

Name: Celia O'Donnell
Address: Milltown, Tuam, Co Galway
Date: 13th September 2017
Interviewer: Margaret Marlow
Transcription by: Pauline Connolly

Location of Interview: Celia's Home

Celia: Well I'll tell you now, this is my Aunt's home, there in that small thatched house, we had to knock it sure and they were selling the farm and my Aunt was dead so they sold that piece and they went down to Roscommon and my husband bought it, the lord have mercy on him so that's how Celia happened to be here. I turned around and married a man that bought the land.

Margaret: Where were you born and raised Celia?

Celia: Do you know the Irishtown road? There's a two storey house on the left as you go down, when you go up the hill, there's a two storey house and that's where I lived.

We used to be coming home from school and this woman used to be out on our way. She had haws. They were the fine big haws and the creature used to go out with the twig knocking them down. She said "They're the happiest days of your life". We couldn't say they were because we hated school.....We got on..... Do you know the break at school? We used to go down the bridge and a crowd of us used to pull the clothes up to here and walk up the river at the lunchtime and come down then, that's how we used to spend the time.....I'll tell you my teacher was Brendan Ryan and Tess Sheridan. They both got married then but they were happy days.... Twas down in Dalgin. It's gone now, it's closed. We used to walk to Dalgin and we used to go in our bare feet during the Summer.....Well, everybody used to go in the Summer, take off the shoes and walk in the bare feet.

Margaret: So, over the years Celia because you've been here so long, you must have seen a lot of changes in Milltown.

Celia: Oh lord Yes, yes, yes. The electricity, they hadn't it here now when I came, well other people had it but the ones in the thatched house, that's my Aunt, she hadn't it but when we came in then, we got it and Thank God we have it since. Oh it was mighty, mighty, Well, I wasn't in that house until the electricity. When I came in, the electricity just came on....Oh Stop, sure they was nothing that time only Bacon and Cabbage for the dinner everyday, we'd come home from school, twas bacon and cabbage.....On Sunday then, we'd have a bit of a roast.....You might have a turkey now for the occasion.....a goose or a duck.

I reared 7 of them in a thatched house – 2 bedrooms and then when I moved in here to the new house, I got another baby. So I had 4 boys and 4 girls.....The open fire I used to cook. I used to make the cake in the oven and put the coals over it and have them under it and bake the cake.....I used to wash the spuds and have the cabbage. Twasn't steak or anything then that time. Not, we couldn't afford it. Anyway nobody had it, I think at that time.....About the bread, make it out of

your head.....we used to make them, put the flour, the brown flour and bread soda, milk, make it up, put it in the tin, put it in the oven.

Margaret: What other things have changed Celia over the years?

Celia: Washing clothes and everything back to the well..... So twas tough work now and then, wheel the pram with me and I used to cycle up feeding cattle or sheep, bring a bucket of water....No trousers, the skirt above here on me..... Oh stop, my heart, my husband's heart wasn't bad but I used to do it to save himself – sparing my husband..... Oh I done my bit.

Margaret: Was your husband a farmer?

Celia: He was.

Margaret: So, what can you tell me about helping him with the farm, then?

Celia: Hard work.

Margaret: Your husband farmed all his life, did he?

Celia: He did.....the cow and the calf, sheep, the little lambs. We had the sow and the banibhs.....Fairs that time.....one in Tuam, we used to go to Ballindine.....I remember before I got married, my Dad, we walked it from Dillonbrook where I lived all the way back and into Ballindine but driving sheep. Sure when we got there, the fair wasn't started and we had to wait. Around half 10 or 11 o'clock, I thought it was evening, the length. I said to Daddy would we soon be home. Oh we didn't start at all yet, he said. Oh stop it.....My Dad lived to be a 102. He used to cut turf and used to go ploughing in Springtime. He had 2 horses and he used to go out ploughing for people and then he started cutting turf and we used to have to spread it. He used to sell 30 cribs here to the priests and 30 to Sheridans and down to Kirwins in Dalgin and our own. ...The 3 girls were the oldest and Mary and myself done it all and the 3 lads were get up, they went off to England and we had to do it.

Margaret: What can you tell me about when you left school Celia?

Celia: I went with Dad doing the work, they used to have the turf and the harvest. We worked like a man as they used say.....But we were happy.

Margaret: What can you tell me about when you were a young woman and socialising, what kind of entertainment was there in Milltown?

Celia: The dance hall was there, we used walk it up to it. The races was in Milltown every Easter Monday, we had a good oul time.

Margaret: What about the other socialising then, the dances?

Celia: Oh, every week, every Sunday night.....To go in, 2 and 6. And you see, if you had three, I would used go in free, so Mary and myself would go in and then Nellie, she was a bit young but she came when she was going free. twas hard to have money that time.....I got married then, reared 8 in the family. My husband died, 24 years ago. They were happy times, I couldn't complain.

Margaret: Did you do occasions like the stations?

Celia: The stations are dying out now, are they over yer way?We'd have the mass and then we'd have tea and things after it.....We used to have to prepare.....That time, it was lime and whitewash. We were down in the old house that time.....having the Blessed Sacrament coming into the house.

Margaret: So, did you do special food on those occasions as well?

Celia: I suppose we would. There was no such thing but the sandwiches that time and a cup of tea and sandwiches – ham

Margaret: So, you mentioned early on Celia, about the day care centre, do you go there?

Celia: Playing cards, 25.....At home, that's where I learned. My Dad/Grandad that taught us how to play cards. He'd be sitting on the chair and we'd be on our knees around.....And tomorrow night, I'd be playing.....over to the care centre.....I go to Bingo, I got 70 this night week and a free book for tonight. I'm paying my way as the one says.

Margaret: Is there anything that you're particularly proud of Celia in your life?

Celia: I'm proud of the time I had and how I got on in good health.

Margaret: Do you have any regrets?

Celia: No. I worked hard but I never said no to it. I had to get on with it