

*Wilson Burgess*



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*Wilson Burgess was born in Aghadowey and spent his formative years in the large county Londonderry townland. He spent most of his youth listening to the men who gathered every evening at Clarehill 'Diamon' in the centre of Aghadowey. There they gathered to relate their workday experiences: The number of acres ploughed, stooks of flax pulled, stacks of corn built, or bottles of Guinness drunk: and to discuss such vital matters as who had left who home from the dance in Glenkeen: who was 'worth o watchin', where the water bailiffs Johnny and Willie Hunter were last seen: whether or not there was a 'rise' in the Agivey river: or who 'wis gaen tae Derry wae the Apprentice Boys', usually the longest distance these men ever travelled.*

*By listening to them the youthful Burgess was unconsciously gathering material which decades later would appear in his two collections Dae Ye See and Ah Jist Wunner. The decision to write about 'hamely' topics in the 'hamely tongue' was entirely natural. The rich, colourful and expressive voices and vocabulary that he heard in his youth, began to attach themselves to the things about which he was to write; subjects as diverse as 'pullin' or scutchin' lint', the delicate craft of ploughing, getting waylaid on fair days, hard work faced head on with humour, women's follies, poteen, encounters with modern technology, and the wonder and worries of 'oor worl' from Aghadowey to Mars.*

*Wilson Burgess who now lives in the Waterside area of Londonderry has just completed an Ulster Scots adaptation of Macbeth. Last year he won the prestigious Frances Browne International Poetry competition with his poem Owl Keady an elegy to the mountain on Coleraine to Limavady road.*

*His book Dae ye see has been selected as the recommended reading for the new Ulster Scots Poetry course at Queens University.*



## 'A DAY'S PULLIN'

When a got tae the fiel in the mornin,  
the lint wiz lyin an' wet,  
A' viry soon got the coat aff,  
for twenty stooks ah had tae get  
Before six o'clock in the evenin'  
for that's the time we'd stap,  
So ah jist tuk time for a pull o' the pipe,  
As ah went for the ban's tae the slap.

Ah didnae lik the ithers tae bate mae,  
So ah pulled as hard as ah cud.  
Before we stapped for somethin' tae ate,  
Ten stooks behin' me stud'.  
Ah had a soda scone for dinner,  
Washed doon wae a bottle o' tay.  
That wiz al' ah had time tae ate  
Tae ca'ry me through the day.

Ah very soon got started agaen.  
Aye, sure mae bak' wiz sore,  
An' mae han' got cut an mae nails got broke  
As through the lint ah tore.  
Six o' clock came roon at last,  
An' a happy man wiz ay,  
For tae mak me twenty stooks,  
Ah had jist yin beat tae tie.

The fermer came oot tae see is  
An' gaen mae beats some ould fashioned luk's.  
Ah think he thocht they wir a wee bit wee,  
So ah toul' him ah'd twenty stooks.  
He says, "Ah'll gae ye yir money noo,  
An at the same time ah'll gae ye a hint,  
Ah'm sure thirs ither jobs ye'd be better at,"  
So ah nivir agaen pulled lint.

## DAE YE SEE?

Whin we were drappin' praties in the wee mossy fiel',  
Yin or twa ithers an' me,  
We wid sit on the heid rig an' blether  
About oor lot in this life-dae ye see?

We wirnae content becas we wir poor,  
For it wiz rich we wanted tae be:  
So ah thocht ah'd nivir get rich drappin' praties,  
An ah ax'ed for mae cairds-dae ye see?

Ah tuk tae the road an' ah trevelled far,  
Wae mony on the same erran' as me,  
But the en'o mae rainbow sti'd oot o' my reach,  
So ah nivir got rich-dae ye see?

Noo efter mony years when ah luk at maesel,  
Ah can hardly belive that it's me,  
For though ah'm no'rich ah luk happy enuch  
A larnt a wee lesson-dae ye see?

Aye, ah larnt tae bae happy on my wiy through life,  
An' the sacret ah'll gie ye al' free,  
Be content wi' yer lot an' wi' what ye hae got,  
An ye'll nivir be poor- dae ye see?

## KILREA FAIR

Wae mae ash plant unner mae oxter  
Ah set oot for the big fair in Kilrea,  
Ah wiz lukin for a young milkin' coo  
It wiz a dreech an' coul' wunters day.

Ah had a luk roon the Diamon,  
An there ah met an oul' frien.  
We wir coul' an' wanted a warmer,  
So we went intae the first pub we seen.

Af coorse, there were some ithers in there-  
In al' ah think there wir ten,  
Ah had the money for the coo in mae poket,-  
Ah hadnae touched it tae then.

The roons come roon brave an aften ...  
Mae money begun tae grow wee,  
We nivir knowed the time passin',  
Tae somebody said "its gone a half three!"

We al' come oot feelin happy-  
Ah'd forgot about the coo,  
It come intae mae heid what ah'd come for ...  
Ah had'nae en'ught tae pi' for it noo.

Wae mae ash plant unner mae oxter  
Ah heeded off for hame,  
Ah had the wife tae face up tae,  
Ah wid hae tae tak' the blame.

Ah thocht ah might tak' hir' aisy,  
Maybe tell hir the money wiz stole,  
Och man if she though ah drunk it,  
She wid be gie and hard tae thole.

Ah wid never hear the en' o' it  
Frae noo tae Settlin day,  
She wid alwis be castin up tae me,  
About the money ah spent in Kilrea.

So ah says tae maesel ah'll stap drinkin'  
Ah'll stert savin agaen for the coo,  
Ah'll go and see the clargy,  
An' tak' the pledge right noo.

For a while ah think ah cud stan' it-  
At hame ah'll hae tae stay,  
But ah'll be feelin quare an' dry,  
The next time ah go tae Kilrea.

## SNEDDIN TURNIPS

It's a drech an' caul November day  
An' here ah' am agaen,  
Wat an caul an miserable,  
Sneddin' turnips in the rain.

The taps ir jist lake fountains  
The roots ir frozen tight,  
Ah git a shooer o' clabber,  
Ivery time ah' gae a skite.

Mae han's is numb, mae feet is caul,  
Its enough tae mak'ye curse,  
Frost an' rain the gether,  
Naethin' cud bae worse.

The fermer said its only a shooer  
Thon boy is hard tae thole,  
Ah know they'd call mae lazy,  
But ah'd bae warmer on the dole.

They blow aboot scalin' mountin peaks  
An the snow, an caul, an pain,  
But naebody iver mentions  
Sneddin turnips in the rain.

## SPRING FEELIN'

The days are gettin' langer,  
Spring is in the air,  
The wife is gettin' fidgety,  
She'll no settle in hir chair,  
So Ah' sit apprehensive,  
Forebodin', filled wae gloom,  
For Ah can hear her ax'in,  
"When will ye start that room?"

Last Spring ye said ye'd dae it;  
Then yir bak' wiz sore;  
Efter that yae niver mentioned it;  
But it shuda baen done afore.  
Mae mither come at Christmas,  
Shae thocht is wiz a disgrace;  
Tae ax' hir fir tae sleep in it,  
Ah hardly had the face.

Ye know the walls are fallin,  
The ceilin's turnin' broon;  
Ah think we'll buy the paper,  
The next time we go tae the toon,  
Maybe we'll go on Setterday,  
Yae'll hae naethin' else tae dae;  
Ah think ye toul mae yisterday  
Bellamaina wiz playin' away'.

Sae ah'll be scrapin', washin', paperin,  
Mae erms will ache wi' pain,  
Ah'll hardly hae a minute's peace  
Tae wunter comes agaen,  
Whin ah caan sit an' doze in comfort,  
In mae oul' ermchair;  
Sae tae mae mony fellow-sufferers  
Ah'll jist say "Dinnae' despair."

## WILSON BURGESS PUBLICATIONS

