



Name: Kathleen Dunleavy
From: Cahergowan, Claregalway
Age: 55
Interviewers: Brona Gallagher
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Brona **Is Irish still as strong in the area as it was?**

Kathleen I was born in Dublin, and my mother died in 1947 and we came to live in Claregalway and my sister went to a Claregalway school - she was in 3rd class and she went into 3rd class here in September and by the following July she was making her confirmation. Before, Confirmation was on a 3-yearly basis at that time and she had Catechism in Irish by the time July came -so Irish was pretty strong - it was the spoken language in the school. She was always excellent at Irish - much better than me, because I went straight to Secondary school when we came here. We did our subjects through Irish, but the everyday language of the school was English and when we came back to Claregalway, here was everybody with their blas and I just wasn't inclined to talk Irish. She was much better than me because she...I'd be good at reading and writing it, but as for speaking it, I'd get bogged down, I'd be stopping and stuttering and waiting for a word. So that's how the Irish was in 1947. She also always got the Irish grant - the "dontas" - the Inspector came around every year and they examined the children and if they were good, I think they got five pounds. My sister anyhow, bought a bicycle - a High Nellie - maybe backed up a little bit by my aunt and we had that bike for absolute years, until it got stolen eventually! It was a bicycle she bought with her Irish language money.

Brona **Did they get it every year?**

Kathleen Yes, so it just goes to show you, there was a lot of Irish spoken, because she couldn't have learnt her Irish otherwise.

Brona **Did the customers speak Irish in the pub?**

Kathleen Oh, certainly. I got married in 1965...'64 and my husband came from an area where nobody spoke Irish and you'd be amazed at the amount of Irish he picked up within 10 years. All the old people had nearly died and gradually bit by bit, the Irish language had disappeared.

Brona **Nowadays, do they speak Irish?**

Kathleen You get a certain number of people who would come in and they would greet one another and speak Irish to each other, but they are only very few and far between now.

Brona Whereas before, it was all the time?

Kathleen Oh, constant, when we got married, my uncle was alive at the time and we had a man working for us and they never spoke anything but Irish. So, when they died, straight away, that amount of Irish was gone out of our home. My aunt always spoke Irish – she spoke Irish to the customers too.

Brona Was she from here?

Kathleen Yes, she was a native. The pub was originally beside the ball alley – you know where the horse riding is now, and we moved back here in 1970.

Brona Do you know anything about the Nine Arches?

Kathleen When I was young, I used to come on holidays to Claregalway from Galway and my grandmother and grand-aunt were living in the house.

Brona What were their names?

Kathleen My family's name is Lenihan and my grandmother's name was Kelly from Waterdale. She never called the river "the river", she called it the canal. So, obviously it was well known at that stage that it was man-made. One of the Blakes over there in Annagh Hill, kind of over that area, wanted to be able to come by boat from his place to Lough Corrib. He had some dream of having transport – maybe barges, or whatever on the river from Annagh up to Lough Corrib, I read that somewhere. But it certainly was a Blake who excavated the canal there.

Brona I did hear that they wanted Tuam and the Corrib to be connected?

Kathleen That was it now – that was part of it.

Brona A Bodkin from Lackagh?

Kathleen That's right. I don't know if anyone mentioned that the wall around the old cemetery at the Abbey – I remember being told that the people who built it got one shilling a day. I don't remember it though.

Brona Was it during the Famine?

Kathleen I don't know - maybe it was around that time. My grandfather came from the village of Clogher. Have you heard of Clogher?

Brona I have, but I can't find it in a townland.

Kathleen It is the same with Cloonbiggen - it is actually Claregalway. And this townland here is actually Cahergowan even though we call it Claregalway, even though that doesn't start until you cross the bridge. Anyhow, where Clogher is at the moment, there near 'Hog Road', there is a house with sheet iron over the thatch and that's the home where my great-grandfather was born in ...no, I'm wrong where my great-grandfather was born, Lenihan.

Brona So, you are from a mature family?

Kathleen Yes, my mother was married in Dublin, but my whole family are all here, but my great grandfather must have bought that place where the old pub was and then in 1914, my grandfather bought about 29 acres for four hundred pounds. I think it was his father that came from Clogher, that's my great grandfather. And his brother then, my great grandfather's brother - the two of them went in to Galway to do an apprenticeship in a shop and one of them bought this place afterwards and the brother bought 'The Tavern' in the square. They were Lenihan's that owned it.

Brona Do you know when?

Kathleen I don't. I know my grandfather was born in 1879, so he was born over here, so it was before that. That house over there was originally a bakery, I believe, because when we were re-plastering in the kitchen, we found all sorts of nooks to the side, and that was the fireplace and it was owned by people called Reilly - 2 sisters and there was Sonny and all I know is one line of the song, it was: - "Shuas is anuas ti Reilly I Baile Chair", I don't know where you'd get it.

Brona We have a song book and it may be in it. There is a song with the Abbey in it!

Kathleen Is that the one "Is mor an cuis naire do no daoine"....did anyone tell you that there was a church across the road here? There is a 2-storey house across the road and there is a road going up and a lot of houses. Well, in my living memory, there was a black gate at the bottom of that road and in the field, just at the right-hand side, there was a church, so I heard. I heard the story that there was a church there in very bad condition and the priest went to America to collect money for it and he was robbed, and the money never came back.

Brona For Hosty?

Kathleen Yes, but by whatever means they started building the one there at the corner (where the church is today), and the roof was blown off the church on the night of the big wind. My aunt can remember a time in the early 1900's, there were no seats in that church and Canon Moran came to Claregalway in 1914/1915 and he was the one who put the furniture in it. There were no seats in that church. The song "Is mor and cuis naire de na daoine", maybe about that old church. That was not referring to the Abbey. I don't ever remember anybody saying that they actually know anybody that went to mass in the Abbey - that the Abbey was used a Parish church or anything like that. I never remember that. Everyone tells about the other one. (Black gate etc.,) and there's an added bit - the priest was supposed to be at a christening party over in Ryan's and when he was coming back here, the roof was blown off the church.

Brona **The night of the big wind?**

Kathleen Yes.

Brona **Ryan's from Peak?**

Kathleen Yes, but they weren't in Peak then. They were at the bottom - kind of opposite Kiniska road - every bit of it is gone now, the land is being sold. There is a kind of a gateway there opposite the Kiniska road. It was a very long thatched house with a lot of windows.

Brona **Were they wealthy?**

Kathleen Oh, they were, yeah!

Brona **Do you know how Cahergowan got its name?**

Kathleen I don't really. It had something to do with calves or else a blacksmith. I can never make up my mind is it a gabha is a blacksmith and a gamhain is the Irish for a yearly calf. So, take your pick! Was it the blacksmith or the calf?

Brona **Are there any named fields in the area?**

Kathleen 'Poll an Capaill' and a hill down by the bank of the river 'Cnoc an drinainn' (Hawthorn) but it's levelled now and there is a well down there called 'Tober Padraig'. There is meant to be a place in Cahergowan, where Saint Patrick shaved himself or something.

Brona **Is Tober Padraig acknowledged as a holy well?**

Kathleen No. There is no story about it – just that it's there.

Brona What trades were there in the area?

Kathleen When my grandfather bought the land, there were two cottages on it, one is there beside the Summerfield and the other was beside it. One had a shoe maker and the other a tailor. There was Donaghue's, a small street shop there beside Hughes' where Horan's house is now – a little thatched one – just this side of Skerritt's, the Carpenters. I don't think I remember it in it – maybe when I was very small. Clancy's had a shop. Carr's lived in it, in Cregboy on the main road to Galway on the left. In the pub, we always had a bit of groceries too. Before my time, they sold bacon – American bacon that used to come in barrels, I think.

Brona From America?

Kathleen Well, I don't actually know, but it was called American bacon anyhow. But, even in my time, we always sold bread and butter and sugar and maybe a bit of sausages and things like that. Then on a Thursday evening, when I was a small girl down here on holidays, it was a fine evening – we always had to have a clean dress on because all the women came and the eggler came from Tuam – his name was Sanron. And they all brought their basket of eggs and they sold them to him and got their money for it and then they came into the shop and bought their tea and sugar and things like that.

Brona Where did this take place?

Kathleen Just outside the shop – he parked his car outside on our front in front of the bar in the old yard and the women came from the villages around.

Brona Do you remember how they were dressed?

Kathleen A lot wore shawls in those days, but there was no noticeable look. The old women would have been wearing long skirts down to the ground and they wore mostly black shawls, as I remember. I have my grand-mother's shawl in the house, which was a kind of a beige colour with a border of cream and brown design and tassels out of it.

Brona What colour were the long skirts?

Kathleen Black and they'd nearly always have an apron in white down to the ground. An old one would be wearing the red. I've seen the red skirt now, but don't ask me to pin down where. They'd be real old women when I was small.

Gathered skirt, red banin material kind of. There is another thing too - when my grandfather bought this place, he started going around to the various fairs and the races with the tent, selling porter. We still have the banner that he had on the front of the tent. It's Patrick Lenihan and its got shamrock and harp decorations around it.

Mrs Dunleavy to her son: Do you know any named fields?

Sean Paircin an bpoll, Hession's field.

Brona Is Poll na Capaill back there too?

Sean I don't know!

Kathleen Back to my grandfather - they went to Castle Hackett fair and to the fair of Turlough and the Galway races.

Brona Where is Castle Hackett?

Kathleen In Belclare, at the foot of Knockdoe.

Brona Can you tell me anything about the Turlough?

Kathleen They were on up until 20/25 years ago, but they were certainly on the decline that time.

Brona Do you know anything about Canon Moran?

Kathleen He pulled my own hair when I was a small girl on holidays, because I was sitting in the wrong seat for Confession. He was notorious. But at the same time, if you stood up to him, he wouldn't bother you again. Just like a bully, he danced on the weak ones.

Brona What was pitch and toss?

Kathleen There was a handball alley where that alley is now, but it was faced the other way but, it was in the way of the new bridge and they demolished it - and my aunt allowed them to build the present alley in her place. Every Sunday afternoon, they'd play pitch and toss. I don't know what the rules of the game were, but they'd have circles drawn in the sand, kind of ...Well toss was to throw the halfpenny or penny in the air and guess what it would be coming down - heads or tails and the pitching was about throwing it or hitting something or something like that - I don't know. But certainly, they spent hours at it. Sunday afternoons - well they played a good bit of handball too.

Brona Was it mainly fellas now at that?

Kathleen Oh, certainly - all.

Brona What card games were played in the area?

Kathleen 25 and 110. I was hopeless at cards - I'd be reading a book, while they played cards and they played an awful lot of cards in our house - in the pub like.

Brona Did ye play for turkeys and geese?

Kathleen Oh yes, and chickens, fowl and all that.

Brona What about 45?

Kathleen 45 is another game, but I never much heard of it - I might have seen it once or twice.

Brona What about fishing in the River Clare?

Kathleen The fishing rights from the bridge to the lake belongs to whoever owns the castle and the rights on the castle side above the river belong to the castle, but on the opposite side belongs to the farmers. I believe that when the land was divided, the farmers were offered the fishing rights, but they had to pay extra, and they weren't prepared to pay it. I'd imagine some of them have sold or rented their rights to some angling club or something like that. The man who owns the castle over there is Mr. Buckley - an American, but they say that the castle is going to go up for sale now. He never interferes with anybody fishing. By right, it's not enough just to have a salmon licence, you have to have permission of the person who owns the river, but I never heard of anyone being stopped from fishing over here. If he sells it, what's going to happen?

Brona Do you know any other owner of the Castle?

Kathleen The first people I remember is the O'Connor's. He was in the army in India. He had 3 children, Hycenth and Geraldine were 2 girls and the boy - I don't know what his name is. That summer about 1945/46, I was down on holidays, myself and my sister, my sister is three years younger than me and we used to go over to play. We used to play with the O'Connor's. The O'Connor's sold to the Johnsons. Mr. O'Connor, well he wasn't just Mr., he was something in the British Army (a Colonel) and he had served in India

and the reason they came to Claregalway that summer was to decorate that place and do it up. Now, they had absolutely fabulous toys that we wouldn't have, a doll's house that you could walk into. We spent that summer playing with them.

Brona **Was this in the castle?**

Kathleen In the Castle Lodge.

Brona **What kind of condition was the castle in?**

Kathleen It is in the same condition it is in now. No one lived in the tower, they lived in the Castle Lodge. The Johnsons lived in the lodge so did the Parmer's, no one ever lived in the castle. The lodge was lovely, it was real modern, and it had five bedrooms. There was a whole wing and there was nothing in it except bathrooms. The rooms were decorated in various styles like the Japanese room, which had all Japanese drapes, ornaments and all that. Soon, after that, they sold it to the Johnsons. That would have been 1945/46. I don't know exactly when they sold it. It would have been the 50's by the time the Johnsons came.

Brona **Was Johnson out of the army?**

Kathleen Yes, he was out of the British Army.

Brona **Did they mingle with the locals?**

Kathleen Not really. They had a son Decky, but that would have been in the time I was in boarding school. I can't remember if Decky went to Claregalway school. They spent more than their holidays there.

Brona **Were the O'Connor's Irish?**

Kathleen I don't know. He was definitely in the British Army. They had a home in Sussex.

Brona **Would women go to the pub?**

Kathleen No, not in my time.

Brona **Would it have been a scandal?**

Kathleen I don't know whether it would or not because it just didn't happen. Now, you had an occasion when people were home on holidays and they came to the

pub. But, there was no such thing as going out for a drink. Now, when I was very young, everybody went to town in the horse and cart and they called into the pub on the way home on a Saturday evening and they had the few jars. I have a big feeling that if the wife was with him, she would have a porter, but there was no such thing as going out to the pub for a drink.

Brona **Would not a group of your friends go out to the pub?**

Kathleen For heaven sakes. I was never in a pub with another girl or on my own for that matter. There was no such thing of going to the pub before the dance.

Brona **How did you socialise before the dance or did you wait at home until 11 o'clock?**

Kathleen No, we didn't wait 'til 11 o'clock. I remember being in Seapoint at half eight or nine o'clock. The band would start up. They would be some alright that would have gone to the pub, but you would find enough at the dance to dance with.

Brona **When did the ladies start going to the pubs?**

Kathleen I don't know. I certainly wasn't since I got married, which was in 1964. Girls never came to our pub anyway.

Brona **What kind of drinks did you sell early on?**

Kathleen It was just water and whiskey, and no one drank whiskey or spirits, only old people. They would ask for a half and they would knock it back, but there were no such things as mixers or lemonade.

Brona **Did you sell soft drinks?**

Kathleen We had lemonade and peppermint corgent and raspberry, orange was relatively new. I remember for a different type, I put raspberry into red lemonade. There was no white lemonade at the time.

Brona **Did you get the soft drinks in the Corrib? Soft water?**

Kathleen That didn't exist. When I was young, it was "Youngs" and they had their place where the great outdoors in Eglington Street is. There was a well in the building. This was a natural well, but whether they poured the water out of the tap, I don't know. It was supposed to have been from the well. There was also the Connaught Minerals in Bohermore, now that time, it was down where the King's Head is now. They were the two main ones.

Brona **Did you have Coke?**

Kathleen No, we had them later on.

Brona **Did you have beer?**

Kathleen We didn't have beer for a long time. I can't remember when beer came in. It was wooden kegs of course and we had to hammer in the tap.

Brona **How did you manage before electricity came? Say for washing glasses or anything along those lines?**

Kathleen We washed them in a basin of water and in those days, you got your pint glass when you came in and you handed back your glass for a refill every time you wanted a drink. There wasn't a constant wash-up going on. Lighting was oil lamps and water, as I have already said, was in the basins to wash up. We had a tank outside to wash up. We went out and brought in our bucket of water, some people didn't have tanks, so they had to go up to the river and bring back barrels of water or they had wells. We always, even when we had the tank went to the well. It is up of the far side of the river, up from the castle. That was a lovely well with walls built around it. There was another one down where the graveyard is on this side of the river. There was Tobair Pdraig and there was the priest's well.

Brona **Where is the priest's well?**

Kathleen That must be where the housing estate is now built. You kind of went in over a stile opposite Horan's house, where O'Donaghue's sweet shop was and you went in one field and in another field and it was all brick lines and you went down steps.

Brona **Why was it called the priest's well?**

Kathleen Because it was the priest's well. It was on church property. Those fields belonged to the church.

Brona **What was it like?**

Kathleen Oh, it was lovely. It was all overhung with trees. It was lovely and cool, dark and mysterious. You had to go down steps to it. It was dark and creepy.

Brona **Is it still there?**

Kathleen I'm sure that it is gone. I haven't heard anyone talk about it since.

Brona When you were young, did you play in the Tinyforts?

Kathleen No.

Brona Who owned the post office?

Kathleen One time, there was a post office opposite here. It was owned by Cahills. Actually, I think you can see the track of the window of the place across the road.

Brona Were there any characters that used to come in and out of the pub?

Kathleen I don't remember many storytellers, but singers, yes. We always had a sing song in the pub. For instance, on the day of the races and the 15th August and church holidays, there would be a sing song.

Brona Were the women involved?

Kathleen There was no women involved, no way, no such thing. The women didn't even come on a funeral day. The trip to the pub was called the honour. Everybody, meaning men, would buy a half gallon of porter and hand it in. The very important people bought the gallon. If you didn't buy your half gallon, you would be declined. My aunt used to clear out the pub at 2 o'clock on a funeral day, because if it went on longer than that, you would have bloodshed. There would be another funeral the next day. That was the routine.

Brona Did any famous persons call in?

Kathleen I remember, he was married to De Valera's daughter.

Brona Did Martin O'Cadhain ever visit the pub?

Kathleen Yes, he was up to Sinn Fein activities more than the Irish language.

Brona Would he talk to any strangers?

Kathleen Anyone that he talked to, I knew.

Brona Were they involved?

Kathleen Paddy Moran was one, now Sean Mac Raymen was on the radio, he came to collect Irish songs. That would have been in the 60's.

Brona Did you hear anything of Kieran Barrett?

Kathleen I knew him to see, Kieran Mac Mahoona was here too. He was on the same lines as Sean Mac Raymen.

Brona So Claregalway seems to be a great place to research?

Kathleen Oh, yes. They researched the Irish songs. Sonny Kelly, Lord have mercy on him, was a great Irish singer. He had all of Raftery's songs.

Brona Did he remember them from memory?

Kathleen Oh, yes.

Brona Did Raftery write the music himself?

Kathleen I suppose he did. He had "Annach Cuain".

Brona Were they in Irish?

Kathleen Oh, yes, of course. When I got married, there was an abundance of Irish songs. There were great singers.

Brona Are there any unusual headstones in the graveyard?

Kathleen Yes, both of them are in the same place. So, you know where the church is, on the high window, to the right-hand side as you go in through, near Burke's grave and then into the left, you come to an open space, one of them has a sheep on it.

Brona Speaking about the Burke lad, is he the man with 900 sheep?

Kathleen I doubt it. I think he was very fond of the booze, unless he was rich and drank all he had.

