



Name: Mrs. Mary Newell
From: Montiagh South, Claregalway
Interviewers: Tara Forde & Martina Hughes
Date: 7th August 1991

Martina **What age were you when you started school?**

Mary I was seven years.

Martina **Was it compulsory?**

Mary I think it was.

Tara **What were the primary schools in the parish?**

Mary Claregalway and Carnmore.

Martina **Did many of the locals get an education?**

Mary Not many in my time, no.

Martina **Did farm work interfere with your schooling?**

Mary Yes, it did. We had to go to the bog, save hay and all the rest.

Martina **Were the teachers cross?**

Mary Yes, they were. One teacher used to put us up on the seat and she had a big stick. She would beat us with the stick. She would put marks on your legs.

Tara **Was it because you didn't have your homework done?**

Mary It wasn't that, whatever questions she would be asking.

Tara **Where was she from?**

Mary I don't know where she came from first. She lived in Cregboy.

Tara **Did you learn irish?**

Mary We talked irish every day. The first day I went to school, it was Irish. I wasn't able to talk a work of English. I learned English at school.

Tara **What subjects did you learn in Irish?**

Mary History and maths, geography, catechism and then we would get our homework, Irish composition and an English composition.

Martina **Did the inspector call around?**

Mary Yes. £2 we used to get that time. Everyone in the village that went to school with me had Irish.

Tara **When do you think the Irish started dying out?**

Mary I would say it's only about 20 years ago or something like that.

Tara **Do you speak Irish?**

Mary We speak Irish here every day.

Tara **Do your children know Irish?**

Mary Of course.

Martina **What did the girls do for a pastime?**

Mary The girls that time, well, to tell you the God's honest truth, I don't know what they did. They used to knit. The first time I was taught to knit, my mother that taught me, R.I.P. She taught me with two feathers.

Tara **Did you like going to school?**

Mary At times I did, but I used to hate going back after the summer holidays.

Tara **Did you do tests or exams in school?**

Mary Ah yes, we would do small exams. We would have them at Christmas and Easter. I did the Teistameairacht. I have a cert in the room which I got for it.

Tara **Did you or your friends go to secondary school?**

Mary No, they or I didn't.

Tara **How many was in your class?**

Mary There was six of us in the class. There was twin girls, Bridget and Margaret. Then there was Sarah Moran, Sally Glynn, Sadie Noone and me.

Tara **How long did you have for lunch?**

Mary The same as today.

Tara **What did you bring for lunch?**

Mary Homemade bread and homemade butter and the grain of sugar when the butter wasn't to be found.

Martina **What kind of furniture did you have in the house?**

Mary We had two beds and a settle bed in the kitchen and the usual wardrobe table. This was in the thatched house. It is no longer there, between Padraic Duggan's and the other house.

Tara **Where did your family name come from?**

Mary I think it (Greally) is English. My father came from Gortcloonmore. He married in to my mother here in Montiagh. My brother in New Zealand says it's an English name.

Tara **When did your brother move to New Zealand? Was he a young man when he went?**

Mary He was 26. He is 34 years gone since last April.

Tara **How often has he been home?**

Mary He was home about four times.

Tara **Were you over there?**

Mary No. My brother and my son were over for his son's ordination.

- Tara** Is he the only one that emigrated to New Zealand from your family?
- Mary Yes. No one else emigrated anywhere.
- Tara** Do you know anything about the pipe band in Claregalway?
- Mary Oh, Martina's grandfather (Martin Hughes) was in it. My father used to drive them, in a cart I suppose.
- Tara** Did they play in Galway (St. Pat's day)?
- Mary I think they played around the parish.
- Tara** How did the blow-ins or the people that married into families in the parish cope with the Irish?
- Mary They picked up as they went along.
- Tara** Do you know anything about the drainage of the river Clare?
- Mary Oh, I do. Peter was a 'ganger' on the river Clare.
- Tara** What is a 'ganger'?
- Mary He was over the men - a foreman. He would have his own bunch of men and he would tell them what to do.
- Tara** What were your husband's duties (apart from looking after the men)?
- Mary He would make sure that the oil was ordered.
- Tara** How long did it take?
- Mary Four or five years, I suppose. Then Peter went down to the river Moy when they had finished the Clare river.
- Tara** When they were poaching fish in the river Clare, where did they obtain the net?
- Mary They bought them.

Tara **What time of year was poaching?**

Mary Summertime.

Tara **When they got caught (poachers), would they get a fine or a sentence?**

Mary You would read in the paper of them being fined.

Tara **How much would be the fine?**

Mary I suppose anything up to £200.

Tara **What do you know about Ciaran Barrett?**

Mary He used to come to the village here. I don't know where he was native of. He used to come to old people to see what kind of stories they had and he would collect them. I remember he was down at our old house a couple of times. We had no stories for him. I think he just came to visit.

Tara **Was Peter involved in the LDF?**

Mary He was and so was my father. Martina's grandfather was in it as well.

Tara **Do you remember who you first voted for?**

Mary Yes, Fianna Fail. I was eighteen.

Tara **Do you remember when the first woman went for an election?**

Mary No.

Tara **During the war, people obliged to grow their own produce, so they could be self-sufficient?**

Mary Yes. Tea was very scarce. We didn't have to buy tea, because my grandmother had a whole lot of tea that time. She had a big chest with tea, paraffin oil, bread soda and soap, so we didn't have to buy any of those commodities during the war. The tea was a half a crown an ounce at that time.

Tara **Where would you get your supplies?**

Mary We got our supplies down the road there from a woman by the name of Clancy. Cigarettes were scarce at that time.

Martina **Were there any local characters?**

Mary I don't think so.

Tara **What about the two old ladies that went to every funeral and cried?**

Mary Well, them were born and reared in the village. They were two old ladies and they married up in kiltroque, and they were always friendly with the Montiagh crowd. So when a person died in the village, they came down and cried. We used to love to hear them cry. Then maybe ten minutes afterwards, they would be laughing - it was a way of life with them.

Tara **How has your life style changed since you were a young girl?**

Mary Well, we have the water and electricity. I do often wonder when there would be a power cut, how we could knit and sew. When we were living in the thatched house with nothing but the paraffin lamp and even without the lamp.

Tara **What do you know about Nurse Keane?**

Mary I think she came from Corrandulla.

Tara **Do you know where she got her training?**

Mary I don't, loveen.

Martina **Did many people move out during the 50's from here?**

Mary Three families from this village moved out. They moved to Kildare. Another family moved out to Carlow.

Tara **Could you tell us about the killing of the pig?**

Mary Well the pig would be fasting all day. Then the cart would be out in the yard and a rope tied on to it. The pig would be put up on the cart. Then tied down. Well everyone in the village would, I think, come to the household. Some lads would hold down the rope and they would stick the pig in the neck with the rope. The blood would be put in a bucket and left aside for later. The pig then would be hung overnight. Then they would get boiling water to shave the pig. Then the next day or so, she would be cut up and salted with salt. Peter put it in a barrel, when the bits of bacon were ready, they were hung up the chimney.

Tara **How did you make the pudding?**

Mary Put the blood in to a basin, pepper and salt, onions, cloves, oatmeal and breadcrumbs. Mix it all up together and have a pot of boiling water. Then you put it into a tin can. Then steam it for 4 or 5 hours. Then you take it up when you think it is done. Then fry it in the pan. It's delicious.

Tara What did you know about the big wind?

Mary Well my father, R.I.P., had hay back in the haggard.

Tara Haggard?

Mary It is a place for keeping cocks. The wind lifted the cocks, it was so wild.

Tara What do you know about the pig market down at the ball alley? It was also called the slaughter.

Mary The people around that had pigs would come there. They would get £15 or £16 for their pigs.

Martina What do you know about the co-op in Claregalway?

Mary It went bust and some people lost their money when they bought shares.

Tara Could you tell me something of your experience in the castle?

Mary Well, I went working in the castle when I was 15 years. I worked for English people. They were very nice. They were non-catholics. Their names were Jobsons. He was a brigadier in the English army. He was retired. He fought in the wars. She was a retired nurse. She was born in India, she travelled the world. She had one son, Dicky was his name. He went to the grammar school in town. They were very nice people to work for, so they would have all the food in the world. The lady had a big thick cookery book, I wouldn't be told or shown how to cook, she would give me the book and I would have to serve it for dinner. They loved wholemeal biscuits. They lived in the lodge. They had a bird room, where he had the birds he shot, dated and all. There was a scullery, the larder, the kitchen, another back scullery, the dining room, the gun room, the sitting room, the corridor, the dressing room. There was three bedrooms up along another corridor. The airing cupboard, there was two bathrooms and two toilets, and then there was a back room, another bedroom, bathroom, and toilet again. It was lovely. I worked for five years with them. I used to cook and do the housework and all for them. They had all those English people on holidays, so they had to get some more help.

Tara **Would they associate with the people from the parish?**

Mary Yes, they were very friendly with everyone around.

Tara **What happened to the castle then?**

Mary They sold the castle to farmers. They used to only come there once a year on holidays. They sold it then to another man. He is now living in Spiddal. He never lived in the castle. It was left there to rot. It would be over 30 years ago since someone lived in it.

Tara **Wasn't your husband working in the castle?**

Mary That's right. He looked after the farm and the gardens.

Tara **When did you meet your husband?**

Mary I first met him at the bog. Then we went dancing in the Hangar, to the Astaire, we would cycle in - I had a bike and so did he.

Tara **When did you get married? And where?**

Mary In 1962.

Tara **Did you go on honeymoon?**

Mary We did. We went to Dublin.

Tara **What was the name of the hotel?**

Mary Harry's. I had a double wedding. My brother and I got married in the cathedral in Thurles.

