

IRISH LIFE AND LORE SERIES

OFFALY ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

‘IN CONVERSATION WITH...’ PART OF THE
ENGAGE WITH ARCHITECTURE PROJECT 2012

CATALOGUE OF 5 RECORDINGS



*An Roinn
Ealaíon, Oidhreacht agus Gaeltachta*

*Department of
Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht*



www.irishlifeandlore.com

Irish Life and Lore Series

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Name: Alan Lindley (born 1968)

Address: 30-31 Lock House, Rahan, Co. Offaly

Series title: In Conversation With ... CD 1

Subject:

Recorded by: Maurice O’Keeffe – Irish Life and Lore

Recording date: 2011

Time:



Content:

Track 1: The traditional work of his family as lock keepers on the Grand Canal and his home – the Lock House. A description of the architecture of this 18th century building. His uncles who worked on the Canal and were responsible for the horses that pulled the barges.

Track 2: Some early memories of his grand-uncle, Walter Mitchell, who worked on the canal as agent for the Grand Canal Company, and who kept a logbook of canal traffic.

Track 3: The maintenance and the management of the Lock House.

Track 4: The continuous upkeep and repair required to the lock gates at 30-31 Lock House. The long hours worked by his mother, many times daily manipulating the lock gates manually.

Track 5: The regular maintenance on the waterways by the Office of Public Works.

Track 6: A detailed account of the logistics of sealing the lock gates, which prevented water leakage.

Track 7: Anecdotes of some of the extraordinary events that occurred on the Grand Canal.

Track 8: The duties of his grand-uncle, Walter Mitchell, as agent for the Grand Canal Company.

Track 9: The wages paid by the Grand Canal Company to his family members.

Track 10: The changing nature of traffic on the canal, from the heavily loaded barges pulled by horses to the pleasure boat cruising of the present time.

Name: The Molloy Family
Address: Killurin, Co. Offaly

Series title: In Conversation With ... CD 2

Subject:

Recorded by: Maurice O'Keeffe – Irish Life
and Lore

Recording date: 2012

Time:



Content:

Track 1: This recording took place with the Molloy family at Kelly's Cottage, the old thatched cottage where their grandmother, Mary Parson, grew up, married and raised a family. Liam Molloy explored the family history, recalling many memories of visits to his grandmother, travelling the mile from his home at Gurteen Bridge to the cottage.

Track 2: Liam described the tobacco shed attached to the house. Goretta recalled her memories of her grandmother's life, and mentioned a story told by her grandmother about the Famine.

Track 3: Liam described the structure of the cottage and the restoration work required to preserve it.

Track 4: Dorothy recalled her grandmother cooking on the open hearth, and the vernacular furniture of the cottage. She also discussed memories of life with her siblings, and her and her sister's employment with Salts Textile Company in Tullamore, and recalled the local dance halls and the bands that played.

Track 5: Marie remembered the seven acre farm attached to the cottage, with its garden, fowl and animals and a pony and trap. Liam recalled drawing turf from the local bog, and churning butter at the cottage.

Track 6: Desmond, the youngest of the family, recalled the generations who lived in Kelly's Cottage and the rejuvenation of the building after it had become derelict following the death of their grandmother.

Name: Evelyn Kennedy (née Quigley) (born 1918)

Address: Banagher, Co. Offaly

Series title: In Conversation With ... CD 3

Subject:

Recorded by: Maurice O’Keeffe – Irish Life and Lore

Recording date: 2012

Time:



Content:

Track 1: Her family background in Portumna, her father’s emigration to America, and his return after a short time to purchase a property in Banagher, where he set up a tailoring business.

Track 2: The history of this property, which had been an RIC barracks. Her father built a dance hall adjoining the property in the 1930s. Memories of her education and her work in the family drapery business.

Track 3: The complexity of the tailoring business, the fashions in clothes of the 1930s, and the journeymen tailors who came from Artane, Dublin to work for her father.

Track 4: The brisk business carried out in the family premises during the years of World War II. The social life of the time and the bands that played in her father’s dance hall.

Track 5: Memories of a number of townspeople in Banagher, and the contented lifestyle they enjoyed.

Track 6: Her grandmother, who lived with the family, and who had spent some time in the workhouse in Portumna at the end of the 19th century. Memories of her uncles’ involvement in the War of Independence and the Civil War.

Name: The Earl (born 1936) and Countess of Rosse

Address: Birr Castle, Birr, Co. Offaly

Series title: In Conversation With ... CD 4

Subject: Recording 1

Recorded by: Maurice O’Keeffe – Irish Life and Lore

Recording date: 2012

Time:



Content:

Track 1: Conversation with Lady Rosse in the Small Library, in which she described her background and her introduction to Birr Castle.

Track 2: Meeting Lord Rosse in the Main Library, where he described the importance of the intact library kept by his forefathers, and the unfortunate fire which damaged a significant number of books. The earldom of the Rosse family and how the title was bestowed. Memories of his forebears’ achievements.

Track 3: Lord Rosse described the architecture of the Gothic Music Salon. Discussed his education and his twenty year long career with the United Nations programme on social and economic developments.

Track 4: Looking from the window of the Gothic Room, Lord Rosse described the landscape, in particular the buildings and the river.

Track 5: His title and responsibility for maintaining Birr Castle and estate, which he inherited in 1980. Explained that the estate once encompassed twenty four thousand acres, and the reasons why this is now reduced to one eighth of that size.

Track 6: Memories of members of the household staff, and the survival of the castle through the years, including its time as a billet for Free State soldiers.

Track 7: The importance of his title and what it means to him to be an Irishman.

Track 8: Moving into the 17th Century part of the castle, Lady Rosse indicated the wax bust of Queen Victoria, recalling the story of how this came into the family.

Track 9: Lord Rosse indicated a secret passageway into the Hall, which leads up the stairway. He described the challenges of returning to health after contracting tuberculosis as a young man.

Track 10: Demonstrated the room which is dedicated to the family archive collection. Here Lord and Lady Rosse indicated the family records which go back to the 16th century, and the Visitors’ Book, showing the names of historians who spent many hours here.

Name: The Earl (born 1936) and Countess of Rosse

Address: Birr Castle, Birr, Co. Offaly

Series title: In Conversation With ... CD 5

Subject: Recording 2

Recorded by: Maurice O’Keeffe – Irish Life and Lore

Recording date: 2012

Time:



Content:

Track 1: Exploration of family records, Lord and Lady Rosse indicated some of the old estate maps, including a survey of the estate from the 1850s.

Track 2: The planned town of Birr and the Castle. Memories of Lord Rosse’s uncles, who served in the Irish Guards.

Track 3: The family name – Parsons - and family connections.

Track 4: Lord and lady Rosse identified family portraits in the castle corridors. In the dining room, Lord Rosse recalled family gatherings and the rituals and restrictions imposed on children at mealtimes.

Track 5: The Small Library, Lord Rosse discussed the national treasure which is the castle, and the importance of keeping the castle contents intact for his son, who will inherit.

Name: Billy Kelly (born 1931)
Address: Tullamore, Co. Offaly

Series title: In Conversation With ... CD 6
Subject:
Recorded by: Maurice O’Keeffe – Irish Life and Lore
Recording date: 2011
Time:



Content:

Track 1: Described how three generations of his family were blacksmiths; his grandfather worked as a farrier for the British Army in the Curragh camp in Kildare.

Track 2: Starting work with his father in the forge in Tullamore in 1945, and living in Parnell Street.

Track 3: The nature of the work of a blacksmith. Recalled how he and his father joined The Irish National Foresters Benefit Society, with added comments from his friend and neighbour, Donney Geoghegan, who remembered the forge as a boy.

Track 4: Demonstrated the blacksmith’s anvil used by himself, his father and his grandfather.

Track 5: The traditional tools used in the forge and recalled the journeymen blacksmiths who came to work for his father in the forge.

Track 6: Described a typical day in the forge.

Track 7: Clear recollection of the day his father passed on the business to him.

Track 8: His profession as a farrier, and travelling out to stables.

Track 9: Memories of the occupational hazards of life in the forge, including the tendency of customers to smoke clay pipes and dispose of them on the forge floor!

Track 10: The day he retired.

Track 11: Memories of his dog, which he called his best friend, who was trained to collect the newspaper from the newsagent.