

John Gavin

Male

0:00:00 - 0:01:50

FAMILY -

John has one sister.

0:01:50 - 0:04:10

LIVING CONDITIONS -

Description of Living Conditions at the time. Still living in the family home. Three-bed, slated roof (unusual in locality at time). Road Condition poor - no tarmac until 1970 around the area.

0:04:10 - 0:07:54

TRANSPORT -

Bicycles used. Cycling common in 1950's. Cost: 12 pounds for bicycle. John used to cycle into the Scout Hall & Paddy Con's - popular dance halls in Ennis at the time.

0:07:54 - 0:10:40

COST OF LIVING -

John was first person to have a toilet in the locality. He did jobs for local people to earn money - picking potatoes, etc. for 5 shillings a day. Cost of Champion newspaper in 1940's - tuppence. Pint of Guinness - ten pence.

0:10:40 - 0:15:45

WORLD WAR II -

Scarcity of leather. No shoes, only clogs available. Three loaves of bread or 3 and

a half pounds of flour were given out. Half pound of sugar, half an ounce of tea, half pound of butter - all this was given per week too. Fruit very scarce. John's uncle had shop in Meelick, Co. Limerick during war - very busy.

Farmers grew turnips, parsnips, carrots, potatoes on their fields. They had hens and pigs. All were self-sufficient.

0:15:45 - 0:18:47

KILLING OF THE PIG -

Crank of bicycle was held with pliers - it was used to hit the pig on the forehead to kill him. Pig was left overnight. Hair scraped off pig with boiling water. Then cut up in several pieces and hung up on the rafters. Special night given to salting the pig. Pig killed annually for special occasions.

0:18:47 - 0:19:32

CURRENT FAMILY -

Six children in family. Three girls/ three boys. Wife: Nancy Sheehan, Kildysart.

0:19:32 - 0:24:20

ENGLAND -

John worked in ESB at time here in Ireland. Foreman on site got killed accidentally. John had small accident himself with his hand on site. He was off work for three weeks. Friends came to visit him from England during this time and encouraged him to leave. He worked on railways over there with Joe Murphy, an Irish contractor who gave lots of jobs to the Irish diaspora there. Wage: 20 pounds a week. Time spent there: twelve years.

John came home to visit once a year. He would get the train to the ferry port; the ferry to Dun Laoghaire and the train from Heuston Station down to Ennis.

0:24:20 - 0:26:30

SCHOOL -

John went to Pitfield School. Not pleasant experience. Teachers were aggressive. John would help out at the creamery in Clondegad before school and sometimes was late at school because of it. John liked Spelling and Latin. Lots of prayers learnt. Books read by candlelight. Paraffin oil used too. Globes for lamps were scarce. Splinters of bog dale were lit and used to help children to see and do their homework.

0:30:45 - 0:42:50

MUSIC -

No music allowed in school. John started playing at age 5/6. He played accordion. Age 15/16: started playing the harmonica. Uncle William was a big influence on him whilst growing up. John recorded a CD in 2009.

1966 - John came home from England. He played at work over there but not at his accommodation - the landlady didn't approve of it. John thought there were too many good musicians over in England to join in with the local musicians. He attended the Black Lion in Kilburn for sessions. Eddie Bolger and others used to play there.

His daughter Pauline plays harmonica also. She won the All-Ireland Fleadh competition twice. John himself won the All-Ireland Senior Mouth-organ Competition in Listowel in 1982. He often competed against his daughter in the competition. John, and two neighbours, Tom Clancy & James Whelan used to attend the Fleadhs together.

0:42:50 - 0:45:00

HOUSE DANCES -

House sessions happened every Sunday in Eustace's, Ballynacally. John used to get a pound for playing music. On his return from England the music had moved into the dance halls.

0:45:00 - 0:47:32

MUSIC -

John plays a set of reels on the mouth organ, amongst them 'The Longford Collector' and 'The Sailor's Bonnet.' _____