



Looking towards the Green, c.1935. (Sammy Perry)

and as the village had no doctor his potions circulated widely.⁶

The nearest doctors were Dr Irvine of Knock, and the gnomic Dr Henry of Comber, 'a coarse old stick' with a big paunch and a no-nonsense manner, epitomised by his remark: 'You've enough manure in you to cover that garden', delivered to a man in agony with constipation. It is said that 'You didn't need to be in your last throes' when you called Dr. Henry. (Stories about Dr Henry abound. On a visit to Millmount he is supposed to have come on a man repairing a cart. Peering over his half-rimmed specs, Dr Henry was quick to notice a mistake and point it out to the carpenter, who calmly replied, 'I can paint out my mistakes, Dr Henry. It takes more than a lick of paint to cover yours.')

The Symington Band and entourage on the Newtownards Road in the late 1920s. The then police barrack is in the background. (Mrs Hunter)



But to get back to Gape Row. Harry and Lizzie Boyd lived in the last cottage with their eight children, Billy, Tommy, Harry, Acky, Lilly, Jean, Sadie, and Ann. Big Harry Boyd was the ploughman at the Beeches, and played the Lambeg drum in the Star Flute Band, the local kick-the-pope band who operated from the Orange Hall. The Boyds loved a singsong and every so often friends would call, the accordian came out, the drink would flow, and the Row would get no sleep until the wee, wee hours.

The Star was a one key flute band and its members were mostly rough diamonds, renowned more for their drinking than their musicianship. Even so, it usually managed to look the part on the twelfth, thanks mainly to a squad of dummy fluters, who materialised at moments of crisis. The Star folded in the early 1930s leaving the field clear for the rather more respectable and professional Symington Band.

As cities have orchestras, Dundonald had the Symington Memorial Prize Flute Band. It was a part band, and a good one. As well as being hired for the twelfth (for £14 plus expenses), they played at almost all Dundonald's set piece occasions, turning out for services, fetes, galas and the coronation of George VI; commemorated with a fete on the Cricky Field, and a bonfire on the moat, built from dozens of empty tar barrels kicked and rolled from Quarry Corner.

The McConnells were now the village's publicans, Tom at one end and Sam at the other, propping it up like a pair of bookends. Tom McConnell ran the Moat Inn. He was an easy going landlord and too free for his own good with credit. It is said that he 'kept half of Dundonald' during the depression. As well as a publican, Tom was the local grocer, coalman, petrol seller, banker and undertaker's agent, arranging funerals for Browns of Belfast. The grocery was run from what is now Tom's Cabin, and had you called during the '30s you might have been served by Tom's brother in law, a shy young man named Jack McKibbin; weekly orders delivered by pony at no extra charge.

If anything Sam was even more easy going than Tom, but he fell out with people easily. The harder type drank here. Like Tom, Sam did a bit of everything. He started a chippie, frying up in a pig feeder in the basement until it went on fire and he doused it with water and was lucky to get out alive. Sam



The new police barrack in 1938. It has since been turned into a fortress.