

Mary O'Reilly, the shoemaker's daughter from Killorglin

Mary O'Reilly was born in Killorglin in 1919 and at an early age had decided that the local National School was not for her, much better was the Presentation Convent School in Milltown, even though it was a four mile walk! She often told the story of not wanting to be different from the other pupils so she hid her shoes under a pile of stones somewhere on the journey and continued barefoot. This worked until someone saw her, removed the shoes and took them to her father Patrick O'Reilly, a shoemaker! She did not get a good reception on returning home, all the way thinking the shoes had been stolen. The O'Reilly family lived for many years on Lower Bridge Street, the 1911 census lists Mary's parents Patrick and Margaret (formerly O'Connor) with her older siblings Eileen (b 1907) and Monnie (b 1909). The family was completed with Danny (b 1911), Edward (b 1913), Margaret (b 1916), Mary (b 1919) and Sheila (b 1923). Mary's grandfather Michael, also a shoemaker, had moved from Cromane and in 1872 married Ellen O'Shea, they also lived on Lower Bridge street. Her great grandparents, Michael and Johanna, lived in the early 19th century in Lower Cromane, but that's where our family research has come to a halt. In 1936 the O'Reillys moved from Lower Bridge street over the river to No 11 Laune View.



Our oldest photographs are: Left Picture, back row L to R, Eddie, Danny, Margaret, front row L to R, Mary, Sheila. Right picture, Mary.
Both pictures are probably 1922/23.

The boys all played at some time for Laune Rangers. Below is an early photograph from the archives on their website.



A 1928 Killorglin team, front row 2nd from left is Danny O'Reilly and far right is Eddie O'Reilly¹



The O'Reilly's about 1930, back row L to R, Eileen, Monnie, Danny, Edward, front row L to R, Patrick (father), Mary, Margaret, Sheila, Margaret (mother).

¹ From the history.launerangers.ie website



Sheila O'Reilly in red cross photograph, middle row 2nd from right, about 1940².

Below is an old postcard of Killorglin, most likely from the 1950's, looking up to the town across the river, the gentleman in the bottom left corner is Patrick O'Reilly.



The road running through the town is Lower Bridge Street where Mary O'Reilly used to live. The photographer must have been standing close to the new house in Laune View.

² From the Killorglin.archives web site

In 1935 Mary left Killorglin, first to Dublin and then Glasgow, where her elder sisters Eileen and Margaret had already gone. Eileen married Patrick Hanlon, and Margaret married James McIver. A reference for Mary written by one of the Presentation Convent School nuns in 1935, Sr. M. Joseph, comments on her love of children. But Mary soon moved on and headed for London. There she lived in Paddington and worked at Lyons Tea Rooms, where she said the tips were usually much more lucrative than the weekly wage. In London she met her future husband, Michael Dingley. In 1941 they married in Birmingham, living first in Aston before moving on to West Bromwich in 1965. During the war Michael had been keen to enlist but as a rope maker was in a reserved occupation. Mary spent some years at the local IMI factory manufacturing armaments.



Mary at Laune View on one of her return visits to Killorglin in 1939.

Mary's elder brother Eddie moved to Liverpool where he married Kathleen Murphy. Eddie was instrumental in establishing a thriving Irish Centre. Later her younger sister Sheila also moved to Liverpool where she married Kathleen's brother Terry Murphy. Both Monnie and Danny stayed at Laune View.



Michael Dingley and Mary O'Reilly on their wedding day in 1941.

Mary and Michael had three children Maureen, Michael and Sheila. When she died in 2016, aged 96, she also had six grandchildren and six great grandchildren. Below is Mary surrounded by her family to celebrate her 90th birthday, must be something in the waters of Killorglin!



Sheila Hartley (Mary's daughter), March 2018.