



Cuimhneamh An Chláir
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Thomas (Tommy) Fahy

INTERVIEW by Cormac McCarthy on July 18, 2011

Interviewee	Thomas (Tommy) Fahy
Gender	Male
Birth Date	approx 1934
Home County	Clare
Area-Townland	North Clare - Newquay
Parish-Townland	Carran - Fahee North
Family	Married with children. Son Donnacha recommended his father for recording
Occupation	Farmer
Report Date	October 21, 2009
Period Covered	Historical information dating from Lisbon tsunami, to local landlords, to present day.
Length of Interview	1hr 21 mins 25 secs
Thematic Areas Covered	School, Change in society, Traditional music, Folklore legend, Sports,
Description	Tommy Fahy from New Quay, a man with a tremendous local north Clare lore, explains the meaning of the name Finavarra. Recorded: July 18, 2009 by Cormac McCarthy

Time	Description
0:00:00 0:00:25	Introduction
0:00:25 0:03:50	General description of the area including landlords (Skerritts). Corkers Hill, Finavarra. Skerritts were Catholic Landlords. 13 in the family. Also the Sampsons (the landlord family took them in).
0:03:50 0:04:00	Cricket in Finavarra played at the demesne
0:04:00 0:05:00	Land passed to the Sampsons and then to the Land Commission. After Cromwell people only had a haggard. Biggest village in the area was in Muckinish.
0:05:00 0:07:10	Loss of 18 families in a tsunami. Land also changed (went to window and point at change in land). Told how New Quay used to be called Old Quay but some people still call it Old Quay. Referred to Oak trees (carrig fada) out in the sea to show how high the water rose. Lisbon tsunami day after the tsunami came here.
0:07:10 0:16:35	Speaks of great grandfather who lived in Belharbour. He worked in the construction of the ponds. After tsunami the mixture of freshwater and saltwater was good for shellfish so the area became very productive. Lobster bought up

	<p>along the west coast. After the famine the pond was walled off and put two sluice gates in it. Boat based in the Aran Islands but bought fish/shellfish all along the west coast. The pond was used as a storage area. Job of the Fahys to go out at Spring Tide and put all the fish and shellfish back into the pond. Fish exported to England. My people drove the fish to the railway station in Oranmore. Big source of employment. 5 or 6 crew from the Aran Islands on the boat plus locals working on the pond. First boat had a tank in it The Alice Webster was the first boat Tommy remembered. Fish put in nets and hung off the side of the boat for transport pre a tank. When pond wall broke they built tanks. Spoke of corribs (3ft high x 10ft long x 7ft wide) a box as big as tractor trailer used to hold lobsters etc. When going for export workers would go down (sometimes at night) and bring shellfish in 3 hours before they could be packed. Packed in boxes with 20 lobsters or more per box. Row of lobsters claws back to back and covers with saw dust. Put ice around tails and side to keep them fresh and alive. Had to be transported alive. Have to boiled alive otherwise they are poisonous. Truck during WWII used to transport it. Schofields in 1949/1950 after three generation but then Americans bought it and English but never did good business. Now under private ownership but no fish farming done. Stanley Schofield was the last of them. Office in British Army in WWI (always had limp when he came back). Rumour he had no family as had more than his leg shot off (testicles!). Always put in 14 lobster instead of a dozen to allow for die off.</p>
0:16:35 0:17:41	<p>How Finavarra got its name. Refers to barrels of wine coming in a shore after the tsunami. Lots of locals going to the shore and coming home drunk! i.e. Wine for the Men or Wine form the Sea.</p>
0:17:41 0:20:00	<p>Talks about material coming ashore. Talk of barrels of oil. Timber barrel of lard. Was very big so got help. When tide went out they brought a cross cut and cut it into smaller bits and put into the horse and cart. Butter couldnt be got at the time but the college in Gort and Kinvara bought it for dip for their bread. Butcher also sold it. Candle grease also washed up.</p>
0:20:00 0:22:15	<p>Talks about ho to make a candle from candle release --- excellent description; step by step.</p>
0:22:15 0:23:40	<p>10 May 1943 walk to just near Gort (Tieraneamhin) fall of 3 inches of snow in May. Canvas shoes driving the sheep in Gort. Would walk 4 miles and hour. Could be slow enough!</p>
0:23:40 0:28:35	<p>Talks about growing vegetables and collecting seaweed. Everyone grew barley and sugar beet and kept sheep. Maybe turnips also. Sugar beet was a big crop. Agricultural instructors would come for a week during the winter to give lectures on how to grow beet. Funny story of a drunk man in the lecture who made fun of a instructor from Denmark --- stops recording for a minute --- then repeats when turned on. Dairy farming only came in in the 1960s. Jimmy Lenehan in Bishops Quarter was a good farmer. Tells funny story of calves being sold and when trying to get a cheaper price they say they have scour. Jimmy replies to say its the businessmen who have the scour and he has it himself Got it myself I can show you the tail of my shirt</p>
0:28:35 0:33:25	<p>Talks of seaweed and its uses as well as the selling of it. Sold in Gort, Tubber, Turlough --- anyone who was 10 miles away from the sea. Go on the wagons into Ennis from Lahinch. Used as tillage fertilizer. Describes process involved in collecting it and bringing to market. Used to put on the stubbles (barley). First guy who did beet (points across the hill the 1940s) who used fertilizer. Locals thought he would ruin the land. Shortly after seaweed went out and fertilizer went in. Glynn's in Kilrush took seaweed in the 1950s. Get the Bool isteach (drift weed) and gathered and dried. Glynn's took 20 lorries a day of seaweed. Was all black weed (the bool isteach was a mixture of everything). Could dry the May weed (red colour) or caul-ach. Was made into cattle meal. Around 1990 that all changed because they found a better product with protein but that gave cattle BSE --- could have come back to seaweed again but they didnt!</p>
0:33:25 0:34:25	<p>Speaks of the garden beside the house. Grew rhubarb, blackcurrants (goes to window). Potatoes, peas, mangetout, cabbages (4 or 5 types), brussels sprouts, cauliflower</p>

0:34:25 0:35:25	Speaks of local cures. Last of the seaweed cultivating Glynnys felt that they were making a potion out of it and that it was good for horses coughing (boiled carrageen).
0:35:25 0:38:45	Father was an invalid for a long time. Was a soldier. In France during the war (3 John Fahys at war that all lived within one mile of each other in Ireland). When father was being shipped to France a submarine came up in front and took them on. Boat crashed into it and took the Germans captive. Two destroyers came to guide them in so some people went to the boats to make room for the captives. One boat sank. Was a tough war --- they didnt speak much out it. Never mentioned it in their letters home. Tells a story of Ruairi the Divil which links his father with being at the war.
0:38:45 0:41:00	Talks again of driving the fish to Oranmore. Tells story of a tinkers fire and coming home at night from Gort (involves his Uncle). Tried to light pipe from tinkers fire and talks of it being a fairy story. Goes onto tell funny story of a woman who broke wind at the Spa
0:41:00 0:42:30	Story of a man who was sick and about the friary in Loughrea (funny)
0:42:30 0:46:45	Speaks of growing up in the area (5 sisters 4 immigrated to America). Walking to school --- Throw off our hobnail boots on St. Patricks day! Walk in horse tracks as lovely soft spot in the middle of the road. Didnt get much schooling left after his Confirmation. Went farming when he was 12 years of age as his father was an invalid. Uncle had a bad leg also. He would drive the teacher to school in a pony and trap (teacher: Mrs. ORourke). Funny story about the hose being evicted!
0:46:45 0:53:10	Talks of the boatmen coming in with turf. Sold for 2.50 --- came in on Hookers. All turf came from Connemara. Was a delight to watch those boats making their way back to Connemara. Describes turf shed and how the boat would come in. Name was Poitin King who brought the fuel (from Connemara). Poitin himself was very old (I think when they were young they looked old). Always had a leath whada (teenager). All had nicknames (names some) on the boat. Schofield wouldnt allow them in if the lobster boat was due in. Pull in anywhere. First thing they got when they arrived was 2 cakes of bread one to eat there and then one for the trip home. Mother would prepare it. Before any money changed hands. Some turf from the top of Corkscrew Hill --- people from Ballyvaughan would sometimes go there. Describes man from Flagggy Shore who took wheelbarrow to Lisdoonvarna. Then another story about a man collecting turf his fulltime job going over and back on a bicycle. Very few employers in the area.
0:53:10 0:53:50	Describes when electricity came to the area. Big change meetings at night, baking cake for a penny. Didnt get it straight away as they were out of the way --- a few years.
0:53:50 0:56:45	Frank McCabe American who bought the pond. Worked with university and banks in Galway. Telling people how to fish. Locals fished from canoes with about 40/50 lobster pots. American had an engine and bigger boats with about a 1000 pots. Describes all the lobster pots arriving. Boats came from Liverpool one in Connemara, one in Galway and one in the Aran Island. The first boat in the Aran Islands was blown to pieces --- he wasnt welcome at all. You cant change Irish people over night. Was going to take their livelihood away. Business never took off. This took place in the late 1950s early 1960s.
0:56:45 1:00:05	Talks of making homemade lobster pots. Use of hazel rods. Head of a salmon used as bait. Overview of lobster catching and storage and sale.
1:00:05 1:03:00	Talks of fish caught and periwinkles. Talks of sieving winkles. Schofield mainly bought winkles from the Aran Islands not from the locals. Told of method to differentiate between live and dead winkles. In Spring locals allowed in to the pond to pick the winkles so he only had to pay labour instead of paying locals for ones picked on the shore. Talks of scallop but dont seem to get much anymore.
1:03:00 1:08:25	Talks of dancing and an area that was concreted for dancing and it had a water pump and a saloon was built there for houses dances. Describes house dances (e.g. days after corn thrashing, for people immigrating, for people home after immigrating). Talks of going to other towns for dances at the dance halls. Man

	form Liscannor (Fr. Quinn lovely man) ran great dance hall in Labane. Stores around the dances Tells how he had a car and used bring people to the dances.
1:08:25 1:11:25	Other social events and visitors to the house. Cards, gramophones with set dancing. Describes one house with Din Joe and Take the Floor. Woman in the house would have everyone ready to go once the music started. Din Joe would call the sets.
1:11:40 1:12:20	Funny story about a man playing cards in the house while his wife was dying.
1:12:20 1:16:15	No coursing n the area even though lots of hares. Talks of rabbits and how they were caught and exported. We fed the British Army with rabbits; they thought it was chicken (laughs). Talks of tracking rabbits with dogs, setting snares. Biggest export in meat was rabbit up until the 50s until Myxomatosis was introduced. A bad disease, came from Germany. 1% in an area would survive and that disease keeps coming back and kills them off.
1:16:15 1:17:43	Talks of the LDF. Meeting Hall in New Quay and was called the Free Clothes Association. You were toggged out (if over 16 years old) (no need for coupons) with boots, pants, tunic, overcoat and a three corn cap. Toggled out forever 5 years to come. Meetings with imitation guns. Could go to camp in Donegal or Cork for more training.
1:17:43 1:21:25	Story of a man who went to Cork for training (rifles, sub machine guns, grenades). Funny story about the mother mistaking the grenade for a bowls ball. Son shows mother how it works and nearly kills his father who is on the outside toilet at the time. (Pol in Airde term used to describe the explosion). Not supposed to use the clothes outside training but everyone did.
	Finish interview and go to look at his garden.