Nan Aherne 2

Female

0:00:00 – 0:02:09
THE FAMILY PUB –

Nan is still an active publican and she relates that the pub is open since her grandmother's time. The establishment is still named after her. She died in 1925 at the age of 80. Nan's mother then took over of the pub.

Over the years many famous and important characters have enjoyed a drink in her pub. There was a yard outside where vets from Ennis and Kilrush came to treat animals and they would drink in the bar as well.

0:02:09 – 0:06:18
THE MACNAMARAS OF ENNISTYMON HOUSE –

Nan's grandfather was a blacksmith. His forge was the best in town and her grandfather shod all of the horses for Henry V. MacNamara of Ennistymon House. She knew his son Francis and his daughters. They always came to Ennistymon in Summer. They'd go to Doolin for the fishing and Carron for the shooting. Kathleen MacNamara was beautiful with long fair hair and was beautifully dressed. She wore make up. She rode out every morning with her half-sister Patsy. Kathleen's eldest sister was Nicolette Devas.

Nan says that Kathleen's daughter Aeronwy Thomas visited her when one of her father's plays (Dylan Thomas) was staged in East Clare. Nan showed her Henry V. MacNamara's accounts in her grandfather's ledger. She died six months ago.

0:06:18 – 0:10:07
THE BAR –

Nan proceeds to talk about other interesting characters who frequented her bar. These included the actor Anew McMaster who came to Ennistymon for a week every year. His company staged a different play every night during the week. McMaster said it was a very interesting town with a very appreciative audience. Richard Harris, the famous movie actor, would also stop for a pint in the bar when he was returning from Ballyvaughan. Later the Merriman School was held in Ennistymon and this brought a lot of business into the pub. Nuala Ã“ Faoileáin often called in for a drink.

0:10:07 – 0:12:44
BRIAN MERRIMAN –

Ann talks about Brian Merriman, mentioning where he lived and where he was schooled on the Lahinch Road. She relates that his mother was a Marrinan girl. While at school, Nan studied a highly censored version of his work 'The Midnight Court'. At the time the quality of his Irish was considered highly classical to an extent that no other writer could equal. This is the reason why his work gained prominence not for the theme but for the Irish.

0:12:44 – 0:19:56
FAIRS AND MARKETS –

According to Nan, Tuesdays and Saturdays were market days in Ennistymon. She relates that Ennistymon was renowned for its fairs. Cattle bought at fairs in Ennistymon were highly valued on both the Irish and English markets. This resulted in farmers travelling long distances to Ennistymon to sell their cattle as the prices were always good. During the time of these fairs, Nan can remember 49 operating pubs in the town. The killing blow to the fairs occurred in the early 1960s when the railway closed down. Cattle were transported to Dublin by rail and onwards to England. The trucks that replaced the railway weren't as reliable and frequently broke down. The end of the fair had a knock on effect on the Ennistymon pub trade.

Mr. Whelan from Waterford was one of the shippers. Nan lists some of the buyers that came from all over the country – the Brutons, the Carrolls, the Starrs from Tipperary and the McCartans from County Down. They came to town the night before the fair. The farmers would arrive very early in the morning when it was still dark. The farmers would select a stand where their cattle would look their best. At this time there were no street lights in Ennistymon so the buyers used flash lamps and the light that shone out from the bars to judge the cattle. Bars would get an exemption on fair days to open at 6 in the morning instead of 10.

Nan talks about how the deal was made and about the luck penny that would always have to be given after the deal was made. The two shilling piece was used for this because it had a cross on it.

Jim Stack was the man who collected the tolls on the fair day. There were paid at a little house in front of Donnie O'Loghlen's shop in Church Street.

0:19:56 – 0:20:55
ENNISTYMON BRIDGE AND TOLL HOUSE –

Nan talks about the Toll House that was located on the bridge. She says that the Devitts who were tailors lived in the Toll House in her time. It had three steps going down to it. When cars became more numerous it was considered dangerous and it was knocked down. The Bridge and the Toll House date back to the 1700s.

0:20:55 – 0:30:20
FAIRS CONTINUED –

The fairs were always great for bringing money into the town. The farmer was paid in cash. He would spend some of that money in town on the day. He often had children with him and he would buy clothes for them. The mart stopped the plentiness of money in the town. The farmer was paid by cheque often up to a week later. Nan talks about some of the drapery shops-Maloneys and Twomeys that operated at that time. When quotas based on pre-war orders were in

operation during WW2 the quotas were generally larger in Ennistymon than for some of the large shops like Todds and Cannocks in Limerick. There weren't many hawkers but Walls on Church Street did sell second hand clothes.The occasional argument would occur at the Fair. These could be a result of someone being out bided.

Nan recalls the street singers many of whom had lovely voices. They would be around singing or playing a musical instrument such as the accordion. It was an opportunity for them to collect some money.Nan recalls two drover brothers from Ennis – one was called Pharaoh.

The Fair day would also attract people from the Aran Islands. August was a very popular month for them to attend. It was common for them to purchase lambs when they visited the Fair. Nan describes what she can remember of these people. She says they walked in a line one after the other as if they were walking under a currach. She depicts them as wearing 'báinÃns' and 'pampooties'. When the Fair was over, two council workers would clean the streets. She names them as 'Bás' O'Brien and Gallagher. The Fairgreen in Ennistymon was rarely used for the Fair during Nan's time. It was very elevated and exposed. There was more shelter in the streets.

0:30:20 – 0:31:01
MUSIC AT THE FAIRS –

Nan tells of a Paddy Tuttle from Ennis who played the accordion at fairs. He was a most respectable boy from a lovely family who went on the road playing. She says he wore a black suit probably given to him by a priest.

0:31:01 – 0:37:05
MUSIC –

Nan has had a lifelong interest in music. Both Nan and her sister took piano lessons. She began lessons when she was seven years old. Sr. Berchmans from

Gort was her music teacher. She had a trained voice. Nan would go over to the convent two days a week for lessons. While growing up one of her musical heroes was John McCormack.

Different opera companies would travel to Ennistymon to perform. This was the foundation of the local interest in opera. Some would even come from London. They stopped when the war began. The Elster Grimmes Opera Company would post over the programme before they would arrive and Nan has one of these in her possession today. They would do six different operas and a sacred concert in the week.

Both of her parents had an interest in music. Her mother played the piano. They had musical sessions every Sunday. Her father played both the violin and the accordion. Both of her parents had an interest in music. Her mother played the piano. They had musical sessions every Sunday. Her father played both the violin and the accordion.

Nan was in Dublin in 1932 for the Eucharistic Congress and it was there she heard John MacCormack live for the first time. Nan mentions a programme that was on RTE which played plenty of his music. O'Brien on Song was the name of the programme. She was very disappointed when the show got cancelled. The programme was presented by her neighbour John O'Brien who was known locally as 'Tina' after Tino Rossi. John had been a boy soprano in the local operas.In the late 1940s new churches were needed in Ennistymon and Lahinch. Money was scarce after the war. Fundraising efforts undertaken included whist drives, musicals and operas. In 1948 the Christian Brothers started doing musicals and later in the 1950s they produced operas. She mentions Brothers Williams, Driscoll, Carberry and Garvey as being involved. They would have a cast of 80 which included pupils and past pupils. Mrs Comber taught the sopranos and altos and Nan trained the tenors and basses. She was the first woman to have a lead role in an opera. She talks about some of her experiences while doing this.

0:46:32 – 0:50:08
THE EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS 1932 –

Nan's mother was very religious and she brought Nan and her brother to the Eucharistic Congress in Dublin. She was ten years old at the time. It was held in June. This was her first trip to Dublin and they stayed with her aunt. She remembers seeing the Papal Nuncio. Nan describes the Papal Nuncio's hat as being like a basin down in his head. Nan laughed and he came over to her and pulled her plaits. All of the events took place in the Phoenix Park and Nan says they would be there hours before it started to get a good place.

She didn't go to see Pope John Paul II during his visit but she watched him on television.

0:50:08 – 1:00:17
ENNISTYMON BANDS –

Ennistymon had six bands in the town (1930s to 1950s). There was the Brass Band and during the war there was a Pipe Band. Her brother was in the Pipe Band. There was also a Fife and Drum Band, Jack Madigan's Jazz Band, Mickey Hogan's Band and Byrt's Band.

The musical director of the Ennistymon Brass Band was Joe Arthur, the photographer. A lot of Nan's neighbours were members of this band – two Carriggs, two Fitzpatricks, Joe Petty and Francie Walsh. They practised in a house across the road from Nan's house. They played for the Corpus Christi Procession every year. On Christmas Eve they played carols in the Square. This was a great opportunity to collect funds for the church.

Nan explains that there wasn't much money around those days. In 1968, Harold Wilson, the British Prime Minister announced that the English weren't allowed to leave England with more than Â£40. This amount allowed the English to holiday in Ireland resulting in a tourism boost and more money being brought into

Ireland.

At this point of the interview Nan talks about some of the other bands that operated in Ennistymon. One band that was different from the rest was Jack Madigan's Jazz Band. She says they played lovely dance music. She mentions Paddy Jordan, saxophonist and singer and Paddy O'Loughlin drummer and whistler and singer with Jack Madigan's Band. Mickey Hogan also had a band. He came from Limerick and was a shoemaker in town. There were plenty of bookings for both bands. There were no dances during Lent and this was their holiday period.

Nan was a church organist for seventy years. She loved being an organist. She regretted having to retire due to arthritis in her hands. She then talks about the modern day music scene in Ennistymon. She mentions the Walls from Main Street (The Stunning).