

# Public Houses in the Parish of Lorrha & Dorrha

*By Seamus King*

There were fifteen public houses in the Parish of Lorrha and Dorrha in the early nineteen-eighties. I became aware of them when I was writing the history of the Lorrha G.A.A. Club. As the number of inhabitants in the parish at the time was approximately 1,300, it meant that there was a pub for every 87 men, women and children! It is unknown how many of the proprietors of these premises made a living out of selling alcoholic drink but my hunch is that virtually all of them depended on ancillary enterprises.

The fifteen pubs were as follows: The Angler's Rest, two Kelly's pubs of Rathcabbin, Mary Anne Brophy's, Lack Meara's, Fitzpatricks of Abbeyville, Sammons, O'Meara's and the Hilltop Pub, Carrickahorig, Carrolls and Hooctor's, The Ferry, Portland House, Moylans and Weddocks, Lorrha, Milne's of Ballymacegan. (I am including the Hilltop Bar because, although it is strictly outside the parish, it is part of the village of Carrigahorig.)

In 2018 there are four pubs left, two in Lorrha, The Friar's Tavern and Pat Houghs, The Ferry Inn, and Kellys of Rathcabbin. Before they disappear altogether I thought it a good idea to record what we know of all these establishments while people have memories of them. I have tried to get as much information as possible and it varies from pub to pub but at least they will be remembered as places that people enjoyed visiting and provided a service for people, mostly men, to have a drink and converse with their neighbours in a relaxed atmosphere.

I would like to thank everyone, especially the proprietors, who co-operated with me in supplying information for this article. Any errors in the information I take responsibility for.

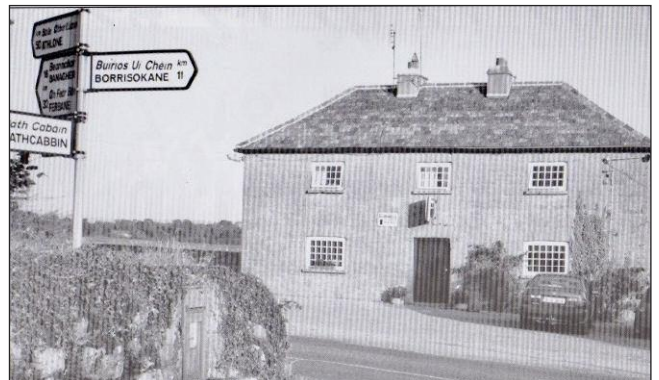
## Fitzpatricks of Abbeyville

Situated on the R438 between Borrisokane and Walsh Park Cross, in the townland of Kilkask, and adjacent to the junction for Lorrha village, is Fitzpatricks, formerly Quinlan's, Pub, run by Louis and Kathleen McCormack. Louis married into the pub in 1981, when it was run by his wife, Kathleen Fitzpatrick, who had inherited it from her uncle, Edward Fitzpatrick. The latter was the proprietor since 1959, when he inherited it from his mother Anne E. Fitzpatrick. Even though Edward owned it, it was run by his sister, Maudie,

Annie E inherited it from her mother, Mai Quinlan, who died in 1930. She had been signed over the pub by her father Rody in 1906. Apparently Rody had lived across the road, where he had a forge and twenty-five acres. He bought what came to be a pub sometime at the turn of the century. Whether it was a pub when he bought it or that he got the licence after the purchase, is not clear.

The building had been an RIC barracks and features of the original structure can still be seen. At one gable end are two slits in the stonework, which could be used as lookout points or places from which to fire a rifle. A picture in the possession of the family shows a customer approaching the door of the pub. The window behind him shows bars on the window, which could suggest a barracks. Having entered the front door, directly in front of one is a small window looking into the bar. This area has very stout walls and is believed to have been the cell in the original barracks.

It is believed that the barracks was originally at the nearby Ashpark House and the Ordnance Survey Map reveals this. Johnny O'Meara of Somerset House is of the belief that there was a pub beside the barracks also. Why a new barracks was built a half-mile up the road is unclear but it would appear that it was the case. Perhaps the pub licence moved up at the same time.



*Fitzpatrick's Pub, Abbeyville. (Courtesy: Roland Dyer.)*

So, five generations of the Quinlan's and their descendants the Fitzpatrick have run the pub since Rody Quinlan moved into the barracks in 1899. It was always a great card-playing pub but to-day, unfortunately, the card players are dead and there's nobody to replace them.

### Brophy's of Rathcabbin

Brophy's, originally Hoctor's, closed the door of its licensed premises in Rathcabbin in 2018 after the family had traded there since 1916. According to a report from the Nenagh Quarter Sessions of 1916 the licence of Robert Dillon was transferred to Patrick Hoctor in that year.

The 1911 census tells us, Patrick Hoctor was 34 years of age in that year. He was a farmer living at Sharragh, with his brother Malachy and sister Bride, all single. Also in the census returns Mary Brophy is 33 years old, works as a manageress and has her own house.

Following Patrick Hoctor's purchase of the pub from Robert Dillon in 1916, he married Mary Brophy in 1917. The couple had no children. The business the couple ran was a grocery as well as a pub, all in the one space. In later years it was a thriving business and rings, for tying horses and other animals, can still be seen on the road wall outside the premises. After Pat Hoctor's death, the business continued to be run by Mary until her death in 1965.

Earlier, she had invited her niece, Mary Anne Brophy, to help her run the business and the latter later inherited it. Mary Anne continued to run the business until 2001, when she handed over to her nephew, John Brophy, and he continued to run it until 2018, when he closed it. Mary Anne died in 2013.

### Milne's Pub, Ballymacegan

It is believed that Milne's Pub started trading as a licenced premises in 1885 and the story on how it got its licence is interesting. The proprietor of the building at the time was a great shooting and fishing man, Tony Somerville. He became friendly with a judge in Portumna, whose name I haven't got, who had similar interests. The two men spent a lot of time together fishing and after an outing on the Shannon, they would return to Somervilles for a few drinks, which Tony kept in the house. In the course of time the judge came to fear that he might be compromised by drinking in the house and convinced Tony that it would be better if he had a licence to sell drink. The judge enabled Tony to get the licence and Somerville's became a licenced premises in 1885.

Tony Somerville married an Annie Mannion from Curragha and they reared a large family that included at least two sons. One son, Michael, fought in World War 1 and was injured at the Battle of the Somme. Martin, the youngest child, was a member of the Old I.R.A.. The Somerville house was a 'safe house' during the War of Independence and was raided many times by the Black and Tans.



*The old thatched pub at Milne's.  
(Photo: Courtesy of Tony & Dee Milne.)*

Martin eloped to Scotland with a local schoolteacher, Mary Clune, in the 1930s, shortly after she was appointed to Redwood National School. Apparently the Somervilles got into debt through the purchase of land and were bailed out by Tony Milne of Crinkle. Tom was married to Kathleen Somerville. This resulted in Tony Somerville's grandson, Tony Milne, taking over the pub in 1942 with his wife, Eileen.

It was an old thatched pub and provided a great service to locals for decades, saving them the journey of over three miles to Lorrha or Rathcabbin if they wanted a drink. The old pub continued in existence until 1987, when business was transferred to a new building across the yard. The old pub was pulled down

in 1988 and the new pub continued to serve drink until 2007 when the current owners, Tony and Dee Milne decided to close it down.

### **Lack Meara's of Ross**

Better known as 'Lack' Meara's, this pub on the Birr-Portumna road at Ross served drink for over one hundred years before it was closed down in 1992. Patrick O'Meara, who was a publican and farmer, came from Terryglass and died in 1876. He is reputed to have brewed his own beer next door to the premises. He was succeeded by his son, Michael, who was born in 1854 and died in 1901 from throat cancer.

It appears that the next proprietor was Kate McGrath, the sister-in-law of Michael O'Meara and she took over the pub and farm after his death. She was succeeded by James O'Meara, the son of Michael and he ran the business until his death in 1972. He was married to Maureen King of Coorlanty, Shinrone and they had two children, Michael and Mary. Michael, who was married to Evelyn Mahon of Lorrha, inherited the business and ran it until the pub was closed in 1992. The licence was sold some years later. Michael died in 2007.

### **The Angler's Rest**

The Angler's Rest doesn't serve drink any longer, but it was a pub of great longevity, probably the oldest pub in the Parish of Lorrha and Dorrha, situated on the Borrisokane to Ferbane Road on the banks of the River Brosna, that separates the counties of Tipperary and Offaly. It is unusual in that it was over time situated on different sides of the road and had the misfortune to be burned down twice.

According to a sign that used to decorate the gable end of the original pub, it got its licence as early as 1829. If that is the case the Angler's Rest must have been licenced soon after the introduction of the Alehouse Act of 1828. It may have got a licence as a result of the construction of a RIC barracks on the hill overlooking the river crossing on the Borrisokane side. Barracks usually had drinking houses nearby and it used to be said that when the RIC were there, their members could drink in the bar, but the Irish had to make do with the goats' shed!



We don't have a record of the owners during the 19th century. According to the Census of 1901 and 1911, Mary Dwyer a widow was a Publican in Annagh. The next owners were the Lyons of Banagher and they sold it to the Larkin family in 1930. The ownership changed hands about the middle of the century when Dan Treacy, originally from the Knockshegowna/Borrisokane area bought it. He was a colourful character and kept a great selection of guns in the place. His wife was a National Teacher.

The next owner was named Cullen and he transformed the pub into what was one of the first singing pubs in the country. Up to them women were hidden away quietly in snugs, but the Angler's Rest was opened up to give them a proper place in such establishments. Cullen did a great business as a result and had to expand the premises to cater for the increased crowds. The next owner was Gilmartin and the singing business declined during his proprietorship. Then in 1977 the pub went on fire one night and some of the neighbouring families remember waking up to the commotion and the sound of spirit bottles blowing up.

The ruins lay idle for a year and Jim Duffy, who had been involved in the well-sinking business, bought the ruin and the land that went with it and decided to rebuild it but across the road. He worked the pub until 1985 when it was bought by Michael and Mary Stephens and they continued there until 1991, when they sold it to Noel Ely. In 1989 the pub was the centre of great celebrations when Lusmagh won the County Offaly senior hurling title. There were several owners after that, one from the North of Ireland, Brendan Laffan from County Armagh, who tried to make a go of it by introducing food and hosting weddings. It was eventually closed down in 2009 and burned down about twelve months later.

## Portland House

The newest place in the parish to be licenced to sell drink was Portland House. Originally known as Portland Park, it was owned by Major Charles Kemble Butler-Stoney, who handed it over to the trustees of Emmanuel Home, Rathgar, Dublin as a home for Protestant orphan children in 1938. Seventeen orphans from Emmanuel House were due to arrive and take up residence there on May 10. Early on that morning a body of armed men entered the house, ordered out the inmates and burned it to the ground. Nobody was ever prosecuted for the deed.

The ruin, on two acres (The estate had been taken over by the Land Commission in the 1930s and the final part was allocated to tenants just before the fire.) became the property of Jamesy Dunne and it remained so until the mid-seventies, when he sold to Dutchman, Johann Schmidt. He opened a hotel with ten ensuite bedrooms and two apartments. The business had an hotel licence, which was run by a Dutch couple, Bill and Angel.

After some years it was purchased by a Dublin man, named Mike Murphy, whose parents came from Kerry. He continued to run it until 1984 when it was leased by Joe O’Keeffe, a hotelier from Glengarrif, who had managed the Westpark Hotel in Portumna for a number of years. Joe refurbished the premises, converted the two apartments into rooms, purchased a full bar licence and developed a business, which catered for the hunting and fishing tourists. He also catered for local needs in the line of weddings, socials and a restaurant business. This continued until 1997 when there was a small fire on the premises, which did a lot of smoke damage. Joe decided not to repair the damage and closed down the business. Portland House returned to its original state.

## Flynns Hilltop Bar Carrigahorig

The Miss Flynns ran a pub on the top of the hill in Carrigahorig. Since the two of them were teachers, the pub didn’t open too often, usually at weekends and it didn’t stock draft beer, only bottles. They also had a small grocery, which was stocked with the basics. They drove a green Morris Minor car for years. Mai taught in Rathcabbin at one stage and ended up in Terryglass. Nonie taught in the Girls School in Lorrha. Some of the smart boys in the school made up the following cant about Mai:

*Mai Flynn had a hen  
Hatching in the clover.  
The hen died, Flynn cried  
And all the fun was over.*

The Flynns were members of a very large family of twenty children. Their father, Ned, owned the pub before them. He also had a few bits of land but wouldn’t be called a farmer. When the Miss Flynns closed the pub isn’t quite clear.

At some stage it was bought by Johann & Brid Scharnenweber, who owned Darragh Builders. They sold it 1989 to P.J. Kenny, who owned the Waterfall in the village in the early seventies and sold it in the eighties. Following his death in 2,000, his son Peter took it over and later sold it to Vincent Cullen, who is in the process of setting up a Centre of Mindfulness there. Vince was an alcoholic for much of his adult life, often wanting to have his own pub but as he says “Luckily, I never got one!”. Now 20+ years sober, he acquired ‘The Hilltop’ pub in Carrigahorig, Tipperary with plans to turn it into a residential mindfulness meditation centre renamed ‘Nalagiri House’, ‘a pub with no beer serving mindfulness to those with a thirst for true happiness’.

## Sammons of Carrigahorig

When Michael Sammon bought the public house in Carrigahorig about 1880 it was a small one storey premises and, in the course of time he built it up to a substantial two-storey building that housed not only the pub but a grocery and Post Office as well. There was also a farm attached. The Sammon’s family were big in the pub business with different members owning premises in Eyre Square in Galway City, Paddy’s bar in Terryglass and two pubs in Birr, including the Cherry Tree.

Michael Sammon passed the pub on to his son, Michael, who continued the trade and expanded the business. He died in 1964 and the business was carried on by his wife, Catherine, until the mid-seventies, when she sold out to P. J. Kenny, a Roscommon man. He continued to run it until the late eighties.

John Sammon, the son of Michael & Catherine, who might have inherited it, but his interest was more in land, recalls the pub as a busy place in the fifties and sixties. There were a number of families living in Ballyquirke and he remembers that about twenty young lads from that townland would come up to Carrigahorig on a summer's evening and congregate in the place. They might play hurling or football or just hang around. P. J. Kenny sold out at the end of the eighties and bought the Hilltop Bar further up the road. There were a number of different owners until it was purchased by Des Hough, who closed down the pub and sold the licence.

## Houghs of Carrigahorig

The Hough family of Carrigahorig were a strongly republican family and were active during the War of Independence. They provided a safe haven for Sean Treacy, Dan Breen and Sean Hogan after the Knocklong Rescue and the three are reputed to have lain low there for two weeks after it. There was a RIC Barracks on the hill behind the premises at the time and it is believed that the Sergeant knew of their presence, but he did nothing about it.

At some stage Tom Hough left Carrigahorig and purchased a pub in Tower Hill, Borrisokane. His brothers and sister, Mini, continued in the premises in Carrigahorig. Their niece, Mary Sherlock, from Rathcabbin came to help out in the place and eventually inherited the business.

She married Leo O'Meara of Curragha in the sixties and they had three children, Geraldine, Miriam and Joseph. The latter was killed tragically in January 1991 when a tree fell on the minibus in which he was travelling, close to Portumna, in all seven died in the tragedy. Leo O'Meara died in 2004 and Mary in 2017. Geraldine had already taken over the business and it was closed in 2014.

In its heyday, Houghs of Carrigahorig was a thriving business, with a grocery and the Post Office as well. It is situated in a precarious location at the bottom of a steep hill with a sharp bend. Quite a number of cars missed the bend and ended up against the house or up the lane beside it. The worst case was a lorry load of lime that came through the front door in the 1960s! Luckily nobody was killed.

## Burbages of the Ferry

Soon after the Second World War, Jack Burbage of Birr, who had fought with the Royal Airforce during the war, inherited his uncle's pub, known as Carroll's at the Ferry. John Carroll was married to a Joyce from Carrigahorig. About the same time Mary, his future wife from Horseleap, Co. Westmeath, set out to serve her time in the grocery and bar trade. She came to Terryglass to work in the Derg Inn. After some time there she moved on to Ennis, back to Horseleap to mind her sick aunt, and back to Terryglass after the aunt's death. One night as she was serving, a customer, who turned out to be Jack Burbage, came in for a drink. He was looking for help in his bar and Mary went to work for him. It was to lead to marriage in 1950.

The pub was a small thatched place, which they were to roof in 1958. There was a grocery and farm as well. Mary remembers that most of their business came from the River Shannon. At that time the Shannon was a highway of commerce, busy with boats and barges plying between Limerick and Portumna, as well as further afield. Big companies like Ranks had stores at the bridge and fertilisers, corn, flour and meal were available to the locals there. The pub was also frequented by some of the workers from McAinch's timber mill and it was always a place for card players. It was a hive of activity and the boaters visited Burbages regularly. Mary remembers that when the wind was blowing a certain way the boats couldn't make their way up Lough Derg and would wait at the bridge for it to ease. On such occasions business was good in the pub. The place used to host the annual presentation of prizes by the Athlone Sailing Club, who used to organise a sailing race from Athlone to Portumna. The presentation continued for many years until 2015 and it used to liven up the pub around the pot belly stove.



*Burbage's Pub, The Ferry. Taken in August 1958 the day before the thatch was removed. Included in the picture are Marty Hogan, Dick Burke, Vincent Hogan, Johnnie Butler, Bobby Browne, Joe Healy, Dinny Duggan.*

All the river business disappeared in the sixties after CIE took over the canal company and closed it down as lorries began to do the same business on the roads. Jack and Mary had four children, three boys and a girl. Jack died in 1991 and Mary continued the business in 2014. The licence is still there, and she believes that one of the sons might still open it up again.

## The Ferry Inn

According to the census returns there was only one pub at the Ferry at the beginning of the twentieth century and that was owned by John Stronge. It's not certain whether that was the Ferry Inn or Burbages that was referred to. The Ferry Inn was owned from the nineteen-twenties onwards by Pat and Nora Hoctor and it was taken over by Mansie Stronge in the fifties. It is not possible to say if these Stronges were related to the original John Stronge. The Stronges sold out in the nineteen-seventies and the Ferry Inn was purchased by a man named Le Froy from County Clare, who ran the Emerald Star Line on the Shannon. He expanded the place, started a restaurant and built a dance hall. He had some big bands to play in the expanded premises.

He was succeeded by Nicholas McGuinness, a German-Pole, who took an Irish name, and Shane Fogarty, who hailed from the Midlands. McGuinness, originally named Klaus Mielke, studied music, was a fine trombone player and played jazz in all sorts of venues with different bands. He came to Ireland in 1966, changed his name and became an Irish citizen in 1978. He opened a restaurant, The Tuning Fork, in Carrickahorg and bought the Ferry Inn, which became a rousing entertainment spot during his tenure. He was succeeded by Eoin O'Carroll of Portland Lane and Tom Nugent bought it off him in 1982 and kept it until 1997. During his ownership he leased it out for periods to P. K. Gleeson, Joe Keane and Joe Tierney.

The current owner, Barry Walker, from County Meath purchased it in 1997, changed it around and put back in the restaurant, which had been done away with under the previous owners. The premises carries on an big food business today as well as continuing to serve alcohol as it has done for over one hundred years.

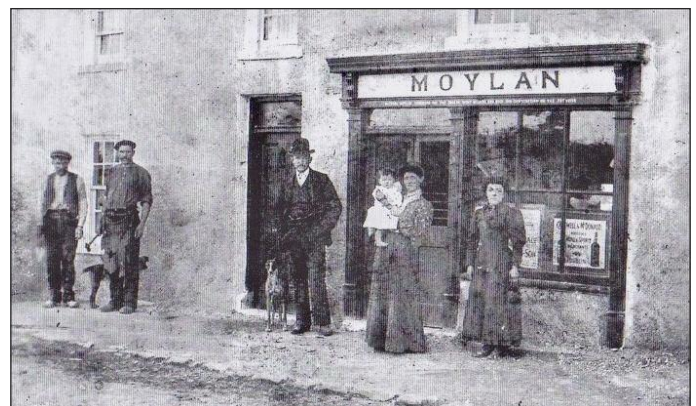
## Pat Houghs of Lorrha

This is one of the best-known pubs in Ireland having the name for the cheapest pint in the country. It is also known for having as proprietor one of the most knowledgeable people on local history and tracing relationships nationwide. There is one more reason why it is famous: it has been in the same family for over 200 years. Owned and managed by Pat Hough today, it was originally in the Flannery name and became Moylan's, the family name of Pat's mother, Maureen. She had a great gift for remembering people and tracing ancestors and relations. This tradition is still carried on by Pat.

Over the two centuries the pub has existed through a famine, wars and many other changes. Throughout this time the house opened its doors to many people of all trades and professions. This welcoming attitude is continued by Pat. His grandfather, Michael Moylan, was a classmate and friend of Thomas MacDonagh. Donough MacDonagh, his son, has been a frequent visitor. Fr. John Gleeson, P.P. a cousin of the Flannery/Moylan family, stayed in the house, when he first came as a curate to Lorrha. He stayed with the family for five years. The Moylan family donated a portion of land across the road on which the present Parochial House was built in 1912.

In the census returns for 1911, Michael Moylan, the head of the household, is 32 years of age. He is married to Ellen Flannery and they have two children, Mary 4, and William 2. Also living in the house was Ann (?) Flannery, mother-in-law. There were three boarders also, including Martin Coghlan, a 40 year old tailor.

In common with many public houses at the time, the Moylans bottled their own stout and whiskey and still extant are labels advertising Moylan's Extra Stout and their 10 Year Old Fine Pot Still Whiskey. In 1916 Michael Moylan's pint rose from two old pence (which meant you could get 120 pints for a £1) to two and a



*Moylan's Pub, Lorrha 1908: Left to right - Mr. O'Meara, Bill Pollard, Michael Moylan (proprietor). His wife Ellen, with their baby, Maureen, (later Mrs. Danny Hough), Lizzy Kennedy, Redwood (later Mrs. Power pf Powers Hotel, Waterford). (Photo: Courtesy of Pat Hough).*

half pence. This raise coincided with the introduction of new (or summer) time. Hence the saying: 'It rose by the new time!'

Pat Houghs is not only a pub but a place of pilgrimage as well, that brings people to visit it if they're in the neighbourhood. The visitor's book contains many famous names. They include politicians, entertainers, sports personalities, including Olympian, Ronnie Delaney, and film director/actor, Patrick Bergin. The most famous visitor must surely have been, Sir William Deane, Governor General of Australia, whose grandfather left the Parish of Lorrha to make his name in Australia.

### The Friar's Tavern

This pub was owned by the O'Meara's at the beginning of the twentieth century. John J. O'Meara was the head of the household. Also living in the house was T. F. O'Meara, a younger brother. T. F. was the secretary/treasurer of the Lorrha G.A.A. Club in 1902. In one extant post card addressed to him he is named as 'Capt. Lorrha H.C.' He was an efficient secretary and he kept meticulous accounts as the statement of the club income for 1902 gives testimony. The total income was £6 - 8 - 2 and the subscription list includes sixty-five names from all over the parish, which suggests a large club.

According to the Lorrha G.A.A. history 'T. F. was an important man in the village having a shop and a pub, plenty of land and an auctioneering business. He must have brought a bit of substance and respectability to the club as did his namesake in Somerset. But, he was also a hurler of renown, having captained the 1905 team to the club's first championship win. He continued to hurl up to 1914. According to the newspaper accounts from the period, T. F. played in all the games of the 1914 championship but, for some reason, he is not included in the photograph that purports to be of the 1914 champions.'

The O'Mearas sold out in the 1930s to Jimmy Weddock, who came from County Carlow, and continued to trade until 1954. The next owner was Peter Rooney, who hailed from County Tyrone. He, in turn, sold out to Richie Bourke in 1987. The next owner was Denis Maher, who took over about 1999 and he continued in business until 2015, when Martin Mangan took over.

### Kelly's of Rathcabbin

According to George Henry Bassett's Guide and Directory to County Tipperary in 1889, there were two publicans in Rathcabbin, Michael Deane and Mrs. Mary Kelly. Both businesses were groceries as well and the latter also ran the Post Office. Nearby, in Derrinsalla, there was another Post Office, run by Patrick Guinan and a publican named Michael O'Dwyer.

According to the 1911 Census Patrick Kelly, Derry, Rathcabbin was a publican and auctioneer. He was 44 years of age, probably the son of Mary and married to Isabella. They had five children, Mary, Isabella, who later married Mick, the Horsey, O'Meara, Annie, John Nicholas, who was one year old, and Kathleen, who was a baby.



*Kelly's, Rathcabbin with the owner, Patrick Kelly and two of his children, Kitty & Jack about 1912.  
 (Photo: Courtesy of Michael & Carmel O'Meara.)*

One of the oldest pubs in the village of Rathcabbin was Deanes. It was purchased by Richard Bracken, the principal teacher in the local school, in the nineteen-twenties, after he got married. Before that he used to commute by motor-bike from Banagher, where he came from. Because he was a teacher he couldn't hold a licence to sell alcohol and it was held in the names of his brother and a relation of his wife's. He held the pub until the early nineteen-fifties when it was purchased by Jack Kelly, who was probably the John Nicholas, son of Patrick of the census returns, and ran it until the late seventies. In later years he used to open on Sundays only. Jack died in 1994.

At the same time the original Kelly pub in the village was run by Mai Kelly, a sister of Jack's. She died in 1956 and the running of the pub was continued by her sister, Kit, who died in 1984. Since then it is run by the current owners, Pat and Davina Kelly.