

THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

10th April 2003. On Inch Island in County Donegal, Elizabeth McLeister interviews Bertie Bryce. Born in 1920, Bertie farmed all his days and is a well known storyteller and raconteur. As well as the following humorous story, Bertie introduced and recited four poems for Elizabeth which we are also including as separate files.

[00:00:00.04] Elizabeth: You say recitations I believe?

[00:00:02.01] Bertie: I do yes, I can do a recitation. I can do a recitation in the Ulster-Scots dialect,

[00:00:09.05] one which I'm asked to do fairly often when I would be attending any of these seminars endeavouring to keep the Ulster-Scots alive.

[00:00:18.23] Elizabeth: Well have you used to speak more Ulster-Scots than you do now, or have you changed your way of speaking?

[00:00:25.25] Bertie: Not much and, if I got into a bad temper, it would be Ulster-Scots yet... It's now...

[00:00:32.25] I wouldn't look down on a man because he spoke Ulster-Scots - no way - because I could have referred you to men that spoke nothing only the Ulster-Scots

[00:00:45.08] and they could buy and sell me or maybe you either. So we didn't look down on them.

[00:00:50.17] Elizabeth: Oh of course not, it's nothing to be ashamed of.

[00:00:52.29] Bertie: No. Well I'll tell you a story now before I do the recitation about that Ulster-Scots and about a man that used it as his native tongue.

[00:01:02.25] He was Glenn, he was Joe Glenn, and down below where I live here, there was two brothers who ran a blacksmith's forge.

[00:01:10.26] They were McLaughlins, and they were Josie and Paddy. Now Josie was the brains of the outfit but Paddy was the brawn.

[00:01:20.24] Now when the brains were given out, Paddy would have been behind the door.

[00:01:24.24] But his contribution to the business was just as important as what the other man's was - although he never was a blacksmith.

[00:01:33.11] He never was really a blacksmith but he invariably referred to himself as a blacksmith.

[00:01:38.20] Whenever we knew that if you went to the forge some day and Josie wasn't there, Paddy couldn't have made you an S-hook but he would have burned the two ends off it!

[00:01:48.28] But he still referred to himself as a blacksmith. But these two men now, there were neither of the two of them would have suffered fools gladly:

[00:01:55.23] they took life very seriously and if you made a joke, if they thought by any manner or means that you were getting at them somehow, they would put you out. They were thick-witted.

[00:02:07.01] But anyway, they were men for whom I had the utmost respect now, the both of them, because I respected them whenever they were living -

[00:02:14.21] but whenever they died and there was nobody else to take over the business, and I tried to do some of the jobs that they done,

[00:02:21.16] that they were able to make look very simple, it was only then that I realised the skill that these men had.

[00:02:29.07] But anyway to tell you the story about Mr Glenn.... One day I was down, I had a horse with me of my father's, getting shod and it was a wet day.

[00:02:37.18] And on a wet day, the people all gathered into the forge. Farmers that had wee jobs to do and they didn't want to spend the time till it came a wet day - on a wet day they were all there.

[00:02:47.13] So this day there were seven or eight people there - and the horse took precedence over any other work that was being done. So they were shoeing the horse.

[00:02:55.16] And this Glenn man came in. Now, nobody ever could understand why, Glenn seemed to have a licence that he could say whatever he liked to either of these two men.

[00:03:06.15] He was the only man could say it and get away with it. Maybe it was something to do with the fact that he was the best farmer in the county:

[00:03:13.03] Joe Glenn was one of the best farmers in the county, he was a model man.

[00:03:17.08] But anyway he came in and the horse was being shod, and he had a sock with him off a drill plough.

[00:03:25.18] Now possibly you people would know what a sock off a drill plough looked like. In those days you didn't screw off a worn part and throw it away:

[00:03:37.18] you took it off and you took it to the forge and the smith put a bit onto it and left it as good as new.

[00:03:42.25] So Glenn came down with a sock off a drill plough and he threw it on the floor. And Paddy was at a loose end.

[00:03:49.02] There was a shoe in the fire heating and Paddy was leaning on the sledge, and he went over and he turned this sock over with his toe.

[00:03:55.26] Now farmers had a very bad habit of keeping them on the plough too long and they were worn too short before they took them to the forge.

[00:04:02.27] But this sock - Paddy went over and turned it over with his toe and he said, "My boanny boys," he says,

[00:04:09.27] "we could've made a good job of that if we'd 'a' got her two or three days ago", meaning it's, she was worn too short.

[00:04:16.27] And everybody was waiting tae Glenn would turn on Paddy because Glenn was very bad tongued. But he never let on, he never took Paddy under his notice.

[00:04:25.08] And the shoe came out of the fire and Paddy fell at it with the sledge and countersunk it and punched the holes in it, and driv the nails. And I was ready to go.

[00:04:34.06] But before I was ready to go, Glenn addressed the assembled audience and he says,

[00:04:40.01] "Boys," he says, "A haed a wile drame last nicht," he said. "A dreamt A wus deid an went awa up tae heav'n tae luk aboot gettin in.

[00:04:49.25] An A fun masel gaun up this big lang nerra evvenye wi a lot o bushes on the baith sides o it. An A waaked on tae A cum tae tha Golden Gate.

[00:05:01.19] An things wus a kine o quate, the'r wurnae monie aboot an A deciddit A wud hang aboot a while before A made ma approach an A hid in the back o a laurel büsh.

[00:05:12.26] An here begod, A was nae time hidden in the back o this büsh tae who cum hirplin up but Josie".

[00:05:18.11] (Noo, Josie haed a bad way o waakin but by God, oniebodie else haed referred tae it an they were out the door.)

[00:05:25.24] "Who came hirplin up but Josie, an Josie went up as boul as bress an he rattled at the gate - an Peter cum oot an he axed him his name.

[00:05:36.11] An he sayed he wus Josie McLaghlin frae the Island o Inch in the County o Dunnygal.

[00:05:42.25] Peter noddit his heid an he sayed, 'Whut trade or profession did you follae whaniver ye wur on earth?' An Josie sayed, 'A wus a blacksmith'.

[00:05:54.11] Ah, Peter shuk his heid an he sayes, 'Aw naw, naw,' he sayes, 'Naw. He sayes, A'm sorry, sur, A'm sorry but A dinnae mak the rules here,

[00:06:01.17] A'm onie here tae apply them, an the rule aye wus the'r nae blacksmiths allowed in here'.

[00:06:06.10] An wi that he closed the gate on poor Josie, an Josie had tae turn an waak awa wi his heid among his feet.

[00:06:12.14] But begod, Josie went nae distance tae he hid in the back o a büsh, jaist fair fornenst whar A wus.

[00:06:18.22] An he wus nae time hid tae who cum up but Paddy. An Paddy went up as boull as bress an he knocked at the gate.

[00:06:26.20] He rattled at the gate an Peter cum oot an he axed him his name. An he sayed he wus Paddy McLaghlin frae the Island o Inch in the County o Dunnygal, an Peter nodded his heid.

[00:06:38.01] An he says tae Paddy, he says, 'Whut trade or profession did you follae whaniver ye wur on earth?' An of coorse, Paddy sayed, "A wus a blacksmith".

[00:06:47.19] An even the distance A wus awa fae Peter, A thought A cud see a wee smile on his face, an wi that he opened the gate an in went Paddy.

[00:06:55.24] An wi that, Josie cum oot fae the back o this büsh an him cal'in oot o him, al oot oot, loud an ignorant tae Peter, 'Houl on thair, houl on a minit, sur, houl on a wee minit.

[00:07:05.03] A thought ye toul me thair wur nae blacksmiths allowed in thair'.

[00:07:09.10] An Peter, he jaist looked Josie straight in the face an he sayes, 'Ah now Josie,' he sayes, 'you know an A know an God an the worl knows, Paddy niver wus a blacksmith'."

[00:07:21.25] Elizabeth: (Laughter) Ah, that's a good one.

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