Bridget (Bridie) Bowe

Female

File 1 00:00:00 – 00:01:46
INTRODUCTION –

Bridie was born on the 22nd January 1927. She is from Ballybunion, a place called Coolard, Liselton
Bridie had one sister and one brother, and another brother who died when he was two, in tragic circumstances
Bridie grew up on a big farm, they had tillage, cattle, cows, milking cows, dry cattle, horses 'my father used to rear thoroughbred horses'
Bridie was only thirteen when her father died.

00:01:46 – 00:04:15
FARMING –

Bridie was milking cows at seven years of age, the milk was strained into a big milk tank, it would then go to creamery, in maybe 3 milk cans, in the horse and cart. The creamery was mile away in Liselton. 'Everybody brought their milk to the creamery that time, they don't anymore'. The separated milk was brought home for the pigs, calves etc. Bridie remembers a pulper, in which they pulped turnips and mangles, by turning the handle, into a tub/dish. The pulped for the pigs and the cows, in the winter. They also had a 'thing' for the pigs, called a 'pig's peck'. Bridie says that a 'peck' equalled two gallons. The pigs peck was a big low iron tub, that would be filled with milk, food etc. Bridie also remembers feeding the cows and going to the well for water.

00:04:15 – 00:05:41
GALLON CAN/WATER SUPPLY –

Bridie remembers carrying a gallon can, she think the travellers would have made it. Travellers made little cans, mugs etc. at the side of the road, and would go around to the houses selling them. Bridie used to bring one of these cans to the well for water. They had two wells on their land, one at a place called 'the fort', a 'fairy fort' she describes as a circle with trees and wild flowers growing in it. The fort had a drinking trough outside it with a pump, and they had to pump water there every evening for the cows, the other well was at the top of the land, and was for the dry cattle, there was no pump at that well, and they would have to fill buckets and pass along a chain of buckets, up and down the hill, to fill the trough for the dry cattle.

00:05:41 – 00:06:48
THE FAIR –

When the dry cattle were sold (at 2 or 4 years), they were bought to the cattle fair (no mart that time). They cattle were walked to the fair at Listowel (3 miles away); any that weren't sold were walked back again. Bridie remembers her uncles sons driving animals from beyond Ballybunion to the fair (9 miles away) staying at her house the night before the fair to shorten the journey again

00:06:48 – 00:08:00
FARM WORK –

Bridie remembers other jobs such as picking spuds and guiding the horses, when they would be cutting the corn, oats, wheat and barley. There were two seats on the moving machine. Bridie would sit on one side, guiding the horses, and her father would be sitting at the other side, with a knife/blade cutting the corn/hay. When cutting the corn, there was a flat board used, and her father would use a rake to knock it off, he would know exactly when to do it. The lads coming along behind the machine, would collect the sheaves, tie them up, and leave them to dry, to be saved.

00:08:00 – 00:09:28
GEESE –

They would then let the geese into the corn fields, and they would eat up any left-over corn. Bridie remembers the geese sleeping in the yard at night. She remembers that they would kill their first goose for the 15th August. That goose would have to be housed for a week beforehand, hand fed, and given plenty of water. They were then killed, and hung up for a day or two, before they were plucked. The plucking was done by a neighbour, an old lady called Mrs. Costello, who did it for everyone. The geese would have to be plucked in the Spring anyway, because they were inclined to lose their feathers at this time. They would keep the feathers/down and pillows would be made out of them.

00:09:28 – 00:10:12
THE CREAMERY –
They didn't churn their own butter, they bought it at the creamery, and the price of it would be deducted from price of the weighed milk, and marked in 'the creamery book'. Julia wouldn't have gone to the creamery; it was the 'servant boys' who went to the creamery.

00:10:12 – 00:11:52
SERVANT BOYS –

They would have four servant boys in the summer and maybe two in the winter (one in the yard and one in the fields). The neighbours would help to save the hay in the summer. Julia used to help, by forking hay up to the men on the 'wine' (smaller than a cock of hay). They would go home for dinner and have tea brought out to them in the evening, and would finish up to go home and bring in the cows and feed the calves. They would feed the calves out of buckets, and then when they got a bit older they would feed out of troughs.

00:11:52 – 00:12:38

HOUSEHOLD CHORES –

They used to boil the sheets and put the 'strickets blue' in the water to make the sheets 'pure snow white', and use a 'clothes stick' to lift the clothes out of the pot. There were also kettles and they used to make all their own bread. They made bread in an oven beside the fire, a tripod with coals in it with the oven (a low round flat pot) sitting on top, with the loaf in the oven. They would put coals on top of the oven, and check it every so often. They also used to make 'mixed bread', with Indian meal, a special bread meal that you would mix with white flour, which would be cooked in griddle on top of the tripod, and cut into triangles or 'pointers'. They would have this bread for their supper with milk. The fireplace had a place/shelf, for smoking meat. Bridie doesn't remember keep holes.

00:15:35 – 00:16:05
CHAMBER POTS –

Bridie says that some old houses had a closet where the chamber pot was kept, but that was before her time. They kept chamber pots under the beds.

00:16:05 – 00:18:16
KILLING THE PIG –

Bridie remembers that they used to kill a couple of pigs a year. A neighbour who knew how to do it, 'the butcher' would come around to kill the pigs. He would put the pig lying on a table in the yard, and use a knife to kill it. Bridie often had the job of holding the pan for the blood to drain in to. They would make pudding with the blood, mixed with oatmeal, onion and maybe some spices. The intestines were cleaned, by bringing down to 'the glasha' flowing water, rinsed inside and out there, then they would be filled with the mixture, tied into rings, and put on a stick over the pot of boiling water, to cook there for a while, and left to cool on a stick laid across two chairs. The neighbours would be given some pork steaks and puddings. Everyone did that when they killed a pig.

00:18:16 – 00:20:05
THRESHING –

They had a big, huge kitchen. Bridie remembers that during the 'compulsory tillage', they would have a week of threshing, ('a thresher pulled by two horses'). Lots of people would come to help, some 'drawing it on their backs down into the corn lofts'. When the threshing was finished, they would all pile into the house and get a big feed (a few geese maybe), and after the wash up, they would play cards at the table and drink porter (a few barrels of porter got for the occasion), and a musician would arrive with his violin, and they would pull the table back, and be dancing reels and sets, and drinking porter into the night.

00:20:05 – 00:21:30
COMPULSORY TILLAGE –

The 'compulsory purchase' related to the percentage of tilling that had to be done to help the war effort, and there were ration books as well. Their school uniforms were done away with (not enough ration for them), food, flour etc also rationed. They couldn't get white flour, only a poor quality brown flour (referred to as 'black flour'). Bridie tells a funny story about this flour.

00:21:30 – 00:22:40
EDUCATION –

Bridie went to secondary school in the Presentation Convent in Listowel. She then went on to Belfast, where she taught maths. Bridie said that in those days no one trained to be a teacher, but you could get a job as one if you were particularly good at a particular subject. A nun in the school got her the job.

00:22:40 – 00:24:15
PRIMARY SCHOOL –

Bridie says that they learned everything through Irish in her National School,

even religion. They had half an hour of English a day. There was about 9 or 10 people in each class. She started school at four and made her holy communion at 6. She remembers walking up with her dad, who was carrying her dress and veil in a box. Her mother was dead at that stage.

00:24:15 – 00:25:52
MOTHER'S DEATH –

Bridie was 2 or 2 Â½ when her mother died. Her father got them a nanny. Bridie remembers lots of servant girls coming and going.

File 2 00:00:00 – 00:02:08
MOTHER'S DEATH –

Bridie says that her family name was Foran. Her mother's maiden name was O'Neill. Her mother died young (approx 39). Bridie thinks she may have died of emphysema. She doesn't remember much about her but remembers the day she died. She was lying in the bed, with candles all around, and a crowd of women crying. Bridie tried to get into the bed with her mother. Her father took her away to be minded by her grandmother.

00:02:08 – 00:10:42
NEIGHBOUR –

The oldest relative/neighbour Bridie remembers is William O'Donnell, a neighbour who was their herdsman. When he was getting married Bridie's grandmother had a house built for him on their land, even though she was not the named owner of the land. The owner was her grandmother's brother, a priest. When he was told about the house, he taught it might be a bad idea, but it wasn't. The O'Donnell's continued to work on the farm, until they all emigrated, one by one. Bridie remembers some of them emigrating. She remembers when Mrs. O'Donnell died. Bridie was driving the cows in when the old woman's daughter in law way-laid her, telling her that the old woman was calling for Bridie. Bridie ran to the house,

only to find her dead. They went to get her son, and with the help of others, they lifted her onto the bed (funny incident, 'mind now, and don't hurt her, and she dead'). Bridie went home to tell her crowd that Mrs. O'Donnell was dead. Bridie knew the old lady well. She used to write letters for her, to her sons and daughters in America. She had told Bridie where everything was, so Bridie was able to tell her family, where to get sheets to lay her out etc. An old woman came up to lay her out, put her in a habit, with a table with all the things needed for her anointment. Somebody had to go to Liselton crossroads to the post office to ring for the priest. That old woman's son, Jack, died suddenly. Bridie remembers that she was sitting on the wall with her husband (Jim-a garda) when she heard that he was dead.

00:10:42 – 00:15:42
HUSBAND –

Her husband was stationed in Ballylongford, near Tarbet/Foynes in Kerry. He was originally from Wexford, outside Enniscorthy. They met in Ballybunion, at a dance. They had a dance hall in Liselton that time that would go on through the Winter, and one in Ballybunion, that would go on through the Summer. They married in 1952. Bridie stayed with him in the barracks for a while, but got sick of the accommodation, so went back home for a while. He was looking for a transfer to anywhere other than where he was but couldn't get one. Bridie went to her local TD, and he was transferred to Limerick City within the week. They travelled around the country then, Sligo, Leitrimâ€¦ Her husband wanted to move back 'to the other side of the Shannon' and eventually got a transfer to Doonbeg. He retired before his time, he got his pension in one lump sum and they got a house in Ennis. At that time the gardaÃ couldn't own anything, and you had to be screened before you could join, she had to be screened before he could marry her. Bridie loved Doonbeg, and also loved living in Sligo and Carrick-on-Shannon.

00:15:42 – 00:16:53
TRANSPORT/LIGHTING –

Bridie says that there wasn't much difference between Doonbeg and Listowel, because by the time she came to Clare, the country was more similar everywhere. Everyone had a motor car then, whereas no one had a motor car when she was young. They had one teacher with a motor car, the rest had bicycles. Bridie remembers that at one time, the cars were off the road, because petrol was scarce. Bridie also remembers a time when even lamp oil was scarce. She remembers having to stay up late, when she was doing exams, and the lamp was going down. She used to get a tin of Brasso, and cut a slit in the cork of it, and stick a wick down into that, and it would burn all night.

00:16:53 – 00:19:54
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE –

Bridie remembers a story about the Black and Tans. Their herdsman, Will O'Donnell, used to tell them stories, her father 'would tell them nothing'. She heard that her father had a brother, Willie, and when he finished in St. Michael's College, Listowel, he was a general in the old IRA. One Sunday morning, the Black and Tans surrounded the church in Ballydonoghue, near Liselton. At that time, a lot of men used to wear britches, like army britches. One old woman was worried that her husband would be picked up, so she crept out, and borrowed a pair of pants, for her husband to change into and her husband didn't get taken. 'But Willie Foran was picked up, they out their hands on him' He was a tall, well-dressed man, and the Tans probably had a good description of him. They put him into their wagon and brought him back to the police station in Ballybunion. They were travelling to Tralee with the Ballybunion sergeant, to shoot him, but Mr. Appleby, a retired policeman, who was friendly with the sergeant, talked to them, persuaded them to let him go.

File 3 00:00:00 – 00:00:49
WAR OF INDEPENDENCE –

(story from File 2 continued) When they came to Liselton cross, there was a chain

of men across the road, blocking the path of the Tans, to stop them. But Mr. Appleby persuaded them to let him go. With the formation of the state, in 1922, Willie Foran was asked to join the gardaÃ, but he didn't, he went off to America

File 3 00:00:49 – 00:02:05
UNCLE IN KERRY –

Bridie's uncle (her mother's brother) was in the Dublin metropolitan police, but he came out of it, and afterwards had a pub in Listowel, the pub which John B Keane ended up owning. He bought a farm, with a mill, where he ground barley, for people he knew, during the war, so they used to get white flour off him. They used to have to keep an eye out for the inspector.

00:02:05 – 00:03:22
CUMMAN NA MBAN –

In relation to Cumman na mBan, Bridie heard that her husband's aunt (Mary Bowe) was in that organisation, and spent 13 days in jail, for activities, with an Annelle Ryan (the same Ryans as Richie Ryan,former Minister for Finance, from Wexford.

00:03:22 – 00:07:30
MAY EVE/STATIONS –

In relation to May Eve customs, her stepmother (a very good and educated woman), used to make them pick bluebells out of the fort, and put them down outside the doorway at night 'to keep the fairies out, or whatever'. Bridie also remembers people putting eggs into hay. They would find them in their hay. Bridie doesn't know who was doing it. If a calf died on someone else's land, they might throw it into yours, to get rid of the bad luck. Bridie also remembers them blessing the cattle and the fields. She also remembers stations being held in their house. People would come from the surrounding townlands, there would be two masses in the house that day, and people would go to confession, and then the

parish priest and curate would collect the 'station money'. Bridie remembers one old woman refusing to give any money, as one of her relations had left lots of money to the church.

00:07:30 – 00:10:12
CHRISTMAS –

Bridie remembers the 'lighting of the candles' at Christmas. They would be let in every room, a candle in every window. Bridie remembers getting up to go to early mass, and going up the road, seeing all the houses up on the hill, and all the lights. For Christmas dinner, they would have a goose and it would be gorgeous. Bridie tells a story about getting a goose in modern times and it was so tough, she had to throw it in the bin a goose that needed 'a pension book!'

00:10:12 – 00:11:00
SELF SUFFICIENCY –

They had the real organic food, their own potatoes, and vegetables, the 'farmers kept the town going', you only went to town for tea and sugar, 'now it's the towns that keep the farmers going'

00:11:00 – 00:13:25
WEDDINGS/CHRISTENINGS –

Bridie says that in those days, you got married in the morning, 'and there was no such a thing as long white dresses and veils', you wore a suit and a hat, but its all afternoon weddings now, and white dresses. You would be fasting as well and maybe would have a meal, a few songs, and go to the bar. Bridie didn't drink or smoke till she was 40. As for christenings, they just went to the church. She was a godmother a few times, including to one of her O'Donnell neighbours. She remembers going to confession across the fields, as a child, and you could often meet a newly married couple, coming across the fields, coming home from their wedding.

00:13:25 – 00:15:56
HOLY WELL –

She remembers going to a nearby holy well, St. Pats well in Coolard, they used to go up there after school to see what was left there, rags, money etc. they used to say that the well had moved from one side of the road to the other (ended up in Dowling's field). There was a particular day to visit the well, but she can't remember what day it was. Bridie says that she was almost grown up when people started visiting the well on a particular day, but they used to visit it regularly, and used to bring bottles of water out of it. It was in a wood, just off the 'gale road'. Her sister was married to one of the Dowling family, Eddie Dowling, a great Kerry footballer, who played in the famous All Ireland in New York in the 1940's. He is 86 now and still president of the North Kerry GAA.

00:15:56 – 00:16:52
FAIRIES –
They were not afraid of the fort, but used to hear that fairies used to come out of it at night and would be dancing around the 'Kiln field' (co called because there was a disused lime kiln in it). They used to sit in the kiln when it would be getting dark, to see if the fairies would come out, but they never did. The old people 'would claim a lot of things', like meeting a dead person on the road.

00:16:52 – 00:19:24
HANGING –

She doesn't remember any mass rocks, but does remember being told a 'giant's grave' in Liselton, the old people would point it out. She also remembers the 'gaur beag', a little smith (blacksmith) who had been one of the 'Whitemen' (Whiteboy). He was hung at Gunsburagh Cross, where her sister lived in Dowling's house. The Tans got after him, and hung him from a tree on Good Friday. Her sister's husband's brother cut that tree down years later. The smith was wearing a collar, they tried twice and would have had to let him go if they couldn't hang him the

third time, but they found the collar, and so they hanged him.

00:19:24 – 00:19:52
THE SAINT –

Bridie remembers her husband bringing her to see 'the Saint' in a church in Wexford town. Seemingly a father shot his son in the church, and he is buried, perfectly preserved under the altar in the church.

00:19:52 – 00:24:08
ENTERTAINMENT –

They held dances in their house at threshing time. But that changed when the compulsory threshing stopped and when the combine harvester came in. But the boys used to visit houses to play cards. They girls stayed home. Bridie and her sister used to visit the neighbours children, on a Saturday night, and they used to go to them. They would play in the fields. Bridie remembers playing in the ruins of an old herdsman's house 'Dooleen's haggart', Dooleen Scanlan, she remembers the small little fields and furrows he left behind him, and the lovely wild rose bushes and cherry and apple trees. Her brother had that all made into a big field later on, and they found an Ace of Spades underneath floor flags, by the old chimney stack.

00:24:08 – 00:27:22
BANSHEE –

Bridie thinks she may have heard the banshee once, while in bed. Her father was ill at the time, he had TB, and he was at the opposite end of the house to where she slept. She heard 'this noise, 'twas like someone crying, going around the house, and then it moved away'. She used to stay in case her father needed anything. This one night the women in the house sent her to bed, and her mother-in-laws niece went up with her. 'and I heard this, a cry, as I thought, and it was like as if 'twas going around the house, and then it moved away, and came back

again, and moved away again, and came back again, and the next thing I heard someone going out the hall door, the front door, of the hall, and come back in, and I heard the rosary going on in the kitchen'. The other girl said that the noise was just trucks on the road, but afterwards she told her sister that it was the banshee, because she had heard it before, and her sister told Bridie. And William O'Donnell was coming up to the house that night and he said that he saw a light going around the haggard 'and he wouldn't say it now, only for he saw it'. This happened on Sunday night, and Bridie's father died on the following Thursday night. He was waked all day Friday and Saturday, and he was the first man in that area, to be buried in a suit instead of a habit, seemingly he had said he wanted to be buried in a suit, because he didn't want the children to see him in a habit, because they would never forget it. Bridie was 13 when he died.

00:27:22 – 00:28:50
CURES –

Bridie can't remember any particular cures for ailments. She remembers there was a cure for ringworm or the 'thether' but can't remember what it entailed. You had to go to a particular man to get this cure.