



Name: James O'Dea
From: Lydican
Age: 60+
Interviewers: Brona Gallagher
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James The old church in Claregalway had no seats in it and they used to be putting stones under their knees. There was a fella living back the road, he used to serve mass, and he wrote this song "is more an cuis naire..." that's a copy of it there. A fellow by the name of Michael Cleary from Claregalway wrote it.

Brona ***Do you know anything about the church in Lydican?***

James I did but I couldn't tell you much about it. There was supposed to be two churches in the parish one time – the one at Lydican down there about half way into Claregalway – in fact it wasn't in Lydican either... it was in Cregboy. That's Castlegar across the roads now! The church would be down near Byrne concrete. I seen the walls of it when I was going to school.

Brona ***Was it in use at the time?***

James It was a long time ago since it was in use. The other one was over around there opposite the Nine Arches or so. There is a two storey house back from it and in there it was supposed to be.

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Brona ***Where the black gate was?***

James Yes.

Brona ***But nobody ever saw it.***

James No, it was a fellow that told me that that church was down in Lydican but it wasn't Lydican.

Brona ***Do you remember the wells in it?***

James Oh no. There were no wells in it?

Brona ***What do you know about Lydican House?***

James It was burned in 1923 – it was the Gratehead's that was in it. It was all fenced in – the whole townland – with a double stone wall. A high double stone wall.

Brona ***So Gratehead owned it?***

James Well, it was the O'Flaherty's that owned it first, and then there was someone else and the Grateheads had it last. James Gratehead was the last man and about six months ago in the "Galway Advertiser" wasn't his photograph in it – 1905 – he played rugby with what they call the Galwegians. Rugby was an upper class sport. It was only the big shots that was playing it.

Brona ***Where did he go after he was burned out?***

James The family went to Wexford – and we have their land as the fella says!

Brona ***Did you ever hear anything about Lynch?***

James Lynch! That's the name I couldn't think of before. He came after the O'Flahertys.

Brona ***Do you know when the O'Flaherty's left?***

James I haven't the dates now. There wasn't many houses in Lydican that time. Leonards, Walshes, Glynn's and the O'Deas ... I think that's all.

Brona ***Were these Leonards big land owners?***

James They came in there from near Headford. I think McCormack was there before them. Even though there was a lot of land in Lydican there wasn't many people living in it. Down beside me now there, there was a whole lot of land at Kilalea's and the landlord was shifting them for whatever reason and they shifted them over to the end of the parish there beyond Caherlea.

Brona ***Was that Lynch?***

James I think it was O'Flaherty that was shifting them.

Brona ***If there were so few houses what was the land used for?***

James I couldn't tell you. There beyond, there were a lot of old homes. I bulldozed them out anyway. Old homes, the old walls and the old streets. It must have been tenants but the landlord was over them – he could shift them anytime.

Brona ***A little village. Would it have been there since before the famine?***

James Oh, they could have been. They were all built with stones. I even got money beyond in it. (Money - four cooper coin. One seems to have the head of a young Queen Victoria).

Brona ***Could you describe the house?***

James They were built of stone, loose stone. They were small. There are still some foundations over there. It could have been the people that were living in the old houses that lost them. Look what I found in the old house out there – two doidins – they were used in wakes. ('Galway' is incised on them). In the wakes in the homes everyone would be given one of them to smoke. Hynes on Galway made them. I've an article that they used to use for putting the thatch on the old houses. It was in the house - me father found it. It must be 300 years or so old. It's a 'needle' for securing straw on to the rafters. It was probable some kind of lamp they used thread it. It was on one of the old houses I spoke about in the field and it was hard to knock it.

Brona *Is there an Irish name for it?*
James I couldn't tell what the name is for it.

Brona *Can you tell me more about the village of houses?*
James Well, there were a lot of houses over there and probably they fell – I don't know whether it was the night of the 'big wind' or the famine.

Brona *Were they situated close together?*
James They were all grouped together.

Brona *About how many - 10,20,30, etc?*
James I'd say there'd have been about 40. But you wouldn't know if they were houses or out-houses – stable and the like. There might have been only 10-12 houses in it.

Brona *Did you find anything else there?*
James No, but I'll tell you what I found one time. When Grateheads land was divided we got 10 acres of land about 100 yards away from the cattle and this old man told me father the history of the field we had. He said there was an old deep well when there was a pump – a deep pump. We searched the field and we couldn't trace it. He told us anyway what happened. The pump was closed. Beyond there at Leonards there was a man named McCormack and he was a bailiff I think they called him. And a fella had a herd down there minding the sheep and lambs. And he had a home built there for watching all the sheep.

Brona *Who was this now?*
James O'Flaherty – he had a herd there. The bailiff had something against the herder and he was trying to send him out of it. One night he came, it was winter time. The pump now a bit wider than that (c.75 – 1m) and it was the finest of building – about 20 ft. down it went.

Brona *Round and of stone?*
James Yes, anyway he came this night and caught 10-12 young lambs and put them down the pump. In the morning, I think it was around 14, the lambs were missing and the herdman got sacked over it. I think it was O'Flaherty that was over him.

Brona *He was set up?*
James He was, and wait until I tell you what happened then. They couldn't find trace of the lambs – they were drowned down at the bottom. There was a pump and they'd pump the water up out of it – well, when the lambs rotted there was a smell out of it! You couldn't even come near the pump. So they took the irons up of it and quenched the pump. Ah, it was found out years afterwards. I think what happened was some man told my father and he said it's in a rough field that pump where ever it is. Well, I was ploughing the land and there was a rough headland and I said I'd dig it out and I found the pump. I closed it two years ago because it was hard to bring the water up out of it.

Brona *So you can't actually see the stone work?*
James No, it's covered but I suppose you could uncover it, if I got a hack,

Brona *Where was this?*

James There was an avenue going out to the castle. There is a two storey house built in it now, that's where the castle is up that avenue and the pump is near there. I found the pump and I cleaned it up and I went down to the very bottom of it and below was a big flag and I found a bowl where the pump used to go in. The finest spring water was in it.

Brona *So where was the village?*

James It's over near the Lisheen. The Lisheen is in the heart of Lydican. There was a big commonage in Lydican before the land was divided and there is one of those old forts in it. And there is an underground passage in it. Now the Lisheen is a round place and there was a big wide wall around it – it was like a place that there was an old fort or something one time. It's all covered up with bushes. The commonage was divided around 20 or so years ago and before we divided it we said the Lisheen would be left.

Brona *So was it your grandfather you say was buried in it?*

James My great-grandfather. He came from Clare. I heard a yarn but I don't know whether it is true or not – in the old house we had there Wall's used to live in it. Walls had no sons at all – he had three daughters and he used at that time walk from here to the fair at Spencil Hill in Clare. He used to bring one of the daughters and there used to be a dance and everything and that's where they met??

Brona *So, who else is buried there?*

James I've three brothers – babies. I've seen babies being buried there when I was young. There were burials as well after mine. I'd say it was 50 years since the last burial.

Brona *Were the tombstones marked?*

James You'd get a stone and put it standing up. They are only about that length (c. 75 – 1m) now. And you see a round ring of stone the shape of the coffin. When I was about 4 years I seen them burying one of ours. A carpenter would make the coffin out in the barn and carry them over the fields. Nine to ten might follow – that's all. You wouldn't have a wake for a baby.

Brona *And there were adults buried there as well?*

James There was.

Brona *Was it nearer than going into Claregalway?*

James Well, there was a good few of them Lisheen's around – there is another one in Carnmore and another one in Kiltulla – everyone had one of them small ones for their own area. There is one back at the crossroads there and there is one not so far away in Cashlea.

Brona *Do you know much about I.R.A. and the burning of Lydican etc.?*

James I heard a lot of lies about it alright! There was a lot of them saying they were out in 1916 and I don't think the half of them was out!
Oh, yeah, that's another thing that was in that castle – it was haunted. And in fact I was in the room that was haunted – after it was burnt. My father told me there was a small little room there and it was never opened – there was a priest

supposed to be killed in it and it was haunted. They opened it once and a terrible breeze was coming out of it and it was on the stairs. There was a long spiral stairs.

Brona ***This was in the castle part?***

James Yes, there was a small room up those stairs and it was in there.

Brona ***You don't know who the priest was?***

James No, did you ever see it? It was a lovely place. After it was burned all the stairs and everything was still in it. The first crowd that got it they weren't able to pay the rent. Corcoran's, two bachelors next door got it. There was even trouble again after it. Fahy has it now and I'd say he'd flatten it before long. It was beautiful – there was a lovely avenue going into it. There were lovely heads on it. Queen Victoria's head and the lion and the union. The stones were taken out of it. There were corner stones and window stones and all that. They were stripped.

Brona ***Were there any safe houses around the place used during the time of the troubles?***

James Yes well Giles at the top of the hill. Mattie Murphy would be in it now. They were near the rocks and the bushes and they could run out the back and hide in the bushes. In the land between myself and the Glynn's over there, there was a deep hole and the ground was high on both sides and they had it covered with sheet iron and branches and they had blankets in it and they were sleeping there in 1916.

McFadden's travelling show had a tent set up just there on the road into Claregalway, where the road was wide. The Freedom Fighters used to have to sleep out in the rocks because of Black and Tans. They knew McFadden's show was here so they all collected in it with a few staying outside for to hear lorries so she told the lads and they took off across the fields. The fella, Fahy, had a banin on and it was a bright night and he was afraid of his life they'd see him with the banin – but he got safe. There was another fella then he went farther over and he was going up across to where they had the hideout – there was a few of them there and they had rifles and guns. When they saw him coming they nearly shot him thinking he was one of the Tans. The Tans didn't say anything to McFadden's.

Brona ***Do you know anything about Tom Ruane?***

James Yes, he was over the volunteers at Easter week. My uncle was telling me that a few of them were asked to go by Tom Ruane. My uncle and two Kelly's. One of the Kelly's had a gun but the other Kelly fella or my uncle could get a gun cut they took off anyway to Carnmore but there were no guns there for them either. When they were going off to Moyode, Tom Ruane only brought lads with guns with him, the rest had to go back.

Brona ***Did you ever hear about the race course in Kiltulla?***

James That's it there – straight across the road. (James O'Dea lives on the Claregalway/Oranmore Road).

Brona ***Is there a Turlough there?***

James The hurling matches used to be there. I was hurling there since I was a young lad – three years of age I'd say. It was the first race course.

Brona *When were the races held there?*
James I don't know. There's 60 acres in it. It was about a mile around. I spent my lifetime hurling there and before me there were crowds coming there every Sunday I'd say back to my grandfather's time – the hurlers.

Brona *Would the Carnmore and Claregalway team have practiced in there?*
James That's right. I seen the old carnmore lads there and I've seen the Castlegar lads, and from Claregalway back to Morris's down there.

Brona *Did you ever hear anything about a racecourse in Loughgeorge?*
James I heard it was in it alright. I heard a bit about it alright, but I don't remember it. John Ruane said he had race horses in it you know. John Ruane's crowd, yes.

Brona *And would they have brought them too??*
James And the Morris's now down there. They were half-breeds now. Local farmers now and that, they were from Loughgeorge.

Brona *It was just the local average man would bring his horse, yea?*
James That's it, yea.

Brona *That again was ... day?*
James Yea.
Brona *What about this fair or Bizzar or Circus or something or other in Carnmore? Who was telling me that at all now? I think it was around the time of Martin Coyne. Have you heard of him?*
James Oh, I knew Martin O Coyne well.

Brona *Did you go to school in Carnmore or Claregalway?*
James Claregalway, he taught me.

Brona *He was another bit of a hero now as well, wasn't he?*
James An, he was great craic, his picture is here, it is.

Brona *He had one finger or something?*
James That's right, look at him there now. He was a real Irish man. Do you know that?

Brona *Yea I see him there alright.*
James That's Billy Morris there as well. Billy Morris. Wait on now until I show you. There is Billy Morris there now in the Black. (Photograph)

Brona *And is that the same Billy Morris we were talking about earlier?*
James Yea, and that's Father O'Dea, the chap now that was our parish priest.

Brona *That's right yea, and Mattie Boyle is there as well?*
James Yea, you know Mattie do you?

Brona *Oh yea, he is on the historical committee.*
James Oh, is that right?

Brona *Yea, but was Martin O’Coyne and Martin O’Connor friendly or were they at different times?*

James Martin O’Coyne and who?

Brona *Martin O’Connor, the two teachers.*

James Oh! Thomas O’Connor is it? Ah, they were friendly, but I’ll tell you who wasn’t friendly – Canon Moran.

Brona *Oh! I heard about him.*

James Canon Moran, you could write a book on the stories about him.

Brona *Yea, I know. I’ve heard a lot of stories about him. I’d say I’ve heard 90% bad and 10% good, and I’d say the good is out of pure fear. He was meant to be a holy man behind it all though. He got rid of Martin Coyne or more or less?*

James He did, he got rid of him alright yea. I’ll tell you, Martin started the I.R.A. in Carnmore.... He was a cousin of mine now, I don’t know did you hear talk of him Paddy Fox – Paideen Fox.

Brona *Would he live near Michael Hynes by any chance? I just heard Michael talk about is neighbour.*

James Yea, that’s right. He got killed, he got killed that time with Martin Coyne.

Brona *Oh, during the internment in the 30’s and 40’s?*

James Yes, about 20 or 24 of them joined the I.R.A. in Ballindereen.

Brona *This is after the Free State and everything?*

James Oh, yes, this is am ?

Brona *Cosgraves time!*

James Wait a minute now until I see what time that would be?

Brona *20’s or 30’s, I think.*

James Ah no, it was later than that. I’d say it was at the beginning of the war.

Brona *Yea*

James That’s the time it was at the beginning of the war and I was talking to Martin Boyle about it, and he wanted to get him going out of the place and he was a great teacher, God be good to him.

Brona *I heard that, yea.*

James He was a powerful teacher. And wasn’t he teaching in Trinity after it again. Look at the books he wrote.

Brona *And he could speak was it Russian and German and all these things?*

James He could, it was a pity what happened alright.

Brona *It was kind of sign of the times though with the wars happening and then the new fell came, the Clare man, what was his name, O’Melia was it, I can never pronounce his name right.*

James He was a rough fella alright.

- Brona** *And the poor fella got beaten up and everything.*
- James** I was going to school that morning and I seen the, it wasn't a squad car they had that time now, it was an ordinary car like and they taking him down and he all cut, after he getting the beating up the road there in Carnmore. There was a few of them in jail that time for it. I think one of the Walshes and the other.....
- Brona** *Which house did Martin O'Coynne stay in when he was What townlands or where would he have stayed?*
- James** He would have stayed – oh! Martin Coyne hold on now a minute. Where did Martin Coyne stay is right. I know where the other fella came from – Lennon.
- Brona** *Yea, that's this name. I could never think of it. Where did he stay?*
- James** He was a while with Mattie Grealish and he changed over to Joyces, of Caherlea. It must be at Kenny's at the cross that Martin Coyne stayed.
- Brona** *Was he around the same time as Thomas O'Connor?*
- James** He was.
- Brona** *And where would Thomas O'Connor have stayed then?*
- James** You know where the new curates house is now, well there was an old bungalow at the back of that they knocked it there about a year ago.
- Brona** *Oh, beside the school he stayed!*
- James** Yes.
- Brona** *He could sleep in, in the mornings. But he wasn't as inclined for the I.R.A. as Martin Coyne?*
- James** Well, Thomas O'Connor had nothing at all got to do with it.
- Brona** *Even in his younger days he was involved in the Republicans?*
- James** He was yea.
- Brona** *But he left it after that, yea.*
- James** He did, yea, ah, he was a grand man – Thomas O'Connor.
- Brona** *Did he leave here, or was it because he died here? He left or what?*
- James** He died here.
- Brona** *So he spent most of his life here so he did?*
- James** He did, ah, he was a grand man that Thomas O'Connor, I hurled with him. We played on the same team. He was a great man to go to the hurling meetings everywhere.
- Brona** *He used to pay if the gate was short or something and he would pay the difference?*
- James** He used to pay the gate anyway. 1 six-pence for it. An, he was a great man.

Brona *Did you ever hear anything about the co-op in Claregalway in the 1920's, did anybody ever say anything about it?*

James Well, I heard my father talking about it.

Brona *He probably bought a share and lost money in it or something?*

James No, he didn't do that, no he didn't get caught.

Brona *He was right.*

James Well, I'll tell you now. Do you know Mattie Cormican do you?

Brona *No, I never heard of him now I never even heard that name now.*

James Well, he is real old, he wasn't at any of this now but his grandfather was involved, well, he would probably know about that now. He'd have a bit of information for you now.

Brona *Yea, he might have.*

James There is a lot of old people not willing to talk too.

Brona *Not willing to mention it, is it?*

James They didn't talk about it, well do you know who might know about it? She probably knows something about it, her grandfather had something to do with it, because Kathleen Moore, Bobeen Dunleavy's wife.

Brona *Kathleen Dunleavy, Mrs. Dunleavy, yes. I was talking to her. I can't remember did I mention the co-op to her now.*

James Well, she'd know something about that co-op now because her grandfather had something to do with it. There was a fella named Cappa?? Back the road anyway he was the whole cause of it, he was a teacher.

Brona *And he set up this co-op and that it just didn't work out?*

James That's right, yes. And he went with the money or some dammed thing like that.

Brona *Well, when we started this committee, what we found out about the area and one of them was the co-op. So I just thought it was an ordinary co-op like anywhere else like you know, but nobody seems to know about it. Michael Hynes was telling me what they started a bit of a one in Carnmore as well, and it didn't go too well either so now they don't really trust them, something about manure, that they bought manure between them and it ended up they got it all themselves or something. Did you ever hear about fairs in Claregalway?*

James No, Turloughmore.

Brona *You never got involved in a faction fight?*

James No, I heard my father talking about them. People would be getting ready for the fight – they'd be preparing for a fortnight before it! There'd be a fellow over in Kiniska and he'd be testing his stick, on a stack of ?? To see was it strong enough to knock it. (Loughlin was his name)

- Brona** *Who'd be fighting?*
James There'd be factions now. Maybe against the Turloughmore crowd. I used to go to Turloughmore when I was very young. It was a big area. There used to be tents and all those tents selling oranges and apples. They'd be down the Limerick.
- Brona** *Can you tell me about the pig market outside Dunleavy's and Kyne's?*
James Oh, be god and I drank enough at it too! Corbett was at Kyne's, McGivern was at Lenihan's we used call it at that time and after that then, Jimmy Healy from Healy's busses, he was beyond there at James Hession's – it's the Summerfield now.
- Brona** *Was it always on a Monday?*
James Mondays it used to be in Loughgeorge. I don't think it was Monday's for McGivern's. They were the three dirtiest pubs – I've never seen anything like them. They were something awful! The old pubs – that's the way they were.
- Brona** *Do you remember the women selling the eggs at Lenihan's or in Ballymurphy?*
James There was a shop in Ballymurphy alright. Pat Murphy's. And Willie Glynn's mother had a small shop in Lydican. Ah, but the Murphy's of Ballymurphy – that was a great meeting place around there. They're all related. My mother is one of the Murphy's. Were you ever in the village?
- Brona** *I was. Talking to Tommy and Sonny.*
James Oh, they're different Murphy's. They're not related. There are two old houses gone out – it and they were Murphy's and there is two Murphy's left. It's from Mayo Tommy and Sonny came. Their grandfather came up from Mayo. They were Herds.
- Brona** *Can you tell me about the tradesmen in the area?*
James There was a line of them there one time in Claregalway, Tailors, Weavers, Shoemakers, Carpenters....
- Brona** *When did they leave the area?*
James We seen the Cobbler, I seen the Tailor, Ross. They'd be 40 years gone I'd say Skerritt, the Carpenter would be 30 years gone, and where Hughes is now there was a Weaver.
- Brona** *What about the Lydican area?*
James There was a forge there in Tonroe – Martin Cannon was his name. He came from Turloughmore. He'd be about 30 years dead.
- Brona** *Isn't Tonroe in Lydican?*
James There were only 3 or 4 houses in Tonroe and they called it Lydican then, up along that way. There is any amount of houses in it now. Sure Lydican goes over as far as the Clare River. It was walled in. That double wall would go over the river. There is a mearing wall between Lydican and Gortacleva. I heard talk that when they were putting that around it they were getting a shilling a day. I'd say it was the time of O'Flaherty or before that.

Brona *Did you hear any stories about the famine here?*
James No, but my father was saying that in the whole country people were starving and in Galway now there'd be a crowd of people after the cart of meal and sticking it trying to get the meal out.

Brona *Can you tell me a little more about the houses you bulldozed. Are they all knocked?*
James Yeah they are all knocked. There wasn't even mortar in them, just stones.

Brona *How much of an area did they take up?*
James I'd say there was 7/8 in Lydican, and in the next field down beside that and going down for 300/400 yards.

Brona *Were they always known to be there or were they covered over with briars or gran?*
James The stones were there.

Brona *When did you bulldoze them?*
James About 20 years ago.

Brona *Was there ever any talk about the area?*
James Well one old man said to me that it was down there Tonroe was first and then they changed up here. Right enough Tonroe was a new village but I don't think that's where they came from.

Brona *Did you father ever mention it?*
James Sure I used to be feeding cattle in it. I was always thinking I'd get something lost in it but I never did! You'd be on your knees thinning turnips and that's how I found the coins, every now and then you'd get an old coin. Beyond that are big wide ridges through the bog, sure they must be very poor, they must have got them cheap from the landlords. I heard it was wheat, not potatoes they used to grow in them. When the land was divided I got about 10/12 acres and those acres were there. It was with spades they sowed them. A fellow told me it was wheat. They were big wide ridges and you'd grow a good piece of wheat and you'd cut them with a hod or a scythe then.



