

Name: Mary Walsh (nee Connolly)
Address: Knockroe, Dunmore, Co Galway
(Originally from Carrowreagh, Milltown, Tuam)
Date: 5th June 2015
Interviewer: Pauline Connolly
Transcription by: Pauline Connolly
Location of Interview: Belmont

Pauline: Hi I'm Pauline Connolly. I'm here with my aunt Mary Walsh in Belmont on the 5th June 2015. Thanks Mary for taking the time out to speak with me today.

Could you tell me some of your earliest memories as a child? What pastimes did you have / What games did you play?

Mary: I used to play with Donnellan's, Bernie and Chris & Helen and Maura Corcoran. We used to play ring a ring rosie and make our own fun. There wasn't any television that time or toys either. We had to make our own toys.

I went to school to Milltown. We used to have to walk, 2 miles down the road. My teachers were Miss Acton, Lord Have Mercy on her and Mrs Dolan. They were nice. I liked them. I liked Miss Acton very well. The teachers were not bad when you'd be late. Of course some mornings, you would be late because you'd be waiting until the rain be over or thing like that.

Pauline: Can you remember your communion day?

Mary: Yes, oh I can.....afraid, going to confessions the day before. There was so much drilled into you.

Pauline: Did you have something to tell?

Mary: I had nothing but I was afraid all the same going in. There wasn't the big excitement as now, well, there was in our own way but no big parties. I wore a white dress and veil, got the loan of it, borrowed it. Of course, the boys got the suits in Tuam. They had to buy it in Tuam. Mammy had to get them in Tuam. Mam used to cycle to Tuam.

Pauline: Do you remember the carnival in Milltown?

Mary: Hmm, ya that was lovely....2 weeks. When, we were young, they used to have the amusements. I used to go down then Easter Sunday evening and Easter

Monday and they'd be there for the next weekend then again but they'd be gone then the next week and we'd be crying when we'd see them going. They used to have hobby horses, the man used to be twisting it with his hand, putting them around and the chairplanes and swinging boats and selling tickets then for prizes, little jugs.

Pauline: Did you ever win?

Mary: I was never lucky to win anything. It was 20 years going on, more. Ya, it was great.

Pauline: Can you remember any of the shops in Milltown?

Mary: Yes, Burkes had a shop, where Billy Burke is. We used to go in there after mass for the sweets.....Grogan's.....Mullarkeys, a pub, the men used to go in after mass, they'd be talking the farming.....and then Glynn's, the hardware.....Flannery's and the post office, they had a little shop and Sheridan's used to have beautiful toys out on the window at Christmas. We used to be looking in at them. They used to have dolls, big dolls and prams. Burkes was, of course, our nearest shop. We used to go in for the sweets and shopping when we'd go to town, go down for messages, go down as far as Burkes.

Pauline: What about the cinema in Milltown?

Mary: Oh yes, it was down below Sheridan's. Well, when we, we'll say, got 14 or 15 years, used to go maybe once a fortnight or once a week on a Sunday night. Laurel and Hardy and the Quiet Man.

Pauline: Visiting was a huge part in days gone past, do you miss that and do you think it is still alive today? The Connolly household was well known for being a lively visiting house.

Mary: Twas great to see the neighbours coming in and when they'd be passing in the middle of the day as well, they'd run in to light the pipe as they used to say and it was nice, big changes today really, there isn't any in and out, you'd miss that. There wasn't as much stress, well I suppose they had in their own way, stress as today but you see it was different times.

The farming. They had sheep and cattle and a few cows and chickens and turkeys for the Christmas. Mammy'd sell the turkeys for Christmas and twas great. We had a dog called Tiny one time and we gave him away because we got a young one and we were crying after him.

Just my Uncle Patk lived there. He was nice, very good to us as kids, lovely, helping us with our lessons and that.

I just remember about going around the house and working around, making the churn and making the butter that time, baking and that, they usen't buy much butter cos they'd make it out of their own milk. The brown bread was nice. Oh ya, on the open fire, twas all done on the open fire. People didn't take any notice really because the fireplace was very big, they'd have a crook for hanging pots in it and that.

In my time, there was only the phone in the priest's house and the garda barracks if you wanted to make an urgent phonecall.

Pauline: Could you describe a day in the bog?

Mary: Oh, it was great for the footing of the turf and the crowd used gather for the tea, for the dinner and tea. It was hard work. Hated the hay ...but [laughs].....haymaking, you were always watching the weather with the hay.

Pauline: What are the biggest change and most beneficial change you've seen over the years?

Mary: Changes.....Stop.....The way they go on holidays now and of course, they get married now, they don't go in with the old people. They go off and build their own houses. They go out for meals and it's a different way of life altogether.

Pauline: If your parents were to return to Carrowreagh today, what do you think they would say?

Mary: Pass out I'd say [laughs]. They wouldn't know it.