

# Martin (Mattie) Burke

Male

File 1 00:00:00 - 00:01:46

BACKGROUND/FAMILY -

Mattie says that he was born in Kilmaley, in 1917

Mattie went to Connolly School, a 2 mile walk

Mattie was one of ten, 6 boys, 4 girls

Mattie's parents were farmers, his father was Thomas Burke, and his mother was Delia (maiden name Hanrahan), a local girl only 'half a mile as the crow flies'

Mattie came third in the family, his sister Mary Anne was the eldest, then his elder brother Mick. Only three alive now out of the ten.

00:01:47 - 00:02:34

FARM -

Mattie grew up on a farm, not a big one. They would have had six or seven young cows, five or six young cattle, a horse & pony. Everything was done with the horse then, putting out manure for the garden (in late March) etc.

00:02:35 - 00:03:10

HOUSE -

There were three rooms in the house he grew up in, it was thatched, two or three to every bed, a big kitchen with a big open fireplace that could take a sack of turf.

00:03:11 - 00:03:55

THE BOG -

They used a lot of turf in their own place, used to cut it with a 'sleán' on their own land, had a small bog of bog with the garden. Turf would be saved and dried out,

and then drawn home with the horse and car. They would have had a big reek of turf, maybe up to 30 feet high.

00:03:56 - 00:04:32

THE GARRET -

Mattie says they didn't have a settle bed, but they did have a 'garret', which was reached by a stepladder. Two could have slept up there

00:04:32 - 00:05:16

LIGHTING -

There was no electricity when Mattie was a child, only had an oil lamp on the wall. Would have to make sure you had oil, or else you would have no light. Could buy oil in the shop, and carry it in a little jar. Mattie remembers trying to do his 'exercises' in bad light.

00:05:17 - 00:08:32

BASKETMAKING -

Mattie remembers his father sewing shoes etc. His father was 'very handy'. He also used to make baskets, for hanging on either side of the donkey. He would use 'oger rods', from the haggard, to make the baskets. He would bring a sod (three inches thick) out of the bog, to use as a base, and would stick the rods 'in twos', they would be sticking up out of it, and then he would weave (pronounced 'wave') rods around the standing up rods. He would also make a handle for the basket to hang off a 'special saddle'. The baskets would be used to bring turf from the bog. Very handy. The baskets were made for their own use, not for sale. His father could also make a 'gadget' known as a 'scuttle', a 'nice hollow gadget' used to pick spuds in the garden. He would also make small calf baskets, using lighter/weaker rods.

00:08:33 - 00:09:05

## TINSMITHS -

Mattie remembers travelling tinsmiths, making buckets and gadgets for the coal as well, remembers one particular man who used to do this, Timmy Casey.

00:09:06 - 00:09:34

## BAREFOOT TO SCHOOL -

In relation to school, they walked there and back. For half the year, they walked barefoot (would shove their boots in under a bush), from the 1st April to the 1st October, walking on rough gravel roads.

00:10:17 - 00:11:12

## PICKING SPUDS -

Mattie remembers that they would be picking spuds in late October. Their mother would have a row to get them out helping their father to pick the spuds. Their parents got around this by having the tea and 'a wedge of a griddle' out in the garden for them when they came home from school, so that they had to have their tea outside, and the spuds got picked as well.

00:11:13 - 00:11:58

## SCHOOL -

In school, he thinks that his best subjects were reading and writing, they didn't learn much Irish. He doesn't remember the day he started school.

00:11:59 - 00:14:33

## OLDEST PERSON -

The oldest person Mattie remembers as a child, was his neighbour, Pádraig Hanrahan, a nice old man. Mattie says that in those days once you were 70 years, people were 'bent in the corner', whereas a man of 70 now is a fresh man. Pádraig was a farmer. Mattie thinks he must have been about 80 years or so. He

dressed very simply. He spoke Irish, it was 'all Irish with him'. Mattie says that the older people had a lot more Irish sayings.

00:14:34 - 00:20:22

GRANDPARENTS -

Mattie remembers his grandparents. He remembers his father's mother well. She had three girls and two boys, Mick and Tim (his father). Mick was supposed to get the place at home, but he went to America, and his father got it instead. Mattie says that his grandmother was a great woman to work, and 'kinda contrary'. When his father married, she never got on with the young wife, and had to have her own room (the best room in the house), and her own portion of turf, potatoes etc. Mattie says that his mother was a quiet woman. Mattie remembers that his grandmother used to tell him stories about how hard she worked. Her husband died of pneumonia a young man, leaving her with a young family. She told Mattie of having to spread manure on drills from a basket on her back. Her name was Bid (Bridget) Pender, and she was from Lissycasey (from 'the bounds' of Lissycasey and Kilmaley. Mattie says that she wore long skirts, blouses etc. and that she was a 'very tasty little woman', 'a tidy woman'. Mattie remembers his mother's father, he was known as 'Taylor Hanrahan', and often used to stay with them. He lived not too far away-their house was visible from Mattie's house. He used to make pants etc. They had a small farm, and there were only two girls in the family, and they worked the farm. The other sister married a man called Thomas Neylon, who 'married in' there.

00:20:23 - 00:26:10

FAIRS/FIRST CAR/CROPS

Mattie says that they had a cowhouse, a place for the 'common car', a small shed for 'young calves'. Mattie says that when cows calved, they would often bring the calves into the house.

Mattie used to go to the fair. They would walk nine miles to the fair in Ennis, over

to the Fair Green. If you sold the cattle, you might get a lift home. Cars were very scarce in those days. Mattie remembers the first car coming to Connolly mass, and crowds gathering around it 'same as if it was something that dropped out of the sky'

If they didn't sell, they would have to bring the animals home. Mattie remembers going to the Ennistymon fair. Tells a funny story about arriving at this fair. In relation to haggling customs, he remembers the men arguing and fighting over a few shillings, making bargains, and hitting one another's hands, and spitting. A few drinks might be taken, but Mattie says that they didn't drink much, as they wouldn't have the price of it. He also says that they could drink much, and there would be a fight after a few bottles of stout. They would sell cattle, horses, etc. they also had sows and 'bonabhs'. Mattie remembers going to Spancill Hill fair but never to sell horses.

In their haggard, they would grow cabbage, onions and early potatoes.

00:26:11 - 00:35:24

GAA -

Mattie doesn't remember the Schools Folklore Survey. He was about 15 when he left school, and was jobbing around the farm. Mattie says that he probably 'stopped at home too long'. His younger siblings 'were wiser' and went off to England. His older brother went at 18 years of age. Mattie stayed around because of hurling etc. They mostly played hurling. Mattie won a Junior A championship with Kilmaley in 1938. Hurleys were very scarce them times. Mattie says that there was a priest in Kilmaley, a Father Burke, who was very interested in hurling. He invited Mattie and his brother, a cousin, Seán O'Loughlin, and a man called Pat Leahy, up to the parochial house because he knew that they had a reputation for stealing trees to make hurleys. He told them they could leave it in the turf shed behind the parochial house. So they took a tree from Jack Davoren's avenue, and left it in the shed. When they came back the next night, it was gone. They realised that another man had been with them for part of the walk down to

Davoren's, Mike Casey. They found the tree under a bed in Casey's house, and took it back from him. Casey told Davoren on them. They told him that they had thrown the tree into a lake 'if he was able to get it'.

They would bring the wood to a man in the Market in Ennis, known as 'Coach Builder Keane', who had a big saw and would cut up the wood in pieces for them. Might get 7 hurleys out of one ash tree.

They would also play a bit of football. He is the only surviving member of the hurling team that played against Cashel in 1943. He hurled with Clarecastle, they were senior County champions in 1943, and won the cup that year as well. Played with Clarecastle for two years. In order to get to matches in those days, you had to cycle or go by pony and car, 'a different set-up altogether' to today.

00:35:25 - 00:36:08

BLACK & TANS -

Mattie doesn't remember any specific War of Independence, Black and Tans or IRA stories. He says that the Black and Tans were 'a rough gang'.

00:36:09 - 00:38:57

THE WREN -

They used to go on 'the wran (wren)' for years. They would collect a good bit of money. There used to be a 'wran dance' at their house. They would use the money to buy 3 half barrels of Guinness and play music and dance till almost dinner time the next day. Mattie didn't play music himself, except for a few tunes on the tin whistle. Mattie is related to the musician Peadar O'Loughlin.

00:38:58 - 00:39:15

MAY EVE -

On May Eve, they would go out milking the cows. He heard of people doing something to the milk, to bring bad luck, but doesn't remember many pisreogs in his area. They also used to bless the cattle on May eve. In relation to May bushes,

he remembers them bring a whitethorn bush into the house. Mattie's wife joins in the conversation, and says that she remembers her father bringing in a hawthorn bush, to 'bring in the Spring' and put it up over the door.

00:39:16 - 00:41:01

WAR OF INDEPENDENCE -

Eileen says that she came from Inagh, and there was a bridge out there, called 'Friar's Bridge', seemingly three friars shot there during the time of the Tans (or earlier). Mattie's brother told her this story. The friars got a tip off and escaped through the bog, there were spikes stuck in the bog, to stop the British). Eileen also talks about a monument in Ennistymon (put up about 15 years ago) in honour of Martin Devitt, who was killed on that spot by the British).

00:39:16 - 00:41:01

HALLOWE'EN/ST JOHNS EVE -

Mattie says that at Hallowe'en they would bob for apples, and it was a night for lighting bonfires. They lived in a hilly place, used to get fur bushes and set fire to a pile of them, and you would see the fire for miles. They also had bonfires on St. John's Eve, nearly every house had one.

File 2 00:00:40 - 00:02:17

WAKES/WEDDINGS/DANCES -

Mattie remembers that people used to sit around at wakes and funerals, chatting, having a drink. He doesn't remember too many clay pipes. Mattie says that there were very few weddings or christenings held in hotels then. Lots of weddings were held at home. Mattie remembers well the tradition of 'picking the gander' or the 'hauling (haul and) home'. A married woman wouldn't visit home for a month after getting married and when she did there would be a celebration, with music, dancing, set dancing on the flag floors. His aunt, Mrs. Griffey used to play the concertina, and they would go to her place, while her husband was out. Her

husband was a grand set dancer as well, and a concertina player as well  
There were particular rambling houses that they used to go to in Kilmaley, they used to go to Thob (Thomas) Caseys at night while he was gone rambling elsewhere. They would play cards etc. The girls didn't go rambling. They would stay at home

Mattie says that the marriages of his parents and grandparents would have been arranged.

00:06:03 - 00:08:37

STORYTELLERS/BLESSED WELL -

Mattie says that there were some great storytellers. Thob Casey was one of them. He would be telling ghost/fairy stories that would make you afraid to walk home in the dark. He had a particular story about a blessed well. Seemingly the people used the water and the well disappeared. It was claimed that you could see the track it took across into a wooded area. Mattie remembers seeing it when he was young. He remembers another blessed well which cured sore eyes; story continued on File 3.

File 3 00:02:24 - 00:05:20

PLANE CRASH/SHANNON -

Mattie remembers when he first saw a plane. He got very close to one when there was a plane crash in Shannon in the 1940s, he was working in the area at the time. They heard a terrible crash, and there was stuff strewn all over the place, people were wearing sunglasses to protect their eyes from the dust. Mattie worked in Shannon in the early 40s, building roads and runways. He worked with the contractor South of Ireland Ashfield Company. They would be picked up in Ennis by an army-style truck. Mattie has a funny story about working there.

00:05:21 - 00:06:17

ELECTRICITY -



They had no electricity when he was young. It was a great thing when it arrived. Mattie cannot imagine not having luxuries like a toilet now. They were all born at home.

00:06:18 - 00:10:28

BUTTERMAKING -

Mattie talks about making butter and the changes in the milk. First of all they had the pan of milk, when the cows were milked, you had a bucket of milk, which was poured into pans. The pans were placed on shelves and left to 'set'. The cream would come to the top, and then could be skimmed off the top with your fingers into a dish/bowl. You would do that every day for a week, until you had a big bowl of cream. The milk would then be put into a churn. They had two, a hand churn and a barrel churn. If you didn't have much you would use a small churn. The churn made butter and you would also have butter milk. Mattie loved the butter milk. Then the separator came along, it would be fixed up in a corner of the kitchen, it was like a big box, there was a big round bowl for the milk, and there was a gadget that took the milk that could be tightened up. You started it up and twisted the handle, one shaft went into a bucket for the milk, and the other sent the cream into a bowl. Then the creamery came along, and everyone got creamery cans, which would be filled with milk, and you would then travel three miles to the creamery with the cans. Then that faded out and everyone got bulk tanks, which were filled with milk and left at the gate to be collected. Mattie describes these as, the four changes in the milk, over his lifetime.

00:10:29 - 00:12:52

FOOD -

They had hens, ducks, geese, goslings and turkeys, and would have eggs from the hens, ducks and gees. They would have goose for Christmas and a wedge of bacon hanging out of the rafters. Mattie remembers his mother and sister making puddings 'lovely stuff' and being sent off to the neighbours with puddings and

pork steaks. Mattie remembers that they kept butter in a dish in a cool place, as there was no such thing as a fridge. He doesn't remember wrapping the butter in anything, but says that the old people would often cover butter or milk with a clean damp cabbage leaf.

00:12:53 - 00:14:12

WWII -

Mattie remembers World War II, news about it on the radio, and the rationing of tea cigarettes etc. There was a black market in operation.

00:14:13 - 00:14:40

SHANNON -

Mattie remembers the excitement of Shannon airport opening.

00:14:41 - 00:15:51

CARMODY'S HOTEL -

Mattie remembers Carmody's Hotel in Ennis and the tragedy that happened there. There was an auction held there and the floor collapsed, killing a few people. Mattie was one of the people who helped demolish it. They needed people who were used to scaffolding. Mattie remembers knocking one of the chimney stacks. The hotel was located opposite the Queens, and had a short road frontage, but was a long building.

00:14:41 - 00:15:51

DOCTOR -

Mattie can't really remember any remedies or cures. Tells of how he had to go to the doctor with rheumatic fever when he was about seventeen, continued on File 4.

File 4 00:00:00 - 00:01:07

## DOCTOR -

Mattie can't really remember any remedies or cures. Tells of how he had to go to the doctor with rheumatic fever when he was about seventeen, continued on File 4.

00:01:08 - 00:02:46

## GAA -

Mattie played a lot of hurling, with Clarecastle and then with Kilmaley. He won a Junior A championship medal in 1938 and won Senior Championship and Cup medals in 1943. People would travel by the 'common car' or pony and trap. The 'common car' was a car with a horse. He didn't really play hand ball or road bowling.