

GREETINGS FROM CUSHENDUN

Cushendun Building Preservation Trust



CONTENTS

Tourism and Cushendun	4
The Antrim Coast Road	12
The Romantic Landscape	16
The Gaelic Revival	20
The Hotels	24
WWII and the Belfast Evacuation	32
“Doon the watter” - The Glasgow Fair	40
Boom Town - 1950s and 1960s	46
Decline and Regeneration	58

Publishing details
ISBN etc



TOURISM AND CUSHENDUN

TOURISM AND CUSHENDUN

The word “tourist” sometimes carries connotations of transience, superficial connection with the place visited and candy floss rather than cordon bleu. If indeed there is any valid distinction to be made between a tourist and a traveller, it might reside in the written account left by the latter, their engagement with the people; whereas the tourist is characterised as an onlooker who leaves only footprints and takes only photographs.

A tourist forsakes his native heath in search of something – an impression, perhaps some escape from the ordinary day-to-day, in short, an experience which is not to be found at home. The destination chosen may be the awesome Grand Canyon, the Taj Mahal or on a less spiritual level, the draw of sun, sand, sea and sangria. Whichever motive obtains, there is always the promise of different customs, cuisine or climate.

It was not ever so: in times past individuals or whole peoples moved when circumstances became too difficult in their homeland. This was particularly so in the first millennium.

In the Middle Ages the stimulus to travel was different in that pilgrimages were undertaken voluntarily, the hardship undergone for the sake of spiritual benefit and towards a specific destination, whether Walsingham, Compostela, Jerusalem or Mecca. Geoffrey Chaucer used the Canterbury pilgrimage as a backcloth against which to delineate the characters of the abess and the almoner.

Nearer to our own time, the Grand Tour was partly a coming-of-age rite and partly an opportunity for a young aristocrat to acquaint himself with the remnants of classical civilisation and with the achievements of the Renaissance.

As with any human activity, travel depends on three interlinked factors;

means, motive and opportunity. At the beginning of the 19th century, only the highest stratum of society had the means and the leisure to voyage simply to satisfy an impulse. Moreover, this locality the Glens of Antrim, were not easy to access by land because of the barriers represented by the coastal cliffs that projected out to the water’s edge. Carriage of goods and people was more convenient by sea and so there was frequent exchange of both between Antrim and Argyll. It was the completion of the civil engineering project, the Antrim Coast Road, which brought change to landward communication. Where before, passage could be made only on horseback, horse-drawn vehicles could transport travellers and goods throughout the year. Ease of travel on the new roadway led to a re-orientation towards the south and away from the east-west trade of former times.

We can only surmise as to the motives of the first intrepid travellers who ventured into the Middle Glens.

However, no imagination is required in the case of one of the first to arrive and record his impressions. John Ó Donovan was employed by the Ordnance Survey as an intermediary interfacing with the speakers of Irish and as an interpreter of Irish place names. While he was not a leisure visitor, his remit straddled the boundary between official recording and what we now characterise as heritage.

Over the years, many tourists have halted in Cushendun, some perhaps only for an hour or two while others have stayed days, even weeks. We natives are fortunate that travellers have recorded in prose and poetry the impressions made on them by the landscape and the people. Supplementing the literary heritage is the visual legacy of photographs and paintings inspired by the scenery of the Glen as it has changed over the last two centuries.

The earliest known work of this kind was by Andrew Nicholl, whose

acquaintance of Cushendun at the beginning of the 19th century is far from a faithful representation of the village. Within Ballycastle Museum's collection, Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council holds a number of his landscapes of the North Coast. Two hundred years ago, the topography of this district - valleys separated by headlands with steep cliffs - must have made his journey, burdened as he was by artist's materials, an arduous one. It was the later construction, between 1832 and 1842, of the Antrim Coast Road which transformed land access to the Glens from what had been an expedition undertaken by the intrepid, to a journey negotiated in the relative comfort of a horse and carriage. The signifiers or emblems of the Coast Road are the distinctive milestones which originally must have been unmissable to a traveller, with their black lettering against a white background, but which are now sadly deteriorated and, in some cases, partially buried.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Cushendun already had residents who were not economically involved with the locality. Those who were so engaged were the Crommelins who pursued a scheme to build a harbour and the Mc Neills of Cushendun House and Glendun Lodge who drew part of their income as land agents for the Whites of Whitehall. General Mc Neill of Rockport House did not have a local connection but settled here, presumably because of the leisure amenities, chiefly the bay and scenic surroundings.

One of the earliest travellers reputed to have visited the Glens was the novelist William Makepeace Thackeray, to whom is ascribed an impression of Glenariffe as "Switzerland in Miniature". Since tourist brochures were a development of the future, it was first-hand accounts such as his which brought the area to the notice of the more adventurous Victorian voyager. During the first half of the 19th century, the vogue for dramatic land and seascapes induced, for example, Mendelssohn to travel to the Hebrides and Byron to the French Alps.

Though on a smaller scale than either, the Glens in the 1840s were both wild and undiscovered, even if, by then, the Ordnance Survey had produced the first accurate maps of Ireland. By mid-century, photography was advancing to become a practical means of imaging and prints could be copied for reproduction in mass publications. Scientific expeditions were organised by enthusiastic Victorian amateurs. In 1867 the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club undertook a two-day excursion to Glenariffe and Glendun and assembled a botanical inventory and a survey of the surface geology.

Less serious in intent was the tour of the Antrim Coast from Glenarm to the Giant's Causeway, by Dinah Mulock (the author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*) and three other ladies. Her travelogue *An Unknown Country* is wryly humorous, and sometimes whimsical, as she relates her encounters with local people. It is critical sometimes of the standard of accommodation and describes monuments such as the Fuldieu Stone, though not in the same magisterial vein as the Baedeker Guides.

With the rise of Belfast as a major industrial city, the new merchant class had leisure and means enough to embark on excursions and the Antrim Coast could be accessed from Larne railway station, at first by horse-drawn wagons from the Laharna Hotel and later by charabanc. Stephen Gwynn's 1899 *Highways and Byways in Donegal and Antrim* is an appreciative and informative vademecum (guide) to Cushendun and Glendun with brief historical background and a collection of local saws and superstitions. At around the same time, the Rev. A. Richardson in his *Guide to the North Coast*, portrayed the village and its surroundings in a favourable light.

Immediately before the Great War, the Midland Railway Company, owning hotels in Larne and Portrush, promoted summer excursions by rail and coach to the Coast Road from both Larne and Parkmore.

It was later in the century that non-natives visited, who were closer to the modern concept of a tourist, that is, transient travellers on a voyage of discovery, attracted by the picturesque landscape. These literary birds of passage, and also local writers, often set down their impressions either epistolary or intended for publication. A Cushendall resident, G. B. Newe, was the author in 1927 of a Guide to the Glens of Antrim, in which he identified sites of historical interest and listed the many reasons to linger in Cushendun. Rosemary Garrett's Cushendun and the Glens included some cautionary advice, but it is evident that she was at home in this area and her directions were based on personal experience. More recently, Randal Mc Donnell's book, Randal's Ramblings in Cushendun and the Glens of Antrim, is factually most reliable and draws on original sources.

An institution which might at first seem to have little relevance to Cushendun was the annual Glasgow Fair. This holiday had its origins in the 12th century as a livestock fair, but by the mid-20th century it was principally a working-class release from factories and shipyards. The exodus "doon the watter" of Glaswegians to the west coast seaside resorts also extended to vacations in Cushendun. The ties that formerly existed across the Strait of Moyle are evidenced in the many surnames common to coastal areas of both Antrim and Argyll. Many glens folk emigrated to the Second City of the Empire in its mercantile and shipbuilding heyday, and they and their families returned to their birthplace during the Fair fortnight in July, staying until August. Hotel registers in the village confirm the numbers of this influx.

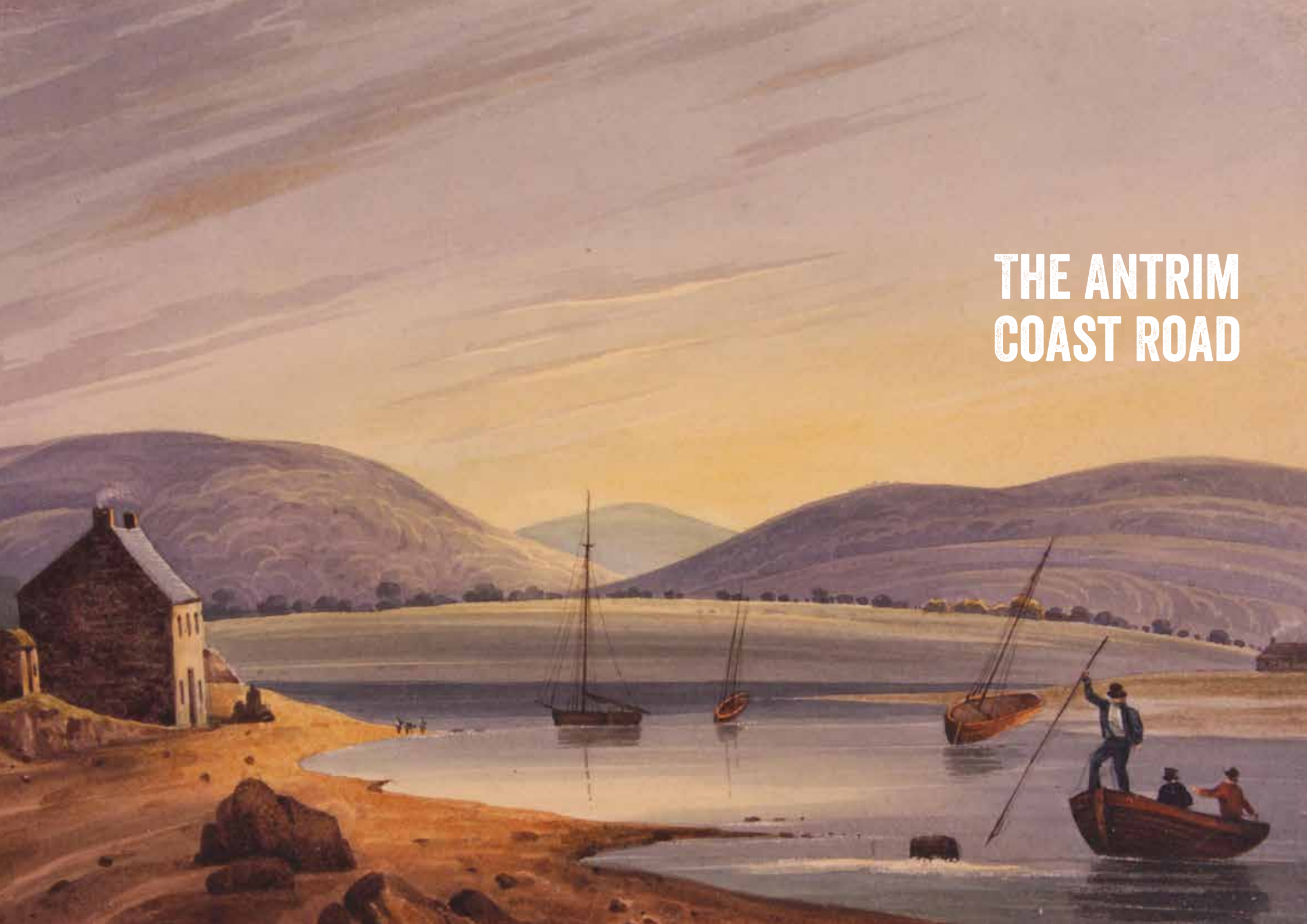
The "Big Houses" of Cushendun did host literary figures from time to time, among them the poet John Masefield and Enid Starkie, sister of the author Walter Starkie and intellectually eminent in her own right. Clough Williams Ellis designed the Square and Maud Cottages with a nod to the Cornish vernacular as a tribute to the wife of Lord Cushendun, Elizabeth Maud Bolitho. Molly Keane wrote a memoir of her holidays in

Rockport House, though without identifying the village itself. The beach was the starting point for Mercedes Gleitz's unsuccessful attempt circa 1927 to be the first person to swim across the strait of Moyle, a feat not achieved until many years later.

From the 1960s onwards, package tours to the Mediterranean and the later Troubles brought about a decline in domestic tourism. Destinations that were once exotic, became familiar and as time went on, there were fewer locations out of reach of a determined traveller. In the 21st century, increased disposable income, statutory holidays and the development of a huge network of air connections has facilitated travel to and from far-flung locations. Now, in the second decade of the century the coach tours bringing Game of Thrones enthusiasts to Cushendun caves, are patronised by a variety of nationalities and arrive throughout the year. However, the coach travellers are fleeting visitors and it is only in summer that incomers stay long enough to appreciate the combination of sea, scenery and frequent fine soft days that Cushendun offers its guests.

The future of tourism here will probably depend on access to walking trails and the direct experience of riverside, fields and mountain tracks as a weekend escape from sedentary occupations, aerial pollution and 24-hour traffic. There are proposals that grants to landowners will in future be made in recompense for the right to roam and that the qualification criteria for payments will change from stocking levels to measures for conservation of wildlife. In that case, the Kerryman's dictum "You can't feed a family on scenery" may well need to be revisited.

THE ANTRIM COAST ROAD



THE ANTRIM COAST ROAD

“A barren waste, asylum of a miserable and lawless peasantry”

This statement was attributed to the Commissioner of Public Works in Ireland in describing the Glens of Antrim in the early 1800s. Due to its remoteness, the people of the Glens traded more easily with their neighbours in Western Scotland than with their compatriots inland. The Commissioner’s proposal was to build a road that would serve to provide work for the local peasantry and benefit trade. The 1798 Rebellion being a relatively recent event, the road would also provide ease of access for the military should it be required.

And so, the Coast Road had its beginnings.

Built by the Scottish civil engineer, William Bald, the Antrim Coast Road remains an amazing feat of civil engineering. William Bald had the novel idea of building the road along the foot of the cliffs, some of which were over 100 metres high.

The Coast Road was completed between 1832 and 1842. Today, north of Carnlough, the Largy Road ends with “Baldy’s Branch” leading down to the Coast Road. This local reference is a small tribute to the name of this great civil engineer who has given us one of the most beautiful coastal routes in Europe.

A contemporary engineering work was the construction of the Glendun Viaduct. Built by Charles Lanyon between 1834 and 1839, and locally known as The Big Bridge, it crosses the Dun River and continues the Antrim Coastal route onwards to Ballycastle.

“Cushendun is cheerfully situated and the neighbourhood is frequented in the summer by gentlemen’s families who have bathing lodges there” (James Boyle’s Ordnance Survey Memoir 1835).

The Coast Road made Cushendun more accessible and it became a fashionable resort for the “gentry” attracted by, among other things, sea bathing. ‘The Five Big Houses of Cushendun’ described by C. E. B. Brett in his book of that name (Lagan Press 1997) date from around this time.

MISSING IMAGE
003 Cloon and Glenarm 1

CUSHENDUN AERIAL 22

THE ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE



THE ROMANTIC LANDSCAPE

“We laid it on the grey rocks to wither in the sun; An’ what should call my lad then to sail from Cushendun: Wi ‘a low moon, a full tide a swell upon the deep, Him to sail the old boat – me to fall asleep” *Sea Wrack* by Moira O’Neill, the pseudonym of Agnes Shakespeare Higginson, (1864-1955). From her residence at Rockport Lodge “a house upon the sea sand a white house ‘an low;” she could look across the bay to Cushendun that influenced so much of her poetry “*Songs of the Glens of Antrim*”.

By the end of the 19th century, the wish to escape industrial cities generated interest in the perceived wilderness of the landscape. Dinah Mulock (the author of *John Halifax, Gentleman*) was an early ‘explorer’ recording her impressions of Cushendun in her travelogue, *An Unknown Country* written in 1887: “Cushendun - the twin village of Cushendall is, if less pretty, decidedly the fresher of the two being more on the open sea.”

The Larne to Stranraer Steamboat Company founded in 1871 brought many visitors to Larne where Henry Mc Neill ran a thriving hotel business, package tours and day trips. His jaunting cars and charabancs introduced thousands of tourists to the glories of the Glens of Antrim and Causeway Coast. Parkmore Railway Station, which opened in 1889, was the point of arrival from where visitors would be transported onwards to Cushendun.

Those drawn to Cushendun with an interest in archaeology and natural history included members of the Belfast Naturalists’ Field Club. Francis Joseph Bigger was one such member. A prominent Antiquarian, he is responsible for raising Shane’s Cairn above Cushendun in 1908 as a memorial to the reputed burying place of Shane O’Neill, murdered by the McDonnells in 1567.

G. B. Newe’s 1927 volume *A Guide* includes advertisements for accommodation described “Cushendun – Beautiful Scenery, Haunts for the Antiquarian, the Botanist and Geologist, Inspiration for the Poet and Artist”.

During the first half of the 20th century, artists, writers and poets flocked to Cushendun. Enid Starkie, Louis MacNeice and John Masefield are all associated with the village. Humbert Craig, Maurice Wilks and Charlie McAuley are just three of many painters inspired by Cushendun which became known as the ‘*St. Ives of the north*’.



Title



Title



Title

THE GAELIC REVIVAL



THE GAELIC REVIVAL

The turn of the 19th century saw the Gaelic Revival. In the north of Ireland both Unionists and Nationalists came together in an effort to preserve the Irish language. This coincided with the Arts and Crafts Revival across Europe. Against this background of cultural renaissance, Feis na nGleann ('The Glens Feis') was founded in 1904, as the first Gaelic cultural festival in east Ulster.

Led by a group of leading 'Big House' figures in the locality, among them Miss Rose Young of Galgorm Castle, a member of a leading Ballymena Unionist dynasty, Miss Ada McNeill of Cushendun and Miss Margaret Dobbs of Cushendall, an inaugural Feis Committee was formed. Joining their ranks was Sir Roger Casement, then a recent convert to Irish nationalism, Eoin MacNeill, Glensman and language revivalist, Francis Joseph Bigger, lawyer and antiquarian, John "Benmore" Clarke and Joseph Campbell, the Belfast poet who wrote the haunting Blue Hills of Antrim.

The Feis took place in Glenariffe on Thursday 30th June 1904 and included music, dancing, language, local industries and games. Hurling, where teams competed for the Shield of the Heroes - a copper shield specially commissioned by Francis Joseph Bigger, was won by Carey Faughs.

With the aim of preserving Irish as a spoken language, the Gaelic League was founded in 1893 by Douglas Hyde and Eoin MacNeill. The Belfast branch (1895) grew out of the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club. An early member of the Gaelic League, Miss Ada McNeill, was proactive in the cultivation of the Irish language, including involvement with the Irish College on Rathlin Island. She was secretary to the organising committee of Colaiste Uladh, founded in 1906, that brought together all creeds and classes to study Irish.

The League and the Gaelic Athletic Association helped to preserve the traditions and identity of Cushendun and its community – traditions which still are at the heart of village life today.



Title



THE HOTELS

THE HOTELS

"The wee village of Cushendun, the Foot of the Dun River is perfectly placed at the side of a lovely bay, with a grand strand for bathing and lazing. There are two good hotels here, very good indeed, and fine fishing up the Glendun River".

Richard Hayward - *In Praise of Ulster*, 1938.

By the 1920s, a summer holiday had become the norm, at least for the middle classes. For many it was a chance to escape the noise and pollution of city life and enjoy the healthy benefits of 'the great outdoors'. Mind you, for plenty of country children the summer was far from a holiday as they were expected to help with the harvest, turf cutting and, in resorts, such as Cushendun, to help out in the hotels and B&Bs.

The new holiday makers wanted something a little more modern and glamorous than a traditional inn or rooms in a house, they wanted a hotel. The first hotel in Cushendun was The Anchorage, established by Maurice Findlay early in the 20th century, but it was the Cushendun Hotel, opened on the 15th November 1925, that caught the spirit of the times.

Mrs McBride bought and converted the old scutch mill and rope works on the south side of the harbour to provide modern accommodation, initially comprising 16 bedrooms, two toilets, one bathroom and private and public sitting rooms. In 1927 the Anchorage was bought by the Elliot's and renamed The Glendun Hotel. By the mid-1930s both hotels were booming, the Cushendun Hotel had expanded with 30 rooms and visitor numbers were impressive. Here, in 1936, the Elliots established the very modern and stylish Bay Cafe (later the Bay Hotel).

Hotels offered their guests an affordable version of the country house lifestyle enjoyed by the upper classes. Both the hotels had tennis courts, and swimming, fishing and picnics were popular pastimes for that precious fortnight of leisure. All meals were taken in the hotel, usually

at one sitting. Randal Mc Donnell recounts that the Glendun Hotel, run by the Elliots, was considered slightly 'posher' serving breakfast, lunch and 'dinner' rather than high-tea. A gong would be rung at mealtimes to bring the guests in from the beach.

The driving force behind The Cushendun Hotel was undoubtedly Mrs Elizabeth McBride whose entrepreneurial mind and limitless energy powered the business. She invested to provide all the latest requirements of a modern hotel including hot and cold water in every room, sprung mattresses and electric light. In 1935, she bought at auction in Glasgow, the fixtures and fittings from a Harland and Wolf luxury liner, the Minnewaska, which she used to furnish the rooms.

The Guests

Among the hundreds of summer guests were many people of interest. Perhaps the most famous in her day was Mercedes Gleitz, the first woman to swim the English Channel, who stayed at the Cushendun Hotel before attempting to swim the North Channel to Kintyre circa 1927.



Title

The Staff

Looking after all the holiday makers was hard work, especially in the days before reliable electricity. Food had to be freshly prepared, fires lit, bars kept and all the laundry.

The hotels were a big part of the local economy and the list of some-time employees includes many local names as well as the proprietors' families, who were roped in to help from an early age. To name but a few, Kathleen McNeill, Annie McGee, Brenda O'Hara, Marie Mort, Sean Scullion, and running the bar across the bridge, the eponymous Mary McBride.



Title

The Bay Hotel Cushendun - How I came to work as a member of staff by Bridie Mc Curdy

One of two twin sisters, I was brought up in Fermanagh. Together with my other sister Mary, we were cycling home from Mass, when my twin was fatally injured by a car. We had been very close, sitting side by side in class at school.

After the accident, the teachers spoke to my parents, telling them that I was no longer able to focus on my education. So, when a Mr Bennet from Dublin came to recruit girls who would learn about catering and hotel management, I decided to choose that course. It was during six months of training that I decided that my vocation was in hospitality work.

I replied to an advertisement in the Fermanagh Herald seeking hotel staff. Mr and Mrs Gregg and Miss Elliot came to our house to interview me. They asked me to return with them, but I wanted a few days to put together my belongings. The three of them came back for me and brought me to Cushendun.

At first, I could not sleep because of the noise of the seagulls but by and by I got used to it. The Bay Hotel was very busy and that is where I stayed, because Mr and Mrs Gregg knew that I had been trained as a silver-service waitress. This meant that I was the only waitress kept on during the winter months. Even during the winter there were many visitors, especially on Sundays. That was the day when Garron Tower students and their parents arrived for lunch. Christmas too brought a large number of visitors – 40 to 50 guests staying for ten days or a fortnight.

Mr Gregg, who was a very good cook, prepared the meals. Guests also came from farther afield – bus loads from the Bann Valley and tourists from all over the world. Mr Gregg always gave me the extra money (calling it the "Bossing Money"). The hotel was very well run, but less so when he retired. In the winter months I was responsible for the ironing which (being a perfectionist) I took great pride in doing well. I look back fondly on my days with the Elliots and Greggs. Long after they had left Cushendun, they gave me a lovely wedding present.

The Bay Hotel - Recollections of Hotel Service in the 1950s by Patricia Grieve McKeegan

As country-bred teenagers in Donegal, who had never been away from the home farm, I and my sister Teresa, who was a year younger, answered an ad in the Derry Journal seeking hotel workers. In the summer of 1962, we set off to work in the hotels in Cushendun. I joined the staff of the Bay Hotel, owned by the Greggs and my sister in the Glendun Hotel owned by Miss Elliot, a sister of Mrs Gregg. On my first night in Cushendun, I woke early in the morning to the sound of the sea against the rocks. Before I opened my eyes, I thought that I was in Lough Derg. That is a sound that I love to this day.

Miss Elliot was kind to her staff. One day Teresa came down in the morning; she had been crying. Miss Elliot asked her what the matter was. She answered that she had suffered all night from a toothache. After making sure that that was the only thing wrong, Miss Elliot gave her a tablet which gave her relief.

Mrs Bertie Gregg was the manageress; she was strict but fair, training the staff well.

There were many rules. The waiters and waitresses had each a number, as had the menus and the tables. Each of us had our station, for which you were responsible. Our duties were to take the order, serve it, tot up the bill and afterwards clear the table. Any tip was yours to keep. Menus were never left on the tables but were returned to a little table by the kitchen door so that they were not misplaced. Not to do so incurred a fine of sixpence. Forgetting to charge for a dish served, meant that you had to pay for that item. Having to pay yourself made for quick learning. The menu included a special meal (The Bay Special consisting of a two-egg omelette with two rashers, mushrooms and two sausages) and it was very popular. On a very busy day, Mr Gregg would help with the cooking

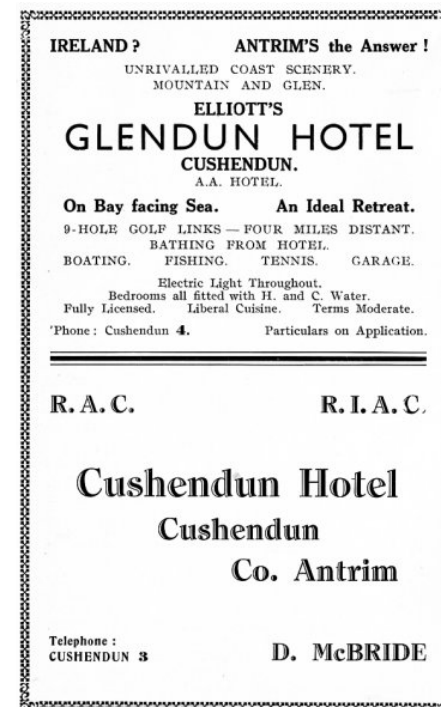
of this dish, making two omelettes at a time in two separate pans.

Sometimes after a very busy day, Mr Gregg would treat us to a scoop of ice-cream in a glass of orange.

Mrs Gregg went around the dining room to make sure that the diners were satisfied and that the staff had done their work to her satisfaction. If you had not, she would ask you to go over and stand with your back to the fireplace: she would then come across to you and ask you to smile and then she would tell you what you had done to deserve a fine (but confidentially), so that only you knew what she had said.

After your day's work you cleaned your station. If there was a mark on the floor, you removed it with steel wool and used liquid polish and polished the whole station and washed it the next day. At last, having helped each other to get everything spick and span, we stopped work and perhaps went for a walk on the beach.

At the weekend, there might be a céilidh in the Parochial Hall and we would go to the fortnightly dances in Castlegreen. One thing led to another and I met the love of my life, marrying him in 1965. We still live here, counting 54 years together.



Title



WORLD WAR II & THE BELFAST EVACUATION

WORLD WAR II & THE BELFAST EVACUATION

Cushendun was remote enough to be considered a safe location to which schoolboys were evacuated during the war. Eddie Spence remembers the removal of the Christian Brothers School from Belfast to Cushendun and recalls his memories of that period both during and immediately after the war.

Reality was never too far away however, and the sight of warships sailing on the horizon was "a lovely sight but an awful sight as well". During this period of enforced living in Cushendun, the young evacuees got to know members of the local community and lasting friendships formed.

Early Memories of Cushendun by Eddie Spence

My father died on the 29th of August 1939 – war had started in September 1939 – and in early 1941 we were bombed out of our home on the Antrim Road, Belfast. My family split up – some staying with cousins, others with friends. I was at St Malachy's College at the time but was sent to the Christian Brothers School who were evacuated to lovely Cushendun, taking over the Hotel (Randal's). It was to get me out of Belfast for a while (I was just 15 ½ years old then).

The principal was a Brother Burgess and I can remember fondly a Brother Ahern who had a great interest in football and hurling. Another not so fondly remembered was Mr (Bonzo) Evans, a large built man with a powerful deep singing voice. He referred to me many times "Spence – of course you were taught by Professors!" (St Malachy's teachers wore gowns).

Christian Brothers'
Cushendun.
17. 8. 42

Dear Madam,

Please forward £ 6-3-0 the sum due to us for the following expenses incurred by Edward Spence during his term here from Christmas to Summer.

£. S. D.

School Fees.....	£ 2-2-0
Book Money.....	9-0
Wkly contribution @ <u>6/-</u> per wk. for <u>12</u> wks..	£ 3-12-0
Other expenses.....	_____
TOTAL.....	<u>£ 6-3-0</u>

A speedy remittance of this amount will facilitate half-yearly Balance Sheet, and will greatly oblige.

Yours sincerely,
G.S.BURGESS.

Title

Day boys at that time were Malachy and James Mc Sparran, Alex Mc Kay and "Fred" Mc Cormick. The outside loo still stands between the hotel and the small cottages. It was used by the bigger boys for a quick "fag" which you could buy loose, for one penny each from the small window of the second cottage. Mrs Gallagher lived there, and her son Ted came down most weekends with supplies of sweets, cigarettes, socks, toothpaste – anything the boys might need urgently.

Each weekend a busload of parents arrived to see their "darling" boys and after a walk around Cushendun lanes, sands, caves, etc, they would head for Mrs Leavey's for a meal – a good tuck-in badly needed after weeks of school meals. High teas were also served at McKendry's No 4 Main Street – (in later years the lovely Flo Rainey lived there).

Some of the pupils' families had shops in Belfast and were able to get the odd extra egg. They brought the eggs down and the boys put their names on them and sent them to the kitchen to "Katherine" via either Aiden Bennet or myself who were prefects. That was a real treat. If the boys misbehaved, no eggs were cooked for that day. During this time, I got to know the Leaveys, the famous Dan The Duck and Henry Andy very well.

Quite a few times, Pinlip Donnelly and I would sneak out the back after lights out and go and visit Mrs Leavey who would dish us a quick soup. He was quite a good boxer – you can guess how he got the name Pinlip. I remember on one of these outings we were struck dumb when we looked out towards the horizon and it was nothing but end-to-end warships. A lovely sight but an awful sight as well.

I also remember the two Mc Cormick boys (they were about the same age as we were) delivering potatoes, and the Brogans delivering milk to the school. We marched to Church each Sunday, Aiden Bennet in front with one Brother and I at the back with Brother Burgess.

Christian Brothers'
Cushendun.
1-2-42

Dear Madam,

Please forward £ 4-16-0 the sum due to us for the following expenses incurred by Edward Spence during his term here from September to end of January.

	£. S. D.
School Fees.....	1-2-0
Book Money.....	15-0
Wkly contribution @ <u>6/-</u> per wk. for <u>9</u> wks..	2-14-0
Other expenses.....	5-0
TOTAL.....	<u>£ 4-16-0</u>

A speedy remittance of this amount will facilitate half-yearly Balance Sheet, and will greatly oblige.

Yours sincerely,

G.S. BURGESS.

Title

After leaving school, I returned to Cushendun nearly every year until 1949, bringing with me 6-7 others and we stayed with Mrs Leavey and May. Great fun and good food. I was serving my time at this period with a very large wholesale chemist/grocer and every two weeks I was allowed a "cash sale." Prior to going to Cushendun, I stocked up with sugar, jam, Pond's Cream, hair tonic and perfume – all on ration and very hard to get. I brought them down to Mrs Leavey and that would be taken off the cost of my two-week stay. I went away in 1949 for 10 years and then my business with an international company covering Northern Ireland led me to pass by Cushendun again. I saw May who told me that Mrs Leavey had gone blind. I went in and she was sitting in a wicker chair and when May asked her "Guess who I have here?" in a flash she said "Eddie", held out her arms for a big hug and of course it was all tears. During my school time I had got to know Dan the Duck and Henry Andy and in later years I was even more friendly with them. On Cushendun bridge a lot of young visitors would gather opposite Mary Mc Bride's. (Summer evenings were the time when scratch teams would play hurling matches on the Riggs.) After pub closing time Dan made his way home via Glenmona Estate, bidding goodnight to the ghost of Lord Cushendun as he did so. Some of the teenagers decided to scare the wits out of him by one standing on the other's shoulder with a sheet draped over both tricksters. I warned the Duck beforehand and so when he neared the ghost, he doffed his cap and said, "Goodnight my lord – I see there's two of you tonight." Taking fright, the uppermost half of the ghost fell on the gravel and the lower one, shaking and pale, ran back to the bridge.

After 11 years away, my business took me to Cushendun, and I met again Dan and Gerard Leavey in Mary Mc Bride's. Henry Andy was coming up from the beach with two buckets of sand and the two called him over to meet a good friend. The craic was mighty, and they insisted on accompanying me as far as Bushmills, introducing me to all the pub owners en route. The travellers did not get back to the village until

thirty-six hours later.

Some years later I heard that Henry Andy Mc Neill was employed in an hotel near Belfast. I saw him from my car and putting on an act I directed some irate remarks in his direction. Two years later I revealed the identity of the indignant motorist – a prank he took in good part and we were friends until he cast his last line on the Dun River.

Around the same time at Mass in St. Gerard's the priest gave a great talk on the Phillippines and addressing those standing at the back, saying "plenty of seats up front", he was quickly obeyed. He seemed familiar to me and when I got home, I phoned St. Gerard's and asked the name of the priest. He turned out be our Aiden Bennet who had been a prefect with me in Cushendun. He came to visit us often.

Now after 70 years of living and visiting Cushendun, we still have the pleasure of all our children (7) and grandchildren (20) coming to stay. They love walking along the lanes with the wildflowers and searching the beach for bits of broken pottery and stones which now decorate corners of our house. For kids who have lived in different beautiful parts of the world, the Antrim Coast and Cushendun in particular, is still a magic land as it was for me all those years ago.



**“DOON THE WATTER” -
THE GLASGOW FAIR**

“DOON THE WATTER” - THE GLASGOW FAIR

Glasgow Fair Fortnight occurred during July when Glasgow packed up and left on its holiday.

The origins of the Glasgow Fair can be traced back to the 12th century when the Fair was a market held in the surrounds of Glasgow Cathedral. In the 1800s it was very much a Trade Fair, but by the 1950s, “Doon the watter” was the annual escape from the industrial city, when large numbers departed to the healthier shores of seaside resorts such as Rothesay and Helensburgh.

Other would travel to Cushendun. Over centuries strong links were established with Cushendun with people and trade moving back and forth across the water. Prior to the opening of the Coast Road, Cushendun had a Passport and Customs Office.

Cushendun was therefore both an accessible and attractive destination, not only to first time Scottish visitors but also to those with family connections.

Denis McKay remembers what it was like as a boy to travel from Stranraer to Larne, on either the Princess Maud or the Princess Margaret and the anticipation of two weeks holiday by the sea. He describes the ritual upon arrival at Cushendun and the excitement of reconnecting with friends to sample the delights of swimming and fishing in Cushendun Bay.



Title



Title

Glasgow Fair and Cushendun: A Recollection by Denis McKay

My father was a publican in Glasgow and every year we travelled from Glasgow to Cushendun for our summer holidays.

We are a large family (one of two halves) myself, my brother Archie and sister Christine were the younger half.

We set out from Glasgow every year before the Glasgow fair in our best school uniforms but on the train going down to Stranraer, we occasionally lost our school caps by leaning out of the window of the train. When, after a three-hour journey, we finally got to Stranraer, we boarded one of the two ferries operating on the crossing, either the Princess Margaret or the Princess Maud.

We bedded down in our cabin around nine thirty at night (a rare late night for us children). But at 4:30 in the morning the ship would load up with coal for the crossing and the chute to the hold usually went by our cabin and at first, we were frightened.

Since we were used to the sea, we were generally immune to sea sickness, but we arrived in Larne quite tired from running around the decks during the voyage.

The taxi which met us was usually driven by Alec Mc Kay who would smoke continuously while at the same time singing songs with my father the whole way to Agola.

The first thing to do on arriving at Agola was to turn the water tap and run the water for half an hour to clean out any lead seeping from the pipes. Next, we lit fires in all the rooms and then got the down mattresses plumped up beside the fires.

Once we settled in to the cottage, I went to find last year's pals to work out how to spend the next two weeks of the summer Fair holidays. The whole family was able to swim, so the beach was our priority. There were so many things to do at the beach. If you managed to hire one of Mc Cleary's boats, that was a highlight. Bill Mc Cleary enjoyed a dram with our Dad, so he generally gave us an extra quarter of an hour in the rowing boats.

Other school friends from Glasgow came to the Glens on their summer holidays and they knew many of the local boys as well. So, we built rafts, lit fires and climbed the "Camel's Hump" and played in the caves, long before Game of Thrones discovered them.

For years Scots folk had been coming to the Glens. Like my father, many had been born there and had relatives locally. During the Fair fortnight,

there was always a Scots Dance in the Parish Hall and whist drives were held throughout the Glens at that time. City girls liked to show off the latest fashions to the local girls, who were well able to hold their own at the dances and of course were popular with City boys.

In later years when foreign travel was much easier, the lack of sunshine in the Glens made the locality less attractive in the Fair fortnight. I personally used to see that time as the Fishermen's Friend because you could be sure of a flood in the Dun River. The Vanishing Lake could not be relied upon to vanish.

With the enforcing of the ban on drink-driving, many people did not travel as far for refreshment and the local hostelrys did thriving business. Scots visitors brought with them a holiday thirst and many an impromptu singsong livened the pub before the "box in the corner" put paid to home grown entertainment.

The attractiveness of sunshine holidays has drawn visitors away from Cushendun and the Glens. But the number who do come find a welcoming attitude from the locals who are open to both people and ideas from abroad.

Long may they come and appreciate the welcome and the craic.



**BOOM TOWN -
THE 1950s & 1960s**

BOOM TOWN - THE 1950s & 1960s

From the mid-1950s statutory holiday pay meant that more people than ever before could afford to go on holiday. Foreign travel was still out of reach, so families headed to the seaside and where better than the picturesque village of Cushendun.

The Northern Ireland Tourist Board vigorously promoted the area with films and posters depicting an Arcadian or idyllic version of rural life. The Ulster Transport Company offered 'package' tours and rambler tickets encouraging local travel. Private car ownership rose from under 5% of households in 1950 to 35% in 1970.

With the increase in car ownership came a new trend, touring caravans. More suited to the Irish climate than camping, caravans offered a low cost, modern and fun holiday. Situated in the former grounds of Glenmona House, the Cushendun Caravan Park opened in 1969. For fifty years now it has been the backdrop for countless holidays and untold memories.

It was the height of the 'baby boom' and the holiday business was also booming. During the holidays the demand for accommodation was intense, the children of a household were often evicted to an out-house to make room for paying guests.

The best known of the guest houses, the Villa Farmhouse opened in 1958 run by the indefatigable and entrepreneurial Cassie Scally. Most guests still came by bus and would stay at least a week, needing regular meals. All the cooking and baking was done in-house and most ingredients came from the Scally's farm. One of Cassie's ten children, Maggie Scally remembers churning the butter every Saturday – there was no fast food in those days "you had no choice, everybody got a job." Maggie still runs the Villa, keeping the original interior in pristine condition.

Holidays were the time when friends and families could get together.

In addition to the Hotels, there were the bars, the legendary Blue Room (American forces stationed in Cushendun during WWII named it after a bar in Minnesota and the name stuck), Mary McBride's, and Pat's Bar. All alive with music, singing, a bit of dancing and plenty of 'craic'. Mc Fetridge's Dance Hall at Castle Green was another draw and in the summer a marquee would be erected near the hurling field for dances and show bands.

For younger holidaymakers an equally enticing establishment was Leavey's Shop which sold everything you could possibly need, buckets and spades, shrimp nets, lucky bags, ice-cream, postcards and comics. In 1958 it was enlarged and converted into a coffee shop. The sitting room was divided to allow space for the coffee tables. To the delight of the teenagers, a juke box was installed, playing the hit records of the day. As the holiday market changed, hotels needed to adapt. Pearl McQuillan was the last proprietor of the Bay Hotel, a role that was thrust upon her when, out of the blue, her husband Danny bought the hotel at auction in 1984. For 16 years the hotel was the place for functions, hurling club dinners, birthday parties, exhibitions, bands and weddings (Pearl recalls hosting four weddings over one Easter weekend). When the Bay closed on the 31st October 1998 it was truly the end of an era: as one patron said, "thank you for our youth..."



Title



Title

Cushendun in the 1950s by Marie Mort

My earliest memories of Cushendun are of the early 1950s and being in and out of Leavey's shop, which always seemed to be busy.

Once a month, the bankman came to the room at the rear of the shop and the farmers came to transact their business.

The shop sold some fruit, lots of sweets, cigarettes, tobacco, jewellery and newspapers, magazines and comics (the Topper, Beano, Dandy and others). In the summer the window inside and out was filled with buckets, spades, windmills and balls. Leavey's shop was on the Main Street and in the summer, at the bottom of the garden (in which were grown gooseberries, blackcurrants, redcurrants, strawberries, peas, potatoes and vegetables) was a "shack" selling freshly picked dulse, newspapers and sweets to the visitors on the beach.

Sometime in the 1950s ice cream came to the village – a cause of much excitement. Ulster Creameries ice cream tasted heavenly – small cones and wafers cost 3d, the larger 6d. Children used to wait for the ice cream lorry and when the driver gave them "hot ice", they ran to the bridge, threw it in to the water and watched it sizzle.

Next door to Leavey's was Sarah Hamilton's shop which also sold sweets, cigarettes, games, buckets and spades. Further up the street was Mc Alister's shop, with Violet and Denis behind the counter. At the left-hand counter on entering, were sold groceries and on the opposite side, drapery. The rear of the store was given over to a wide variety of hardware. Petrol pumps, operated manually by a handle, stood outside. At the far end of the bridge, Mary Jane Laverty's Post Office was where the mail was sorted before the postman, Jim Spence, set off on his red bicycle to Glendun, while Gerry Leavey walked to Culrany to deliver letters to homes in that part of the parish. Many times, I often accompanied him on his deliveries to Tor. Years later a Post Office van was brought

into service – an innovation that made the task of delivery much easier. Visitors returned every year to the hotels and local guest houses: in July, from Scotland and Belfast, and in August, Southerners and English people. Enduring friendships were formed, lasting even up until the present day. For a few years, Scottish Boy Scouts camped in the Riggs Hurling Field and again acquaintances were made. The Scout troops came from Roslin and Penicuik near Edinburgh. On the evening before their return home, their minister and scout masters held a jamboree, to which local children were invited and treated to sausages, beans, chips and orange juice. Addresses were exchanged and correspondence carried on until they returned the following year.

It may have been 1958 when the bankman retired, after which, Leavey's shop was enlarged and converted into a coffee shop. The sitting room was divided to allow space for the coffee tables. To the delight of the teenagers, a jukebox was installed, playing the hit records of the day. Those times are nostalgically recalled by the older generation returning now to the village.



Title



Title

After work, Billy Bell organised cricket matches on the green in front of the Maud Cottages. Anyone who batted the ball onto the sands below or across the road into Johnnie's Field, scored automatically a Six. Billy was an accomplished violinist and had a collection of classical LPs, one of his favourites being Schubert's Trout Quintet.

Every Sunday, three or four Upton's Tours buses stopped in the village for one to two hours to give the passengers an opportunity to take in the caves and the beach.

Bill and Jack Mc Cleary hired out rowing boats, allowing the rowers to view the Cave House from the sea. In the evenings, fishing using a streamer from the bow yielded a catch of mackerel or lythe and glaishin. In those years Cushendun was a haven and when visitors departed, tears might be shed. My memory is of one young boy, whose family regularly stayed in the Cushendun Hotel, and who was so reluctant to go home, that he protested by walking in to the middle of the river – but to no avail.

Just below the Bay Hotel was the Salmon Fishermen's hut. The net extended out across the mouth of the river and one of the Finlays' men stood in a rowing boat at the end of the net, so that when salmon entered it, he could signal to the land for the net to be hauled in. The sight of the silver catch never failed to hold the attention of the onlookers. Those salmon which were not sent to Belfast Market that evening, were enjoyed by the residents of the nearby hotels.

Growing up at The Villa Guesthouse by Maggie Scally

Montreal Villa was bought by my grandfather in 1922 to get his family out of Belfast. At that time the Troubles were ongoing, and he didn't want his family to be living in the city. So that's when they came then and they did what everyone does, they fell in love with Cushendun and stayed.

There were three children, my father Harry, Mary who married Paul McCormick, and Alec. My grandmother died in childbirth, so Grandfather brought them up. My father married Cassie. There were ten children in the family and, before she started the B&B, (and I am not ashamed to say this) there were mornings when we would be about to go to school that she would look around and there wouldn't be that much for breakfast. Mum was very practical and if there was a penny to be made, she would make it, so in 1957, when my youngest brother was one year old, she started 'The Villa Guest House'.

When Mum started, very few people had cars and people wouldn't come for a day and leave, they would come on the bus and stay for a week or a fortnight. She was a fabulous cook and in the early days the guests were on 'full board' as they talk about; breakfast, lunch and dinner. We had the farm as well, we kept turkeys, cattle, sheep and hens. Everything that was outside in the vegetable patch and from the farm went on the table and we also sold the eggs and butter. I remember churning the butter every Saturday, it nearly drove me crazy.

We were a big family and all of us children had to help, well you had no choice in the matter, everybody got a job. When we got back from school and had had something to eat ourselves, it was time to serve the guests their dinners, she would line us up and check we were fit to go in to the dining room. Nearly all of the family would be hard workers to this day. In the summer the whole family would move out of the main house and into the barn (now the Coach House). It was not renovated at that stage,

but it was whitewashed every year and there was a bed for everybody that was in it. There was a big fireplace with all the irons and that's where we did our cooking. Dad built an outside toilet but there was no shower, and I tell you something, we learned how to wash out of a pint of water. That's the way it was, we made do and mended.

Mum was great at diversification; she would take in boarders from Garron Tower, or field trips from abroad. She would do Christmas dinners for people outside the house. One time she was raising money for Father McGukian's new house, so she held a Parish Tea and a dance out in the barn. She made the soft furnishings and all our clothes, when we got older and went off to dinner dances wearing the full regalia, the evening dress, the earrings, she made all those too.

My mother was involved in setting up the first tourist group in the Glens. The Villa won many awards over the years, one of my favourites is 'Houses in Harmony with the Countryside'. When she died in 2008, she had been in the business for over 50 years.

I could tell you lots of tales about the folks who came to stay. There was an old lady, I forget her name, she had a wee dog, his name was Bobby, and she treated him like a little baby, Bobby was in the pram with his hat on, and his little boots, and the cover over him. She was a very well to do woman but when Mum was showing her to her room, she noticed the case had a label saying Muckamore, which was in those days an asylum. So many stories, it was good craic I can tell you!

The Bay Hotel by Pearl McQuillan

It was the 14th March 1984. Danny (McQuillan), Turlough McKeegan and Aunty Anne, Danny's sister, went down to the auction to see what was going on. So, the auction ran its course and shortly afterwards I got a phone call from Mrs O'Neill, "Congratulations Pearl" she said. I asked her what she was talking about and she told me "Danny has just bought the Bay Hotel!"

Well Danny came home, and I said, "What are we going to do with it?" and he said, "I don't know but the only one way it can go is up because it's down now." So that was the beginning of the time we ran the Bay Hotel. Up until that time I had been a hairdresser. Plenty of people didn't think we would last six weeks but we were there for nearly 16 years. I'd been thrown in at the deep end, so I reckon it was a pretty good achievement. It was hard, at that time, people weren't coming on holiday the way they used to, but we made so many friends over the years. We had Sunday night dances; they were good. The first band we had was Jo and Jean, they played accordion and she sang. Later we got bigger bands, the Untouchables, Gerry's Duo, Country Creme. If the young ones misbehaved, I told them they wouldn't be getting in again, they hated being barred because they knew it was the only entertainment around. When we were closing the business there were many young boys and girls who said "Thanks for our youth."

We had a lot of Hurling Club dinners from all over. Armoy, Loughguile, Glenarm ... we supported a lot of functions. And weddings, so many weddings. One Easter we had weddings each day of the weekend. Running such events, you had to be able to sort out all the little problems, like providing a needle and thread or, if the groom didn't want to dance the first dance, you had to go running looking for a brother to do it. So many stories I could tell - surprise birthday parties never went to plan. On one occasion there was a birthday party arranged for an old man. On

the way his wife decided to stop and do her shopping, meanwhile her son was getting desperate because the hall was full of people waiting, and the meal was booked. When finally, they got to the Bay, the two of them walked up to the table at the top, they still had no idea of what was going on. The man looked across and recognising a friend said "Oh Hallo, what are you doing here, are you down for your tea?" only then did he notice the others and that they were all his people...

The motorbike weekend, the North West 200, that was one of the highlights of my life.

They came from everywhere. I remember one morning there were 18 bikers waiting for breakfast, but my two waitresses had failed to turn up. I went into the dining room (there wasn't a woman among them) and I said, "Did any of you young fellas do waitering when you were at school?" and two of them put up their hands.

At that time, (during the Troubles) well, Cushendun wasn't really affected, we had a couple of break-ins, we never had any phone calls, any bother. We were nervous about it but there were bands and things we might have been asked to have, certain types of nights of bands... but we tried to keep it all middle of the road. I never went to bed until everyone was out of the place, one of the secrets of successfully running a business with a pub in it is not to drink alcohol (Pearl is a Pioneer). It was a mammoth task, but we had real good times.

A WEEKEND OF TRADITIONAL
DANCE, MUSIC AND SONG
BAY HOTEL, CUSHENDUN, Co. ANT.
FRI.-SAT., MARCH 27-28



The MULLAGH SET DANCERS from Co. Cavan; Sliam flute-players, (Peter Moran, Paddy Duignan, Peter Walsh, Sonny McDonagh etc.); Antrim fife; Ulster fiddlers from Antrim, Tyrone, Fermanagh); songs from Archie McKeegan and other Antrim singers; stories from John Campbell.

FRI. 8.00p.m.: OPENING CONCERT/DANCE ... adm. £2.00
SAT. 3.00p.m.: FLUTE AND FIFE WORKSHOPS / DANCE WORKSHOPS ... adm. free
SAT. 8.00p.m.: CONCERT/DANCE with host, John Campbell.

EXHIBITION OF FLUTE AND FIFE-MAKING by Sam Purray

Enquiries re. accommodation etc. to CAITLIN McNEILAN, CUSHENDUN 507.



Arts Council of Northern Ireland

Title



DECLINE & REGENERATION

DECLINE & REGENERATION

“The Troubles”, from 1969 on, had a negative impact on the tourist industry. Discouraged by regular news footage, people outside Northern Ireland were disinclined to holiday there. While Cushendun was not significantly impacted, the bombing of two hotels in Cushendall and one in Ballycastle did little to dispel the grim picture being enacted nightly on the news.

Not for the first time, Cushendun provided a safe haven for Belfast residents who continued to come to Cushendun, either renting locally or staying in the Caravan Park of which generations of families have fond memories.

Local businesses worked hard during this period to maintain social events for both locals and visitors alike. The Bay Hotel catered for weddings and other family events, and ran social functions including exhibitions, to provide entertainment. In those days, prior to the smoking ban, and long before social media, people actually went out to meet each other and catch up with gossip and news.

Today, with tourism once more on an upward trajectory, Cushendun again attracts visitors from all over the world who wish to visit the famous caves featured in the iconic *Game of Thrones* television series, where Melisandre birthed her shadow baby. Daily tour buses from Belfast bring visitors from the cruise ships docked at Belfast to experience the beauty of the Antrim Coast and the *Game of Thrones* sites.



Title



Title



Title

Autumn in Glendun and the Summer of the Sixties by John Simpson

It's evening in early Autumn and I'm gazing up at Glendun. Autumn clouds are writing words in the sky, those wispy clouds with their throwaway lines.

Back then it was July in Cushendun, there was a blue sky in its summer glow resting heavily on the brown river. Quiet flows the Dun! There's Henry Andy holding forth on the bridge, Dave McWilliams is in the Blue Room and Acky's up to his old tricks again. Mrs Leavey is squeezing them in, England have got the World Cup and Gerry's at his window cursing everyone, down and up. Marie just laughs it off.

Cushendun in July and the Motherwell crowd are there with their "Cod Liver Oil and the Orange Juice." Kevin falls off the wall but he's all right. Johnny the Rocks is scolding us again. We're throwing stones in the river and we're off to play spin the bottle, sure what does he know. Early morning treks round the coast with Tony and we come upon a basking shark bleached by the sun. There was a salmon in the stream at the end of the beach we nearly caught. That salmon was nearly as big as the stream itself; I swear.

Ann arrives with her new baby, puny and blond. Mummy says what are you doing, that baby needs fattening up. Mrs McNeill is slaving away in her garden and Seamus is still working in the field. I've got new sandals for the beach. The plastic cuts into your feet. "Och, never mind that," Mummy says, "Those blisters will heal," she says. Every year she said that. The salt, the sea water, that'll heal them. The ice-cold sea. And then... twilight.

Radio Caroline is coming through. Car headlights are heading up to Castlegreen – The Hop, The Blue Room and afterwards wee Mary's. I'm in bed too soon. Watching out over the white streetlight I see black darts.

Bats with their jagged wings making sharp angles at the light. There is noise too that darts and dives, it's the laughter of the wilder children let loose on the night.

That was then, that was Cushendun, that was the Summer of the Sixties. Now Autumn is having its say. The sea is not as cold now, October is its warmest month. I can hear doves in that tree. Far above them flies a sparrow hawk, it's playing the current as if playing with time, bending and shaping it.

There is a time that is still when nothing moves and there are times which race ahead. In between are moments to find words that give us the measure of things; the probability of this, the probability of that, or just the randomness of it all.



Title

Peace



EUROPEAN UNION

Northern Ireland - Ireland

European Regional Development Fund



**Causeway
Coast & Glens
Borough Council**

