

Pa Crowe

Male

File 1 0:00:00 – 0:05:19

EARLY LIFE –

Pa starts off the interview by saying he was born in Drumline on the 30th June 1930. His was born into a family of nine with been the third last.

His school, Clonmoney NS, was located three miles from his house and he would walk there every morning. He says he enjoyed the time spent at school. At that time you would finish National School at the age of 14. It was very rare for someone to continue their education on further unless they were to become a priest.

His family had a small farm of approx. 30 acres. During the war years they got some extra land which he refers to as conacre. Pa says that he used to work on his family's farm but also worked in Shannon, Dublin and England which was where he had an accident in 1955 but wasn't seriously injured. Before his accident he worked as a wagon repairer on the railway. One day he was accidentally struck by a train resulting in him been put out of work for a while. He returned home after this occurred. He regained his strength over time and returned to work. He started off welding and building cow houses. Work was plentiful in this area around 1956 as there was a scheme set up. People were able to receive a £12 grant to financially assist in the construction of these cow houses. They would generally fit 6 cows. Pa says that during the period of '56 to '59 he constructed seventeen of these buildings.

0:05:20 – 0:11:06

BUNRATTY CASTLE –

Pa says that he was involved in the restoration of Bunratty Castle. Lord Gort bought the ruins of the castle in 1957. The castle itself had no roof and was in serious disrepair. The previous owners were farmers who inherited the castle as it was on their land.

Pa remembers playing in the ruins as a child. Children were able to go in and out of the ruins as there were no doors.

Pa says that Nelly's Pub in Bunratty Village was once known as 'The Pike'. This is because there was once a bridge located there which had a toll. He got its current name during World War II and Pa explains how this came about. The bridge that was once located there was built by Pa's great grandfather in 1804. At the time it was believed to be the widest one arched, stoned bridge in Ireland. The architect was named Smith and Pa's great grandfather was John Crowe.

Pa was involved in the restoration process from 1959 – 62, doing different jobs. A man by the name of Cullen was contracted to rebuild the roof in its original style. Scaffolding was put in place and this was how the roof was brought up and put into place.

0:11:07 – 0:13:41

THE GREAT FAMINE –

Lord Gort was a medieval enthusiast, frequently collecting medieval furniture and other objects from that period in history. He was originally from Lough Cutra, three miles from Gort in Co. Galway. Pa says the town of Gort was named after Lord Gort's family as they fed the people during 'The Great Famine'.

Lord Gort was a military man, serving in the English Army during the second World War and was involved in the 'Battle of Dunkirk'.

0:13:42 – 0:20:39

BUNRATTY CASTLE –

Pa talks about how Lord Gort came to buy Bunratty Castle. One day he was passing it in a car with an archaeologist, John Hunt. As they drove by John jokingly said wouldn't that be a great home for all your medieval furniture. Lord Gort then bought the castle for £300.

One of Pa's jobs was putting all the medieval furniture in place which started to arrive in 1960. He continues to talk some for the furniture.

File 2 0:00:00 – 0:11:03

SHANNON FARMHOUSE –

Brendan O' Reagan was involved in the Duty Free in Shannon in 1962. He had interest in Bunratty Castle. Shannon airport was expanding at this time and there was an old thatched house located on one of the proposed routes of a new runway. The house itself belonged to a John Mac Conmara. All of the local people objected to it been knocked because it was a great house for the tradition of going on 'cuairt'. This was the tradition of people visiting a house for means of entertainment. In other parts of the country it was known as 'céile or the rambling house. All of the local people didn't want the building destroyed as they would no longer be able to go on 'cuairt' there.

The Clare Champion did a piece on the local's objections to the destruction of the house. John Cullen, the contractor working on Bunratty Castle, was building the Shannon Shamrock at the time which was built in 1960. He then said that he would relocate it to Bunratty if he was given a site. McCarthy, who owned the Shamrock, gave him the site and the cottage was then called the 'Shannon Farmhouse'. Pa was put in charge of ascertaining the thatch and scallops. He continues to talk about some of the building techniques that were observed while he worked on this project.

Pa recalls the massive amount of interest the Americans had in the thatched house. He then went and told Christy Lynch, the man in charge of Bunratty

Castle.

0:11:04 – 0:13:17

EARLY LIFE –

Pa knew a lot about thatched houses because he grew up in one. When he was young, slated houses only belonged to people who were financially better off. He says that while he was growing up people had to get used to not having much money. One saying that was around at the time was ‘that if you hadn’t what you liked, and then you better start liking what you had’. There was no such thing as people getting mortgages at that time.

0:13:17 – 0:16:41

CHANGES IN SOCIETY –

The Shannon Farmhouse was built when the tradition of thatching was dying. This building was built solely for tourism purposes.

Pa then talks about a time before running water. Women would have to travel to a spring well which was a great place for them to exchange gossip. The well that Pa’s family used was also used by five other families. Pa says that there was an unwritten rule that if the well was on your land, you could never stop anyone from using it even if you had a falling out.

There was no electricity at this time also. People used oil lamps and candles for lighting.

0:16:41 – 0:29:50

BUNRATTY FOLK PARK –

Pa talks about the Folk Park. He mentions Loop Head House. This house was located out in Loop Head, the most westerly point in Ireland, therefore the closest place to America. It was common in America on St Patrick’s Day, for people to

walk out into the water and say well, by Christ, we're this much nearer to the Loop Head anyway'. This house was replicated in the Folk Park along with houses from Limerick (The Golden Vale) and Kerry. Pa describes the Loop Head as having three chimneys with the front and back door been opposite each other. The walls would hold holy pictures along with some of political figures such as Daniel O' Connell. All of these pictures were put on the walls in Bunratty also. In some cases these pictures would have been donated.

File 3 0:00:00 - 0:02:47

BLACKSMITHS -

Pa says that the forge was a very important component in a locality with the blacksmith being widely respected. Places like Dromoland would have their own resident blacksmith. Nobody would ever take the position of blacksmith as it was considered unlucky. It was also considered unlucky to steal something from a forge therefore they were never locked at night. Pa remembers using forges as shelter from the rain at night when he was returning from a dance.

Shoeing horses was only ever done by blacksmiths as it was both an important and difficult job. The water that was used to cool the shoes at the forge was believed to cure warts. At the end of the day the blacksmith would always wash his hands in this water.

Pa says that the horse shoe was always a symbol of luck. He says that this is because when the Blessed Mary was walking with the unborn Jesus he robes kept opening. A blacksmith converted a horse shoe (which were much smaller in those days) into a pin. She then said that this object would always be associated with luck.

0:14:43 - 0:18:12

BUNRATTY CASTLE & FOLK PARK -

When the Bunratty Castle & Folk Park opened up as a tourist attraction, Pa was

given a job in general maintenance. Pa would also give tours as he was very knowledgeable with the topics on display. Pa stayed working here until 1999 which was when he retired.

0:18:13 - 0:23:29

DAY OF THE THRESHING -

Pa describes the 'day of the threshing' as a great day with much activity throughout the countryside. Children didn't have any school on this day. This was when they would separate the seeds from the corn. It would always happen in the month of October.

0:23:30 - 0:28:24

BUNRATTY CASTLE & FOLK PARK -

Pa talks about two Dublin women visiting the Golden Vale in 1995. This was the year that Clare won the All Ireland in the Hurling and Dublin won the Football. Pa was impressed with speech that the Clare captain, Anthony Daly, made on the day.