

Tragedy At Carrickmakeegan

Una Maguire

On Sunday afternoon of the 23rd of August 1942 the community, not only of Drumreilly and Ballinamore, but also of Leitrim and places further afield, was shocked by news of the terrible drowning tragedy, which took place on the Ballinamore- Ballyconnell Canal about sixty yards from Carrickmakeegan Bridge. Earlier on that fateful afternoon a group of happy young people, ranging in age from sixteen to twenty, had cycled from Ballinamore towards Garadice Lake. I was ten years of age at the time. I remember that, as myself and other family members were returning to the meadow after dinner, we passed the group of young people on the bridge. They were having great fun, laughing, singing and playing music.

Vincent Keegan rowed his brother's 16ft. flat-bottomed boat from Maxwell's shore to a point on the canal, where all got aboard. Two of the group, with the help of the oars, were pushing the boat away from the canal bank, when it capsized, and all ended up in the water. Hugh Baxter and my father Tommy Connolly, both of whom lived nearby, were called to help by Eamonn Canning and Vincent Keegan. They helped in taking the first body from the water. John James Maxwell, Bernie McEnroy, John Kelleher, John Gallagher and others joined them later. Dr. Moroney and Fr. Patrick Brady C.C. Ballinamore were also there to render assistance. Noel Dolan was the only swimmer in the group, and he and Vincent Keegan, a non-swimmer displayed great heroism in their attempts to

rescue their comrades. Despite their best efforts however, four girls and two boys lost their lives. They were Maureen Moran, Carmel Prior, Maureen Rowley, Minnie Walsh, Seamus Wisley and Sean Dolphin. The survivors were Betty Bohan, Carmel Conlon, Teresa Martin, Bernadette Wisley, Eamonn Canning, Noel Dolan and Vincent Keegan. I remember my mother giving dry clothes to Betty Bohan, Carmel Conlon and Bernadette Wisley.

The accident took place at about 4.00 p.m. but it was after half eight before the last of the bodies was recovered. The bodies were taken on John James Maxwell's lorry to the Catholic Hall, Ballinamore, and the inquests took place on the following day. The remains were laid out in the Hall, and later the six coffins were removed and placed in front of the Church altar. There were heart-rending scenes in the town before and during the funerals. Carmel Prior, Sean Dolphin and Seamus Wisely were laid to rest in Oughteragh cemetery. Maureen Moran and Minnie Walsh were taken for burial in in Aughnasheelin, and Maureen Rowley was interred in Fenagh Abbey cemetery.

A memorial stone, inscribed with the names of the six victims, stands at Carrickmakeegan Bridge, reminding us of one of the most appalling tragedies to befall Leitrim or the surrounding counties during the last century. The presence of the monument should remind us of the advice of the poet, who wrote at the time as follows:

*"Now all you good people, take a warning from me;
Never pass on that way without going on your knees.
Say a prayer for the souls you will never see more,
For they lost their young lives out on Garadice shore."*



Padraig Mulligan, Mary Kate Brady, Marian Mulligan, John Brady, Geraldine Mulligan and Sean Maxwell at the memorial at Carrickmakeegan Bridge



Hughie and Una Maguire



Oliver Maguire and his nephew Kevin Prior



Back Row L-R: Maggie Reilly, Jimmy Reilly, Tony Irwin and Hughie Maguire
Front row L-R: ? ?, Mrs Irwin, Maria Maguire, John Maguire, Una Maguire



Una Maguire with her children Oliver, Sean, Regina, Dessie, Anna Marie, Geraldine, Hugh Joseph and Michael

The Garadice Victims

i

*Dear friends from all over this nation,
Your sympathy with mine do extend
With the parents of the Garadice victims,
Which to heaven its blue waters did send.*

ii

*It being early one fine summer's evening,
As the sun its bright rays did unfold;
Those youths they went out to go sailing,
Their numbers being thirteen all told.*

iii

*They said goodbye to their friends before leaving,
And to Garadice then made their way;
They were watching with eager eyes seeking
A boat, which by the riverside lay.*

iv

*They got into the boat, where 'twas anchored
Where the river is fifteen feet wide;
And when water flowed over the gunwale,
It was then they leaped over the side.*

v

*Noel Dolan, the only swimmer among them
Showed courage and pluck seldom found.
He with others saved some of the party,
But six of those youngsters were drowned.*

vi

*The six were two boys and four girls,
And the oldest was scarcely nineteen.
May their souls shine forever in glory
With Mary our Mother and Queen.*

vii

*In my mind I can still see their faces,
Who in life were so young and so gay.
Ballinamore their fond memories will cherish
While their bodies lie mouldering in clay.*

viii

*So pray for Prior, Moran and Rowley,
Walsh, Dolphin and Sean Wisley,
Who left from their homes that sad evening
Their loved ones no more for to see.*

Maguires I Ardra



Maggie Maguire and her son Joe



L-R: Hughie and Joe Maguire



Standing L-R: Hughie Maguire, Tommy Keegan, Kathleen Maguire, Maggie Mary Maguire, Keegan, Joe Maguire
Seated L-R: Johnny McCartin, Bridget McCartin, Bridget McCartin Masterson



L-R: Joe Bridget and Hughie Maguire