

## Bowling Green of Yesteryear

In 1883, a sub-committee of the Town Commissioners reported on the sanitary conditions of the houses in this area. Some were occupied in tenements, others were held by single families.

“In none of these houses is there any provision as to water closets, privies or drains which, in itself is deplorable; but your committee feel it would be but ill discharging their duty if they stopped short at such an exposition and remain silent as to the absence of every feature which would recommend them as habitations for human beings. The poor can only hope for impoverished dwellings, but when a gentleman enters into commercial relations with them, and on a well intended profitable scale to himself .... he should not be exempted from the obligation of providing them with accommodation somewhat better than Indian wigwams”;

Throughout the report, which discusses poverty and deprivation in many other parts of Galway as well, the words that stand out are “miserable”, “omnipresent ordure”, “dung heap” and so on.

At the beginning of the last century, Thomas S. Clarke ran a company called “The Bowling Green Mills” here that made “celebrated homespuns” and specialized in tweeds, blankets and rugs. At that time also, Michael Lydon and Son were fishing tackle manufacturers in Bowling Green. The street has always been, and remains, almost exclusively residential. While the facades remain the same, the interiors bear no resemblance to the 1883 report. The numbering system on the houses was a mess (at one stage there were four No. 5’s in Bowling Green) but has now been regularised

Using the present numbers, those who lived on the left of the street in the 1940’s were as follows; The Donnellans and later the Mulkerrins lived at No. 2 ; Ma and Da Seary were in No. 4, later on the Spelmans ; Jack Seary and later the Conneelys were in No. 6 ; Next door was occupied by Annie Barnacle who died in 1940. She was Nora Barnacle’s mother. The Cotters lived there later; Mannions were in No. 10 ; No. 12 was occupied by Susie Stephens, and later on by Johnny and Kathleen Griffin. Kathleen was Nora Barnacle’s sister ; Next door lived the Flavins, later on the Scanlons ; Mary Mulreaney and Monica Dillon lived at No. 16 and it later passed to the O’Sullivans ; The O’Shaughnessy family were at No. 18, which was later taken over by the O’Connors ; Next to that was the back entrance (now demolished) to McNamara’s Butcher shop in Lombard Street.

On the right hand side, the Kellys lived in No. 1 ; Reagans were in No. 3 ; Peter Heaney had his butcher shop and residence next door ; May McDonagh was in No. 7 which later passed to the Morris's ; The Walshs and later the Lenihans were in No. 9 ; The Clohertys were next door and finally, No. 13 (now demolished) was occupied by the Fallons.

Many of the houses consisted of one room upstairs and one room down. Their small yards probably served as kitchens during the summer. The houses on the left got their water supply in 1940.

Our sincere thanks to an old Galwegian for this photograph, and to Jimmy Mannion for much of the information.

An Taisce's July tour takes place this Sunday, the 17th July 2011, to Inchagoill Island on Lough Corrib, to Cong and to Ashford Castle by boat, weather permitting. In the event of it not permitting, the tour will become a Wilde Tour of Conamara. The guide will be Peadar O'Dowd. The bus leaves CIE bus station at 10am. If you are interested, please contact Martin Byrnes at 091 794 435.