



Name: Michael Walsh
From: Gortatlewa
Age: 80
Interviewers: Sharon Kearney & Tara Forde
Date: 18th July 1991

Sharon *Did you ever hear anything about Michael Davitt making a speech behind the friary during the Land League?*

Michael No, the only thing I knew about Michael Davitt was, 'twas in the graveyard of Claregalway that he made that speech.

Tara *Do you know anything about the speech he made?*

Michael No, all I knew was that he was the founder of the Land League and helped the small farmers in Claregalway. I know the place that he stood in. Do you know where the steeple is, well on one side of it there was a rock and he stood up on that and made his speech.

Sharon *Did you ever hear about activities during the Land League – maiming of cattle and so on?*

Michael No, why would they. A lot of Irish people up the Landlords. A man called Boyle from Gortatlewa, Boyle defended the Landlord and they shot him in the eye. I remember him having a cover on the eye always. There was a man called Duggan and he lost his eye. He was working for Conn Burke.

Sharon *Could you tell me anything about the killing of pigs?*

Michael I do well, we used to kill them here, several times. We would take out the wheel of the cart and we would put the pig up on the cart. We would tie down the pig and let his head hang down out in front, then we would stick the knife in its throat. Then there would be a big pot of water and we would throw it over the pig and shave him then.

Sharon *What did you use to shave the pig with? Did you use a razor?*

Michael A razor, oh no, a razor was too valuable. We used a very sharp knife. The next thing would be to hang him from the rafters. He would be opened and gutted and he would be washed. Some of the guts then would be deputed for cutlets. The blood would be deputed and boiled and made into black pudding with a bit of oatmeal. Then we would give some around to the neighbours.

Tara *How long would the pudding last for before they would go rancid?*

Michael Two or three days.

Sharon *Was there a local man to kill the pigs?*

Michael We killed them ourselves.

Sharon *Was there a pig market down near the handball alley?*

Michael It wasn't a market. It was a man that used to come there called Glynn, actually there was two brothers in it. It was McGivern that was over it and he had the Glynn brothers working for him. They were up in Parkmore and Cahergliseraun. McGivern had a store in the dock and another one in Monivea. Then Corbett from Headford had Kelly's of Loughgeorge and Murrays in Turlough where he used to put the pigs. There used to be hundreds of pigs.

Tara *Was there a pig market in Loughgeorge?*

Michael At the crossroad, but it wasn't a pig market. They would buy and sell them and weigh them. Do you know where Hanley's is, well he was buying them in his own place.

Tara *What are Jobbers?*

Michael They were the people who would buy for companies. Say at the horse fairs there would be a lot of jobbers there. They weren't buying them for themselves but for the big farmers they worked for. The fairs were one thing, the markets were another and what ye were calling a market was the "slaughter". They used to buy with weighing scales. In Galway now when they would be buying them on foot.

Sharon *Did the women used to sell eggs?*

Michael No, but they used to go to the fair. Then they would have their little snug (nook) down in the pubs. You would have never seen a woman at that time drinking at the counter. The woman would be in their hiding place.

Sharon *Would that be called a "snug"?*

Michael Yes, it was called a "snug". They are too long gone out of it. Oh by God, I was up to forty years or more when there was still snugs in the pub.

Sharon *What would the women drink?*

Michael They would drink stout. They wouldn't drink much, why would they, they didn't have the price of a pair of stockings. There was this man and he was going out with this woman for years and didn't he leave her there and she said with a curse on him "may he never get married until he marries a drunkard". It was the truest word that she ever said.

Tara *Did many people believe that they were truly cursed when someone cursed them?*

Michael There is an old saying to answer that question, "a curse don't fall on a stone". There is one thing certain, if a widow cursed you, and she having the right, by right that curse would come true. I know certain people that it happened to.

Sharon *How many houses in the village was there when you were a young lad?*

Michael There was McDonagh's at the head of the village. The Qualter's, Stevens. This house, Carr's and Murray's. Then shortly after that, Murphy's came. There was a relation of the Murphy's that worked for a Landlord in Annaghdown. He worked for Anncorn as a horse groom.

Sharon ***How many houses are in the village now?***

Michael There is McDonagh's, Qualter's, Stevens, well its Carton's now. Then there is Moran's, our house, Carr's, Murray's, Common's, McGrath's, Duffy's, Murray's, Murphy's and Connolly's. There are fourteen houses now.

Sharon ***Do you remember anything about the Claregalway Co-op of the 1920's?***

Michael My father had a share in it. That's really all I would be able to say on it. After a while it went bust.

Tara ***Do you know how much you father paid for his share?***

Michael I know what it was £5. £5 was an awful lot of money that time. The only co-op that was saved was in Oran. The fella that saved it was from Lackaghbeg. He was a fella by the name of Greaney. He was there till every penny was paid back.

Sharon ***Do you remember horse racing in Loughgeorge?***

Michael I remember it well, why wouldn't I.

Sharon ***What time was that?***

Michael I'm sure it was seventy years ago.

Sharon ***Was it just the locals that took part?***

Michael Yes and no. The only two I knew that had horses in it were Philip and Tim Feeny. Peter would be there still.

Tara ***Would the farm horses be racing?***

Michael Certainly.

Sharon ***What prizes were there?***

Michael Oh I don't know. I remember the tents and the tea and of course, the drink.

Sharon ***What prizes were there?***

Michael Oh I don't know where Kyne's, well as you go over the road towards Tuam, there was a little small road into the field. The field was behind Kelly's.

Sharon ***Do you remember the storm Debbie?***

Michael I remember the storm Debbie. I was living in the house here when Debbie hit us sometime in the '50s. I was in Galway that day with a load of spuds. I was at the potato market and the roofs of the houses were just about off the houses. I left the horse in the garden which was used for the horses that time. I was about Mervue that day, I had customers above in it and as I was coming out of Mervue that day, a sort of gale rose and I was going out and back College Road and this is no lie, I had a white horse and he was frightened and didn't the roof go from the shed, go over our heads and land in front of the white horse. When I was coming out of Galway all the walls were knocked. They used to say one time, that if you took a stone out of the road you would save a soul in purgatory. When I was coming out I said "Good damn it if I'm to put souls in purgatory, I will be here all night" so I went on my way.

Sharon *Do you remember the two old Murphy's who had a shop?*

Michael Why wouldn't I. They were there in Ballymurphy castle. Well them two were always fighting. Pat Murphy left the place to a nurse and she in turn left the place to her daughter.

Sharon *Do you know anything about the ghostly car in the area?*

Michael No. I heard of the "Closta Bower". It was a kind of hearse drawn by horses and bells. The only thing I will ever know and never forget till the day I die is the story I'm going to tell you now. My father was going to the fair one morning. He said "come with me". I would say now that it would be anything up till 6 o'clock. It was down there before you come down the hill to the centre. The damnest thing came down the road. I heard the bells and the horses coming and I could see nothing. I amn't saying that it was that now or not. There was an awful lot of people who had died were seen walking the road. There are a lot of masses said now for the dead not like that time. There was a lot of them who died and who were seen rambling the roads later on.

Sharon *Do you know anything about the fairies at Burke's boreen?*

Michael Some fella made out he saw them, but he was on the wine. His name was Pat Murphy. They were saying that he was attacked there. I never believe in those stories.

Tara *Did you ever hear of the Banshee?*

Michael The people of this parish used to go to a village called Crusheen over there. There was a well there it was there they saw the Banshee.

Sharon *Do you know who the Banshee was? Was it some kind of spirit?*

Michael What they say the Banshee was a woman that wasn't churched, that she was after giving birth to a child. There she was anyway washing herself in this well. This fella said something to her and she followed him and nearly got him at the door. I heard talk of that now that she nearly grabbed him by the head.

Tara *What age was the Banshee do you think?*

Michael She was young because she had a child. There is a story of a man called Walsh from Lackagh who married a Sheridan girl from Kiniska. Now, I'm only saying what I heard. Do you know Smith' forge beyond Kelly's (Kynes), that man's father was at the wedding and he said that while he was coming home that morning from the wedding he saw that woman at the head of the road and he could swear that it was she that was in it and didn't she die about three days after the wedding and there was nothing wrong with her.

There was a fella up there by the name of Clarke. The devil was shook on him long ago. Johnny used to get up for mass in Claregalway and his wife was not long dead when this happened to him. The night before he put the clock out and he woke up and he got ready for three o'clock in the morning. When he was setting off for mass, he heard the talk coming back the road and he seen two women who were long dead at that time. He knew that it was his wife and the other woman was Qualter's. They were like if they were alive, chatting away to themselves, but he couldn't know what they were saying to themselves. He knew his wife and her voice and he never went to first mass after that.

Sharon

Do you remember the games they played at wakes?

James

They made ropes of hay and I couldn't tell you what they did with them. I never saw anyone at it only the Montiagh people. I remember this man telling me that he brought two young lads down to a wake in Montiagh and the same carry on was going on down there. Some said that if they didn't go home they would nearly be killed and that's all I'm going to say on that matter. It was awful.

