

BALLYMENA AND GIBRALTARIAN LINKS

CHAPLAIN FOR THE CAMPS

Elizabeth told me that her parents, Angela (Sene) and Ernest Lara had lived in the Brekagh Bridge camp (11). They had been married in the Church of St Patrick, The Braid, Ballymena in April 1945 by Fr McHugh. I found that Fr McHugh - now Canon Dominic McHugh - was alive and well and ministering in Ballymoney.



I arranged to meet with him and hear his memories.

He recalled that during the war the Bishop of Gibraltar was an Irishman - Bishop Fitzgerald. He told me how he was Chaplain for the four camps - Dunaird, Drummack, Aughacully and Brekagh Bridge. About five hundred men, women and children lived in each camp. He lived in Pat O'Boyle's house at the bottom of Slemish and performed weddings, funerals and looked after the spiritual life of the people.

The Dunaird and Drummack camps were about half a mile apart. It was a bit further to Aughacully, with another half mile to Brekagh Bridge. Canon McHugh said Sunday Mass in Dunaird and the people from Drummack attended. Then he went to Aughacully and the people from Brekagh Bridge attended. When I asked him if he remembered Angela and Ernest Lara he produced a copy of their wedding photograph.

This is Angela and Ernest with Angela's parents - Rogelio and Isabel Sene and Fr Dominic McHugh.



Canon McHugh recalled how one of the daughters of Angela and Ernest had been chosen as 'Miss Gibraltar' and had her photograph in the Ballymena Observer.

I did some research and found that Lillian Anne Lara had indeed been Miss Gibraltar in 1975.

Canon McHugh remembered that Miss Maureen Fee from Tempo, Co Fermanagh had been the teacher in Brekagh Bridge (11). She had married Gerard Bogue and is now deceased.

He spoke of Angelo Montado, a Gibraltarian teacher. Her mother died here and was buried in Ballymena - maybe in a Pauper's Grave! Angelo went back and became the Principal of a school in Gibraltar.

Canon McHugh told me that his sister Moira had got engaged to Bill Jones of Glasgow just before the war. Bill was posted to Gibraltar and remained there all during the war. He started a Catholic Library in Gibraltar. Twenty five years after the war ended Moira and Bill returned to Gibraltar and found the library still functioning. When they chatted to the lady in charge, Tilly Peres, they discovered she had been in a camp near Ballymena during the war.