

## BALLYCASTLE SEVENTY YEARS AGO by [Thomas Langan](#)

*The author's childhood memories of Ballycastle about the time of World War I (1914-1918)*

The appearance of the countryside seventy years ago was vastly different from what it is today. Congested District Board houses, as in Ballinglen, and labourer's cottages were almost the only houses with slated roofs. The great majority of the people were small farmers living in two-roomed, stone-built, thatched houses. A great many of the houses in the street of Ballycastle were of the same type. Out-houses, too, had thatched roofs. A few shopkeepers employed thatchers who sewed the coat of oaten straw on the dwelling-house. In general, however, the coat, whether straw or rushes, was secured with sugans of oaten straw.

The 'room' was separated from the kitchen by a stone-built partition which widened in the centre into a large open fireplace which rose to a chimney about eighteen inches above the thatch. The fire hardly ever went out on the hearth of the kitchen fire-place. At bed-time the kindling, supplemented with a couple of heavy sods, was covered with 'griosach'. This provided a few coals to start off the fire next morning when the ashes were removed. The kitchen fire-place was really the heart and nerve-centre of the house. Not only was all the cooking for people, pigs and poultry done there; heating of water for washing or any other purpose was done there also; smoothing-irons for ironing had to be heated there. People sat in hobs, on creepies, stools, forms and chairs to chat, tell the news, tell stories and sing songs around the fire.

Flax was being grown, but not for local use. The impervious sub-soil in the stretch of land known as Pairc Rua in Ballyknock was found suitable for a flax-pond. I can still remember the horrible stench the day the pond was opened. Not even the worst slurry has ever seemed quite as bad. However, it passed in a day or two and was not repeated. But if the spinning of flax had ceased, the spinning of wool had not. In every house there was a spinning wheel and a pair of wool-cards. The native mountain wool, usually heavily stained with bog, was dampened with paraffin oil, carded into rolls, and spun into yarn. A good deal of this yarn was doubled into a knitting yarn, which was used to make stockings, socks, jumpers and pullovers. Often large balls of yarn were taken to a weaver to be woven into blanket material or flannel, breidin, used in boy's suits, men's trousers, and backs and sleeves for sleeved waistcoats. Carding and spinning usually took place at times when the kitchen was more or less empty during the day. A lot of the knitting was done at night, when the family, and perhaps visitors, were seated around the fire.

One year our English class Reader was what must have been a very abridged edition of Joyce's 'Old Celtic Romances'. As soon as my father saw the book he told his brother-in-law, Michael Maguire, about it, and Michael told his cousin, Paddy Jordan. Then, night after night, they came to our house until they heard every story from start to finish. While the audience sat around the fire, my mother knitting away, my father in his stockinged feet sat up on the table beside the oil-lamp and read a chapter. At this stage I cannot say anything about his pronunciation or punctuation. I only know he was radio and television all in one to us, and was probably responsible for my being a book-worm for as long as I can remember. At the end of each chapter he came to the fireside, and the three smoked their pipes as they discussed what had just been read, praising the brave, heartily condemning the cowardly, the lazy and the greedy.

Our school was one-roomed with two men teachers, the Assistant with Infants, I and II inside the door, the Principal with the rest of the pupils next to the fireplace. Each section had two long, wobbly, wooden desks with inkwells and slots for slates (no longer in use). Each group was divided into two, one group doing written work in the desks, the other oral work, standing in semi-circles before maps or blackboards. As the biro was not even the germ of an idea at that time, we were set to work to copy Vere Foster headlines with pens and ink even in First Class. The ink, which some of the seniors were sent to make by adding water to a quantity of ink powder, smelt acid, and very quickly corroded the nibs so that they became gapped or crossed,

spluttering ink all over the page. Quite often, too, some mischief-maker chewed a piece of paper into a mush and pressed it down into an ink-well. Imagine the predicament of a seven or eight year old who found a knot of this ink-charged material on the point of his pen, very often without even the protection of a piece of 'blottin'! Yet it was possible to get 1/2d for one of these finished copies from one of the women who sold sweets, and rolled each page into a spill to hold a pennyworth of 'bulls eyes'.

The school-yard was small and precipitous, so we did our regimented drill and most of our play on the road in front of the school or in the surrounding fields. Winters' 'Forth' was the favourite pitch for hounds and hares. This reminds me that I saw my first football match on the level portion of the same field beside the Ballinglen river. In winter time when we wore split-kip, hobnailed boots, we often played a game called 'sidey'. It often puzzles me how any teacher could allow us into a school or to handle copy-books after playing 'sidey'. The 'teams' stood shoulder to shoulder, heads bent down, facing each other, each member armed with a bent stick broken out of the hedge. The 'ball' started out as an empty 1lb. paint tin. At every blow it became smaller, rounder and harder until it was about the size of a golf ball. Each team tried to drive the ball to the left by slashing at it viciously with the bent end of his stick. They missed the ball far more often than they hit, but at every blow they sent up a fine spray of churned liquid mud which covered shoes, stockings, trousers, even jackets, hands and faces. Did we wash afterwards? Every morning two boys went to the pump in the street for a bucket of water. No matter how full the vessel was leaving the pump, it was rarely more than half full when placed on the table inside the door in the hallway. That was the sole supply of water for the school for the day! You'd be lucky to get a drink half way through play.

We were very conscious of the Great War, owing to all the talk about wreckage. The U-boats were taking a terrible toll of shipping in the North Atlantic and there was no telling what one might find in taking a walk along the shore - boxes, barrels, planks, mahogany baulks, huge bales of cotton, carcasses of dead horses, even corpses. One heard of dead horses still warm when washed ashore, so they must have been a very short time in the water. On the other hand, we could see the borings in rafters and flooring joists of houses being built at that time which proved that the wood had been a considerable time afloat. Every beach-comber loved to get a small article such as a box of margarine or a plank which he could carry away. Big heavy finds such as barrels (full), bales of cotton, and mahogany baulks had to be towed to the pier behind a boat, rolled up above high water with crowbars, and left there until sold. Prices fetched were regarded as far too low, and the finders were only entitled to a percentage salvage, which had to be shared among seven or eight crew. One man must have left very well pleased as he concealed a box of margarine which he had found under a heap of stones. A local 'poet' captures his chagrin when he discovered that his find had disappeared in the lines:

*Bad cess to the dog  
Who stole me 'prog'  
of lovely margarine.*

The war caused all kind of shortages, tea, sugar, flour, but one that impressed me most was the shortage of pipe tobacco. Most men smoked pipes. My father, like most of the neighbours, used Walnut Plug, but Mr. Kneafsey, our Principal teacher, used Cut Plug. At one time both kinds were unobtainable, and both men felt very badly. They tried cigarettes, which were plentiful, without success. They broke up cigarettes and put them in their pipes - useless! Disgust! One day, in desperation, our teacher tried smoking two cigarettes together but when about half way through he threw them into the fireplace where they fell on a half-lit sod of turf. Almost at once one of the senior pupils went up to warm his hands. Leaning over the fireguard with both hands spread out and one eye on the teacher, it took him but a second to retrieve, top, and pocket the precious 'Butts'.

There were travelling tailors who went from house to house. Shortly before the 1918 Election we had a man named Padney O'Boyle in to make some clothes for us. The sitting member, a member of Redmond's party was a man named Dan Boyle. We youngsters used to tease Padney by casting up to him everything we heard the grown-ups say about Dan. As Dan was being opposed by a Sinn Fein candidate, our local doctor, Dr. John P. Crowley, he had little support in our locality. I had to bring home some animals from the December fair, and missed Dan Boyle's meeting that afternoon. The R.I.C. alleged that there was an attempt to overthrow the platform, and there was a baton charge and a number of arrests were made. One of these, who worked for Martin Tomes, Ballyglass, was sentenced to a month in Sligo jail the next court day. Doctor Crowley won by a landslide, and was a member of the first Dail.

The Gaelic League continued active in Ballycastle. I heard my mother speak of a play in Irish which had been staged there. Seemingly the plot centered on a wedding of a poor couple who depended on the gifts they received to start up a house. As each guest arrived his gift was commented on and praised and compared with that of the richest local farmer in the words: 'Agus pinsin 'e snaoistin o fhear na mbo'. An item on the programme of a Feis was Comhrá Beirte. One adult who entered for this competition was evidently determined to do a Mike Tyson and silence his opponent with a stunning question. A man with the temerity to oppose him came forward to be greeted with: 'Ch chaoi a bhfagann an t-anam an corp?' (How does the soul leave the body?). Whatever the attempted answer, it was treated with the utmost contempt. From an argument to delight even a Mairtin Ó Cadhain, Canon Munnelly found his role rapidly changing from that of adjudicator to that of a referee. However, when the men came to grips, he had to call on some members of the Committee to eject them, and the competition was cancelled.

I remember attending a Gaelic League class in a vacant thatched house near the church. The teacher, whose name was Sean O'Ceallaigh, was a neat young man in a brown plus-four suit, who taught some very basic Irish, the basic steps in Irish dancing, and singing:

*Ar thog an gadai tada uait, tada uait, tada uait,  
Ar Thog an gadai tata uait,  
Is e a' dul síos an bothar!*

And 'Aon, do, tri, aon do tri, aon do tri, ceathair, cuig, se, seacht' is all that has stayed in my memory from that class.

There was a concert and play, followed by a dance, billed for a Sunday night early in 1921. It so happened that the remains of a local man, a member of the R.I.C., shot in Belfast, was lying in the church that night, but the Committee decided to go ahead with the programme. When the fun was at its height, a lorry-load of Black-and-Tans arrived, and a night of terror ensued. There was a slated roof without felt underlay or ceiling, much less insulation. Young men were ordered at gun-point to climb on the collar-ties and kick out the slates. They were forced across the street to Barrett's pub, where they were treated by having funnels pushed into their mouths and the contents of porter bottles, the necks of which had been shot off, poured down their throats. One smart young man, who was heard to mutter "Hurry Up", got a kick in the pants out the door. The hair style 'bare back and sides' seems to have been fairly new at the time. The Tans proceeded to spoil the young fellows' appearances by cutting gaps across their coifs with scissors or shears. But one young fellow with a particularly strong crop of red curls was slashed with an open razor. For many days afterwards young fellows had to live with 'monched' hair, black eyes and split lips. When daylight came the Gaelic League house was sprinkled with petrol and set on fire. It smouldered for days but refused to burn. I think we never stood in it afterwards.

The gardens above and to the back of the old church were much higher than the church-yard. One Sunday morning after 11 o'clock Mass we found the church surrounded by Black-and-Tans. Young men were searched but no arrests were made. One fine day during turf-cutting time two Crossley tenders sped down the street. One continued on the main Belderrig road as far as Glenurla, the other branched off on the Ballyglass road, continuing on to Shrahlaggagh. As we

stood on the Glen Road near Grady's corner, we could follow their movement by watching the clouds of dust they raised. We afterwards heard the occupants carried out a lightning search of Ballyknock - Dunfeeny Hill. Turf-cutters were asked their names and addresses; no arrests were made. I think it was about this time I saw my first aeroplane. We were preparing for setting up the potatoes when it flew westwards, returning in a short time.

In spite of The Troubles', life went on very much as usual. Ballycastle had its weekly markets and its monthly fairs. What was sold at the market? Nearly half of the arable land was tilled, and probably half of that produced potatoes, the bulk of which were fed to pigs. So there were very few Wednesdays when there were not bonhams for sale, as well as potatoes, oats, and rods for making baskets and pardoga (creels for donkeys). When the litter of bonhams was about nine weeks old the owner selected usually the four he intended to fatten. Then he moved the front board of the cart back halfway and covered the smaller space with sacking tacked to the box. The bonhams for sale rested on a bed of straw under that cover. Every now and then a corner was pulled up to allow for inspection of the little animals. Sales were made after much haggling, the deal clinched over a `beverage'.

The last Wednesday before Christmas was known as Margadh Mor - the Big Market. In anticipation of weeks of broken weather, something like a month's supply of groceries and provender was laid in. This, for most people, meant that the horse cart had to be taken out, as very few had donkey carts. After school it was very difficult to cross the street, as the horses stood with heads, in over the tail-boards, of the carts in front of them from the top almost to the bottom of the street. Husbands usually accompanied their wives on Margadh Mor, and looked after the bag-stuff, i.e. flour for humans, 'Injun' meal for pigs and poultry. As each couple completed their order they were given a Christmas Box, which often contained a bottle of red wine.

Fair day began with the pig fair about 6 a.m. If pigs were able to walk they were driven, but many pigs housed in cold, damp, dark houses were `bet up on the feet', `had the crippage', and had to be carted right up beside the shambles. There was no weighing of animals, buyers and sellers relying on their judgment. As soon as a pig-jobber had finished buying he employed men with carts to take the pigs to the station in Killlala. Before leaving with their loads of pigs these men went round to the shopkeepers looking for orders for loads (of groceries, etc.) from the station.

The pig fair was followed by the fair for sheep and cattle, which were held in small groups on the street and footpaths. It was common to see sheep with young lambs for sale, but I cannot ever remember seeing a suck calf on the street. Sheep were mostly black-faced horny, and most of the cattle were black Aberdeen-Angus half-bred, although butty red animals with sharp horns came in from the `mountain'. At the start efforts to do business were usually tentative, very high prices were asked, very low offers were made, or the prospective buyer turned away in disgust only to be pulled back by a neighbour, an offer was made, the `differ' was split again and again. When a sale was made you'd see men coming to have a look each using the price as a guide for himself. Several of the shops were Grocery & Bar with, in some cases, drapery and light hardware as well. They had double back yards. You could leave your cart, side-car or trap in the first yard, which was surrounded by stores. You could stable your horse in the second yard, where he was separated by a door from the cattle you and your neighbours were holding in the second yard, while you refreshed yourself and transacted your business in the bar or at the other counters. Altogether a busy, noisy occasion with much talk, joking, laughter intermingled with hard-headed business.

The two sides of the top of the street were occupied by standings known respectively as 'ceants' and 'clairins'. The owner of the ceant stood on a platform under a cover and conducted a Dutch auction of the various articles of second-hand clothing which he held up and praised. Starting usually from £10, he came quickly down to £9, £8, £7, with an occasional yell in between to attract attention. The prospective buyer waited until the end of the `auction', then asked to be let handle the article, and, after pointing out various faults, made an offer of half or even quarter of

the final figure. The salesman made long, loud, protestations, but after much haggling, a much lower price was agreed. Then he proceeded to auction another item. On the opposite side of the street the stall holders sold sticks of rock, liquorice, bulls eyes, wind fall apples (Granny Smith wasn't even dreamt of), cockles, dulsk, creannach. There, too, stood the man with the pellet gun - a penny a shot, and if you rang the bell you got a free shot. It was remarkable how often boys turned from the clarions to waste their scarce pennies on a test of marksmanship. Then one day we were intrigued by the sight of a black man. I suppose we had heard of such people, but I don't think any of us realised that they really existed - something like fairies. But here he was, a fine specimen of manhood, picking his way between cattle, sheep, and people, down the middle of the street. And down the street we followed him, and half way back up again, until he turned and challenged us. "Why are you following me? I'm not a lion or a tiger going to eat you". As we watched him disappear, some one of the lads said he was pulling teeth. And we wondered if his dentistry was anything better than the local variety, which, we had heard, went something like this: "Open your mouth". After a brief inspection a forceps was selected from a rack on the wall and the decayed tooth yanked out "That'll be half a crown". Having discharged the debt, the patient was told "Go out and spit outside".

The tumbler spread his jute sack on the wet street and performed his feats. The most impressive was when he put pins standing a few inches apart, then, placing himself in front of them, he bent backwards and lifted them between his eye-lids. People threw pennies and half-pennies on the sack, usually a pittance. Singers sang songs such as 'Patrick Sheehan', 'The Glen of Aherlow', 'John Mitchell', 'Bold Robert Emmet', while old women went around selling ballads at 1/2d. each.

Dominick Street was known as Pound Street, as there was a pound there where trespassing or wandering animals were sometimes impounded until their owners redeemed them. On the opposite side of the street Hanlons had a small turf-fired bakery where they turned out standard batch-bread and large round pans 'with the impress of the baker's elbow in the top'. Competition came when Moyletts of Ballina put a delivery van on the road. This was a type of large wooden chest with a perch-type seat in front, built on the sprung framework of a trap or side-car, and drawn by a single light horse or pony. The vehicle for the delivery of Guinness in wooden firkins with red-painted bottoms was a long, wide platform with four wheels. We often stood and admired the two big horses with hairy fetlocks and brass-tipped harness which used to pull this vehicle. (I think it belonged to Egans in Ballina). Mention of horses reminds me that there were three black-smith forges, Pat Clarke at the top of the Main Street, Jim McHugh and Anthony McHugh at the bottom. And generally, but especially in Spring, they were kept busy. Every farmer had a horse, a plough, a harrow (wooden, with iron pins), as well as a cart. In Spring it was a custom to shoe horses with 'slippers', light, well-worn shoes that would not gather too much of a hoof-ball. Coulters and socks had to be pointed, mould-boards set, harrow pins pointed.

After school it was common to see a number of tousled heads around the forge door, watching the sparks flying as the blacksmith and the farmer beat the iron, red-hot from the fire, with hammer and sledge. One fine evening saw five tinker men sitting around in front of Pat Clarke's forge. I cannot say if they were sitting on the bare ground or had some kind of a seat. Each had his box containing sheets of shining tin, a snips, a hammer, a long type of anvil, a soldering iron, solder and resin (usually pronounced rozghin), and a young lad to attend him. They were all very busy at work. With his snips each of them cut his tin into sizes they seemed to know very well. Then, with the hammer and anvil, he turned seams along the edges, joining the seams where required. During this time his young assistant had gone into the forge, where the smith allowed them to use his fire to heat their soldering irons. When the young lad returned with the hot iron, his father, laying aside his hammer and anvil, applied resin to the joint he had prepared and soldered it to hold together in a water-tight joint. In this way, to a rather pleasant din, they produced saucepans in two sizes, a gallon-sized saucepan used frequently to give buttermilk to the pigs, and a can of two or three gallon size, used for milking the cows and fetching spring water from the well. The women and children went around the townlands from door to door selling the vessels and collecting whatever they got as charity, e.g. potatoes, milk, buttermilk, a

little butter, perhaps a little home-made bread, and, once a year, a small ball of horse-hair, the clippings of the horse's mane and tail. Some people, however, used horse-hair to make 'duls' for fishing for the fish they called smaoil or bream. I believe the correct English name for this fish is Ballan - wrasse. The men-folk usually did the rounds a few days later, each man carrying his toolbox, which we called a 'budget'. You'd hear it said the tinker's marriage ceremony consisted of the bride and groom jumping over the budget! Tinkers had a very hard life. For shelter they had little tents of canvas, or even sacking, spread over bent hazel wattles with both ends stuck in the soft, wet, roadside, sometimes without as much as a fence for a wind-break. On a few occasions a young boy or two put in a few days at school, where they cried all day.

We usually had half an hour's Catechism before the 11 o'clock Mass on Sundays. The class was held beside the organ on the gallery inside the main door. The church was only partly seated; families paid an annual rent for a seat. The majority knelt on the bare floor. Collections of pennies were taken up at all the doors before Mass. Every four years a fortnight's Mission was preached by the Redemptorists. We youngsters thought them marvellous preachers, but older people felt none of them could compare with a Father McNamara, who was one of the men who preached the first Mission over in Ballycastle. The parish was then a Breac Gaeltacht, and he was eloquent in Irish and English. A number of the fairs were held on church holy days, 25th March, 29th June, 15th August, 8th December. One young fellow had to go to 8.30 Mass to be ready to mind the animals while the others attended 11 o'clock Mass.

On our way to school we passed by an old mill no longer in use. Then one day a number of men started to work cleaning up the old Mill race. A Co-op had been formed to reopen it as a corn mill. Another Co-op was formed to open a store. Both worked for only a short time before failing, leaving a number of people in financial trouble.

People went to blessed wells, and on Garland Sunday to Dun Briste, Downpatrick Head. One heard announcement from the altar concerning the devotions as well as requests for maintenance of the statue. Only the very able-bodied ventured to The Reek, as they had to walk all that could not be done by rail, i.e. Killala to Westport. There was still a good deal of talk about a proposed rail line to Belmullet, linking Colloney to Blacksod, which some wag christened the All Red Route. But there was a tailor named Burns who derided this. His pipe-dream was to blast the harbour bar and make a canal up as far as Ballinglen.

There were still some memories of the Boer War. One roofless old house was called Pretoria, another Ladysmith. Various individuals were often referred to as Kreuger, and De Witt had a ballad to himself, the only line of which survived was: 'They cannot kill or capture bold De Witt'. Lynchecaun did considerable better with:

*A thousand warriors on my track  
They thought to track me down  
But I drove a bread-van through them  
In the streets of Galway town.*

There was no Hall. Events such as socials and whist drives followed by dances were held in the town schools. The Girls' School was staffed by nuns and the Boys' School by two male teachers, each school consisting of one room and a cloakroom, turf house, hallway, were under one roof and connected by a doorway concealed behind a science press. By moving the press aside, it was possible to use one room for the entertainment, the other for refreshments, usually consisting of mugs of scalding hot tea and thick slices of batch bread liberally coated with red jam. Though frowned upon by the Parish Priest, country house kitchen dances were frequently held. Picking up some excuse such as the arrival of a girl on a visit to relatives, a few young fellows formed themselves into a Committee. Their first and greatest problem was to find a family willing to have the dance in their kitchen. That done, they issued free invitations to all the girls in the locality. Boys were charged a shilling each. This money was spent on bread, butter, tea, sugar and jam, as everybody got tea in the room, and something a little stronger, perhaps, for the man of the

house. Music was usually provided by young men on melodeons. The names Eddie Gilmartin and Mikey Bell come to mind, but on one occasion a strolling fiddler was employed. Evidently he felt that 'refreshments' were too slow in coming or too meagre, and went on strike. Somebody had an old melodeon with just the bellows and the lowest base key in order. When the old instrument was pressed into service and the striking fiddler heard the droning sound he jumped up, grabbed his fiddle, and gave his best rendition of The Connaught Man's Rambles.

Game birds seemed to be very plentiful. You could hardly step on to the heath without starting up a pack of grouse. Folk-lore had the hen grouse worrying about the shortage of food with 'Feach an bho ud, and bho ud, an bho ud', with the optimistic cock replying: 'Feach an cnoc ud, an cnoc ud, and cnoc ud'. Flocks of golden plover whistled as they wheeled over our heads when saving turf. Frost brought snipe and woodcock down to the streams close to the dwellings in Wintertime. 'Gentlemen' with names like Verschoyle and Mudge had the shooting rights and held shooting parties, especially around 12th August, but in spite of the vigilance of the gamekeepers, there were many unlicensed shot guns and much poaching. Some shop-keepers bought dead game birds and hung them just outside their doors.

Poteen-making was carried on in spite of the best efforts of the R.I.C. Yeast was sold openly. You would often see little bags of it about 4 lbs. weight lying on the grocery counter, and on several occasions I bought 1 oz. of yeast, as my mother loved to make yeast bread. We all loved the bread, but dreaded the ordeal of not knocking against the oven during the time the dough was left to rise close to the hearth.

As the Great War continued it would seem the U-boats posed less of a threat, and there were fewer reminders from the sea. But there were other reminders. One day a young man, a past pupil, whom we all recognised, and not one noted for good attendance, turned in to visit us in his Jack Tar uniform. Another young man, son of a retired R.I.C. constable, appeared on the street on crutches, invalided back from the Western Front. Occasionally at fairs we saw young men in Canadian and Australian uniforms, emigrants who had got caught up in conscription and were now members of the Expeditionary Forces.

As the years moved on signs of the struggle nearer home began to manifest themselves. The R.I.C. barrack, which was later occupied by the Gardai until the present station was built, was next to Polke's. The site of Mrs. Browne's house was then vacant until it was filled with barbed wire entanglements about one storey in height. Steel shutters were affixed on the windows. One sunny Saturday evening as I passed up the street on my way to confession and for some messages, the barrack door swung open and a sergeant and six members of the force, all in uniform and each with a rifle on his shoulder, marched out into the middle of the street, turned left and headed down the Belderrig road. I watched them down as far as Currower road. Some time on Monday word reached us that Tommy Nealon had been shot in Clydagh, in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Shortly afterwards the old barrack was vacated, and the police moved into Ballycastle barracks, which, then as now, stood in its own ground surrounded by a high stone wall. For extra security, it was surrounded by barbed wire fences. The small estate of Heathfield, which had not been acquired by the Congested Districts Board, was taken over by somebody under Dail Eireann, and people were invited to send grazing animals to stock it. My father sent a filly. Then word went out that the R.I.C. had rounded up all the grazing animals and driven them into the grounds of Ballycastle House. I cannot say what formalities had to be entered into to have them released, but I feel the occupants were glad to get rid of them. Then one night the old barrack was one of some 150 nationwide to go up in flames, the roof of the room over the archway having been cut to prevent the fire from spreading to Polke's.

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