

Matthew Bermingham 2

Male

File 1 0:00:00 – 0:05:34

EVICTIONS –

Matthew's grandfather, who was Matthew also, got married in 1862 in the same house that Matthew lives in today. In 1887 they were evicted from their house. Matthew's grandfather used to meet with the Plan Of Campaign who was always organising strikes and arranging meetings, His father was 15 when this happened and he rarely talking about it. He says that they had an awful way of evicting people and he describes the method which involved a battering ram. It took two days to get Pat McGrath out of his home. The Landlord at that time was Vandeleur who had a big family and all the streets in Kilrush were named after his family.

0:05:34 – 0:07:48

THE ECONOMIC WAR –

The rent was very high until De Valera reduced it. When he cut the annuities paid to England by half he didn't share the cheaper rates with the people. Matthew remembers the annuities been £16 and £32 before that. There was also a tariff on every cattle according to their age.

0:07:48 – 0:11:33

EVICTIONS –

There were people living in the Vandeleur house while Matthew was growing up. The house itself was massive been built on 2 acres of land. The principle part of the house was north and two young lads got killed there when they were lifting lead.

Matthew says his father didn't talk about the evictions a lot but he did explain to him his role of keeping the porridge hot. He continues to explain this role. The eviction went on for one day. Matthew's uncle Paddy was born the week of the evictions over in Jack Keating's house.

After the eviction, they went to live with their neighbours and ended up staying there for six months.

0:11:33 - 0:18:38

THE GREAT FAMINE -

Matthew says that he didn't hear many stories from the Famine times. There was a Mahoney man who lived to 97 years and came to same area. Matthew asked him about the famine and he answered said that there was no need for anybody to be hungry. He used to go foraging during these years.

0:18:38 - 0:23:44

FAMILY BACKGROUND -

Matthew was born on the 26th May 1917 and he has two sisters. He talks about his sisters and their families for a brief period. His father died suddenly when he was 80. Six months prior to this his mother passed away at the age of 78.

His father was a great man for trapping and one of Matthew's earliest memories involves him getting caught in one of the traps.

Matthew was the second in line in the family.

0:18:38 - 0:23:44

SCHOOL -

There were a lot of students attending Moyasta at the time Matthew was going there. The teachers were Mr & Mrs Murphy. They both died in their early fifties. He talks about one teacher, Mr Cassidy, who was from Cooraclare. He was

trained in a protestant school which meant the clergy would never offer him a teaching position. He managed to get a job in Moyasta because the clergy had no control over the school. Matthew continues to talk about this teacher for a short period.

In the 1920's there was no value in education. Most people would finish school when they were 14 or 15. They would then go to work doing things such as 'cutting the turf'. Matthew describes this as tough work. There were a few bogs in the locality where lads worked.

Matthew spent seventy years working in the bog, along with doing the chores on the farm. One of house jobs around the farm was milking the cows. His family would then convert the milk to butter.

0:23:44 – 0:29:35

CHURNING THE BUTTER –

The first stage of the process was using the milk separator. Then, you would leave it rest for a week and you would make butter out of it by putting it into the churn. In the summer time it would take about an hour to churn the butter whereas in the winter it would only take ten minutes.

One of the old 'pisreogs' at the time was if someone called to the house while the butter was been churned, they would have to give it a churn.

When the butter thickened, it was strained out for butter milk. Butter pats where used in this part of the process. Whatever was to be sold was left in one lump. Butter paper came in rolls and was used to wrap the butter. Matthew tells a story about Jack O'Brien that involves butter.

The butter that was made for sale was put into baskets and then brought to the fairs.

Before 1940, Matthew's family used the creamery in Kilrush as it was the closest one. After that there was one built closer.

0:29:35 - 0:35:04

KILLING THE PIG -

Matthew's family kept pigs and whenever his father wasn't able to kill the pig, a butcher came out from Kilkee. He says that he never liked salting the pig. The killing took place in the kitchen and he remembers the killing. The pig would always be fat. After the pig was killed, it was cleaned and then hung up for a full day. This event would only occur once a year in their household. There was always a very strong tradition of giving some meat to your neighbours.

Matthew talks about selling bonabhs at the fair. They would travel to Kilrush by means of horse and cart. The local carpenter, Timmy Madigan, would make a creel for the trailer. Timmy had his own workshop and where he would make bodies for cars.

0:35:04 - 0:43:04

THE CIVIL WAR -

Matthew says that a lot of families took different sides during the Civil War.

When Matthew was 17 there were fights in fairs where lads used sticks. A lot of times each group would be divided politically with one side been 'Fianna Gael' and the other were 'Cumann na nGaedheal'. Generally, there were 5 or 6 involved in these arguments. Also, there were several trying to halt these fights while the Garda never got involved too hastily. He tells one funny story about these fights at the fairs.

Matthew never visited 'Béal na mBláth' which was where Michael Collins was shot. Here it is said that Frank Taylor travelled there before.

Matthew's father was a strong supporter of Fianna Gael because he was opposed to de Valera. He talks about a TD named Paddy Kelly from Cree.

Matthew knew a man who had the cure for ringworm and talks about him for a few seconds.

0:46:37 - 0:49:55

1932 ELECTION AND EAMON DE VALERA -

There was massive amount of activity in the spring of 1932 and when 'Fianna Fail' won they celebrated with parades. Seán O'Grady was one out of 3 or 4 local 'Fianna Fail' TD's elected.

At the time Eamon De Valera wasn't long of jail and it was a Mrs Talty that got him out. She was a nurse in the jail and she was meant to bring him the keys for him to escape. He wasn't executed along with the other prisoners due to his American nationality.

Matthew heard de Valera speak at rallies a few times. A few members of his opposition were present and would shout but never cause any trouble.

0:49:55 - 0:53:00

CURES -

Matthew talks about cuts and cobwebs been used as a cure. He tells few stories that involved these ingredients been used.

0:53:00 - 0:54:56

CHILD BIRTH -

Most children were born at home with nurses been present to help. Rarely would the doctor be present along with the nurse.

Matthew's children, however, were born in a nursing home in Kilkee.

0:54:56 - 0:58:22

WEST CLARE RAILWAY -

The West Clare Railway tracks were located only 200 yards from Matthew's house. As a child he was only on it twice travelling to Kilkee which cost him six pence. One day he went to Kilkee to meet the Bishop as part of the preparations for his confirmation.

Matthew never heard of the railway been given any nicknames but all of five engines that operated on it were named.

The journey from Kilkee to Ennis would take two hours when full of cattle. It would leave around five in the evening when the fair was finished.

There was a junction at Moyasta with one direction going towards to Kilkee and the other to Kilrush.

Matthew describes the West Clare Railway as highly convenient and its down fall began with the introduction of lorries. When it closed they took up the railway and talks about the fast work the men did.

0:58:22 - 0:59:21

ELECTRICITY -

There was one house in the locality that had electricity ten years before anyone else. Its installation would cost the tenant £80 at the time. Matthew talks about this family getting electricity.

0:59:21 - 1:06:50

FAIRS -

There were five or six fairs in Kilkee every year while Kilrush would have one nearly every month. Doonbeg have four or five which Matthew describes as very good.

Collecting tolls was a big job in Kilrush. Matthew talks about the man that did this job.

Matthew never liked going selling cows at the fairs because of all the haggling.

Despite the political fights that Matthew talked about earlier in the interview, there was rarely any other trouble at the fairs.

When going to sell at the fair he says that you would want to have a good idea of animal values. When the deal was done, the tradition of the luck penny was always honoured.

There system of tagging cattle wasn't introduced until 1953. Matthew says that once you got your cattle settled, they would always stick together. The location for settling your cattle was decided with the first open space available upon arrival.

1:06:50 – 1:12:20

FOLKLORE –

The interview itself is taken place besides Matthew's open hearth fire and he talks about it here listing a few of its uses.

Whenever someone would call on 'cuairt', they would sit by the fire and tell some stories. The 'Banshee' was one very popular topic in the stories told. He tells one story that involves the Banshee.

Biddy Early was often mentioned and so were her cures.

Marty Griffin was one man that called to the house to tell stories with most of them been ghost stories.

1:12:20 – 1:17:41

RELIGION –

The church was very powerful while Matthew was growing up. He talks about being at school doing his Easter duty which was confession.

Priests frequently interfered with house dances with Father Ryan been notorious for this in Cooraclare. There were never any dances during length.

Matthew talks about the construction of some churches and their costs. He says that the church in Lisdeen cost £7,000 to build.

1:17:41 - 1:20:08

THE OLYMPIC GAMES -

Matthew's uncle Paddy was a well-known weight thrower. He was in the 1928 Olympic games and was an inspector in the Dublin police. In the Olympic games Paddy's best throw won the Discus but the umpire said that his foot crossed the line resulting in Paddy receiving only a bronze medal. The weight of the discus at that time was 8 ½ pounds and Matthew continues to describe it.

Matthew talks about how he got interested in this sport.

1:20:08 - 1:23:29

THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE -

Matthew's uncle was in the RIC and later, when the Free State was formed he joined the Garda and was stationed in Dublin. He was in Dublin during the War of Independence but never spoke about any of his experiences during this time. He never spoke of his feelings towards IRA but he did know about Michael Collins and all of his escapes

1:23:29 - 1:37:14

TRANSPORTING TURF -

Before ending the interview, Matthew says he wants to talk about the boats bringing turf to Limerick. One of the roads that was used was nicknamed BÃ³thar na Gabhair (goat). The turf was brought down this road and then put on the boat which would then head to Limerick. The boat would carry seventy horse loads of turf.

Matthew remembers Bill Lynch who wanted to mechanise the whole transport process. He spent some time working at Fosset's Circus.

Matthew talks about the turf boat that was found at Blackweir Bridge. He says that this boat was known as a cot and continues to talk about this turf boat.

Patrick Griffin was a man that used to own a boat and would do all the repairs himself. The process was known as 'corking'

.
Matthew talks about one boat tragedy that happened.

The boatmen of the time used to live in a line of thatched cottages and this area was always well known for music.

Matthew finishes the interview by telling a funny story which involves hunting foxes.