

Name: Attracta Farragher
Address: Russelstown, Milltown
(Originally from Carrownurlaur, Milltown)
Date: 19th December 2015
Interviewer: Pauline Connolly
Transcription by: Pauline Connolly
Location of Interview: Russelstown, home of Attracta Farragher

Pauline: This is Pauline Connolly of Milltown Heritage Group who's going to have a chat with Mrs. Attracta Farragher. Thanks Attracta for making me welcome into your home in Russelstown on the 19th December 2015.

Pauline: First of all, could you tell where you were born and raised?

Attracta: I was born in Carrownurlaur, Ballindine, County Galway and I was reared there as the fella says. My father was Thomas Rhatigan and my mother was Ann Donnelly and they had a farm. My father was in America before he got married and then he was formally from Musicfield in Milltown and he got married from there but he bought this farm after coming from America and that's where we lived then and we helped on the farm.

Oh, after coming home from school, we'd have to go out weeding and maybe go to the bog and foot the turf, that kind of thing. We were kept busy, I can tell you. My father used to work in the council then, have a horse and cart, bringing the material round about, he was working there for a while, mostly on the land he [was working]. He died anyway at the age of 52 which we thought was pretty young at the time, well I suppose, that time. Now they're living until 90 and 100. My god, just imagine. He died in 1939, I think.

Pauline: You mentioned he spent time in America. What did he do over there?

Attracta: I don't know. Well, my mother worked in the kitchen. There were ten of us in the family, five boys and five girls and she had her hands full with the lot of us so that kept her busy. I went to school in Ballindine.

Pauline: Who were your teachers?

Attracta: Mrs. Rodgers and there was a Miss Kelly and a Mrs. Gill – Miss Gill. The girls were upstairs and the boys were downstairs in the school and Mr Griffith was teaching in the boy's school and Miss Gill I think and Mrs Kelly and Mrs. Rodgers in the girl's school. Well, in fact any of them weren't very nice but we got on with them all the same but Mrs. Rodgers was severe enough on the children. She was an old woman, maybe that's why she was a bit cranky sometimes. She wouldn't do anything out of the way, just treated as best she could I suppose, she taught us as good as she could so managed to get on with her. We did, English, Irish, Maths, History and Geography. Well, we played catching and we played skipping and that's all I think outside. The ground wasn't very good for skipping, we used to be all muck when we'd come out of it.

And when we were going to school in Ballindine, every household had to bring a cart of turf in the winter time to keep the fire going and sometimes it wasn't very good turf, no more than my own and oh you froze from the cold sometimes, we used to have to do our hands like this to try and bring some power back to the fingers, ah but sure there was a crowd of us, we enjoyed it.

I liked school alright. I remember getting a slap for one thing we did wrong at school and they made out it was my fault that I was the leader and I remember there was a little mark there on my hand where she gave me a slap with a big aul pencil, twas about that length – as thick as three pencils together. I'm telling you, you felt it when you got a wipe of that.

Pauline: And what did you do?

Attracta: Well, this woman that was teaching us, she used to go to Dublin at the weekend. I don't know what the attraction was up there for her but she was gone anyway and she told us to write down how you make a cake and when we put the cross on the top of it then, I had it spelt wrong and of course, they all copied mine because they thought I was right and it was me that suffered for it, not them (laughs), oh lord. I bake a cake once a week there for myself. I can't stand loaf, the only way I eat loaf is toast it.

Pauline: Is there any neighbours you remember? Or who would be the oldest person you would remember as a child?

Attracta: Michael Coyne at the corner there, you know Michael Coynes and on the other side Patrick Flynn and I remember them. Patrick Flynn had something wrong with his speech, he used to go to mass and go to town riding a horse, lovely grey horse. He was a grand old man and as kids, there was just a field between our house and their house and we used always go across the fields if we wanted to go visiting we'd go to his house. It's just himself, the wife and they had one daughter and I suppose they were the nearest to us. When we were kids, we'd go anywhere for a bit of fun.

I worked in the bacon factory in Claremorris - making sausages and getting the meat ready for them and linking them up and if you didn't do them right, twas god help ya. They just give out to you. Well you might get, maybe, bits of meat at a reduced price, never anything for nothing. You had to work for everything.

Pauline: Were you paid well?

Attracta: 15 shillings a week, the old money, oh that wasn't much, but I suppose it meant a lot in them times. We survived anyway.

Pauline: And did you work anywhere else other than the bacon factory?

Attracta: Well, my brother had a shop in Ballindine and I used to be there maybe fair days or sometimes helping out in the bar, that's all....Whiskey, beer, stout, glasses of stout, there were barrels of stout there, tapping it and filling them out till they'd be satisfied.

Pauline: So, when did you get married?

Attracta: I got married in 1952, the 2nd of January and I'm here since. We were married in Milltown. Well, my mother died the day before Christmas eve and I was getting married the 2nd January and I wanted to put it off for a while and they all said no, carry on and I did. So,

there wasn't much of a gathering like at it, just the two families, yeah, and that's a long time ago now (pause).

Pauline: Where did you meet your husband?

Attracta: My uncle had a dancehall down in Coole, I think. We used to go these dances and that time we weren't allowed in at the dances under 18 years of age but I was older than that, there I first met him. I saw him coming in the door and I asked some fella who was that fella and he told me and from that on I knew himself. We had six children altogether, four girls and four boys and they're still around. Tom's mother and father were here at that time and she was a great help surely, ara we got on alright. My husband, he was a handy man, we'll say, he could turn his hand to anything and he was very well liked around the parish and everywhere. He'd do a bit of carpentry and mostly he carried on the farm at home or here and that was mostly it.

Pauline: He was a handy man, is there anything you have that he has made.

Attracta: Really, I don't think there is, because when they started renovating this house, they threw out a lot of things, he had a dresser that he made himself and wardrobes. He was a good dancer, he could play music, played accordion. Well, he loved horses and he had five or six horses at a time, maybe they were brood mares and he'd have their foals then and we had cattle and sheep along with that. We had hens and ducks and geese. We didn't do much turkeys. We had too much we thought. But we had geese, we'd have a flock of geese and we'd have a goose every Christmas and that was a novelty them times because you wouldn't have it every day of the week if you wanted but we hadn't it, we thought it was only the elite that had the turkeys for Christmas (laughs).

Someone would call once a week to the village, have all the necessities with them. Then, when we came to the war, everything was rationed, you had to have to have your coupons for this, that and the other and we were only allowed half ounce of tea per person in the week, three loaves of bread in the week and you might be lucky to get a pot of jam once in a while. I don't know about butter or things because we always had our own butter and vegetables and potatoes and all that kind of thing.

Pauline: So, you made your own butter?

Attracta: Ya, in the churn, you'd be half the day at it between making the butter and doing it up, salting it and everything.

Pauline: What butter do you use now today?

Attracta: Low-fat butter mostly, I do buy the cheapest butter.

Pauline: What did you miss during the war that was available before the war?

Attracta: Ara, sure you could get everything before the war, you could get flour, tea and sugar, any amount you wanted but then the coupons came out and you had to get that, even petrol and oil and all that, paraffin oil we used in the lamps them times, all that was rationed.

Pauline: How did you feel when the war ended?

Attracta: We were delighted because gradually everything was coming back to normal again and sure the prices, you'd get five woodbines that time for two pence half penny and a package of players or Aftons for six pence. So, it's no wonder people got into smoking, now they cannot stop and they are way dearer.

Pauline: What do you remember about Milltown village?

Attracta: Oh, they used to have races there every Easter Monday, great crowds, they'd have stalls out, in the field then, behind the post office, and apples & oranges, bananas, sweets of all kinds, we used to enjoy it.

Pauline: Do you remember the train station in Milltown?

Attracta: Ya, I do. That was a good biteen from here, the trains were running regularly there. Well the odd time, if you wanted to go to Tuam or Claremorris, you'd get the train there, there were no buses, no other accommodation.

Pauline: Used you have to walk over to the railway?

Attracta: Well, walk ya, twas walk everywhere unless you had a bicycle and sure it was ages after then when they started getting cars and the next thing, you'd see two or three cars outside everyone's house.

Pauline: Can you remember how much was the ticket?

Attracta: Oh, I can't really but they were very cheap.

Pauline: Would you like to see that railway reopened again?

Attracta: Well, I don't know. They were talking a while ago about opening it but I don't see how much an advantage it would be to the people around here because they all have cars and then there's vans and lorries on the road. I don't think they'd be much need for a train unless it was going into some place where there was very little road traffic or that kind of thing.

Pauline: And, have you ever travelled outside of Ireland?

Attracta: Ya, I was in England a few times. I travelled a good bit around Ireland. We used to go with the day care over there. I was in London, I was in Dover and I was in Manchester. I had a sister down near Dover and I remember I have a picture of myself above on the high cliffs of Dover. My sister in Irishtown had a sister-in-law in London and Tommy's people are in Manchester or outside it. I was over for Joseph's christening. My sister used to come regular and her husband and they had no family but they adopted two kids, a lad and a girl. The lad was here last July, I think, himself and the wife. We keep in contact all the time. I'd cards from both of them there last week.

Pauline: Do you remember the cinema in Milltown?

Attracta: Ya, I do. I remember being there one night, with a couple of the kids, there were small that time, one of them fell asleep in our arms. Ah, it didn't last long, you know. I don't know what happened it that it went.

Pauline: Can you remember the film you seen?

Attracta: I don't know what the name of it was but it was on television there not so long ago. It was about this young lad. I don't know what happened him, something happened his hand, was it a stroke he got or what but he was going for his first communion and he had no clothes or anything and the clothes were donated to him. It was lovely to see but sad at the same time, you know.

Pauline: What do you consider the biggest change you've seen over the years?

Attracta: Well, the traffic on the roads is shocking now compared to how it was when I was a kid. You were lucky if there was one car and you'd think there were very well off people if they had a car, do you know. Now, everyone has them. Ya, I think, that's the biggest change, all the different ways you can get around, do you know.

Pauline: In your opinion, is there any business in Milltown you would like to see return to the area? Is Milltown missing anything now that they had generations ago?

Attracta: Well, we had a dance hall in it, the CYMS up there and it'd be nice to see that and have something in it, nice to have a dance, say, maybe senior citizens, bit of a get together. Well, they do have over in the day care centre, a lot of the old people come together. It'd be nice to have.

Pauline: And have you been to the day care centre?

Attracta: I have indeed, very year since they started. Ya, twas great there the last time, the music was good and lively. The people got up and danced, those that were able. The meal and everything was lovely.

Pauline: Christmas day is coming upon us. How did you prepare for dinner when you were younger, when there were no modern day cookers or electricity?

Attracta: Well, we had this goose that we reared ourselves for Christmas day. We had an open fire in my house and we had this big pot you know, the old fashioned pots with the 3 legs under it and you'd have it out in the hearth there, coals under it and coals over the lid to cook the turkey or the goose and you'd cook vegetables separate then and when you take up the goose, the goose is stewed, you'd turn the vegetables into the gravy that came off the goose and god, they used to be delicious. God I'd love to see them back again (laughs). And we'd have jelly and custard after that. Of course, the currant cake was a novelty that time because you wouldn't have it only at Christmas time. Sure, we can have it every day now.

Pauline: In the modern day, what pastimes do you have?

Attracta: Well, I go to bingo three nights a week and

Pauline: And, bingo, do you win?

Attracta: Occasionally, I win, sometimes a fair amount and other times maybe €10 or €15, keep going anyway. The most reason I go is you meet people that you won't see everyday. I go to church on Sunday and doing the ordinary around. I like gardening. I like flowers outside but I have no love for them inside cos they die on me (laughs). I'm not able to do

much now I admit. I love the garden outside, nice pastime, you're out in the fresh air, looking at flowers and maybe pull a few weeds here and there.

Pauline: I see a book here beside me, are you into reading?

Attracta: Oh, if I hadn't books, I'd be dead, that's all about it. I read. I go to the library when it calls to Milltown every 2 weeks and I take out 3 books and I'll have them and maybe another one read before the 2 weeks are up again. I like Nora Roberts. I like Maeve Binchy. I like, what's this other one, Josephine Cox. There's a good few that I like. Danielle Steele and I don't know who wrote that one but I'm reading it.

Pauline: It's The Road Home by Rose Treymen, one of the finest writers.

Attracta: Oh, sure they'll say that on them all.

Pauline: Do you have any regrets in your life? Is there anything you wished you could have done and never got around to it?

Attracta: I don't really know. I wouldn't say I've no regrets but I was smart enough going to school and I thought that I might get some position out of school rather than go on the land but I didn't go to high school or anything.

Pauline: So, you don't really have any regrets, what would be the proudest moment of your life?

Attracta: That's a tough one now, I suppose getting married and settling down.

Pauline: And now you've got grandchildren as well that keep you occupied.

Attracta: And great grandchildren. I have 7 great grandchildren and I have 20 grandchildren but one of them died tragically and I have 19 living. They're mostly all in Ireland here. Alan is the only one in New Zealand. He's the only one out foreign. I think all the grandchildren are great. They keep going to school, they have something in mind that they'd like to do and they keep on going to school until they achieve that and I know a lot of them are successful in that line. It's a great achievement really because you'd wonder in the present day when there's so much attractions outside that they keep on going to school until they get what they want.

Pauline: So that concludes our interview today. I wish you and your family a happy Christmas and may 2016 be a good year for you.