to sing as you tackle the thing  
That "cannot be done," and you'll do it.**



## **It was the night before Christmas**

Denis Heffernan - Emly TidyTowns

Kate Flannery was busy doing the last preparations for the great day. She had spent the afternoon touching up the whitewash walls outside the front door of their thatched house.

Jimmy her husband, she had sent to town in the evening to collect the goose, 2 black puddings and 1lb of sausages for the breakfast on Christmas day. The smoke was billowing from the turf fire as Kate fussed about thinking everything would be right for the dinner on Christmas Day. With her hands on her hips she counted the special willow pattern plates on the dresser. She only took them down for Christmas and with six children she was wondering if the plates would be safer left on the dresser.

Still it was Christmas and it was a very special time of year. The plates were there since her grandmother's time. Jimmy her husband had married in to the small farm but Kate always held the reigns, mind you Jimmy wasn't the brightest spark, still he was able to father six children, 2 girls and 4 boys. Kate had hushed them all of to bed before 9.30, after all Santa clause could come any time after the dark.

Rosie wanted a doll with blonde hair, Jimmy who was six years wanted a mouth organ, Nellie wanted bubbles to make magic balloons, Paddy wanted a Beno comic, Mick a Ludo game and Henry a new school bag. Kate looked at the clock on the dresser 10.30 no sign of Jimmy she would brain him with the poker when he came home.

As the clock stroke 11 she heard the latch lifting on the door and in wobbled Jimmy with a red face and his britches falling down over his wellingtons, I am home Kate said he, I am as drunk as a lord. Don't you be taking the Lords name in vein says Kate and she blessing herself, she was on fire, I will finish you off for once and for all with this poker.

With all the noise and commotion hadn't Santa came and left all the presents in the porch. Jimmy sat in the big old bedsit under the hob and fell fast asleep, Just as well he sat so near the chimney because with the wind coming out his mouth and coming out somewhere else every time he moved. Kate finally woke him and got him to bed at 1.30. All of a sudden she thought of the goose, the pudding and the sausages they were nowhere to be seen, well she fussed about and couldn't lay an eye on them.

Then she suddenly went to the front door and opened it she gasped at what she saw, Jimmy's Raleigh bike knocked over and the canvas message bag blown around with a small bit of brown paper, no sign of the goose, pudding or sausages. Kate looked at the stars in the night sky and prayed for God to give her patience. From the distance she heard the howling of a fox, Kate said to herself may the harm of the year go with the blasted goose, the sausages and puddings. She went inside and makes herself a cup of tea very soon it will be Christmas day.



## The Litter Slob

Ken Duffy – Swords TidyTowns

Have you seen the litter, left by litter slobs  
No respect for others, environmental jobs  
Baskets hanging, with a multitude of colour  
Planters on streets, they couldn't be fuller

Countrywide, Tidy towns do what they can  
Out in all weather, are this volunteer clan  
In Hi-Vis, they seep, crop and clean  
In towns and villages, efforts can be seen

Asking for nothing, they toll each day  
Picking up rubbish, keeping weeds at bay  
Graffiti nationwide, has gotten out of hand  
Adds to the workload, of this working band

Never losing heart, continuing with a smile  
No matter how high, our rubbish does pile  
If you see them out, say doing a great job  
Good luck in the battle, against the litter slob





## Be a Litter Quitter

by John

When you feel inclined to litter  
Resist the urge and be a quitter  
I hope you listen to this poem  
Bag it up and take it home

## The Dandelion

Anonymous

The sun danced along the blades of grass,  
Creating shadows on the mountainside.  
We walked the path and laughed  
Then spotted a glimpse of yellow  
Like hope bursting through the gloom

A single, solitary figure pushing forward  
Whilst the cobwebs dripped their dew  
Onto the mornings breath.  
Standing alone but happy;  
Proud to be noticed.



# The Village of Coon

Coon TidyTowns and Heritage Group

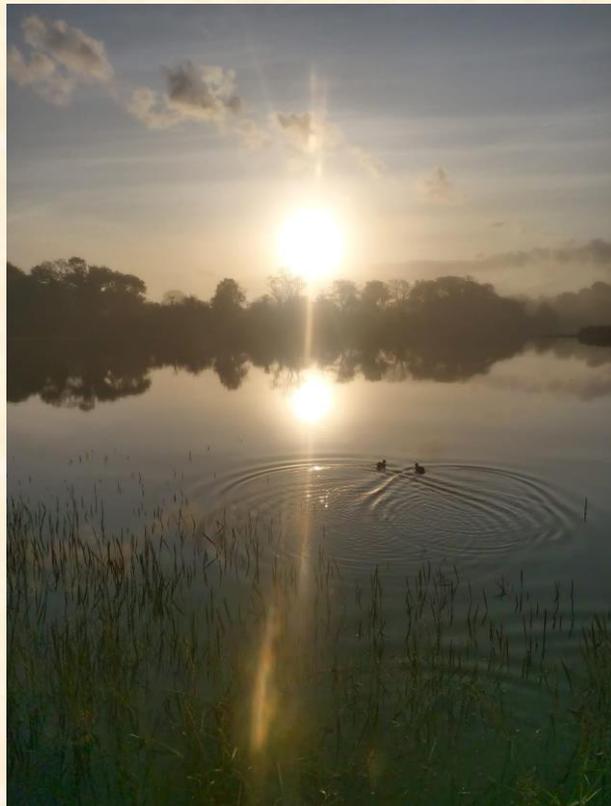
Gliding snakelike through the rushes, forming pools below Rossmore  
probing, rushing, gushing onwards for a date with sister Nore.

Restless now its progress hindered by ten thousand Sitka Spruce  
muddied water losing moisture, snarled branches, tangled roots.

Slower now and brooding anxious flows more slowly on past Coon  
to a joyful meeting with its twin below the weir.

Then, refreshed, renewed, replenished like a fresh horse given rein  
will toss its head again with relish, on towards Dysart, almost home.

**Image submitted by  
Tarbert TidyTowns**



## **Tidy Towns 2020 My Thoughts**

**Denis Heffernan – Emly TidyTowns**

To all our towns and villages across our native land  
To adjudicator's one and all to the staff in Ballina  
This little thought for all.

With a sad heart I write these couple of lines  
With Covid 19 nothing is right  
Next year will be better please god we hope  
So keep the chin up until Covid goes.

At this time of year the excitement would build  
As we waited and counted the days for that trip  
To the Helix in Dublin for All Ireland Day  
To see who would be crowned Irelands Tidiest Place.



## **Ballynacally My Home**

Marian Kelly – Ballynacally Tidy Towns – Co. Clare

Where is this little village with its beauty oh so rare  
where stone walls lead you up the road amid blossoms,  
sure none can compare

The old stone bridge stands prominent and its arches five in all  
the water flowing free beneath only tides will make it stall

The echo from the bell tower near the graceful church rings out  
and the ruins of Dangan Castle bring many a photographer about

The forge with its bellows and anvil fond symbols of times past  
and friendly folk stop up to chat while at the shrine a prayer I clasp

Down at the pier I scan the islands across the estuary clear  
such majestic unspoiled beauty as a boat soon does appear

Rose lovers, Paradise and Blessed

Well tranquil gems that must be seen

as children play near the old pump at the centre of the fair green

Where is this enchanting village oh I don't have far to roam

its dear old Ballynacally my community and my home

# The Man on the Bridge

Denis Heffernan – Emly TidyTowns

I see him now on the windy bridge his clothes all tattered and torn,  
His ears are red his face is pale a drop falls from his nose,  
With paper cup in his trembling hand he sits there all alone,  
While some passers-by give him the eye others don't even notice.

Perhaps he was a carpenter who worked from nine to five,  
Or he might have been a builder or worked on the railway line,  
He might have been a footballer who for his parish played,  
But now he is old and feeble and his life just fades away.

I wonder if he was married and had a wife and child,  
Or has he brothers and sisters perhaps they have all died,  
I wonder if he has a home with roses around the door,  
With bacon on the ceiling and flagstones on the floor.

When I sit to eat my dinner with pork chops and apple sauce,  
I think of this poor lonely man who has no dinner at all,  
Supper time means nothing or news on RTE,  
Only shade from the wind and weather on the windy bridge sits he.

Tonight when I lay in slumber neat my patchwork quilt so warm,  
I wonder where he will be resting neat the bridge in a sheltered corner,  
No Pyjamas he will be wearing only the same old ragged clothes,  
That he wore on the windy bridge the same as the day before.

His head falls softly sideways the pain in his leg is no more,  
He closes his eyes gently god is calling him home,  
His life on earth is over,  
The man on the bridge is no more.



## **Litter is a Virus Too**

Gerry Kennedy – Corofin Tidy Towns – Co. Clare

### **LITTER IS A VIRUS TOO**

A pandemic is rare or so we're told  
But when it's here your life's on hold  
Stay Home, Stay Safe, takes some persistence  
But you have to keep your social distance  
You can do a lot of things from home  
Meet up on Zoom or use your phone  
Work remote with broadband cover  
Ask Alexa, Google or whatever  
At Level Five your world's online  
And the internet will do just fine  
But virtual won't do the trick  
When you need to do a litter-pick...  
For that, on people you depend  
Your partner, neighbours or a friend  
The volunteers who rally round  
For pride of place they can be found  
Estates, approach roads and the street  
They like to keep their village neat  
With common sense they do it smart  
Working together - but staying apart.  
Living with Covid is what we do  
And litter is a virus too  
But this is one that's our own fault  
And one we have the power to halt  
To stop the spread of Covid 19  
Will take more than a Spring Clean  
But consider others before one acts  
And we stop this litter-bug in its tracks!

# 2021 A New Year

Denis Heffernan - Emly TidyTowns

2020 is now truly gone,  
But in 2021 Covid goes on,  
Oh now I wish we could put it to sleep,  
And get on with our lives like it used to be.  
Still we know we must soldier on,  
And in Tidy Towns we are all so strong,  
So upward and onward with no excuse,  
We had a rest, now the test is yours.  
To be a member you don't have to be smart,  
Check in with Tidy Towns and they will give you the start,  
You might be surprised with the joy,  
You will get while helping others and doing your bit.  
If you can dig a flower bed or paint a wall,  
Wash down a sign or cut a lawn,  
Pick up litter that's on the street,  
Or spread some chippings it would be a treat.  
A must for every town starting anew,  
A simple plan of what you intend to do,  
A few photographs of before and after,  
And a few short lines with the entry form.  
Good luck to you all and do keep safe,  
In taking part you are all so great,  
The future of Tidy Towns depends on you,  
Your community will benefit too.

# Beautiful Ardpatrick

Denis Heffernan

I have been all over Ireland and much beauty I have seen,  
But none to compete with Ardpatrick so green,  
In Spring, Summer and Autumn, you always do look great  
But even on a January day you blow my breath away.

As I drive in by the school its beauty is supreme,  
And then the Sunvale Inn and the church stood out so clear,  
The Community Centre and Bishop Murphy's Park are the icing on the cake,  
With the Greenwood Inn where I often sang looking over the whole place.

Out I go the Kildorrery road and head for Conway's Cross,  
The well-kept roads and footpaths with signage all tip top,  
The tall green trees and sweeping bends are all there to be seen,  
I swing around and head back down to see the place so clean.

But then you leave the village and think you have seen it all,  
Just stop and take a look at the old creamery yard,  
This is a place of tranquillity where you can roll back in time,  
And remember men with ass and cart long long before your time.

Best of all in Ardpatrick your people are so pleasant,  
They welcome you and speak with you and are never in a hurry,  
As I leave behind O'Sullivan's garage which always looks so clean,  
God bless al and do keep safe brighter days will soon be here.

## **Homeless But Not Different**

Where shall I go today that is different from yesterday,  
A street where I won't be known or the park where I can sit alone'  
Everyone talks about Covid 19 and the way it affects their lives,  
But for me alone hungry and frightened wondering will I survive the night

You have a clean bed to lie on enough to eat each day,  
A shower to freshen up and friends to share your day,  
I too once was like you with family and friends galore,  
But things in my life happened and now I am feeling so broke.

At 45 my life is not bright my feet are hurting this cold wet night,  
In my chest I have pain my heart is so sad,  
I am your brother please remember that.

Denis Heffernan Oct 2020

Please help the homeless this winter



# Raphoe

Martin Laird - Raphoe Tidy Towns 2004

This is my town, my own hometown, A place they call Raphoe

A City it was once renowned I'd like you all to know

Its Castle, Cathedral, and Standing Stones are famous sites to see

And living here for all my life means all the world to me

Surrounded by God's beauty in river, wood, and tree

And proudly founded by a Saint that's in our history

St Columba and St Eunan In days long long ago

Where proud to come and pray here In the Monastery of Raphoe

When summer days are drawing in and the swallows flying low

And harvest fields are gold and brown In our townlands round Raphoe

Just take me to my own dear town and let me take my rest

Along those lovely country roads for it's there I love the best.

## Our Friends

Kieran Togher

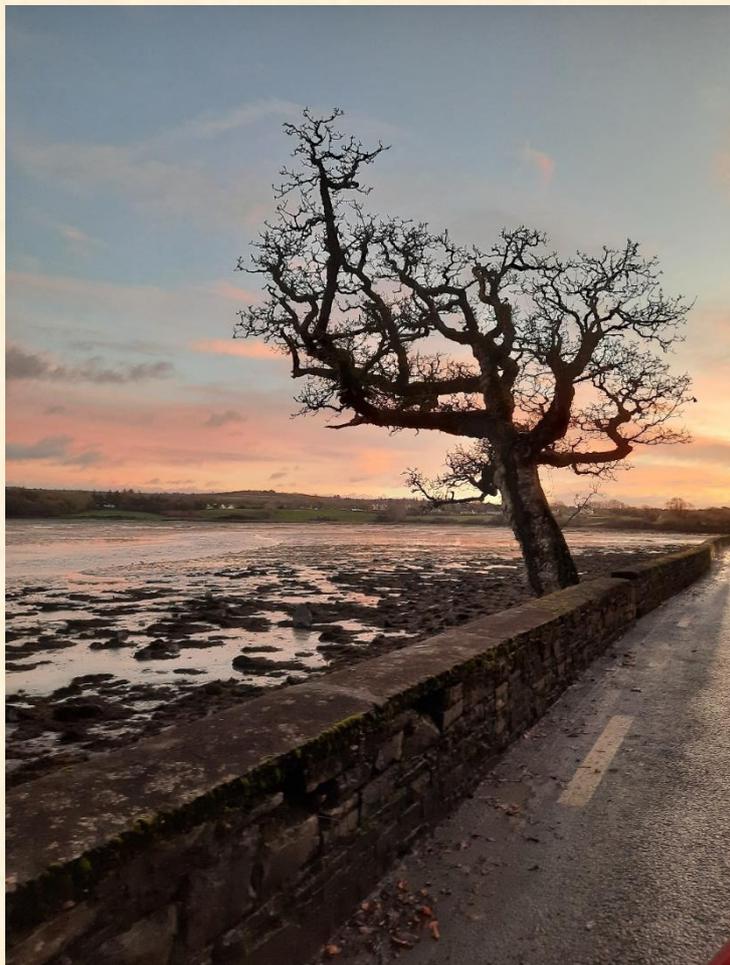
In our isolated worlds  
We forget about them  
As they race  
To fill their larders  
Those little industrious  
Marvels shine  
Saving our home  
Our planet  
One flower  
At a time

They carry the seeds  
Of life  
As payment for nectar  
The plant welcomes  
These assiduous little gems  
As friends  
Building a symbiotic relationship  
One bee  
At a time

Our food depends on them  
If they go, then we follow  
We need them  
They get nothing from us

In return  
We are a burden  
To this incredible life form  
All we do is  
Destroy their world  
One habitat  
At a time

They love the red clover  
Yet these seeds cost nothing  
Nature gives them to us for free  
So do not spray them  
Or cut them away  
Nature will do the rest  
Save our world  
One meadow at a time  
One hedgerow at a time  
One flower at a time





## My First Job

At 13 and a half I was too young to leave school so my family got me a transfer to Anglesboro National School where I only went for two days. So that was my secondary education, reason for same I was going working for a farmer in Ballyduff Ballylanders.

Danny Kelly was the farmer's name. The house was approached by a short drive from the main road. At each side of the graveled drive there was a mature laurel hedge and a long slated house grey in colour. Danny his wife Ann his two daughters Alice and Margaret and Danny's elderly mother lived in the farmhouse. The wonderful great memories I have of my first job I still cherish today.

From the moment I arrived in the dwelling I was made to feel like one off the family. But at such a young age I was very lonesome and I missed my own home and family. No mobile phones then so no contact it was like been miles away. When I went there it was the month of February the cows were starting to calf so I learned how to milk my first cow. Soon I got the hang of things as spring went by; next up was the challenge to go to the creamery.

The pony was brown and the cart had rubber wheels. On Sunday I would tie the pony to a street pole while I went to mass. I would have to put the pony's reins around his neck as he could shake off the winkers. One Sunday morning I forgot to put the reins around his neck, so when I came out he was gone cart and milk cans and the winkers left hanging on the pole. So up the street as fast as I could run and my heart in my mouth. Sure enough out the road I caught up with the pony grazing along the side of the road and the cart and milk cans behind him. I tell you he went home to Ballyduff very fast that morning.

Danny's mother was a small woman she always wore black clothes. She had a high timber chair with high arms, we all wanted to sit on it. I remember myself and the girls trying to make her dance around the house with us, on one such occasion she had a shortness of breath we helped her out in the yard to get her breath.

I had my own room just off the kitchen I remember sometimes we would say the Rosary. Danny kept greyhounds; I can't remember how good they were. Sometimes he would give them raw eggs for to get them fit. He would make me drink the raw eggs he told me it would help me grow, it worked I grew out but not up as people know.

The summer came quickly and we had great times in the meadows and the long evenings, the cuckoo and the corncrake could be heard till darkness. Still I missed home and my family my first trip home was the end of April. I couldn't believe how different my own boreen was with all the wildflowers what a difference the couple of month made.

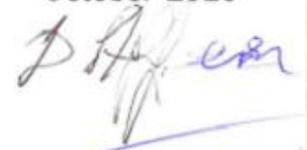
Then, to have to leave home again. Their motor car was a black Volkswagen now a memory. Many a time they took me visiting to Danny's brother in Kilbehenny we also used to visit Katie Ryan in Cappawhite, where we got lovely big cream sponge cake and green jelly and mixed fruit.

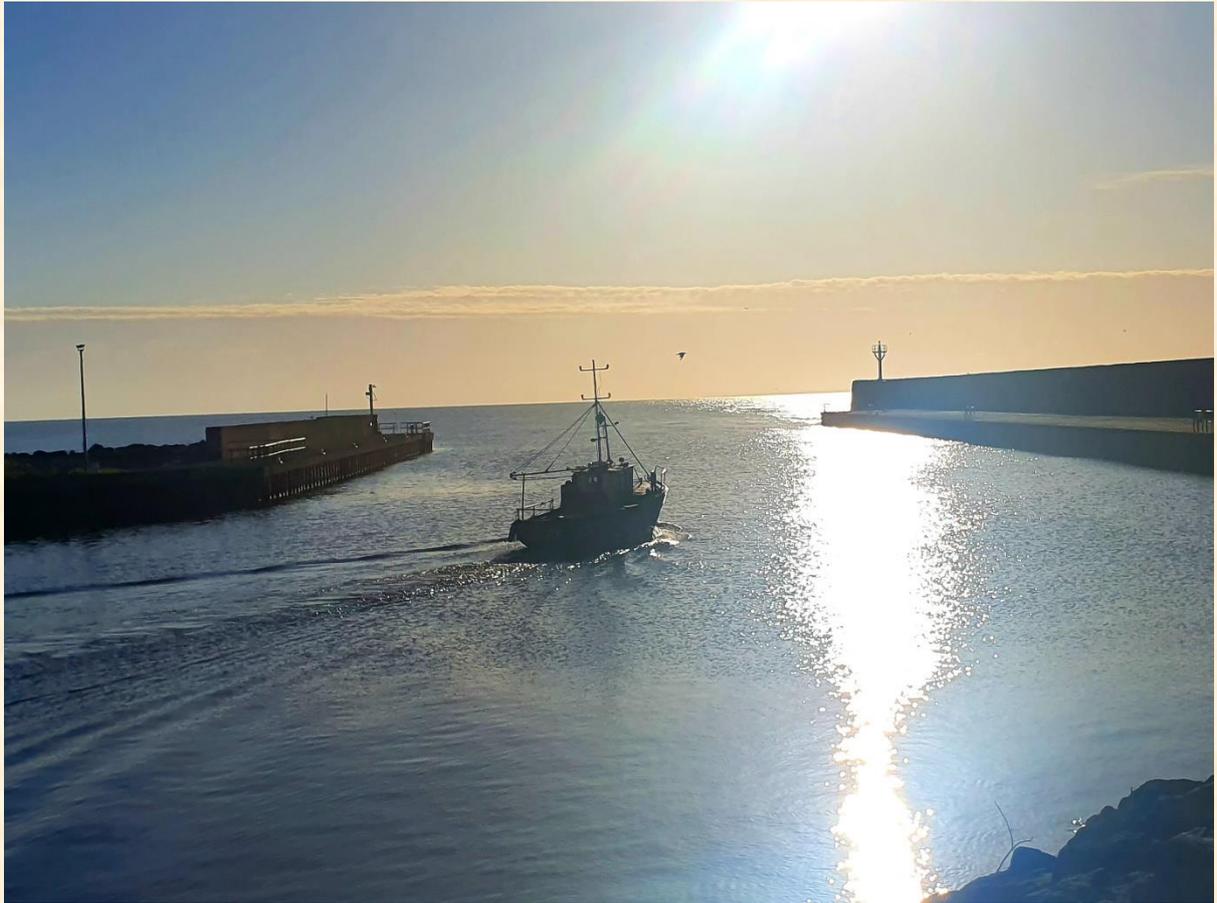
Sometimes I would be left minding Danny's mother if she wasn't feeling well. On one such occasion she was in bed, it was winter time so we only went to the creamery every few days. I decided to make a small bit of butter, I put the cream from the top of the churn in to an Andrews liver salt tin and shook it until I had a lump of butter and a small sup of milk, not been happy with that I put it on the fire with the lid on. Well after a few minutes it blew off the fire and there was bits of butter stuck to the ceiling, the red open dresser and to myself and I was stuck to the chair with the fright of it. Mrs Kelly senior below in bed asking what happened as if I could tell her with the shock I was in.

I didn't like breakfast time because Danny and his mother always had boiled eggs, they liked them lightly boiled the sight and smell of them to this day I can remember with disgust. Dinner I loved flowery potatoes from their own garden and white cabbage with a lump of butter and a mug of separated milk. My memory of this and the sun shimmering in the window is like it only happened yesterday. Sometimes at night we would have a bit of marble cake for our late tea. Sometimes we would have coco. I remember some of the people who lived nearby, Fitzgeralds, the Martins, O'Dwyers, Tommy Lane and the Dunne family who lived across the yard. Mr Dunne played the bag pipes with Anglesboro Pipe Band they were a very quiet family.

Autumn, hay in the barn and generally a time for tidying up. I remember cutting timber with a cross cut saw one of us at each end. I felt I was a real man doing such work, Danny showed me how to breast a ditch with whitethorn something I still love to see done today. So I came to the end of my year in my first job, it is sixty years ago but my thoughts of the great times I had at the start of my life. The friendship with Margaret Vaughan nee Kelly and her sister Alice is still a great part of my life today. Many jobs have I had in my life but none holds the wonderful memory of my first job at Danny Kelly's in Ballyduff Ballylanders Co Limerick.

A true Story  
Denis Heffernan  
October 2020





How much we took for granted.....

Oh yes, how much we took for granted, so many of us say  
when we think of times of freedom before Covid-19 came our way  
you'd stroll through towns or villages as carefree as you please  
but then this Covid-19 swept through Ireland like a breeze

The Ploughing, it was cancelled, the Eurovision too  
The Leaving Cert and our Tidy Towns to name another few  
we must stay six feet apart; Social distance - we hear so much  
But thanks to Zoom and Skype calls, we can all still stay in touch

Our litter picks were hampered, our projects put on hold  
Our activities all curtailed unless, essential, we were told  
But Tidy Towners can't be beaten, we are a tougher crew  
Determined, strong, together, we will see this problem through

Stay it seems to be the word, that is so much on our tongue  
Stay safe, stay home, stay separate, but most of all, stay strong  
At times, it can be frightening; you might think you're on your own  
But please remember, we are in this together, you are not alone

It was great to hear the Minister say, the competition will proceed  
We long to get back to our activities, that is all we need  
We'll plant and paint and tidy with sustainability in sight  
Tidy Towns groups are determined to get everything just right

Sadly there were no trophies or medals handed out this year  
oh how we all missed the build-up to the Helix atmosphere  
onward you will venture and look forward to the day  
when the 2021 entry form is full and sent on its way

But for now we must remember to give each other space  
To wash our hands and mind ourselves and cover up our face  
But Christmas is approaching and it's time to take a rest  
To all the volunteers and their families we wish the very best

Look forward to working with you all in 2021  
The TT unit.

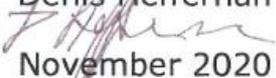
## ***Go for it in 2021***

20-20 is nearly gone,  
But Tidy Towns we just carry on,  
So for a winter's day please check your list,  
And see what's best for next year's test.

May I first suggest you check your plan,  
To see where you can improve your marks,  
Check each section and make a plan,  
Of what you can do for 2021.

Always remember small things count,  
Things you can do without stressing out,  
Keep your work load simple and always be safe,  
Wear a high vis vest so you can be seen.

Top of my list is keep your place green,  
It is not as hard as it may seem,  
God bless you all for the work you do,  
Don't fret about things you cannot do.

Denis Heffernan  
  
November 2020