



Through the Ages

*Stories of yesteryear as told
by the children of today*



Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme
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Leabharlann Chontae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Library



Comhairle Contae Mhaigh Eo
Mayo County Council

Western People

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Future of Mayo journalism is in safe hands

WELCOMED to *Through The Ages*, a souvenir magazine produced by the youngest team of journalists in the *Western People's* 137-year history and published in association with Mayo County Council and Creative Ireland.

When we launched the *Through The Ages* project for Mayo Day 2020, we could never have imagined the incredible response from schoolchildren from Mayo and further afield. The idea was to encourage children to conduct remote interviews with their grandparents who were cocooning amid the Covid-19 lockdown.

We had promised to publish a sample of the children's articles in the *Western People*, but on seeing the quality and variety of these young reporters' work, we felt a souvenir magazine was richly deserved. The final product, as you will see, is unquestionably one of the finest publications we have had the pleasure of producing in the *Western People* and I can safely say the future of Mayo journalism is in safe hands.

Prepare to be brought on a magical trip into Ireland's past as

grandparents recall their formative years in the middle decades of the twentieth century. It's a world without Internet, television, telephones and even cars; a world where youngsters create their own entertainment in the natural world around them, climbing trees, playing conkers and searching for birds' nests.

The most captivating aspect of this publication is the way the childhood tales of an older generation sparkle to life through the voices of children. We have published the articles unedited and unabridged because we wanted to retain the authenticity of our young reporters' fantastic work. The prose is colourful, engaging, honest and never dull; these reports will hold your attention from first word to last.

This project would not have been possible without the fantastic support of Mayo County Library and, in particular, Mayo's County Librarian Austin Vaughan. I'd also like to thank librarian Darina Mollay who liaised with schools and parents as the entries were being submitted.

The Mayo Day team at Mayo

County Council also offered their full support and encouragement from the outset so thanks to Director of Communications Martina Hughes and everyone at www.mayo.ie, as well as former chief executive Peter Hynes.

I also wish to extend my appreciation to designer Laura Lynch who has done such a fantastic job in bringing each page to life with a really imaginative and creative layout. It's lovely also to see several youngsters on the reporting team for *Through The Ages* whose parents or grandparents once worked in the *Western*.

Finally, thanks to all of our talented young reporters who took the time to interview their grandparents and put pen to paper. Every journalist remembers the first time they saw their name in print so we hope all of our contributors enjoy seeing their bylines in this souvenir magazine. It is certainly a perfect keepsake from 2020, a truly extraordinary year that will be talked through the generations to come.

- JAMES LAFFEY
Editor
Western People

A social document of a long-lost era

MAYO County Library is delighted to partner with the *Western People* in the publication of this very special souvenir magazine, which has been compiled from submissions to our *Through The Ages* project, run in association with Creative Ireland.

These articles, penned by schoolchildren throughout Co Mayo and further afield, offer a fascinating snapshot of life as it was once lived in the Ireland of our grandparents. From saving hay with donkeys and carts to playing pitch and toss on country roads, the scenes depicted in this magazine are utterly unimaginable to today's children. Yet those same youngsters have vividly captured their grandparents' reminiscences, creating a valuable record of a way of life that has completely disappeared from Ireland.

Through The Ages chronicles all aspects of life in

Mayo during the middle decades of the twentieth century, from schooling to farming, rural and urban living, as well as the games children played in that distant era before television. Indeed, in many cases, the interviewees are members of the last generation of Irish people to have grown up without television, cars, telephones or second-level education. Their stories, therefore, are extremely valuable from the perspective of social history and I believe this project, in its own small way, is a natural successor to the famous Schools Folklore Project of the 1930s.

It is Mayo County Library's intention to archive all of the submissions in the Local History section at our headquarters in Castlebar, thereby preserving for posterity a unique initiative that is a very positive legacy from Lockdown 2020.

This publication has been made possible through

funding from the Creative Ireland Programme, which connects people, creativity and well-being. We're thrilled to have been able to connect children and their grandparents in such a meaningful way during the coronavirus pandemic, and the positive feedback we have received from parents about this project is really encouraging.

Heartiest congratulations to all of the children whose articles feature in this very special publication. At a time when Mayo-born authors are gaining recognition all over the world, it is wonderful to know that there is another talented generation of wordsmiths following in their footsteps.

- AUSTIN VAUGHAN
Mayo County Librarian

It all began on Mayo Day 2020...

MAYO Day 2020 was always going to be a little bit different. The introduction of a series of restrictions to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic meant new ways had to be found to mark a calendar event that is widely anticipated each year.

Mayo County Council, which has been the driving force behind Mayo Day since its inception in 2015, believed it was more important than ever to host a Mayo Day like no other, and so plans were put in place for a series of virtual events on Saturday, May 2, 2020. Chief among these was a live show, *Mayo Day Live - Global Voices*, which was broadcast from the Communications Department of Mayo County Council, as well as a Mayo Day film, entitled *Oceans Apart*, and a custom-built Mayo Day website.

Mayo County Library, in association with Creative Ireland, also agreed to partner with the *Western People* for *Through The Ages*, a project that involved schoolchildren interviewing cocooning grandparents about their childhood memories. Each child would submit their article to Mayo County Library for inclusion in a souvenir magazine to be published by the *Western People* at a later date. Well, that later date is here and this magazine reflects the efforts of more than 100 children from all over Mayo, as well as other parts of Ireland and overseas, who participated in *Through The Ages*.

Martina Hughes, Head of Communications with Mayo County Council, said the quality of the children's work has exceeded all expectations and the council is really delighted to be involved in this magazine, which is published in conjunction with Mayo County Library and Creative Ireland.

"An opportunity to share stories across generations is always welcome



Celebrating Mayo Day 2020 on Saturday, May 2, were Kaj and Julia Wawer, from An Cladrach, Ballinrobe.

Picture: King Klix Photography

but given the unprecedented times we have found ourselves in on Mayo Day this year, where children had gone for weeks and months without seeing their grandparents, made this project really special. I believe this publication will be read with great interest by many for

years to come."

Mayo Day 2020 was a phenomenal online success and the overall reach of the MayoDay hashtags was an incredible 13,123,000. Yes, that's 13 million people who engaged with Mayo Day 2020. The hashtag MayoDay was trending at number one in Ireland by 12.30pm on Saturday, May 2, and remained in the top five on Twitter for the rest of the day.

The broadcast, *Mayo Day Live - Global Voices*, was watched by people all over the world. The show was a mix of chat, interviews, music and messages of hope and solidarity for a special Mayo Day, from well-known people from Mayo and those who love Mayo. Mayo natives Liam Horan and Louise Duffy hosted the three-hour show which included exclusive interviews with internationally acclaimed chairperson of The Elders, and Ballina native, Mary Robinson, Minister for Rural and Community Development, Michael Ring, former Taoiseach Enda Kenny together with a variety of Mayo voices from locations all around the world, including, London, New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Texas, Sydney, Dubai and Malaysia.

As part of a special campaign, 'A Minute For Mayo' messages from national and international leaders and familiar Mayo faces formed part of the broadcast with inputs from An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, Mark Mellett, Chief of Staff of the Irish Defence Forces, former RTE newsreader Michael Murphy, chairman of Mayo GAA Liam Moffatt, broadcasters Ray Foley, Phil Cawley and Aoibheann Ní Shuilleabhain to name a few.

Beautifully recorded performances from some of Mayo's most talented performers were a real highlight of the show including Mayo Young Person of

the Year 2020 Cathal Gavin, the inimitable Lisa Canny, Stuart Moyles, Kate Heneghan, Sean Costello and trad enthusiasts Billow Wood.

The Mayo Day film, *Oceans Apart*, was a short film about Irish emigration and connection during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Using interweaving voices of Mayo people thousands of miles from home, the film offered a poignant reflection of 2020 Ireland. Exploring the realities of life for people during lockdown and for those who have emigrated, it looks at the hardships and tensions experienced by those who leave and those who stay. The emigration effect on families has a deeply rooted place within the fabric of west of Ireland life.

The film has received outstanding reviews from all around the world since its launch on Mayo Day.

The website www.mayo.ie was the Mayo Day stage, the platform that showcased the very best of Mayo's, art, music, writers, photography, local business offerings, visitor attractions, competitions and more. The webpage also was the home of the live broadcast, *Global Voices*.

Virtual Mayo Day captured the imagination and hearts of the global diaspora and locals alike and the attention of the wider media. The popularity and engagement of the online content is the greatest indicator of success.

"Mayo.ie has been resourceful, creative and innovative with bringing Mayo Day to its current position over six years," says Martina Hughes. "It will need continued support, resources and partners going forward to drive Mayo Day into a truly citizen-owned movement with worldwide community buy-in."





Playing outside in the fields

Reporter: Grace Pierce (age 7), Balla National School
Interviewing: Her grandmother, Anne Moran

THE olden days were different from today.

My Granny lived on a farm. They had no electricity, just an oil lamp. They got water from the well.

She didn't have many toys. She played outside in the fields.



A blackboard instead of a whiteboard

Reporter: Lily Conroy (age 9), St Peter's NS, Snugboro, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmother, Gretti

THIS week I interviewed my granny on the phone. I asked what life was like when she was young. I asked her about home, school, and what she did for fun.

HOME: My granny was born in the countryside but moved to town (Castlebar) when she was young. Back then there was no tap in the house. They got water from a pump on the New Line. They had a black and white television. When she was my age they had no car.

FUN: When my granny was my age she played hopscotch and the 'hoagie' jump in a stream near her house. They liked climbing hay and picking apples.

SCHOOL: Granny had to walk to school. They were taught by nuns. They sat at wooden desks and had a blackboard instead of a whiteboard. The teacher used chalk to write on the board.



Pupils from Cloghans NS, Knockmore, pictured at the Ballina Liturgical Festival in 1958. Picture: Western People Archive

Grandad made his Communion and Confirmation in the same year

Reporter: MATTHEW FLANNELLY (age 12), Scoil Raifteiri, Castlebar
Interviewing: His grandfather, Seán O'Sullivan

MY Grandad's name is Sean O'Sullivan and 2020 is a special year for him as he will celebrate his 80th birthday in July. He was born in Cloghans, Knockmore, Ballina, in 1940 but he later lived in Shranamonragh, Ballycroy.

He lived two miles from the national school so he walked or cycled to school. There were about 35 children in the school and it started at 9am and finished at 3pm. The school was heated by an open fire and the pupils had to bring some turf for the fire. There were no school uniforms.

His favourite subjects were History and English. At break time, they had hot cocoa and bread, which was supplied by the government. They played Gaelic football every break time, because his dad, my great-grandad, was a teacher and the principal of the school, and he had played football for Kerry in the 1930s. They played boys against the girls and the teacher was on the girls' team.

He made his Communion and Confirmation in the same year, 1948, as the Bishop of Killala only came to the parish once every four years. Grandad still has his Sunday Missal book that he got as a



Cloghans National School, Knockmore, circa 1930

present that year. It is written in English and Latin. For Confirmation, three children were picked from each school to go up to the Bishop and answer questions and you got a blue ticket if you got the question right. Grandad did!

Grandad lived in a house with a big open kitchen and three bedrooms off it. There was a big open fireplace with a crane in the middle to hang the kettle and the pot from. It had a hob on each side where people could sit on. The floor was

made from concrete with linoleum on it. There was no electricity so light was by paraffin oil lamps and candles. Water came from the nearby river or from rain collected in a barrel on the roof.

Grandad's chores were working on the farm feeding cows, minding the hens, picking spuds, threshing oats and saving the turf. He also had to help the neighbours on their farms.

Grandad's pastimes were playing tag, hide and seek, Cowboys and Indians and cards. He played football and rounders, went fishing and read books and comics. There was no television and there was only one radio in the village, and Grandad's house had it. It was run by a wet and dry battery. There was only one station on it and all the neighbours came into the house to listen to the news and sport on it.

A mobile cinema came to the local hall once a month. He watched a film called 'The Dawn', which his mother, my great-grandmother, was in.

Life in the 1940s and 1950s when Grandad was my age was a bit different to 2020!



Working the land by hand

Reporter: CASIE CORRIGAN (age 13), Scoil Raifteiri, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmother, Christine Walsh (nee Berry)

ELECTRICITY was introduced to Ireland in the 1940s, but it was the late 1940s when it reached the villages of Drummin and Lecanvey which were home to my grandparents.

My Grandmother was the eldest of nine children. She spent most of her time looking after her siblings but in her free time she loved to play with her tea-set, dolls and jigsaws. These are the presents that Santa would bring, along with a piece of fruit and some sweets.

She grew up on a farm. They grew potatoes, oats, carrots, parsnips, cabbage, lettuce, onions and strawberries. They had a variety of animals including cows, sheep and pigs; as a result, they were self-sufficient.

They killed some of their animals for meat and sold others at the market. They got milk from the cow and made their own butter with a churn.

All of the land was worked by hand. There were no tractors back then. The whole family had to work on the farm and sometimes the children stayed off school to help out.

The land had to be ploughed, harrowed and ridged in preparation for sowing potatoes.

All of the children walked to and from school in their bare feet. The school was one mile away from my Grandmother's house.

My Grandmother won a scholarship to the Presentation College in Tuam. She boarded there until she went to college in Dublin where she studied teaching. After qualifying as a teacher, she worked in Dublin for many years before relocating to the West of Ireland with her husband and two children in 1983. She felt that her children would have a better quality of life growing up in the countryside, just as she had done.

Christine retired in 2007 and spends her time enjoying walks, playing bridge and singing in the local choir. She has been cooing with my Grandad since March but I am lucky enough to live quite close to them.

Sometimes I cycle up to them to bring them groceries. I am looking forward to giving them a hug when the coronavirus is gone.

Picking an acre of potatoes

Reporter: THOMAS McDONNELL (age 9), St Peter's NS, Snugboro
Interviewing: His grandfather, Stephen McDonnell Snr

STEPHEN McDonnell Snr is my grandfather. He is 69 years old. He is a builder with my dad. He is married to Joan Dunne, she is my grandmother. My Grandad grew up on a farm. He had one sister and four brothers. One brother died at a young age. It was hard work on the farm.

He went to school in Crimlin National School and went to the bog after school from April to August because they sold turf to make money.

He helped around the farm. He picked a whole acre of potatoes! (He really hated this job).

They had cows, pigs and chickens. He milked the cows every morning and after school and his mother would make butter on Wednesdays.

They ate vegetables in season, eggs, bacon and chicken.

Life was hard but he was happy. His uncle lived with him. He was 12 years old when he first went to town!

He says now he finds it very hard to throw things out because it was hard to get things when he was young. He is very generous to me and all the family.



Performers in Ballaghaderreen pantomime Robinson Crusoe at St Mary's Hall in December 1959. Picture: Western People Archive

Playing 'Pitch and Toss' and sliding down the roof

Reporter: KELLY-MAY COGAN FLYNN (age 9), Scoil Christ Ri, Enniscrone
Interviewing: Her grandmother, Martina Flynn

MY name is Kelly-May and I live in Enniscrone with my mum, granny and grandad. My granny is from Mayo and she is who I interviewed.

My granny's name is Martina. She was born on May 28, 1937, in Kilfian, Co Mayo. Her family's name was McHale. She had six brothers and three sisters. Her dad's name was John and her mum's name was Margaret.

They owned a farm. Her dad had eight or nine cows, two horses, 30 hens, 12 ducks, one drake and 10 geese, one gander, six pigs, one sow and one noisy rooster who was always fighting with the sheepdog and the cat. It was a very busy farm.

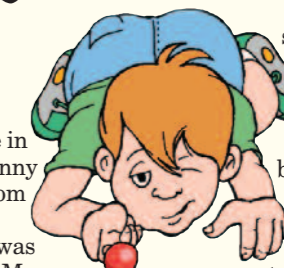
Granny's home had two bedrooms, three children slept in each bed and the older brothers slept in the bed in the kitchen.

There was a kitchen and a parlour. Both rooms had a fireplace. They had no bathroom so they had to do their business in the cow stable and they used a capog leaf as toilet paper.

When you were born in Granny's house you stayed in their parents' bedroom in a cradle next to the fire.

Granny played really fun games as well. She played a game called 'Pitch and Toss'. To play 'Pitch and Toss' you put a stone a good distance in front of you and you threw coins at the stone. Whoever got their coin closest to the stone won all the money. Granny also loved to slide down the roof of her shed.

Granny had porridge every morning with honey from her older brother's beehives. At



school, Granny had no uniform. For lunch, she brought bread with jam or butter.

For school, all the children brought a big glass jar of cocoa. There were 80 or 90 students in her school with two classrooms and two teachers. When Granny

was older she collected the teacher's lunches from the post office every day on her way to school.

School finished at 4 o'clock and on her walk back home she cracked a turnip on a rock to eat it.

Granny grew up with a lot of music. Her dad played the flute and every Sunday musicians came to play with him.

In 1955 (this is the exciting bit), Granny was picked out of 500 women to be Miss Mayo! That was in a dancehall in Ballycastle. Granny was 18 at the time. The Johnny Pickering Band was playing at the dance.

Granny stayed in Dawson Street in Dublin with a relation for Miss Ireland. She got sixth place. She made Kilfian proud!

Thank you for reading about my Granny!



Ice-skating on frozen canals in The Netherlands

Reporter: CARTER JORDAN (age 9), Ballinlough NS, Co Roscommon
Interviewing: His grandmother Susanna Sweeney

FOR Mayo Day 2020, I interviewed my 'Oma' on video-chat. Her name is Susanna Sweeney (nee Wijers). She is Dutch and lives in Castlebar, Co Mayo. 'Oma' is Dutch for granny.

She was born in 1956 in Haarlem, The Netherlands and is 64 years old.

I asked her about her memories from school. We talked about how she travelled to school. She told me there were no cars or school buses then. When she was four years old she went to the 'Kleuterschool' on her scooter on her own. When she was seven, she went to school on a bicycle and when she was 12, she walked to the secondary school.

In the winter it was very cold and the canals would freeze over. They did not get a 'Snow Day', instead she would have to carry her ice-skates to school. The lessons were cancelled and they would have ice-skating competitions all day.

The ice-skates were made from wood and leather with a metal strap. The children would tie the skates to their shoes. Oma used string to tie her's on. The rich children would wear ice-skating boots.

If you couldn't skate you used a chair to push along on the ice - no penguin skating aids on the ice back then!



A Danish-registered boat pictured at the Quay in Ballina in 1959. Picture: Western People Archive

The day the goat ate all the jam

Reporter: ISABELLE WILSON-McDONAGH, England
Interviewing: Her grandparents Christy and Mairead McDonagh, Creggs Road, Ballina

GRANNY lived in a very happy home and it was very big. It was somewhere in Co Galway.

They lived on a big farm with loads of animals and they had a housekeeper and a farmworker. She had six brothers and sisters.

From the day a pig was born they named it 'Curly' and every day Granny came back from school they would call 'Curly' and the pig would come running out. One day they had to sell it in the market and they were very, very sad.

They had a kid goat on the farm. Every day in their garden they had to chase a chicken and kill it for dinner. They had geese and a gander and whenever they went up to the gander it pecked them.

Granny's mum used to make jam and used to leave them on the table waiting for the lids. One day she went out and the goat came in and started eating all the jam.

Somedays her grandfather would pick them up with a horse and carriage from school. Other days they had to

walk one mile there and one mile back.

With her brothers and sisters, she used to go racing with the horses. One day Granny took a pony and it wasn't as fast as the horses and when she was riding she suddenly fell off into a drain. Luckily, her brother could pull her up. They didn't tell their mum afterwards and the pony was okay.

In their house, they had a big pump in the yard and all her neighbours could come to the yard and have water out of it. There was no electricity in

the house or no running water and they had a toilet outside.

Grandad lived in Roscommon and his house had three bedrooms. His father died when he was 13 and his mother didn't have a job. She was a housewife.

They didn't have a television but they had a radio and on Sundays, if they were lucky, they would go out to the cinema. They had to pay four pennies to get in. They liked Roy Rogers and Kit Carson.

Grandad only saw the sea when he was 15. His favourite animal on the farm was a

sheep. He liked playing football and hide and seek with his brothers and sisters because they didn't have any technology.

When Grandad grew up he won a big competition in rowing and he was picked to row for Ireland.

Pictured at a dance in Ballina in 1958 are Cathal Gilmartin, Frank and Ruby McElwee with band members Judd Ruane and Tommy Murphy. Picture: Western People Archive



2020 isn't the first time my Grandad had to 'cocoon'

Reporter: ÁINE TREATOR, (Age 11) Derradda, Knock
Interviewing: Her grandfather Tommy Hamill

HELLO, my name is Áine Treator. I am 11 years old and when my Grandad was my age, he got a sore throat, but his mother called the doctor anyway, who immediately diagnosed him with diphtheria, even though he says he had been immunised sometime before.

He got taken to the fever hospital in a vintage ambulance, which was the first time he travelled in a motor vehicle!

If you don't know what diphtheria is, it is a highly contagious bacterial disease that causes inflammation in your mucous membranes. It can make breathing and swallowing difficult and potentially cause fatal heart and nerve damage. We don't see it much now because we get vac-

inated as babies.

When my Grandad got to the hospital, he was put in a six-bed ward. In the bed next to him, there was a little boy, about five years old who lived in the same street as him. Sadly, he passed away overnight. His bed became occupied by a man around 40 years old who also sadly passed away overnight.

After a few days, his throat felt better and he recovered but he had to stay because he was still infectious so no-one was allowed to visit. There were no radios, and TVs weren't invented. Comics were almost unavailable and he couldn't get books from the library, so he was very bored.

After several weeks, he was allowed to go home!

My Grandad grew up in Dundalk, Co Louth. Back then, kids had to 'make do'. The would make things like cricket bats from scrap timber and fishing nets from ladies' old stockings, sticks from bushes and jam jars. They were ace racing driv-

ers in gigs made from scrap timber, old pram wheels and a rope for steering. The girls on the street made a swing out of along rope and an ESB pole.

They went to 'The Pictures' at the matinees on Saturdays or Sundays; it was only fourpence.

He sang in the Cathedral Choir. The choirmaster was an accomplished organist. He didn't have trouble managing a group of boys. If one became giddy, he would quietly say 'Foolish youth!', and decorum was restored.

My Grandad has been cocooning in his home in Meath for a while now. He will be 86 in July.

In some ways, life is very different now from when he was young, but in a way, this pandemic is very similar to when he had diphtheria.

I miss him; hopefully, I can see him very soon.

One of his favourite book series, Diary of a Wimpy Kid, is probably keeping him occupied!

The Sunday matinee at 'The Pictures'

Reporter: JOSEPH GALLAGHER (age 11), St Joseph's NS, Killala
Interviewing: His grandmother Ann Geary

I HAD the privilege to interview my Granny on the phone.

CHILD: My Granny went to school at the Sisters of Mercy in Westport. She lived right across from the school and the good thing about that was that she could go home for lunch. She liked school a lot because there was always something happening. She liked drawing and art. She loved sports a lot too.

TEENAGER: For secondary school, she went to a boarding school in Dublin. She liked it a lot more because there were lots of sports to do there such as hockey.

Her least favourite thing about Dublin was that she could only see her family on her time off from school, so it was quite limited.

ADULT: When my Granny was an adult she emigrated to Germany for a year. She had also travelled to England, Switzerland and Italy.

The social scene was to go to a matinee at the pictures on a Sunday between 3pm and 6pm. Otherwise, it was all sports, although when she was 16 she could go to dances.

I Zoom call my Granny during lockdown due to Covid-19.

Going to Scotland to pick potatoes

Reporter: AJ GALLAGHER (age 11), St Joseph's NS, Killala
Interviewing: His grandmother Margaret Gallagher

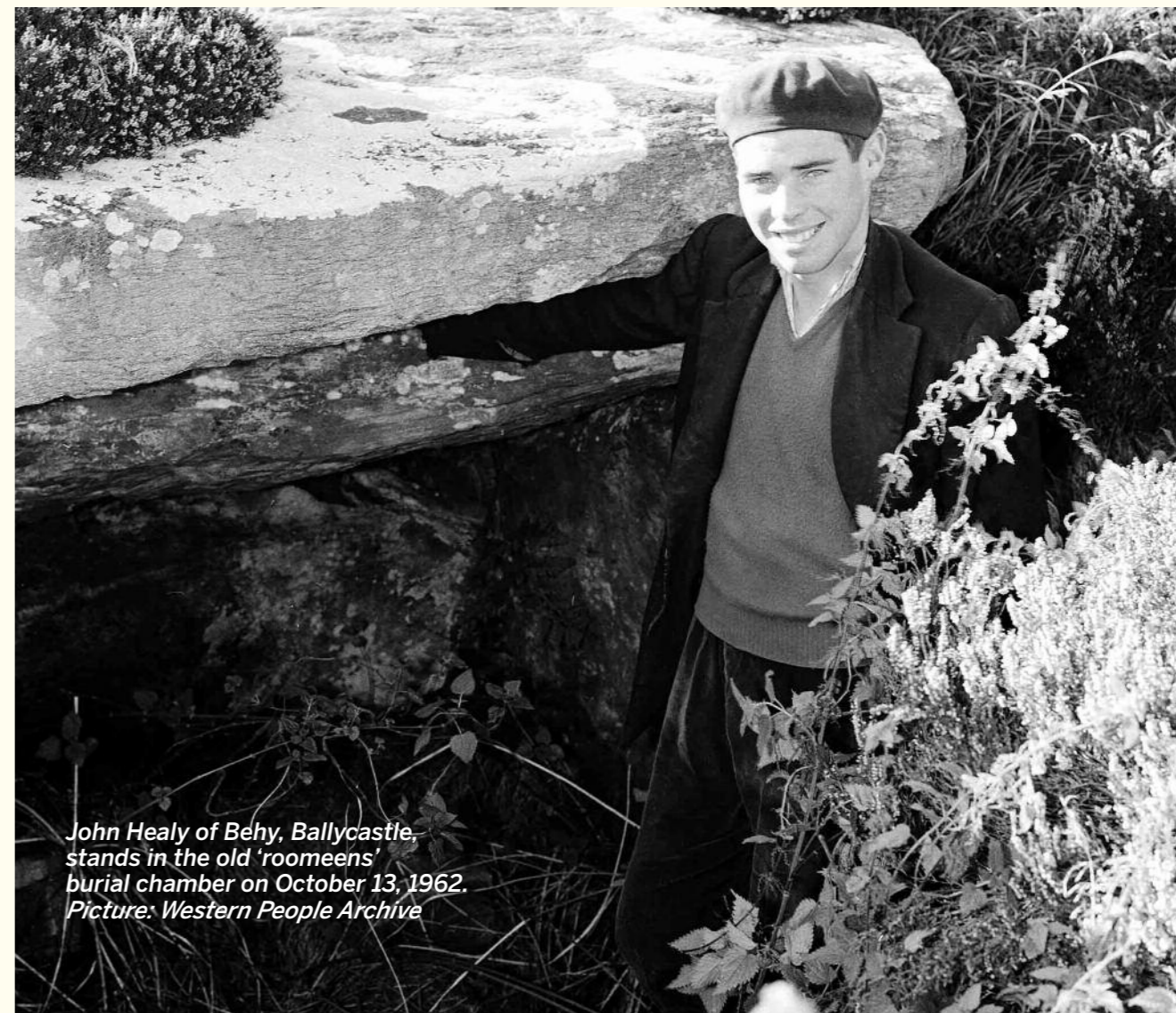
MY grandmother was born on March 26, 1955. She was the third eldest of 12 children. She lived in a two-bedroom house that had electricity but no toilet or running water. There was a toilet in a shed outside and they had to bring water in a bucket from the well.

Every morning they had to milk the cows by hand. Her mother did the baking while her father was a fisherman so they had fish most days for dinner and sometimes even for breakfast.

Travelling to school was tough, having to walk three miles in her bare feet through fields. Each child had to bring one sod of turf so the fire could be lit because there was no heating in the school.

At the age of 13, she left school and went to live in Scotland with her aunt. She worked as a potato picker and sent home all her money to help raise her younger siblings.

After three years, she came home to Ireland and worked for the next two years as a barmaid at the marquees where she met her husband. They dated for nine months before getting married at the age of 18 and by the age of 30, she had eight children of her own.



John Healy of Behy, Ballycastle, stands in the old 'roomeens' burial chamber on October 13, 1962. Picture: Western People Archive



Schooldays of marla, inkwells and turf fires

Reporter: **ELLIE BUTLER** (age 12), Breaffy NS, Ballina
 Interviewing: Her grandmother Kathleen Mullen

HELLO reader, my name is Ellie Butler and I just turned 12 years old.

I have a report on what life was like in the olden times. I interviewed my granny Kathleen Mullen. There is some more information included from my Nana Maura and my Grandad Paddy. I also found out a little about my other grandad Ióne.

Kathleen grew up in Cartron, Attymass. Maura grew up in Behybeg and she went to Behy National School. Paddy grew up in Knockmore. Ióna grew up in Granada, Spain.

Kathleen went to a two-teacher school. It was only down the road from her house so she walked every day, even when she was small.

She never had a shop-bought schoolbag. Her mother always made her one with whatever materials she had.

Kathleen had two friends who lived up the mountain. They went to school with her. When Kathleen and her friends came home, her mother always had a good fire

lit and a bacon sandwich and a cup of tea. The girls once came down with a roll of material to thank her.

Since it was a two-teacher school, there were junior infants to second class in one room (the female teacher taught them) and third to eighth class in the other (the male teacher taught them). Back then, children finished primary school when they were 14, while now children are about 12 or 13 when they finish. Interesting, isn't it?

When she was in junior infants, Kathleen used small blackboards to write on, and a little box on each desk had a duster, chalk and marla (or plasticine). The marla was hard so the infants had to roll it between their hands to make it soft. While they were softening it, the teacher would teach Irish.

When she got to second class, Kathleen would use an inkwell. It was made of wood and had a nib at the end of it. Before that, she just used a pencil. They used to dip the pen into ink. They couldn't lean too hard on it or it would



Members of the cast of 'Little Red Riding Hood' pantomime staged in Ballina in January 1962. Western People Archive

break. She also had blotting paper. If you blotted your copybook you'd get in trouble. She remembers having red and blue-lined copybooks when she was learning to write. She said if you fell in the yard you never told the teacher. Wow! Imagine if

someone broke their leg. Remember I said before the woman taught the younger classes? Well, she did but she retired, and a new young male teacher took her place. He taught Kathleen to sing. She still remembers some of the songs he taught today! The kids also had to set out the teachers' lunch. Well, times have certainly changed.

When she was a bit older, Kathleen went to the school every day and cleaned it. She swept the floors and lit fires in the winter. Every family had to take turns bringing a cartload of turf for the fire. From November 1 to May 1, she'd light fires. In the evening, Kathleen would take the coals out of the fire and into the hearth and then put ashes on top. This was called raking the fire.

When Kathleen was in sixth class, she tried out for a scholarship. She and her friend got a place in boarding school.

Maura and Paddy also walked to school and brought cartloads of turf once a year. Paddy said that every house had a Singer sewing machine to make their own clothes. One dress was often turned inside out to keep it clean and it had to do the whole week. There was no electricity in schools. There was a big wall at the back of the school. The girls played on one side and the boys on the other.

LIFE ON THE FARM

Kathleen, Paddy, Maura and most likely Ióne all lived on farms. Paddy remembers that you'd kill a pig and have your own meat. It would be preserved with salt and last for seven months! Paddy says that meat tasted much better than it does today.

Since there was no electricity, butter was put in water to keep it cool. Butter could also be wrapped in grease-proof paper or salted, according to Maura.

Ioné lived in a barley and olive farm. Once a year they sold olives to a factory to make olive oil. They kept big jars of olive oil for themselves. In Ireland, chickens, hens, ducks, geese, cows, calves and pigs were kept on the farm. Potatoes, carrots, turnips,

parsnips, onions, beetroot, oats and barley were all grown.

Every year the threshing machine came to the farm. Every man in the area would help and the mother would make them dinner. It was called 'Meitheal'. There were very few tractors. People had horses but no-one could afford two horses so they paired up with other farmers to till and plough the fields. They did the same thing bringing turf home from the bog. Someone would have a trailer and everyone would help.

Kathleen can remember the oat fields where the oats were grown. When it was cut it would leave stubble. She would hide in the stacks of corn. It was made of sheaves.

Her father used to mend anything – windows, shoes, you name it and he'd fix it. Whenever they needed chicken for dinner, her father would kill one. It was plucked and then cleaned.

Her older brothers would go to town with a cart of turf to see if anyone would buy it. When autumn came, a group of men went picking potatoes. The men slept in a shed during this time.

The family often sold milk to the creamery too. Paddy said there was no unemployment benefit in those days.

SOCIAL SCENE

Paddy told me a lot of people went to England for work. The summer before Kathleen was 10, her sister and her family came home from England for three months. They went every night to the cinema.

The first film Kathleen saw was The Ten Commandments.

Visiting neighbours was very important and there were a lot of children around to play with. Every year, on January 31, they got dressed up and put a lace curtain or a home-made mask on their faces. When they called to houses they got pennies instead of sweets. Money was different back then – 240 pennies made a pound.

When they went to houses, they'd sing or dance. They pretended they could play a Jew's Harp, mouth organ, French fiddle or a comb.

Kathleen wasn't allowed to go to a dance until she was 17. She was very annoyed. In the dancing hall, the ladies would stand on one side and the men



Prizewinners at the Foxford Fleadh in July 1966. Picture: Western People Archive

on the other. When the band called out, the men would ask the ladies to dance.

When Kathleen was 14, she went to the Gaeltacht for a month.

BONUS REPORT

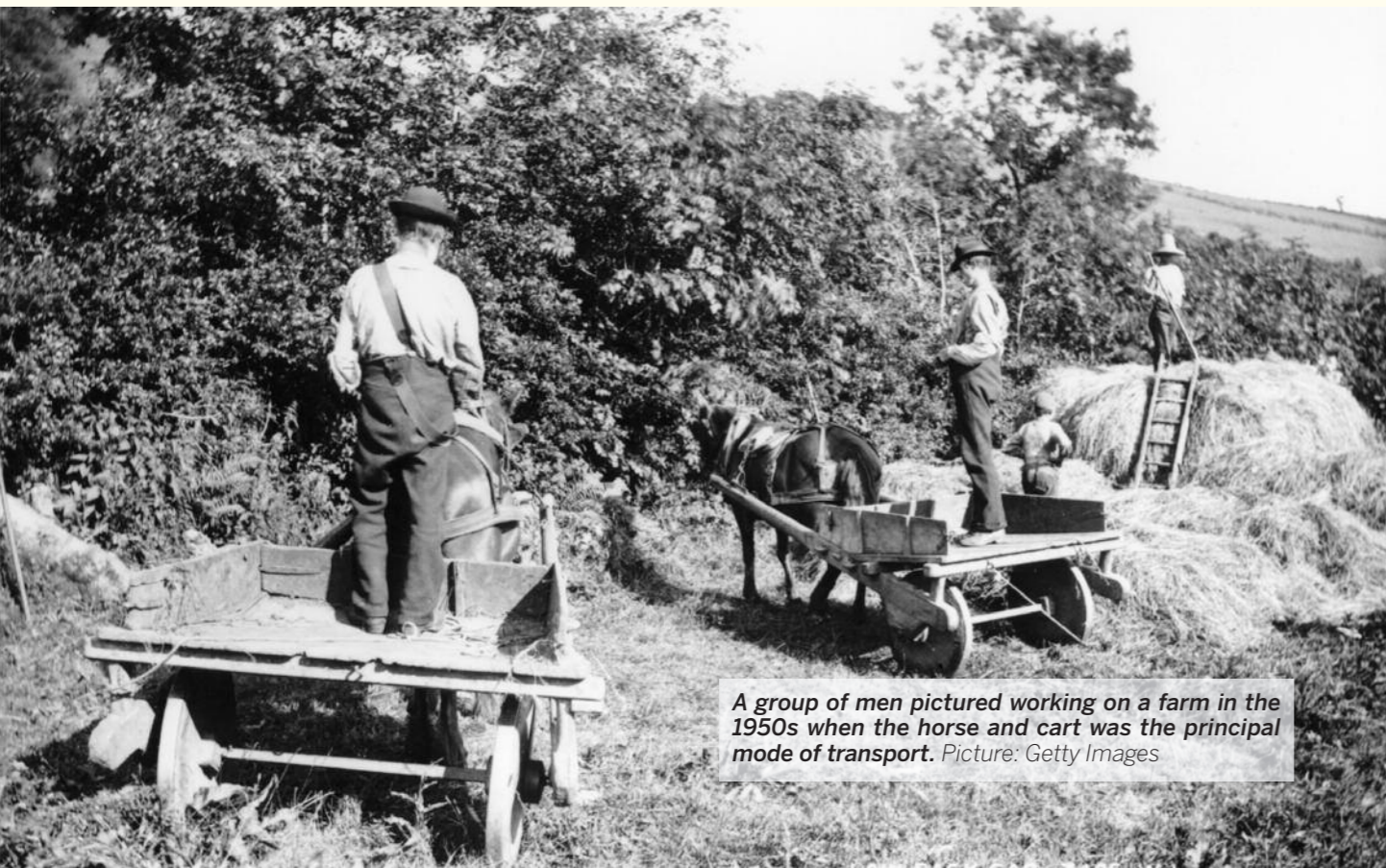
On May 5, 1944, early in the

morning, an American bomber plane flew over Kathleen's house. They could hear it spluttering as it ran out of fuel. The crew had flown through a storm and landed in a bog near her house.

The people in the plane came out and went into a

neighbour's house and got boiled eggs and toast. Kathleen's mum, her brother Tom and two neighbours went up in the donkey and cart for 'a nose'.

That's it for today! We hope you enjoyed this highly factual report! Goodbye



A group of men pictured working on a farm in the 1950s when the horse and cart was the principal mode of transport. Picture: Getty Images

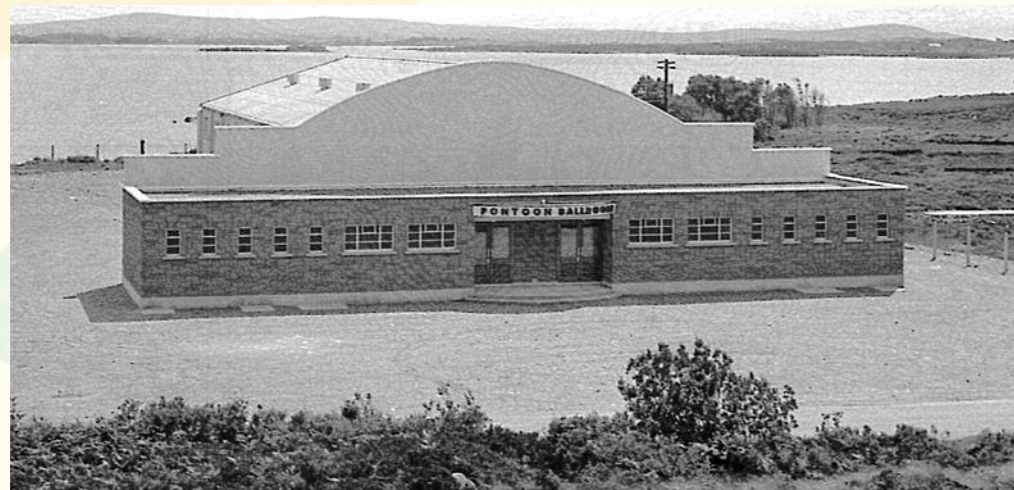


The Corpus Christi procession winds its way around the bridges in Ballina in 1961. Picture: Western People Archive



'We had one car in our village'

Reporter: **DARREN CAREY** (age 9), Barnatra NS, Ballina
Interviewing: His grandmother Sheila O'Malley



'I used to go to the dances in Pontoon. There was one car in the village and the driver would bring four or five of us to the dance.' Picture: Western People Archive

THIS is the story of my grandmother Sheila O'Malley (nee Winters), Shrataggle, Porturlin, Ballina.

"I had a good life when I was younger.

"I was born in 1950 and I was the youngest of 11. I got everything I asked for as I was the youngest and was a little bit spoilt.

"I grew up in Muingeraran, Granard PO. I walked two miles to school and back each day. I didn't like school at all, especially from age 11 onwards. The teacher was very strict and got cross if you didn't know your lessons.

n't know your lessons.

"My father, God be good to

him, spent many hours learning my lessons. A lot of my siblings emigrated, most to the States.

"When I was young, the travelling circus, Duffy's, would come to Crossmolina and my mother would always take me.

"When I got a bit older, at 17, I used to go to the dances in Pontoon. There was one car in the village and the driver would bring four or five of us to the dance.

"My Mom and Dad sold the house and we moved to Glencalry.

"I went to the States in 1970 after my mother died and came home at Christmas 1971. I got married in 1973. We both went to the States from 1973 until 1977. We then moved home to Shrataggle and this is where I reared my own family."

When the snow went halfway up the doors

Reporter: **ZOEY DAVEY** (age 12), Scoil Raitteiri, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmother Daphne Reilly

MY Nanny's name is Daphne Reilly but before she got married it was Daphne Sadler. She grew up in London and started school in 1954. Every day she would walk to school three miles and back. In primary school, she would bring a packed lunch like us but she would wear her own clothes. She didn't go on any school trips in primary or secondary.

The teachers were very strict in both primary and secondary school.

They would give you lines, detention and they would hit you with a ruler. In secondary school, you had to wear a uniform and you would get cooked dinners like steak and kidney pie from the school.

Nanny often got tonsillitis and when she was 14, she got asthma. She also had measles and German measles but then, every child got sick.

She left school in 1965 at the age of 15 and didn't do any exams because my great-grandmother, or her mother, got very ill. She had to work to make money.

As a child, every Saturday she would go to the morning pictures and

watch a movie.

She lived in the city in London so she would get her water from a tap and she wouldn't have to make butter. She had roller skates and board games when she was young but she didn't have many toys as she would play outside a lot.

In 1963, there was bad snowfall overnight and the snow went halfway up the doors. Sometimes the fog would be so bad you wouldn't be able to see your own hand!

My Nanny had my mum when she was 19. Times were quite different when my Nanny was young but I'm glad the teachers aren't allowed to hit the pupils anymore.

Farming since the age of seven

Reporter: **AOIFE HOBAN** (age 8), Carrakennedy NS
Interviewing: Her grandfather Cecil Horkan

MY Grandad's name is Cecil Horkan. He was born on July 29, 1938, and he was born in Belclare, near Westport.

When he was younger, his house was small. There were three bedrooms, a kitchen and an outdoor toilet.

His teachers were Ms Hastings and Ms Kelly, and his friends were Anne and Willie.

In his school, there was one room with everyone in it, and at break time they played football and 'tip'. If he was bold, he would get hit with a stick and he had to bring turf for the fire. He told me he didn't like school.

At home, he played Cowboys and Indians. My Grandad said he became a farmer when he was 30 but he liked to farm when he was seven until now, and he is nearly 82. His mam owned a shop when he was younger so he got to put sweets into bags in the shop.

His wife was Sal Horkan and they got married in 1967 and celebrated 50 years married in 2017. Their kids are Michael, Richard, Clare and John. Clare is my mother. Their grandchildren are Aisling, Alex, Rollo, Haylee, Holly, Ciara, Abby, Marlo, me, River and Shauna.

Sal died on March 14, 2018. I miss my Grandad during Covid-19 but it was fun talking to him about when he was young.



When Van Morrison played the Town Hall in Kilmaine

Reporter: **PERRY WALSH** (age 7), Barnacarroll NS, Claremorris
Interviewing: His grandfather John Mullin

MY name is Perry Walsh. I am seven years old. My Grandad John (Mullin) is from Kilmaine. We call him John.

His parents had a shop opposite Kilmaine Hall. I asked him a lot of questions about the shop. John is a great storyteller so his answers were very long. He is very funny. I hope I will see my grandparents soon.

"We had a shop for many years opposite the Community Centre in Kilmaine. Back in the day, it was a dancehall where bands came to play. It was a custom then that the band would have a meal before they played so my mother always fed the bands sandwiches and tart. We had a band there one night called Them. Van Morrison played with Them.

"Back then, very few people went to the pub before the dance. A lot of them came to our shop for a soft drink and listened to the jukebox. I worked behind the counter from the age of six. Mam and Dad served the customers. I was in charge of the money. There were no cash registers so I was the whizz kid, making up the bills and dispensing the change!"



The days of brown flour and tea rationing

Reporter: **FAYE WALSH** (age 9), Barnacarroll NS, Claremorris
Interviewing: Her great-grandmother Nancy Mallee (nee Egan)

HELLO! My name is Faye Walsh, I'm nine years old. I live in Murneen South, Claremorris.

My great-grandmother, Nancy Mallee (Egan), was born in 1920 in a house across the fields from where I live now, in the townland of Mace. We call her Nanny because she is my mother's Nanny. Her 100th birthday was in April and President Michael D Higgins sent her a lovely letter.

I interviewed Nanny about her life, growing up in Mayo in the 1920s and 1930s with nine older siblings. I asked her three questions:

1: Did you enjoy going to school.

I liked learning new things in school. My father brought turf to the school on our donkey cart. Teachers were allowed to hit children back then. One of the teachers was very cruel. Geography was my favourite subject. I wish I could have gone to secondary school but I had to help out on the farm.

2: What did you wear when you were growing up?

We had some sheep for wool and a spinning wheel to make knitting wool. My mother knitted dresses for the girls and sweaters and socks for our brothers. Shoes were handed down from one sibling to the next. We had leather shoes which were covered in studs to protect the soles from wear.



Twisting the threads of spun wool in preparation for a long winter of knitting in an era when most clothes were homemade. Picture: Getty Images

On May Day, May 1, we would always talk off our shoes and go barefoot for the rest of the summer.

3: What was life like during World War II?

World War II began in 1939. Even though we were not directly involved, it was difficult in a lot of ways, such as the rationing of a lot of items. Tea, sugar, white flour, raisins and fruit were rationed, as well as paraffin oil,

which was so essential.

We did not have electricity in rural Ireland until the 1950s. So we had to make do with candles most of the time. During the war years, brown flour was available - but it was terrible! It made lots of people sick.

Every person was allowed half an ounce of tea per week, so mugs of tea were a rare commodity. The war ended in 1945.

* I really enjoyed my first experience of being a reporter!



Youngsters who were among the winners at the Began Feis in 1958. Picture: Western People Archive



Main Street in Castlebar in the 1970s.

When a hurricane stopped Granny from teaching

Reporter: CIARA HOBAN (age 10), Carrakennedy NS, Westport
Interviewing: Her grandmother Teresa Hoban

MY Granny was born on March 9, 1943. She was born in Seanvalleybeg, Drummin, near Westport. She is 66 years older than me.

When Granny was young her house had three rooms: a kitchen and two bedrooms. She had a small garden but a huge farm. They had sheep, cows, hens, pigs, ducks and they grew potatoes, carrots, and cabbage. Granny loved helping on the farm and so do I.

Granny was the youngest of four children – Kathleen, Bridgie, Paddy Joe and then Granny. Her parents were John and Mary Kate.

In school, Granny loved Irish and Maths. From school, Granny remembers that after the wintertime they took off their wellingtons and ran across the bog! That was a huge highlight for her!

Granny's friends were Annie Hopkins and Máire Keane. Her teacher was Michael Martin Duffy. She was the only girl in the class. Hugh Kelly and John Duffy were her



The start of Ras Muigheo, a 100-mile cycle race, in Westport in 1961. Picture: Western People Archive

classmates.

Granny started teaching in 1961. She was only 18! I told her she must have been VERY clever!

Before she started teaching, a hurricane arrived so she couldn't teach until the hurricane was over!

Granny got married in 1966 to Johnny Hoban (there were

a lot of Johns in her life!).

They had their first child Máire in 1967. They had their second child Seán in 1968. He is my Dad and he is the best Dad! He has three children. They had their third child Seamus in 1969. Seamus has four children so he is taking after Granny! They had their fourth child Pádraig in 1972. He is

the last but not the least!

Granny has seven grandchildren: Jamie is 18, Darragh is 14, Nathan is 12, I am 10, Rheanna is 9, Aoife is 8 and Shauna is 5 (if you think, Jamie could be a teacher now!).

I love seeing Granny every day and I hope to give her a big hug very soon.

twos to the church. They sat on the right-hand side of the church in the middle pew while St Patrick's Boys' School teased them from the other side. All the boys were wearing suits with white socks and sandals, and the girls all wore dresses – he said they looked like princesses!

Afterwards, they marched back to the school, and to his great surprise, the nuns had thrown a party for them! The table had a white linen table cloth and lovely china cups and saucers and some shiny silver spoons.

The reason he was impressed with the cups, saucers and spoons was that he came from a poor family and they only had enamel cups.

There were butterfly buns, oranges and bananas. He said it was the first time seeing an orange and didn't know what to do with it.

He remembers a white timber rocking-horse that they were allowed to go on that day. He told me that years later he found out it had belonged to Lord Lucan.

Grandad said he has very nice memories of that day and that the nuns were very kind to Grandad and his brother Eddie. He really liked seeing the photograph again because this was the first time a photographer had taken a photo of him in those days.

A few weeks later all of the boys went to the boys' school.

A doll from America

Reporter: BONNIE WALSH (age 8), Barnacarroll NS, Claremorris
Interviewing: Her grandmother Rosemarie Mullin

MY name is Bonnie Walsh. I am eight years old. I asked my lovely granny Rosemarie (Mullin) some questions about growing up in Claremorris in the 1950s and 1960s.

Rosemarie was a schoolteacher so she has lovely writing. She wrote out her answers and posted them to me. I am really looking forward to seeing my grandparents when life is normal again.

Question 1: What was your favourite game?

My favourite game was 'Catch'. We played it in the schoolyard and in the handball alley if the grass was too wet and muddy.

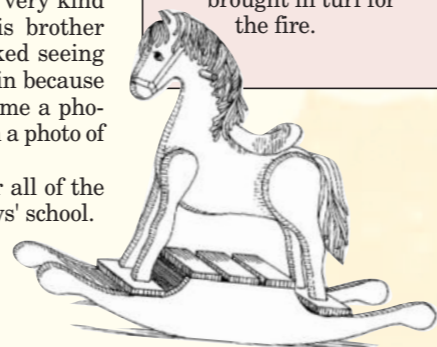
Question 2: What was your favourite toy?

My favourite toy was a lovely big doll which my aunt Della sent to me from America. I called her Ann. She also sent me an extra doll's dress so I could dress her up.

My mother was a very good dressmaker. She made lots of clothes for my dolls.

Question 3: What chores did you do at home?

We lived on a farm so there was always work for us to do in the evening. I went down the fields and brought the cows up to the cowhouse for Dad to milk them. I collected the eggs from the hen house. I took the clothes in from the clothes' line and I brought in turf for the fire.



A ride on Lord Lucan's horse

Reporter: TAYLOR JORDAN (age 11), Ballinlough NS, Co Roscommon
Interviewing: His grandfather Ernie Sweeney

FOR Mayo Day 2020, I interviewed my grandad Ernie Sweeney. He recently turned 70 years of age.

One of his childhood memories was relived recently when my mum showed him a photograph on Facebook of his First Holy Communion Day. This photograph of grandad and his twin brother Eddie was taken in May, 63 years ago. They were attending St Joseph's Girls' School and there were 28 children in the class. There were six to eight boys in the class.

He remembers marching in



Lord Lucan at his estate in Castlebar around 1900.

Cycling home from dances in the dark

Reporter: LEE SHRYANE (age 12), Scoil Iosa, Carracastle
Interviewing: His grandmother Kathleen Shryane

DURING the lockdown 2020, I got to talk to my granny about what life in Ireland was like when she was growing up.

She went to school in a village called Cloonfane in Co Mayo. She walked two miles there and back every day.

When my granny and her sisters and brothers came home from school, they had jobs to do around the house. They lived in the countryside on a farm.

They had to carry buckets of water from a well half a mile down the road. They had to carry the buckets of water until the barrels for the cattle to drink from were full. This usually took them hours.

When the turf was being saved, she had to go to the bog after school and on the weekends.

They usually had a lot of potatoes sown, they used to have to help with them too. They used to put potatoes in the ridges, this was called 'dipping'.

Another job they had to do was to pull 'boohalons', which was a yellow flower weed that grew in the fields. They had to be pulled and gathered up.

On her Communion day, she walked up to the church in her Communion dress. After mak-



Students participating in the musical at St Louis Secondary School in Balla in 1960. Picture: Western People Archive

ing her Communion, as a treat they went to a shop for an ice-cream.

As my granny got older, for her birthdays she could have a bottle of Cidona (a big glass bottle) and a cake divided among the family or 50 pence. She could have one or the other.

When she was a teenager,

they cycled into Charlestown to go to a dance. There would be about 12 of them cycling into town. They had such fun cycling home in the dark.

She also remembers her mother, which is my great-granny, making homemade butter. They all had to help to make the butter. If any visitors came into the house, they

had to help too. It was meant to be lucky to do so.

One summer there were visitors from England in a neighbour's house. They had borrowed a donkey and cart from another neighbour. They went for spins all over the place in the donkey and cart. It was the best summer ever.

She also told me that they

didn't have lots of toys or bikes - they had one bike between 4thems - but they had lots of fun.

I really enjoyed listening to my granny's stories. It's a lot different growing up in Ireland now. Children have a lot more these days but we also have great fun just like my granny did.

The bread delivery van had lots of uses

Reporter: TOM MCHALE (age 11), Gaelscoil na Cruaiche, Westport
Interviewing: His grandmother Mary Connolly

MY Nanny was born in 1935. She finished school at 14 and went to work in a shop.

There was a local bread delivery man who had a delivery van. It was used for many purposes.

There were shelves in the van to store the bread but when there was a dance he would take out the shelves and put two planks in and use them as a bench for people to sit on while he brought them to the

dancehall.

When someone in the parish died, he would take the shelves out and put the coffin in and use it as a hearse!

When she was a little girl, her father had to go to England for work. They grew their own potatoes and vegetables and had hens for eggs. They rarely ate meat.

When their father came back from England for Christmas he would kill some fowl for their Christmas meal. This was such a treat for the family. Then he had to go back to England so she didn't see her father much during her childhood years.



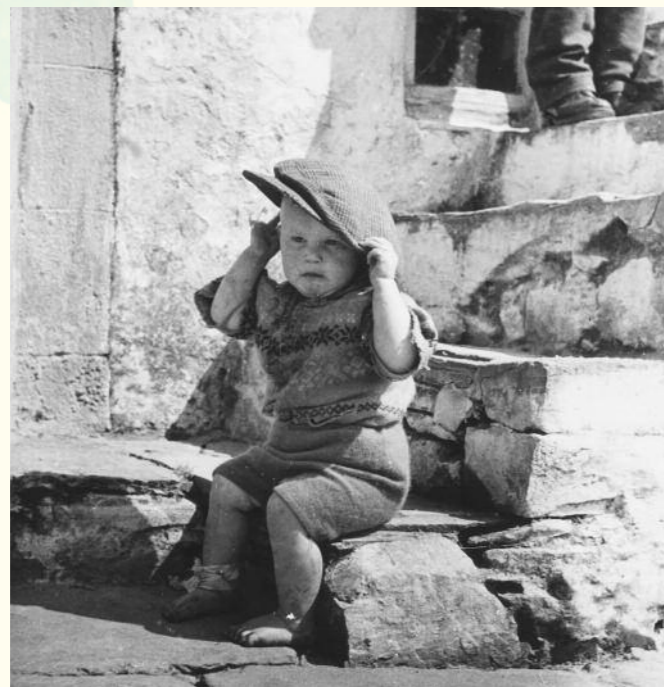
A horse-drawn grocer's wagon in 1950 when travelling shops were all the rage. Picture: Getty Images

Life on a Donegal island in the 1950s

5Reporter: FEIDLIM O'SHEA (12),
Scoil Raifteirí, Castlebar
Interviewing: His grandfather
Francis Bonner

MY Grandpa is an interesting man with an interesting story to tell. I love to hear all about him and his life so far. I'd like to take you on some of his journey in my own words based on an interview I had with him and my experiences with him.

My grandpa's name is Francis John Bonner. Most people that know him call him Francis. He was born on November 22, 1944. His mother's name was Katie Early and his father's was Michael Bonner. He was the eldest of seven children born in his mother's family home on Pinkie Hill, Arranmore Island in Co Donegal. His father later built a



A young child tries on a tweed hat for size in Co Donegal in 1940. Picture: Getty Images

house in the townland of Il-lion, Arranmore Island.

The houses at the time were very different to the large houses of today. Grandpa remembers that the original house had only two bedrooms and one other room that served as a kitchen/living area.

There was no bathroom inside the house or no running water or electricity. He remembers coming home as a young man from working in England and building on a new bathroom to the house. Electricity came to the island in 1956.

There wasn't the same hustle and bustle growing up on the island and life was fairly quiet. Grandpa started school at the age of four at one of the island's two national schools. He stayed in school until he was 13 years old. He remembers walking to school and car-

rying a sod of turf for the classroom fire. If you didn't bring the sod you got a slap with a cane or sallyrod from 'The Master'. School was mainly through Irish.

He wore shoes to school but also recalls going barefoot during the summer and particularly remembers working on the bog in his bare feet. His mum would have knitted jumpers for all the children to wear and they would be passed from child to child. He was lucky to be the eldest!

There wasn't much time for playing when he was growing up as life was harder and there was lots of jobs to be done. Most houses had their own field where they grew their potatoes and vegetables for their meals and also grass and corn for feeding the animals.

Each house also had a part of the shore allocated to them

for saving seaweed to fertilise the field for the crops. Each house had a cow, hens and ducks. These were essential as they needed the milk and made their own butter.

Each child was well able to take a turn on the churn. The list of jobs were split up among the children and they took in turf for the fire, filled a bucket of water from the well, helped look after the animals and often the girls were left to do the inside jobs like help prepare meals, washing dishes and clothes and general cleaning up.

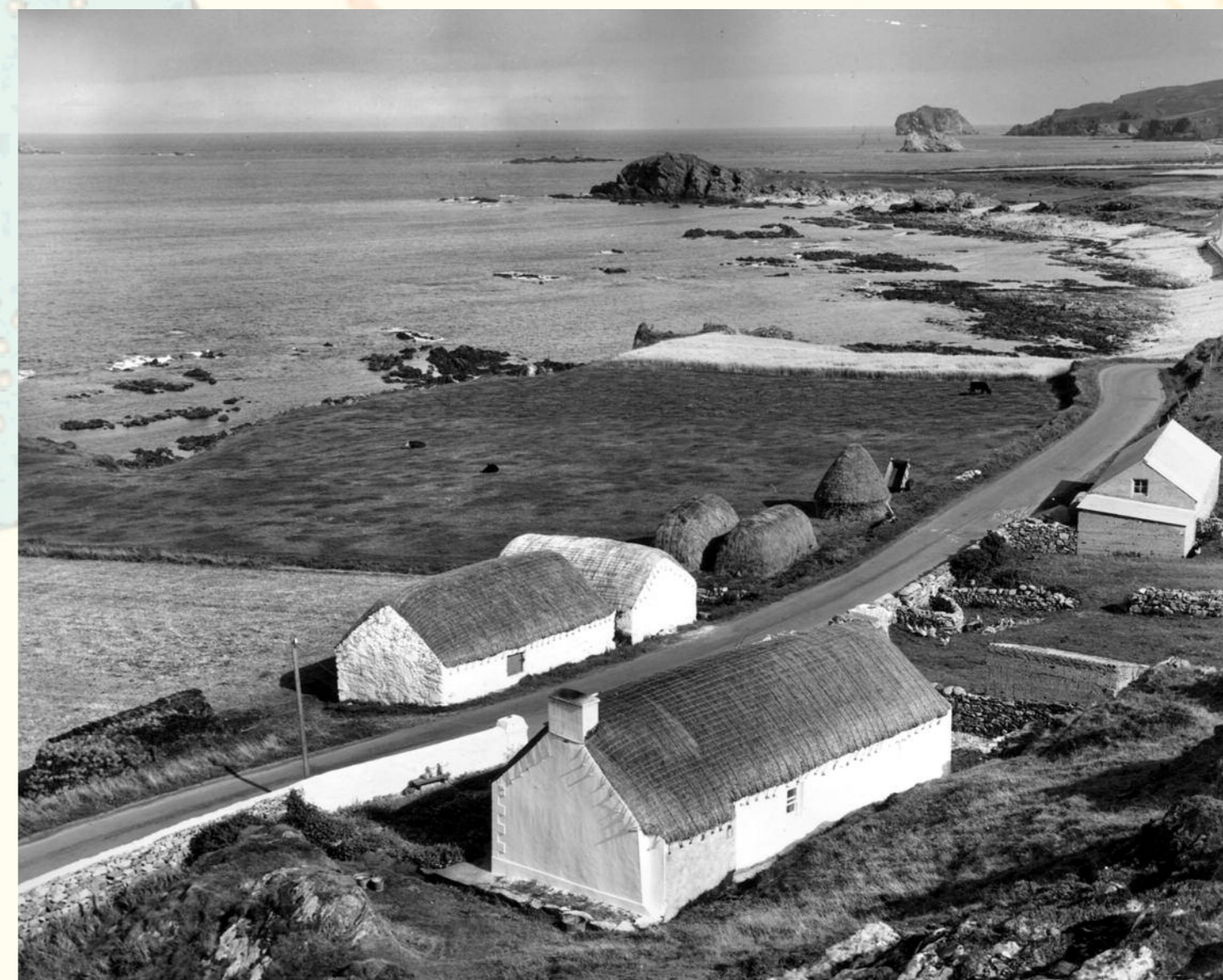
From early childhood, the whole family went to the bog in the spring and into the summer to save turf. This was all done by hand. Usually, the men and young boys cut the turf with a sleán. It was thrown out on the bog in rows and after a few days it was turned to let it dry thoroughly. The whole family then went to foot the turf and when it had dried fully it was taken away home to be made into a turf stack and covered for use in the winter. Grandpa remembers being delighted to get a cart to take the turf home instead of dragging it home behind the donkey!

As children, they played football and swam. There was mainly a tradition of soccer on the island due to most families working in the UK. There were never many toys but at Christmas they were given something small like a ball to share and maybe an orange or two. Grandpa remembers when he first went away to work he sent home comics and sweets to the younger children at home.

At the age of 13, Grandpa left school. There was no opportunity for him to go to secondary school like his younger siblings. Money had to be earned for the family and the young people were sent off to Scotland to the 'Tattie Hoking'.

The man in charge was called 'Pally' McHugh (Patrick) and he took a group of about 30 with him to Scotland. It was hard work as you can imagine working from dawn to dusk saving the potatoes. The men stayed in one shed and the women in another. There was a dance most Saturday nights where they all went to meet up. They all got dressed in their best clothes for Mass every Sunday.

Over the years, Grandpa worked as a fisherman, starting with his dad on a yawl, and then moving onto a trawler,



Thatched cottages near Malin Head in Co Donegal in 1950. Picture: Getty Images

'Avail'. He went from fishing for a few hours a night with his father to fishing for a few days on the trawler. The yawl he started on was only 26 feet but the 'Avail' was 50-foot long.

A huge part of Grandpa's life was spent on the Arranmore Lifeboat. As far back as the 1970s, he was a volunteer in

the old open lifeboats. As time went on, he worked his way up the ranks from the second mechanic, then he was the second coxswain, then the voluntary coxswain and then the full-time coxswain. He had many adventures on the

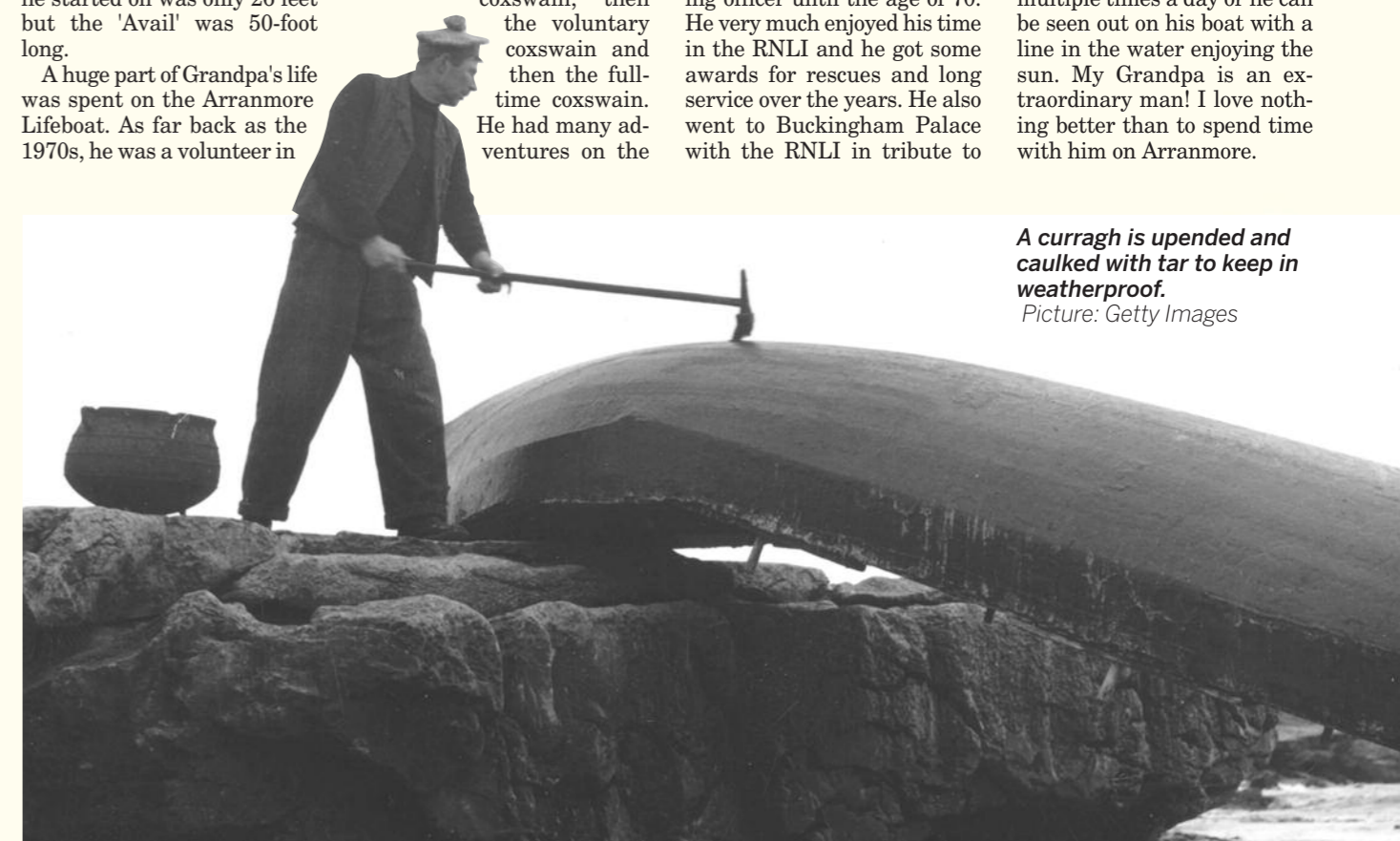
lifeboat over the years. He had to retire at the age of 55 as it was the rule in the RNLI but continued as a volunteer launching officer until the age of 70. He very much enjoyed his time in the RNLI and he got some awards for rescues and long service over the years. He also went to Buckingham Palace with the RNLI in tribute to

service!

In his retirement, my Grandpa can be seen walking his dog on the beach and road multiple times a day or he can be seen out on his boat with a line in the water enjoying the sun. My Grandpa is an extraordinary man! I love nothing better than to spend time with him on Arranmore.



A woman looking through boxes on a quayside in Co Donegal circa 1950. Picture: Getty Images



A curragh is upended and caulked with tar to keep it weatherproof. Picture: Getty Images

Fish on a Friday and jiving at the weekend

Reporter: **SINÉAD PHIBIN (age 12), Scoil Raifteirí, Castlebar**
 Interviewing: Her grandmother Olive O'Connell

I AM lucky to have three grandparents still alive. They are all cocooning at the moment because of Covid-19 but much happier this week since they were given permission to go outside to exercise.

I have chosen my Granny in Meath because we have a lot in common with each other. We share the same birthday on July 15 (but Granny is a few years older), we both love fashion and interior design and we both miss Grandad lots since he died two years ago.

My Granny's name is Olive O'Connell and she was born in Dundalk, Co Louth in 1944. We celebrated her 75th birthday last year shortly after the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings in World War II. We learned all about it when we were on holiday last year in France and we bought Granny a special bottle of wine with a label celebrating the 75th anniversary and she was so happy.

Granny grew up in what she called 'Postwar Ireland' where rationing was still in place for luxury items and times were hard. She was the second in a family of five children. Her dad worked as an electrician for GNR (Great Northern Railways) and her mom worked at home hand embroidering Irish dancing costumes. They ate mostly fresh food and lots of vegetables but there wasn't the same selection as there is today as vegetables weren't imported so there was a lot of carrots and cabbage and turnip and peas.

The dinners were a lot of stews and bacon and cabbage and they ate inexpensive meats like liver and tripe (sounds disgusting) but they always had fish on a Friday. Granny went to the



Mayo County Council staff members enjoying themselves at their annual dance in December 1966. Picture: Western People Archives

Realt na Mara girls school in Dundalk and it was at a time when schools were very strict and children were beaten often by the nuns for misbehaving or not doing homework or being late. They didn't have any clothes other than their school uniform, an outfit for wearing after school and an outfit for Mass on Sundays.

There were not many toys available when Granny was a child as there were no plastic toys back then but they played lots of games like snakes and ladders and ludo, which Santa would have brought. They also played games like hopscotch and skipping and playing ball.

Granny said looking back it seemed as if there were more toys for boys to play than for girls as she remembers her brothers having little metal cars and trains to play with but only children who were from very rich families would have tricycles and toy prams. The wealthy families would be the doctor's family or solicitor's family. Granny remembers one of her friends getting a gift of a doll from America and there was great excitement in school when she brought it in as it was a 'walkie talkie' doll. Granny had a lot of her

cousins living close to her when she was growing up so she had lots of kids to play with if there was time after all her jobs at home and her homework was done. Granny and her family lived in a small terraced house which only had two bedrooms and no bathroom. The toilet was in a little

shed in the garden at the back of the house and it was when Granny was a bit older her parents were able to build a bathroom. They had their baths in the kitchen when she was small in a big tin bath and water had to be heated in a kettle over the stove as there was no running hot water.

When Granny was 12, her older brother who she adored died from what she later learned was childhood leukaemia, which was very rare at the time. Granny said she wouldn't have been told

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The old Ballylahan bridge pictured in 1960 before being replaced with the current bridge. Picture: Western People Archives

what was wrong with him as nothing was discussed with children like that at the time. Granny only remembers that he was very sick and was nursed by her mother at home for the last months of his life. She said her Mum was never the same after that and Granny had to stay home a lot from school to take care of her mother and her younger brother and two younger sisters.

Anytime Granny went to school after that she got into a lot of trouble with the nuns for missing so many days but she wasn't allowed to tell them why. When she got a little older, she was taken out of school to work in a shoe factory to help support her family but Granny said that although it was hard work there were lots of other girls in similar positions and they did have fun during their teenage years too.

When she was 16, Granny was allowed to go to the local dance on a Sunday afternoon every week, which was called a 'hop'. Granny has always loved dancing and her and Grandad were really good and were always 'jiving' at any party they went to. I loved watching them.

Granny, as I said, has always loved fashion and she used to look in the window of a shop called 'Madam Kay's' in

Dundalk and try to copy some of the designs for her own clothes. She made most of her own clothes then and made them for friends too because she loved sewing.

Grandad showed us a picture of Granny a few years ago from when she was younger and was in the newspaper after winning a competition for designing and making her own dress and they had to model the dresses in a fashion show. Granny made her own wedding dress and she made the Communion dresses for my Mom and Mom's two sisters and for lots of Mom's cousins.

Granny and Grandad moved to Ashbourne in Co Meath when Grandad got a job in Dublin. They raised their family of five children there and Granny still lives there today.

Granny worked hard all her life and some of the things she had to go through were tough but she always tells us that God never gives you more than you can cope with. The main difference Granny thinks about her time growing up and today is that she loves seeing the confidence that children have today compared to when she was young. They were more afraid of adults and they definitely weren't asked for their opinion and they didn't get to ask too many questions.

I really enjoyed the interview with my Granny and I'm really glad to be a child today because we have the technology for me to be able to talk to and see my Granny when I can't visit her and she can't visit us during the Covid crisis.

I am really sad that I will not be going back to school to finish 6th class and that my Confirmation was postponed and that I don't get to meet up with my friends or do any of the other great stuff we were supposed to do this year but I know we are all doing it to keep our grandparents safe and it is worth it all.



A youth walks barefoot with his donkey on a country road circa 1940. Picture: Getty Images

Riding to school on a wild donkey

Reporter: **ASHLEY CARDEN (11), St Joseph's NS, Killala**
 Interviewing: His grandfather John Carden

1. How was life when you were a kid?

It was very different from today. We had two different travelling shops that would come to our house each week and there was a travelling butcher.

People used to grow their own vegetables and everyone had hens, ducks, turkeys and geese. We had fresh eggs every day so people were very self-sufficient.

2. How was school?

On my first day of school, I hid under the desk and ran home. I didn't come back until the next year.

In Junior Infants' class, my teacher's name was Mrs Jennings.

The school had three classrooms and one bathroom. We didn't have a toilet. It was a bench with a hole cut out of it.

3. What games did you play?

I played a lot of sport when



I was younger. The high jump, long jump and the 100 metres sprint. At school, we used to play music in the classroom but I could not play the tin-whistle so I used to play the drums using a biscuit tin.

4. How did you get to school?

I had to walk to school. It was a mile away and sometimes when it rained I used to get a lift with the postman.

There were wild donkeys beside my house so sometimes I would get a rope and ride them to school and ride home after school.

5. What was the work like?

I had a lot of chores at home. I helped in the bog and picked potatoes. When the neighbours had to save the hay, I was sent to help.

6. How did you contact your friends at the weekend?

I used to make arrangements during the week because we had no mobile phones. We only had a phonebox outside our house.

7. What did you write on and with?

We had to write with pens that had to be dipped in ink that was in the desk.

Fighting bulls... and a tricky question from the Bishop

Reporter: PATRICK GARVEY (age 12), Scoil Raifteiri, Castlebar
Interviewing: His grandfather George Garvey

MY Grandad was born on July 28, 1928. His home house was in Dillonbrook, also known as Cormeelick North, Co Galway. He lived in a thatched cottage with his five brothers, three sisters, Mum and Dad. The house had four rooms upstairs and four rooms downstairs. They got light from oil lamps, heat from fire and they cooked by putting a pot over the fire with the food inside. They mostly ate cabbage, turnip and potatoes, grown from their own garden, with bacon or beef from their own pigs and cows.

But it wasn't easy on the farm. Two of my grandad's uncles were killed by bulls, my grandad fought a bull at the age of 19 and his dad fought a bull at the age of 70!

He walked to school with his eldest brother PJ. His school was in Dalgan so it was a pretty long walk. He wore short pants, a shirt and a jumper knitted by his mum. His favourite subject was



The senior Gaelic football team from St Jarlath's College in Tuam pictured in 1959-60. The team, which included several students from Co Mayo, went on to win the Hogan Cup. Picture: Western People Archive

maths and he didn't have a least favourite subject. There was only one classroom in the school. Junior Infants to fourth class were on one side and third to seventh class were on the other. Each side of the classroom had a fire that burned turf.

The teachers were very strict. One time the teacher thought my grandad was talking. He got hit with a ruler on the hand as a punishment even though he didn't do any-

thing. Later on that day, the teacher heard my Grandad's dad was coming to pick up my Grandad that day. So the teacher gave my Grandad a penny to buy some sweets.

My Grandad made his Confirmation in third class. It was the bishop's first year so they held up paper flags and did a guard of honour when he arrived. Every class choose a student to answer some questions from the bishop. My Grandad was called up and he

was asked: 'What is the difference between a sacrament and a sacrifice?'

My Grandad was the only child to go to St Jarlath's Boarding School from his school that year. There was an entrance exam at the start of the year and if you came in the top three you would get put through secondary school free. My Grandad came fourth, which was very good seeing as the top three students were prepared for the exam by their parents, who were teachers. He just missed out so he only had to pay £30 a year instead of £35.

My Grandad really enjoyed St Jarlath's and he was upset when it was time to go to college. His dad wanted him to become a vet because there weren't many vets back then so the pay was very good and he was practically a vet himself. But my Grandad wanted to be earning money as quickly as possible, and seeing as the course to become a vet back then was seven years, he decided to become a teacher instead. His dad was so mad he didn't talk to him for a week



but after a while his anger subsided.

After my Grandad finished his two years in college in Drumcondra he started looking for a job. In 1948, he acted as principal for the president of the IEO in Lisacul, Ballyhaderreen, Co Roscommon, until March 1949 when he got a job as the principal in Kilgevrin National School, near Tuam. It was said in the local newspaper he was the youngest principal in Ireland but it wasn't confirmed. He was definitely one of the youngest though.

In 1967, he became the vice-principal in Milltown National School and stayed there until 1988. My Grandad now lives beside Milltown school at the age of 91! I could've told you hundreds of other stories because my grandad George Garvey has one of the best memories ever, which is one of the reasons why he's the best Grandad ever.

A woman brings in turf from a stack outside a cottage in the 1950s. Picture: Getty Images.



Pilgrims climbing Croagh Patrick on Reek Sunday in 1976. Picture: Getty Images

The day my Nanny gave up singing

Reporter: MARY-KATE MCHALE (age 13), Sacred Heart School, Westport
Interviewing: Her grandmother Mary Connolly

Nanny started school at three years of age because the school had to have a certain amount of children to keep it going. She went to school only twice a week.

When she was around nine years old, Nanny and her class went to the church to practice carol singing and on the way, they spotted a new foal born. When they arrived at the church, they started rehearsing the carol 'The First Noel' and Nanny whispered to her friend beside her 'The First Fo-al' because of the foal that was born on the way! They both laughed a little at the joke but my Nanny was the

one caught by the nun for laughing. She was brought outside and the nun was giving out to her. Then the priest came along and heard the story and he crossly said: "There is no talking or laughing in God's house or you will burn in hell."

Nanny started bawling because she didn't want to burn in hell.

When she went home that evening she couldn't mention a word about it or her mother would get very mad at her for doing that and thought she'd never be forgiven because at the time adults were very strict and you were taught to do what you were told.

Nanny didn't sing for 50 years after that until her grandchildren were born. Now she enjoys singing to her grandchildren.

Reporting the news for the 'Western' in the 1960s

Reporter: RONAN McDONAGH (age 9), Quay NS, Ballina
Interviewing: His grandfather Sean Allen

THIS report is about my grandfather Sean Allen and part of his life. He was a teacher but before that, he was a journalist for the Western People. Now he is retired and spends his time with his grandchildren. I interviewed him because I thought it would be fun and interesting to learn about his past. He told me that he reported on many things like GAA, darts and local news stories.

Grandad Sean became a reporter because he liked writing. He started on May 4, 1964. It was a sunny Monday morning. The first thing he ever reported on was the price of cattle at Ballina Mart (the price of a cow was around £20). He mainly reported on sports and the main one at the time was Gaelic football. He covered club and intercounty football. Later on, he became the darts correspondent. He also wrote about local stories and some of them were very sad. He told me about someone who was accidentally killed in Kilmaine. Grandad Sean visited the scene and went to the bail hearing in Ballina Courthouse.

He met some very interesting people in his career as a journalist and some of them are very famous. Here are two of them.



Seamus Cawley in one of the Western People's delivery vans in the 1960s. Picture: Western People Archive

He met Ronnie Delaney in the Downhill Hotel. Ronnie, who won Ireland's first track and field Olympic gold medal, was presenting awards at a Mayo Sports Stars function. My grandad told me that he asked him: 'Did you bring it?' He meant the medal, but Ronnie said no. Everyone asked him that question.

He also met Micheál O'Hehir, who was a leading sports commentator for television and radio.

He had two funny stories. One was when he was reporting on a football match. He was asking the referee for his name for the match notes. He said that he was a Bishop Browne, a well-known Bishop of Galway at the time.

Then one of the Grandad's reporting trips was to a brewery in Dundalk. The guide was an ex-soldier. While serving in

the Congo his company was attacked and four of his comrades were killed. His legs were pierced with poison arrows and after being rescued by other UN soldiers, both of his legs were amputated. He had two artificial legs. The manager of the brewery told my grandad: "He comes to work everyday legless and he's never been sacked."

Grandad Sean told me that he left the Western People in 1974 and went to college part-time to study to be a teacher. Even though he loved journalism, he had to be away most weekends at matches and was busy most evenings. So, he changed careers to spend more time with his family. He told me that he never regretted the change.

I enjoyed interviewing my Grandad because I felt like I was the real reporter.



The Mayo Sports Stars of 1973 pictured with their awards which were presented at the Western People annual dinner in the Downhill Hotel. Pictured from left are: Thomas O'Toole (wrestling), Christy Hughes (Gaelic Football), Bart Crowley (hurling), Eddie Campbell (athletics), Liam MacHale, Chairman, Cosac West, who accepted the Hall of Fame award on behalf of Bert Healion, Peter McGee (handball), Ronnie Delaney, who presented the awards; Anthony Smyth (swimming), Vinny Walsh (soccer), John J. Tolan (Badminton), and Brian O'Donnell (boxing). Picture: Western People Archive

Memories of the travelling shops in Attymass

Reporter: MADELEINE WALSH (age 13), Attymass, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandfather Padraic Walsh

Back in the 1930s, there were three shops in Attymass. They sold all sorts of items and delivered to your door, which was great because there were not really any cars in our village back then. Flannelly's was the biggest travelling shop of them all.

My great-grandad worked in Flannelly's and his name was Patrick Hughes. My grandad Padraic has fond memories of helping out when he was allowed to after school or on holidays, working with his dad and another man called Joe.

They went around selling things with a horse and cart. At that time, petrol could not be got so that is why they used a horse and cart during those years. A lot of things were rationed like tea, sugar and bread but most people back then were self-sufficient because they got milk from cows and they made their own butter while potatoes were grown along with other types of vegetables. They usually shared things between themselves and their neighbours.

But let's get back on track now! The travelling shop used to go around the parish of At-



A group of men negotiate the sale of pigs circa 1950.

Picture: Getty Images

tymass. When the war ended the carts were taken off the road and Flannelly's bought a truck and it was a lot easier and quicker to get around. Now they could carry a lot more things like bags of meal for the cows and other sorts of bigger items like that. One of the most popular things they sold was tobacco because most people smoked a pipe.

Christmas Week was a very busy time for the travelling shop and nearly everyone got

a little gift. That was my Grandad's favourite time of the year. Around Christmas, my great-grandfather came home at around 12 o'clock after an early start at seven. They finished up the deliveries on Christmas Eve and came home knowing they would be home with their families for two weeks because people usually ordered enough supplies to do them for that period of time.

My Grandad loved that he

and his brothers would be off school and be with their family all together to celebrate Christmas.

St Patrick's Day was also a very busy time of year. They always had a great time because Flannelly's always held a party that night for all the workers. They usually sang the whole way home after the party.

As the country advanced, so did Attymass and the travelling shop slowly disappeared.

Walking to school in hail, rain or shine

Reporter: BREENA WALSH (age 9), Attymass, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandfather Padraic Hughes

MY grandad Padraic Hughes told me about his schooldays.

He went to school in Attymass. School, which started at 9.30 and ended at 3 o'clock. He walked to school with his brothers in hail, rain or shine, often with holes in his shoes.

He didn't have many books, just English, Irish and a notebook. He wrote with a pencil or a pen and ink.

His favourite thing to do in school was read his English book.

For his lunch, he usually had homemade brown bread with butter, which his mum would have made, and cheese.

There were four classrooms in the school with boys and girls. The school was about a 20-minute walk from his house. He walked to and from school every day on very bad roads with potholes filled with water.

My Grandad said school is a lot different now than in his day.



Eating canned sweets and dancing at the crossroads

Reporter: SARAH JANE KILCAWLEY (age 12), Scoil Raifteiri, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandfather John McGovern

MY Grandad John McGovern was born in Lambrock in Co Fermagh in August 1934. He was the oldest of a very large family. He lived in a small two-storey house in the country with his grandmother, Mary McManus, his sister Margaret and his two uncles Jimmy and Terry. He was very close to his grandmother and he described her as standing six feet tall with white hair tied up in a bun.

I asked him some questions about his childhood and his life, and this is what he told me...

Granny McManus cooked everything in the fire. She would hang the kettle and the pots on the crook. She kept food warm on the hob. A typical dinner was bacon and cabbage. They grew all their own vegetables. The nearest shop was about a mile away and if his uncle was kind enough to give him a half-crown, he would spend it on sweets. The only sweets you could buy back then were canned sweets. Grandad remembers they were black and white.

Horses played a big part in his life and he rode them bareback as a child. His uncle 'Monkey' McGovern was an accomplished jockey.

Grandad moved from Northern Ireland to what he calls the 'Free State' when he was a teenager. This meant he moved to the Republic of Ireland.

I asked him if he remembered much about 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Back then, there was a lot of trouble between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Grandad moved to Monaghan, which became his new home. He remembers the 'Yanks', which were the American troops that resided in Northern Ireland for a while. He remembers them having

chewing gum which had never been seen in Ireland and which made them very popular with the ladies!

The family had a goat and Grandad would milk her every day by hand and she would produce a 'quart' of milk, which is approximately two pints.

At Easter time, children would go to farmers to get chicken's eggs as a gift. The children would cook the eggs in a pot on the fire and eat as many as was physically possible.

Grandad went to a country school with about 12 other children. He walked to school wearing shoes that were provided by the government. He wore short trousers until he made his Confirmation and then started wearing long trousers and a jumper. His teacher was extremely strict and used to hit them with a 'pointer', which was a thick piece of wood. He said the teacher always aimed for the legs or the knees.

Grandad left school early to help on the farm and earn some money for the family. He plucked turkeys for one shilling a bird.

I asked Grandad if he was ever sick and he said that the only illness he had was 'Measles' and that had caused him to have a weakness in his eye.

There was no running water and Grandad would be sent to the nearest well to collect water in aluminum buckets. Scrubbing boards were used to wash clothes. The scrubbing boards were made from timber or glass.

Times were hard and there were few jobs but Grandad worked hard and earned enough money to have a drink and attend local dances. He was taught how to dance by an elderly lady that lived beside his home. Sometimes he danced at the crossroads and on other occasions, he would cycle to the dances and carry his friend home on the bar of his bike!

Grandad moved to England in the 1950s. He worked in



Boiled sweets, which were often transported in large cans, were very popular in Ireland during the 1940s and 1950s.

Picture: Getty Images

several different jobs and became a plasterer. Health and safety were not always a priority back then. One job involved Grandad climbing a power station in Willington in Derby, which was 350 feet high and climbing 26 ladders with no safety harness – his job was removing plastering from shuttering. I am glad my Grandad survived that and to this day he is not scared of heights.

In 1960, my grandmother went to Derby in England to stay with her sister. She was recovering from TB (Tuberculosis). One evening at a dance she was introduced to Grandad. It was love at first sight. They spent most of the next six weeks together. My grandmother went home to Ireland but she brought a little bit of Grandad with her – a photograph, which she slept with, under her pillow.

He had not forgotten her either. One bright sunny day she received a postcard which made her heart flutter! That

fine gentleman from Fermagh wanted to visit her. That evening she returned home from work and was shocked to see that Grandad had arrived on his motorbike and was sitting by the fire already talking to her parents!

They got married in 1961 in the UK and returned to Ireland to live in Cuingbeg, Pontoon, where they inherited a lovely home and a smallholding from my grandmother's cousin. Together they milked cows, bottled milk, made butter, opened a shop and knitted and sold Aran jumpers.

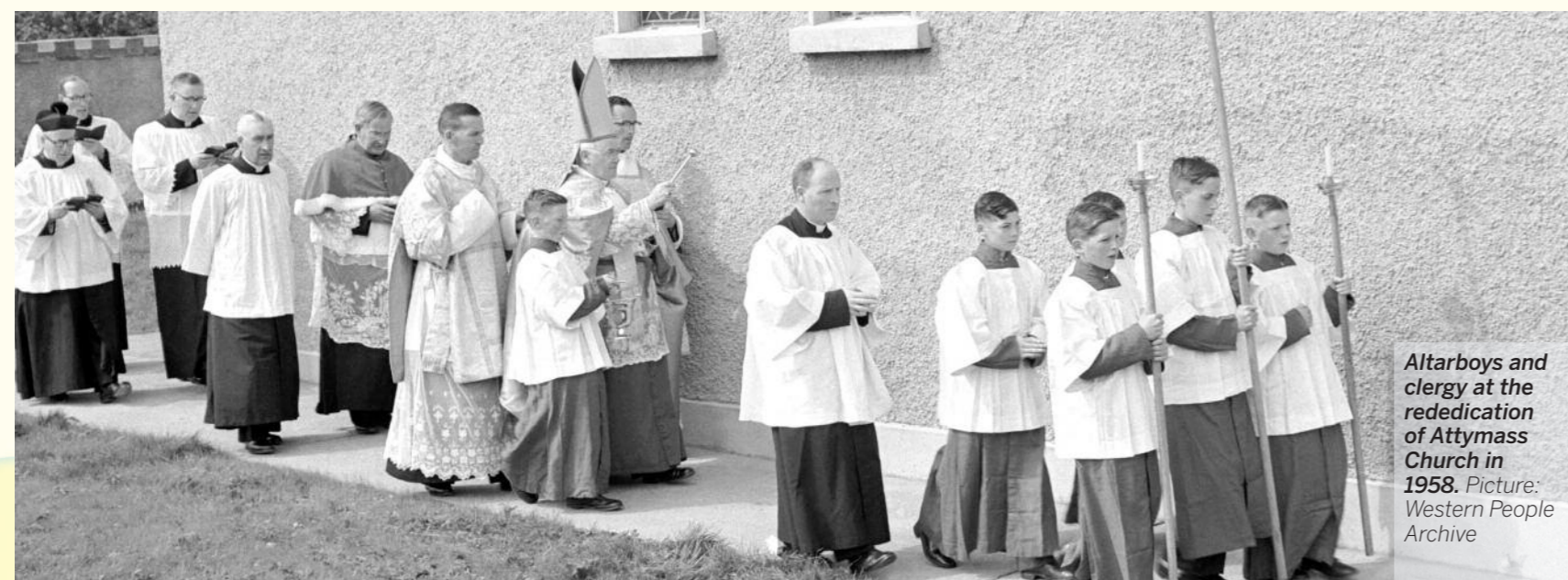
My grandparents were the only ones in the area during the 1960s that had a television, so when there was a boxing match on, everyone would come from the neighbouring villages to watch. Their house was also a visiting house where people would come to play cards. Grandad played Pontoon and Granny was really good at a card game called '25'.

Before Grandad adopted his

children, Granny's nephews spent a lot of their free time in Pontoon with my grandparents. The 'Brogan lads', as he referred to them, became a massive part of his life. They helped Grandad cut and save the hay; all the work was done without machinery, so it was very hard work. Turf was cut every summer and turned by hand and stacked to dry before being brought home.

In 2011, my grandparents were 50 years married, but in 2015 my Granny passed away. After that, Grandad took up social dancing. It makes him feel young again. Unfortunately, due to coronavirus and restrictions on over 70s, he is not dancing these days but he has his goats and his trusted 'Snowy' to keep him company.

My Grandad maybe 85 years old but I know he was once young like me. We love spending time with him and look forward to living close to him when our new house is ready – it is situated right beside his house!



Altarboys and clergy at the rededication of Attymass Church in 1958. Picture: Western People Archive

Memories of a dark day in Derry's history

Reporter: ELLEN SHAW (age 12), St Peter's NS, Snugboro, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmother Imelda Donnelly

I HAVE chosen to interview my grandmother, Imelda Catherine Donnelly, but all her grandchildren know her as 'Mamó'.

Imelda Donnelly was born to a large family on September 10, 1952. Her parents Jimmy and Moira Donnelly had 13 children but sadly two died. Anne had coeliac disease and died at the age of four and Thomas died during childbirth at home. All of Imelda's remaining siblings are still alive today.

Her father Jimmy was a farmer and cattle dealer, which meant he travelled around the country, often on foot. Imelda's mother Moira worked in the hospitality business before her children were born. She had trained as a cook and was known for her great dinners.

They lived in a small house on a farm in Co Tyrone with the nearest town being Irvinestown in Co Fermanagh. They had a gaslight in the kitchen which was lit with a match. They got their heat from a range in the kitchen,

which was fuelled by firewood and they also cooked on this range. Her mum baked three cakes of bread in this range every day.

Chickens were reared on the farm and they would kill, pluck and eat them. On Christmas Day, her grandparents and her uncle would come every year for dinner. There would be 17 people in a small house eating at tables, on their knees or on the floor. The children would open their presents, usually a small board game, picture book or a yoyo.

As a young child, Imelda loved being outdoors, playing hopscotch, rounders, football or climbing trees. She also used to help around the farm and house. Every Saturday, Imelda used to take her younger siblings out to the farm so her older sisters and her mother could clean the house. She also used to help in the bog and hayfield in the summer.

One day every summer, the Donnellys would pile into Jimmy's van and go to a beach in Bundoran. They also went to stay in their cousin's house in the summer. Her older cousin would bring Imelda on the carrier of his bike. The Donnelly's had a few bikes but



there weren't enough for everyone and they weren't always in the best condition.

Imelda was almost five when she started school. On her first day, she went by train but then the train line closed so she usually went by foot or in her teacher's car. Her teacher usually brought the younger children to school in her car.

After finishing primary school, Imelda and her sister

Sheila went on to Mount St Lourdes Grammar School, which was a boarding school. Imelda missed her parents but they came every Sunday and Imelda and Sheila would return home for all the holiday breaks.

At Mount St Lourdes, Imelda took part in tennis, netball (she won an U16 Ulster Final with the school team) and rounders. They also had a sports day like most

schools have now with races and games. Every night they would have a recreation, which is when every pupil would listen to music and dance for half an hour before they went to bed.

Imelda had a summer job in Irvinestown in an office at the age of 16 and in the following two years she had a job at a guesthouse, which her sister Mary ran in Wexford. Imelda did cleaning, cooking and changing beds.

When Imelda finished secondary school, she attended McGee University in Derry to study radiography for two and a half years. She finished at the age of 20.

She studied and worked at Altnagelvin Hospital and she was in the hospital on the morning after the mass shootings in Derry on Bloody Sunday in January 1972. Imelda thought it was awful that so many had died - 13 people were killed and 15 were injured that day in Derry.

She along with other trainees had to take notes for the postmortem but she hated the experience. There were lots of bombs and shootings. People from both sides of the community were killed.

Bringing home the corn in a horse and cart in the 1950s.
 Picture: Getty Images



Derry on Bloody Sunday in January 1972. Thirteen people were killed and 15 were injured that day in Derry.

"The Republicans would shoot a Protestant and the Loyalists would shoot a Catholic. It was a horrific."

Imelda saw the smoke, heard the bombs but never got caught up in one. She did know two men who got shot in her area. One of these men used to visit their house often and was shot in his van because he was a Catholic. The other man, Patsy Kelly, was shot and his body dumped in a lake. Imelda's parents, however, knew 10 or 12 people who were killed during 'The Troubles'.

Imelda worked in Dublin in 1973 for almost a year. In 1974, she married Michael O'Grady from Louisburgh and moved to Monaghan town where they were working. Shortly after, they were travelling to Mayo to visit his family when they were stopped by the gardaí in Sligo and told that there had been a bomb in Monaghan in May 1974.

Imelda and Michael had four children, Ronan, Reiltin, Sorcha and Darragh, all born in Monaghan. Once the children were born, Imelda

Children celebrating Christmas in 1955
 Picture: Getty Images



stopped working full time as a radiographer but did some relief work in the hospital in Monaghan. The family moved to Louisburgh in 1980 to live with Michael's parents, Pat and Nora, in their small house in Kilgeever. They lived there for two and a half years before building their family home at Old Head.

Later, Imelda studied reflexology and practiced this in her home. She also gave adult learners courses as an intro-

duction to reflexology.

Imelda is known for her baking, cooking and her delicious homemade jam. She enjoys set dancing, badminton, yoga, walking and gardening.

The house is often busy with some of her 12 grandchildren visiting regularly, enjoying her company, dinners and desserts. Thankfully, Imelda is still in good health at the age of 67 and she hopes to live to be 100.

Life on a small Mayo farm in bygone days

Reporter: SEOSAIMH MUNNELLY-O'KEEFFE (age 8), Gaelscoil na gCeithre Maoi, Beal an Átha
Interviewing: His grandmother Mary Munnelly (nee Hopkins)



My Nanny grew up on a small farm in Co Mayo. On the farm, there were three cows, three sheep, one horse and six hens. Every year the cows and calves and the sheep had lambs.

The cows were milked by hand and the calves were fed with some of the milk and the rest was put into a milk can and brought to the creamery.

Nanny's sister and brothers cleaned the stables and the henhouse. The hens went outside in the day and were inside in the night.

They went to the bog to save the turf and when it was dry the donkey and cart would bring home the turf. The turf was built into a stack outside the house. They had a big open fire and that was their only form of heating.

In summer, they saved hay to feed the animals in winter. The meadow was mowed by the horse and mowing machine and saved into 'laps' and then 'haycocks' and taken to the 'haggard'. They often had a house dance when all the work was done.



A little bit about my Nanny

Reporter: EMMA ROONEY (age 8), Ardagh NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandmother Kay

I have a Nanny called Kay and I'm going to tell you a little bit about her childhood.

My Nanny had a bathroom inside her house but not everybody had one, some people had one outside and some people didn't even have a bathroom. Some people went to the toilet in a byre.

My Nanny had five siblings growing up, four brothers and one sister. They shared a bedroom and had double beds. The girls mostly wore dresses and in summer they would wear shorts and a top.

My Nanny's favourite colour was yellow. Her favourite shop was McHale's. It was in Lahardane and it was her Granny's shop. She and her siblings used to walk to school.

My Nanny had really nice pretty blonde curly hair.

And that's all about my Nanny. Thank you for listening to my story. Bye!



How my Granny ended up going to school in the local town hall

Reporter: ROSA MAYOCK-HARRIS (age 11), Scoil Raifteiri, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandparents Paul and Maureen Mayoock

MY Granny is from Cloonduane, Belcarra and my Grandad is from Bofeenau.

While I was talking to them, I realised that a lot of their childhood memories were very similar, such as they both walked to school and they both liked school very much! Neither of them had a least favourite subject. My Granny's school was quite strict but she loved to learn and loved her books. My Grandad's schoolmaster was a kind man so he experienced school as a positive place.

Generally, there were no uniforms so both of them just wore their everyday clothes to school. They walked one mile to one mile and a half every day and often when my Grandad was young, he walked in his bare feet all the way to school. There were about 12 students in each room but strangely in my Granny's school the boys and girls were separated. School always started at half nine in the morning and ended at 3 o'clock.

My Granny said books were scarce so when they received them they were always over the moon.

She told me about a strange event in her school life. Just before she started going to school, their local school in Belcarra was burned down. Because of this, she spent her first four years of school in the local town hall. In second class, she moved to Errew school.

Both of them remember their First Holy Communion, even though my Grandad is 90 years old. He still remembers getting a white store-bought jumper, which was very unusual at the time as all their clothes were made at home. Granny remembers wearing a white dress and veil.

Granny remembers one teacher who was very strict and religious and Granny said she was very scared of her. Re-

ligious teachings of the time were very frightening for your children. For both my grandparents, their school lunches were always homemade brown bread and butter. Anyone who had white bread was envied.

After primary school, my Granny went on to secondary school in Castlebar. My Grandad worked on the farm and started to work in a business. He went on to open his own store in Ross village where they built a house together. He also had a travelling shop for many years.

Both households had a small farm with cattle, pigs, sheep, hens, ducks and geese. They sowed crops like oats, barley, wheat, potatoes, carrots, turnips and cabbage.

They were both very self-

sufficient. They had horses, a plough and carts. In order to sell their animals and crops, they travelled miles to the nearest fairs in Castlebar, Ballina and Claremorris. My Granny said that often it wasn't very profitable but at least the money was used for clothes and schoolbooks.

They both remember the local blacksmiths and limekiln. They grew up in stone houses with thatched roofs. There were three to four rooms in the houses. The kitchens had stone 'flag' floors and there was lino on the bedroom floors. Sometimes, these houses had a bed in a corner of the kitchen also. They had outdoor toilets.

The houses were heated by an open turf fire. All the food

was cooked and baked on the open fire or in the stove beside it. They used oil lamps for lighting until the electricity came in around the late 1940s. They had a freshwater supply from wells and springs nearby.

It was so lovely to talk to my grandparents about all of this! We sat outside on our patio keeping a safe distance between our chairs. They were so happy to give their time and to share their stories with me. I'm lucky to have such kind grandparents. We usually have Sunday dinners with them every week but that hasn't been happening right now because of Covid-19.

They are in their 80s and 90s now and have lived through times of great change. They have been frightened by

Covid-19 but they have been taking very good care of themselves and are positive and hopeful for the future. My Grandad is very humorous and regularly tells us funny stories. He still remembers the day when he was about four years old and went close to a horse at home who was eating oats. The horse took Grandad's arm in his mouth and lifted him off the ground, throwing him. He says that the horse didn't hurt him but he must have been frightened because he remembers it to this day - and that happened 84 years ago.

I'm looking forward to a day when we can hug Granny and Grandad and I believe they are looking forward to that happy day also.



Workers from Foxford Woollen Mills pictured on a day trip to Knock Shrine in 1959.

Picture: Western People Archive

Riding to Lisdoonvarna with a cart of fresh butter

Reporter: EMMA DE SILVA (age 13), Davitt College, Castlebar

MY grandmother and generations before her were born and reared in The Burren in Co Clare. The Burren has unique flora and fauna and it is said that there is not enough clay in The Burren to bury a

man, not enough water to drown a man and not enough trees to hang a man. My grandmother was one of six children and they all worked on the farm. They walked five miles to get to school. They had jobs for the morning and evening at home. The girls usually milked the goats and all of them collected water from the well. In the summer, the amount of work

was greater. Her father would cut the hay, all of them would help to collect it and turn it into haystacks. As they got older, they learned how to milk cows and they also fed the young goats and sheep with bottles. They fought for that job. The highlight of their work was the ride to Lisdoonvarna in the horse and trap with the butter they made. Three of them would go each week. The butter would be wrapped in paper and cloth. They surrounded it with large cabbage leaves to keep it cool. Their father would let them out at the foot of Corkscrew Hill so as to take the weight off the horse. They later found out that their father liked to sneak a cigarette!

Bringing home the hay at the end of the summer was a big occasion. All the neighbours would come with their horses and carts and they would have a big meal of bacon, cabbage and new potatoes. They sat around and told stories until the horses got restless. Most things were done by either hand or horse, and all their crops were grown at home. That's what it was like when my grandmother was younger.

That's what it was like when my grandmother was younger.

That's what it was like when my grandmother was younger.

Celebrating Christmas at Mayo General Hospital in Castlebar in 1959. Picture: Western People Archive



Granny made her Communion on her first week in school

Reporter: LUGHAI DH SWIFT (age 15), Davitt College, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmother Mary Swift

MY grandmother Mary Swift didn't go to school until she was seven years old. She had to stay at home on the farm to help her mother care for her younger brothers and sisters because their father had to go to England to survive and her mother couldn't cope at home on her own.

The first week she went to school she made her First Holy Communion and didn't have a clue what she was doing.

Mary found school very hard because it was very unfair due to corporal punishment. She felt she got slapped for no reason.

She left school at 12. At that time, she had to go to school one day in the year to prove she went to school in seventh class.

She worked on the farm for a year, then went working full-time, aged 13, in a busy restaurant from 8 to 8. She earned one pound and ten shillings for the first month and then it went up to four pounds per month. She cycled seven miles home to her mum.



Children pictured in a one-room schoolhouse in the West of Ireland in the 1950s. Picture Getty Images



My granny started school when she was just three!

Reporter: ANNA BARRY (age 9),
St Peter's NS, Snugboro, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmothers Ann Cuddy
and Tréasa Barra

Hi, my name is Anna. I'm nine years old and I am going to tell you a bit about my two grannies. Their names are Granny Cuddy and Granny Barry, (GC) & (GB).

GB's school was just across the road from her house but GC had to walk around two miles. I go in the car to and from school.

They both had nice teachers and good schools. GC started school when she was three! Her teachers were husband and wife. There were six in her class.

In GB's school, there were a bigger number of students in a bigger school. GC brought cocoa to school and her teacher made hot cocoa.

GC has a disabled brother and she had to help him around.

My school is big and there are 27 in my class.

GC's mum and dad were farmers but her mum also made all of their own clothes and even uniforms.

GB's mum was a retired nurse because in those days women could not work after they got married or had kids. Her Dad was a Guard, which meant big money back then.

GC lived in a farmhouse with her parents and four siblings whereas GB lived in a cottage with her parents and one brother. They both had lots of fun.

GC's house was heated by an open fire and range. They made all their own food.

Hope you liked my story.

Playing hopscotch and raiding orchards

Reporter: OISÍN BARRY (age 7), St Peter's NS,
Snugboro, Castlebar
Interviewing: His grandfather ('Pappa') Gene Barry

When my Pappa was a boy things were very different to what they are for me. Pappa had one sister and six brothers. He was in the middle.

They lived in a small townhouse in Birr. He slept in a room with three of his brothers.

I am lucky to have my own room with lots of toys. Pappa played hopscotch and pushed an old wheel down the road with a stick.

His Dad owned a shop.

Pappa like to play handball. He liked to play hurling too just like me.

Pappa and his brothers would steal apples from a local orchard.

Pappa went to the local Christian Brothers school for boys. If you were late for school you would get a slap. Pappa loved singing class and he still loves singing. Pappa wore short pants to school and had bread and cocoa for lunch.



There was great excitement in Brickens in September 1940 when a group of local men were employed by Mayo County Council to tar the road through the village. Pictured are ganger Dick O'Gara with workmen Thomas Kelly, Michael Healy, Michael Carney, Kevin McHugh, John Brady, Billy Lohan, Michael Kirrane, John Connelly, Luke Morley, Tom Lyons, Mike Morley and Paddy Murray. Picture: Western People Archive

The days of pounds and shillings

Reporter: Brayden Murray-Nolan (age 11),
St Joseph's NS, Killala
Interviewing: His grandmother
Breedge Nolan

'BACK in the day' is a phrase I hear a lot when I'm talking about the latest gadget or games to my parents. It's hard to imagine some of the stuff they tell me but it's fun to hear their stories.

I decided to ring my grandmother Breedge to ask her about things 'back in the day' and I found it very interesting.

She was born in 1950 in a small town in Sligo called Ballymote. She moved to Mayo when she was very young. She went to the local national school in Brickens, which had an av-

erage of 55 pupils and two teachers.

They had no technology back then and even had to bring turf to school to heat it. Everybody walked or cycled to school and one boy even rode a horse in. Her favourite subject was Irish and she liked school because it was the only way to see her friends.

She finished school at 12 and didn't go to secondary school, very few did back then. I think she would have done well in secondary school because she is quite bright.

There was only one shop in her village called Flanagan's. This is still open but is a bar and restaurant now.

Granny said compared to nowadays things were very cheap. They used pounds and shillings back then not like the Euro we have nowadays.

She got her first job at 15 in a toy shop in Ballyhaunis. The main source of employment in Mayo was farming. She made six pounds and 10 shillings a week.

She told me only one person in her village had a car and they used to get so excited to see it because it was such a novelty. To socialise, they would visit the neighbours and chat for hours, and when she got older she went to dances in the town hall. She was 15 when she first went to the cinema in Ballyhaunis.

Granny's first car was a Ford escort in 1969. She married Grandad Joe when she was only 20 years old. By the time she was 32, she had six children: three boys and three girls.

She still lives in the house she grew up in and farmed the land. I don't know how I would manage back then if I couldn't communicate with my friends. I know I can't see my friends now because of the pandemic but at least we have phones to talk to each other.

It was lovely talking to my Granny about these things, but I feel bad that she didn't have all the things and opportunities we have nowadays. I'm grateful for all we have nowadays.



A group of girls pictured cheering on the boys at the Scoil Padraig Sports Day in Ballina in 1962.

Picture: Western People Archive

Bullseyes and six-a-penny Dandys

Reporter: ERIN KELLY (age 8),
Barnacarroll NS, Claremorris
Interviewing: Her grandfather
Anthony Condon

My Grandad Anto grew up in the 1950s. When he was little he used to love to go to the circus. It would pass by his front door. The caravans and trailers were pulled by horses on the way to the Fairgreen in Castlebar.

One of the circuses was called Fossetts and the other was Duffy's. There were lions, tigers and elephants in the circus in those days!

His family owned a fruit and vegetable shop on the bridge in Castlebar. It sold groceries too. A pound of butter cost two shillings and sixpence!

Grandad's first job after school was in a shoe shop called Tylers. His weekly pay was 10 shillings, which he gave to his Mammy.

I asked him what were the most popular sweets in them days. He told me that they were Bullseyes, six-a-penny Dandys and chewy toffees.

When my Grandad was a young man, he acted on the stage in the Town Hall in Castlebar with his brother Richard.

I'm very proud of my Grandad.



A small homestead in the hills of Connemara in the early 1950s.

Picture: Getty Images

How my Nanny ended up with two birthdays

Reporter: DARRAGH JENNINGS (age 12),
Cloondaff NS, Glenhest, Newport
Interviewing: His grandmother
Aggie Davitt

My Nanny was born in the 1940s in a thatched cottage in a place called Kilhale, Glensiland, Castlebar. Kilhale is a rural area on the side of the Bireen Mountain.

She was the youngest of six children. The cottage only had three rooms, two of which were bedrooms and there was also a small nook beside the fireplace, which they called the 'cailleach'. This fitted a double-bed perfectly. The older people of the house would sleep there at night and would pull the curtains across for privacy.

Nanny was born in March but her birth wasn't registered until April. So my Nanny has two birthdays - her real birthday in March and the date of birth cert in April. She told me it was because it cost a lot of money to register a

birth and her parents would have had to hire a car to get all the way to Islandeady to register her birth. Her sister Maureen wasn't registered for six months.

Nanny said they had a lot of animals on their farms. They had cows, pigs, sheep, donkeys, horses, hens, cats and dogs. She liked growing up on the farm. They grew their own vegetables, milked their own cows and made butter from the cream of the milk. They had eggs from the hens and wool from the sheep. Her favourite animal was a Collie dog called Rover and she had a black and white big she was very fond of too.

Nanny had to walk about two miles to Glensiland National School every day, sometimes barefoot. They had to cross a river to get to the school and sometimes it would be dangerous as it would be flooded.

She also passed the local church on the way to school. The priest would be standing outside in his long robes after saying Mass. He would ask them: 'What did ye have for breakfast today?'

Her father had told them to say two boiled eggs, a slice of brown bread and a mug of tea. Her dad would often say: 'I wonder if you told him you had nothing for breakfast would he have brought ye in and fed ye?'

Every child had to bring two sods of turf to school to keep the fire burning in the classroom. If Nanny forgot the turf she would get two of the finest slaps on each hand with a can by the Master.

They had to line up to do a spellings and maths test every day after school. If they got the answer wrong the Master would put them to the back of the line and sometimes it would be dark when they got home, especially in winter. They had to eat their lunch outside every day, even when it was raining.

Children went to school until they were 14 when they done their Primary Cert, which is like the Leaving Cert now. Nanny said the Primary Cert took you anywhere you wanted to go.

She said every day was busy on the farm. They each had their own jobs, like going to the well for water or sweeping

the floor. Winter was really busy as most animals would be housed for the cold weather so they would have to feed them and clean the barns out every day. The summer would be taken up with going to the bog and making hay.

Nanny said every Christmas they would hire a hackney car to go to Castlebar to do a big shop. She recalls one Christmas at the age of six or seven they went to visit Stephen Garvey in his house on Castle Street because he was a relative of theirs. He was also a famous musician.

When they walked in he had a load of change on the table and he told her if she gave him a kiss he would give her all the change. She gave him a kiss on the cheek and he gave her the change. She was so excited with her money and always remembers going to Regan's Shop with her parents. She bought ribbons and slides for her and her sister's hair and sweets for everyone.

Nanny's family would always end the day by saying the Rosary.

Nanny said she had a very happy childhood.

Building the first thresher in Mayo

Reporter: **BILLY DONNELLAN** (age 8),
St Joseph's NS, Ballinrobe
Interviewing: His grandfather
James Golden

MY grandad James Golden grew up on a farm in Ballymartin just outside Kilmaine in the 1950s. I interviewed him about his life on the farm in those days.

1. What age did you start farming?

I was aged about six in 1955.

2. What were your chores?

Feeding the cows and chickens and bringing them into bed at night. The goose and the gander were aggressive and would bite you if they got the chance. The chickens and geese were locked in at night so no foxes got them.

3. Did you milk the cows?

We milked them morning and evening. Often, the cow would kick the bucket and you would have no milk for the day.

4. Did you help your mother and father make butter?

Oh yes. We used to separate the cream from the milk with a separator, then we'd make the butter in the churn. You'd have to keep twisting the churn until the cream would break and the butter would collect.

5. Your father invented the first thresher in Mayo. Did you help him?

No, he built it when I was a baby in 1948. It was in the local papers at the time as it was very unusual for a man in the country to build one. They

were normally built in Aberdeen in Scotland and imported in.

6. What was the thresher used for?

The thresher was used to thresh the corn. It would take the seed off the corn, the seed would be bagged and you'd make a reek of the straw.

All the neighbours would come when the thresher would be in your haggart so the village would work together to get the corn threshed.

7. What was your favourite thing to sow?

Potatoes because we could eat them and the cabbage was nice too.

8. Did you use a scarecrow?

We had one to frighten the crows from picking the spuds.

9. Did you buy anything

from the supermarket in those days?

No, there were no supermarkets in those days. It was just an ordinary shop and all we really bought was tea and sugar. We were almost self-sufficient. We also bought a bag of white flour every now and again.

10. How did you heat the house?

We had a range in the kitchen. A range is a cooker that you burn timber or turf in. Grandad had a sawmill so we had lots of timber. In the summer, we went to the bog to get turf. We used to make tea in the bog and we'd have great fun running around throwing sods at each other.

11. Did you have to make hay?

Well, that's what the cattle would eat. During the summer when the weather was fine, we'd cut the meadow and make cocks of hay and then in the Fall we'd bring them into the haggart and make big cocks and feed the cattle from that.

12. What do you miss most about the farm?

I don't miss much as it was very hard work but what I liked most about it was being out in the fresh air. The summers seemed better back then than they are now, we'd be out from morning to night. If we weren't working we'd be playing.

In the winter, we brought the stock to the fair. We'd get money for buying clothes and shoes. The fair was a great day out.



John Monaghan, Mayo Abbey, was the winner of the swing plough award at the Mayo Ploughing Championship in 1962. The event was held on the grounds of St Mary's Hospital in Castlebar. Picture: Western People Archive

Schooldays in the 1950s on the Mayo/Galway border

Reporter: **JAMIE DONNELLAN** (age 8),
St Joseph's NS, Ballinrobe
Interviewing: His grandmother
Marguerite Golden

My granny Marguerite Golden (nee McGrath) grew up just outside Cong village on the Galway side. I recently interviewed her about life at school back then.

1. What year did you start school?

1956

2. Did you wear a uniform or casual clothes

We wore casual clothes in national school.

3. What class and year did you make your Communion in?

I made my Communion in first class in 1960.

4. What did you wear for your Communion?

A white dress with a long veil.

5. What time did you start/finish school and how did you get there?

We started at 9.30 and finished at three o'clock. We had to walk in hail, rain or snow for two miles. We were very lucky as we all had shoes to walk in. We were well wrapped up with a good coat if it was raining. The boys and girls all walked home together. The boys would always start fighting and we'd run away. Boys will be boys.

6. What would you have eaten for lunch?

Bread, jam and cocoa because the food was supplied by the government and the girls had to spread the jam onto the bread for all the children.

7. Did you share a classroom with other

years?

Yes, first, second and third classes shared a classroom.

8. Describe your teacher and what were the punishments for being bold?

The teacher was cross and unfair. He had favourite students. We received a slap with a cane on both hands if we were bold.

9. What did you write with?

We used to have a copybook and a pencil. We had to copy what the teacher wrote on the blackboard.

10. What source of heating did you use in the classroom?

An open fire of turf. Someone had to bring in the turf every day to light the fire. People brought in the turf from home. Sometimes people brought in wood for the fire. My daddy used to work in the woods so we used to bring in bags of wood.

11. What games did you play at school?

The boys played football. The girls played catch. At that time, the girls wouldn't have dreamed of playing football.

12. Where did you go to the toilet?

We had no toilet in the school. It was an outdoor toilet. It was extremely cold and it wasn't even a flush toilet, just a hole in the ground. We didn't have any means of washing our hands.

13. Did you have any after-school activities?

None whatsoever. We did our homework for about half an hour. we even had it on Friday.

14. What was your favourite subject?

Maths. I loved totting up numbers and adding them. I was good at Maths.



The entrance to Ashford Castle, Cong, in 1979

Picture: Western People

Curly Wee and Gussy Goose



Reporter: **BETHAN STONE** (age 9), Bohola NS
Interviewing: Her grandmother

The following is an interview with my grandmother over WhatsApp on May 5, 2020. We talked about her school days.

1. Did you get hit at school?

Yes, I did. My first slap was in Junior Class. The nun was using a doll's house to teach Irish. The nun had to leave the class and told us not to touch the doll's house. I touched it and that is how I got slapped.

2. Did you have a principal?

Yes, her name was Sister Rose.

3. How many were in your class?

There were 25 - all girls.

4. What subject did you like best?

Geography

5. What teacher did you like best and why?

Mother Gabriel. She used to read the children a cartoon from the Independent newspaper about Curly Wee (a pig) and Gussy Goose.



A group pictured at the Ballinrobe Brass Band Festival in October 1957. Picture: Western People Archive



A rainy day in Crossmolina in 1960 when cars were still a rare sight. Picture: Western People Archive

A day in the life of a boy in 1950s' Crossmolina

Reporter: Aoibhinn Burke (age 11), Ballyvary Central NS
Interviewing: Her Grandad John

IT is 1957 and 11-year-old John lives in a two-bedroom terraced house in Crossmolina with his parents, two brothers and two sisters.

He gets up at seven in the morning. He gets dressed in his normal clothes. He doesn't have to wear a school uni-

form.

His first job of the day is to get fresh water. He fills a bucket from the water tap which is on the street outside his house. Then he has a breakfast of soda bread with sliced banana. His mother Mary, my great-grandmother, bakes the bread every day.

He walks to school. There is no schoolbus and his parents don't own a car. In the summer months, he walks barefoot so he can save his shoes for the colder months.

There are seven teachers in his

school and 23 children in his class. School starts at 9am and finishes at 3pm.

John enjoys learning Maths, English, History and Geography. His least favourite subject is Irish.

At lunchtime, he eats soda bread and an apple. He plays Gaelic football with his friends.

After school, John has lots of jobs to do. He has to sweep the pavement at the front of the house, then he has to water the vegetables in the garden. His last job is to bring in the turf for

the fire.

He eats dinner, which is usually bacon and cabbage. If there is a special occasion, his mother will bake an apple tart. This is a real treat!

If he has time in the evening, John likes to read comics. He buys comics with his pocket money and swaps them with other boys at school when he has read them.

The summer is coming and John will be spending his holidays with his Grandfather, farming and saving turf. He will be busy!

The post office at Rathnamagh

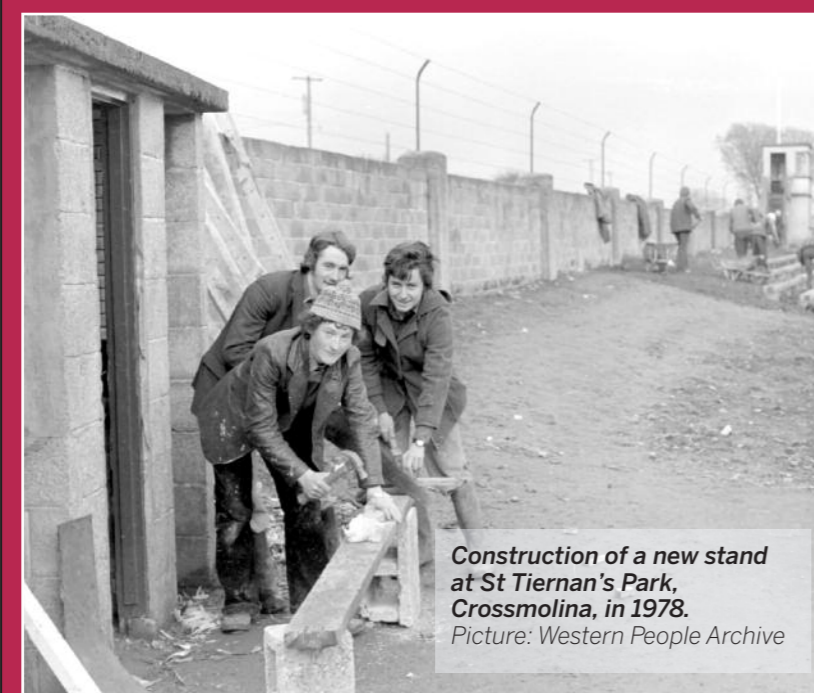
Reporter: ERIC DEVANEY (age 7), Ardagh NS, Ballina
Interviewing: His grandparents Kathleen and Frank McHale

My grandparents used to run a post office, Rathnamagh PO. Granny sorted post, sold stamps and food, and people paid their bills there.

The first phone in the village was in their house. It was a payphone. People came in to make calls.

A lot of people came to collect their pensions on Friday.

The post office closed in the early 2000s because people started using online banking and pass machines.



Construction of a new stand at St Tiernan's Park, Crossmolina, in 1978. Picture: Western People Archive



The rainbow and the pot of gold

Reporter: ELLENROSE LAVELLE (age 10), St Peter's NS, Snugboro, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandparents Teresa and Ger Lavelle (Nanny and 'E')

MY name is EllenRose Lavelle. I am ten years old. Today, May 5, 2020, I interviewed my granny and grandad Teresa and Ger Lavelle. Due to the Covid-19, I interviewed them through the window.

Here are some of the questions I asked.

1. *Where and what year were you born?*

Ger was born in Castlebar in 1950. Teresa was born in Westport in 1951.

2. *What was your favourite toy and memories from childhood?*

Ger liked skipping and the cinema. Teresa liked hopscotch and the cinema as well.

3. *What did you want to be growing up?*

Grandad wanted to be a technician and Nanny wanted to be a good mother.

4. *What is your favourite activity now?*

'E' likes to walk and Nanny likes to swim.

5. *Where is the best place in the world you both have visited?*

Nanny's favourite place is Australia and New

Zealand. 'E's' favourite place is the USA.

6. *What is your favourite memories of being a mum/dad?*

Both of them said healthy and happy children and grandchildren.

7. *What was your favourite technological invention that occurred in your lifetime?*

Both of them said the television.

8. *Is there any piece of advice that you feel you need to share?*

Both said to live life everyday as if it's your last.

I truly love my Granny and Grandad with all my heart. They are amazing people. I love them to the moon and back.

As the old saying goes: children are the rainbow of life, grandchildren are the pot of gold.

Peeking in windows to watch television

Reporter: ROXANNE GINTY (age 9), St Joseph's NS, Bonniconlon
Interviewing: Her grandmother Kay Flanagan

MY Nanny was born in Er-Linville Hospital in Cork. She was the first born and weight seven and a half pounds. Her dad was Tim Donovan and worked in a factory. Her mum was Maureen and before she had my Nanny, she worked as a machinist and made clothes.

My Nan was not rich but was very happy. She lived in a flat with her parents and brother Time and her sister Marian. She had two cats - one white and one black.

My Nan started school at five in an all girls' school. She wore a uniform which is like mine; it was a navy pinafore and white shirt.

My Nan liked to play. Her favourite game was Knock-down Ginger where she would knock on a door and run away. I asked what happened if she got caught and she said she got chased with a wooden spoon.

My Nanny had to television and used to peek in windows to watch television. Now she has a television. I love my Nanny.



Members of the Bonniconlon Gaelic Football team pictured in 1952. Picture: Western People Archive

Christmas was the time when everyone came home

Reporter: NIAMH KELLY (age 11), Attymass NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandfather William Ginley

GRANDAD Ginley was the youngest of his family. His older siblings had emigrated to England when he was a young child. His father went to England every year to pick potatoes and send money home. His siblings came home for a holi-

day during the summer and Christmas. They travelled by boat from England and then by train, bus or taxi from Dublin.

There was always great excitement when they came home. They brought sweets, toys and new clothes home to their younger brother and sisters. There would be a party when they came home and all the neighbours would call. There was singing, dancing and card games. Everyone would stay up all night telling

stories. Everyone was in good form, wearing new clothes and having a great time.

Grandad's chore each Saturday evening was to polish the shoes for Sunday mass. One Christmas, he polished his sister's brand new pair of brown suede boots. She was very upset but my great-grandad told my grandad he had done a great job and not to worry. My great-grandad then gave my grandaunt money to buy a new pair of boots when she went back to England.

On Christmas morning, Santa would come. He would put the presents into socks that were hung over the fire. There was always a toy, a bar of chocolate and an orange. Everyone wore their best clothes and walked to Mass with their neighbours. Everyone wished each other Happy Christmas.

When Christmas was over, everyone was sad because it was time for the older siblings to return to England.

Searching for birds' nests in spring

Reporter: SAVANNA MCGUIRE (age 12), St Aidan's NS, Kiltimagh
Interviewing: Her grandmother Tessie Ford

I ASKED my Nanny Tessie in Co Kerry some questions about her childhood. Here is what she told me.

1. Tell me about your family home?

My family were my parents and grandparents and we all lived in a very small house with two rooms. My friends lived near me and we played together every day.

2. What is your earliest memory?

My earliest memory is picking daffodils on a walk with my grandfather and going fishing with him.

3. What do you remember of your schooldays?

We walked to school every day, barefoot in the summer. My teacher was Mrs O'Connor

and she was always singing with us. My favourite subject was Irish and we played a lot of games during break. My favourite was catch.

4. What was your favourite food/sport/pastime?

My favourite food was bacon and cabbage with potatoes and my favourite sport was running. My favourite pastime was looking for birds' nests in spring, sewing and reading.

5. Did you have chores to do at home?

We always had plenty of chores to do, like going to the well for a bucket of water, bringing in the turf and collecting sticks for the fire. Those were our daily chores.

Once a week we would have extra chores to do and help our parents with tidying, as well as feeding the hens.

6. Compare school in the past to nowadays.

School in the past was much like today except we just had books to study from and today

there are computers and a lot more modern technology.

7. Compare home life in the past to nowadays.

Home life long ago was simple. We had not televisions or computers, we played outdoors all the time. We were never bored and entertained ourselves with reading and playing games.

8. What are the biggest changes you've noticed in your lifetime?

The biggest changes I have noticed are that young people have much more money than we had and have cars, etc. They get to travel to other countries and all over the world.

9. What changes have you noticed in the area where you grew up?

The biggest change in my area compared to when I was young are all the beautiful new houses. There are a lot of facilities for young people like swimming pools and play-

grounds for kids to play in.

10. Have eating habits changed?

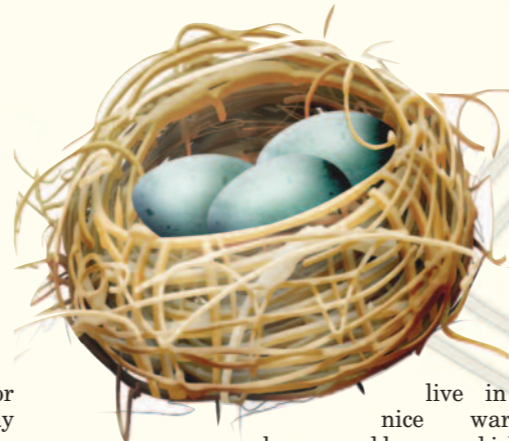
Eating habits have changed a lot. In my young, we always ate meals cooked at home whereas today there are a lot of takeaways and young people like to eat pizzas and burgers. They were unheard of in my growing up days.

11. What fashion changes have you noticed?

Fashion has changed a lot since I was young, but fashion always does that anyway. Growing up we had very little clothes and most were hand-me-downs from our cousins, and we were very glad of them. Today, kids have loads of beautiful clothes to dress up in.

12. Any changes for the better?

I suppose the changes for the better are that people have a better way of life today. They



live in nice warm houses and have good jobs and more money to live more comfortably.

13. Any changes for the worse?

Probably the worst changes are that we have got a bit too materialistic and want something new all the time. We have got a bit lazier too and drive everywhere.

14. Do you have any regrets you'd like to share?

My only regrets is that I didn't have the opportunity to go to college and become a teacher. Still, I am happy with my life and my lovely family who are wonderful.

15. Do you have any advice for me as I begin my journey in life?

My advice to you is to be yourself and be the best person you can be and to do whatever makes you happy. Life is too short so enjoy every minute of it.



Children at Dunquin, Sleah Head, County Kerry in 1950. Picture: Getty Images

Making daisy chains and playing Blind Man's Bluff

Reporter: CÁIT NÍ ÉANAIGH (age 12), Scoil Ráifteirí, Castlebar
Interviewing: Her grandmother Mary Hyland

THIS morning I had a lovely chat with Granny on the phone. My Granny's name is Mary Hyland and she lives in Charlestown.

Granny was born on May 26, 1945. She grew up in Carracastle and was the eldest of three children. Granny has had a busy life and today she shared some of her story with me.

I asked Granny about her memories of primary school. Granny missed her first year of school because her dad was very sick. She started school when she was seven years old. Granny and her friends

walked four miles to school, often in their bare feet. She often brought turf to the school to keep the school fire going. Her first teacher was called Mrs Giblin. She was a lovely teacher as she used to tell the class stories and make cakes for them.

Granny remembers that Mrs Giblin wore lovely perfume. At the time, not many people had perfume.

When Granny was a child there were very few toys. A lot of the time she had to use her imagination when playing with her brothers and friends. Some of the games that Granny mentioned were: picking flowers and making daisy chains, hide and seek, hopscotch and blind man's bluff. Granny also played 'shop' in the back kitchen using food tins and bags of sugar or flour. Granny also kept busy help-

ing out in the house and on the farm. She helped her dad milk the cows, cut the turf and make hay. She'd go to the well to get water and pick spuds for the dinner.

Granny went to secondary school in Charlestown. A lot of her class didn't do their Leaving Cert but Granny did. She wanted to do nursing when she left school. She had an aunt in Nottingham who organised a place in a nursing hospital there.

Granny lived in Nottingham for a few years. She met Grandad while living there. He was from Kildare. Granny and Grandad got married in Nottingham. They moved back to Ireland in the early '70s.

My grandparents had four children and my mom is the eldest. Granny and Grandad lived in Dublin for a few years before moving back to Mayo in

1986. Grandad continued working in Dublin because there were few jobs in Mayo. Granny looked after the home and raised the children. Grandad came home at weekends. All of Granny's children are married and have families of their own.

Granny worked in a local nursing home for a while but she's now retired. She enjoys singing and is involved with the local church choir.

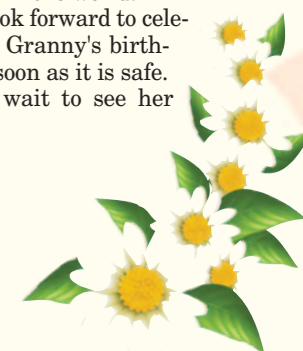
Grandad died in 2011, so she has been living on her own for almost nine years. Due to Covid-19, Granny has been co-cooking for a number of weeks. Thankfully, she is keeping well.

I asked Granny how she is getting on. She told me that she feels lost, lonely and a bit scared. She also finds video chatting hard. She is glad that the weather is nice.

I'm very lucky to have my Granny because she's my only grandparent left. I miss being able to visit her but I enjoyed the conversation over the phone. I've learned a lot about my Granny.

At the end of this month, Granny celebrates her 75th birthday. Incidentally, this month marks 75 years since the end of World War II, so Granny's arrival marked the beginning of a whole new chapter in the world.

We look forward to celebrating Granny's birthday as soon as it is safe. I can't wait to see her again.



Pupils from St Louis Convent Kiltimagh performing the 'Student Prince' in October 1962. Picture: Western People Archive

Cycling ten miles for a day's work in the bog

Reporter: RÓISÍN MULHERIN (age 13), Attymass NS
Interviewing: Her grandmother Bridie Ruane

MY Granny's name is Bridie Ruane. She was born on April 18, 1945. She lived in a village called Carranduff, near Enniscrone, Co Sligo. Her parents were Michael and Mary Mullaney. They had two boys and four girls.

Granny went to Quignabar National School. She walked to school with her siblings. Every child had to bring a sod of turf to keep the school warm. School was a lot harder back then.

Granny had to help on the farm, milking the cows and

picking potatoes. The bog was ten miles from their house and she would cycle to and from the bog with her dad. She spent the summer holidays turning the turf and making it up. They would bring food with them to eat. They got a can of water at the well to make tea in the bog.

Granny lived near the sea and enjoyed many days picking seaweed and dillisk. They would sell it to different people from Ballina. The money they got was used to buy groceries for the house.

Granny left home and moved to Manchester when she was 16 years old. She travelled there by boat and worked for her uncle in his restaurant. It was a different lifestyle in



Sorting the mail in Ballina Post Office at Christmas 1960, from left: Kieran Scanlon, John Flynn, George Armstrong, Henry Corcoran and Michael Joe Broderick.

Picture: Western People Archive

Manchester. She really enjoyed working there and meeting new friends.

Granny lived there for four years but really missed home and her family. She returned home and met her husband-to-be Sean Ruane. They got married in 1938 and moved to Ballina to start a new life.

They had nine children, five boys and four girls. Granny was only 23 years old when

she got married and Grandad was 24 years old.

Granny waited at home as a housewife, looking after the kids and cooking and cleaning. She enjoyed baking brown bread and treacle cakes.

She has 21 grandchildren and adores each and every one of them.

On March 2, 2017, my Granny's husband Sean Ruane sadly passed away. He

enjoyed wonderful years with his children and grandchildren. He loved his horses.

Granny still enjoys baking buns, making apple and rhubarb tarts and lovely pan-cakes for her grandchildren.

Granny was a hardworking woman over the years and now enjoys going to Mass every morning and going to bingo to meet and catch up with her friends.



The calves loved to see me coming with buckets of warm milk

Reporter: Caleb Hurley (age 12), Barnacarroil NS, Claremorris
Interviewing: His grandmother Marian Higgins (nee Hannan)

THE following is an interview with my grandmother about her childhood.

1. Where did you live?

I lived in Castlegrove, Kilconly, Co Galway. We had a farm.

2. How many were in your family?

There were six people in my family. There were my three brothers and me and my parents in the house, as well as my uncle who was blind, and my Nana. So eight people lived in our house.

3. Did you have your own bedroom?

No, I shared with my Nana.

4. Did you have electricity?

Yes, we had our own electricity with a wind charger because my uncle was an electrician. So we were lucky!

5. Did you have an outside toilet or inside toilet?

We had an inside and an outside toilet.

6. Was it cold in the house in winter?

Yes, but I had an open fire in my bedroom so that kept me warm at night.

7. Did you have a pet? If yes, what pet did you have?

Yes, we had dogs and cats and in the spring we had pet lambs and we always had a bird - I think it was a goldfinch - that we kept in a cage. We used to go into the field and get a nice golden weed and feed it to the bird!

I also loved the calves. I used to love carrying buckets of lovely warm milk to feed the calves after they had been weaned. They would love to see me coming with the milk!

8. What chores did you have to do?

I had to wash the dishes, sweep the floor and collect the eggs and count the sheep. I also had to save the turf and bring in the turf for the fire. I had to bring the clothes out to hang them up to dry and bring them in again and fold them.

9. What was your favourite food?

I loved home-baked scones and brown bread. My Mammy was a great baker. I loved chicken too.

We had a travelling shop come to our house every Thursday. That was very important. My Mammy always bought us hard sweets (bullseyes and gobstop-

pers) or a chocolate bar.

10. How did you get to national school?

We walked to school most days but if it was very wet my Dad drove us to school.

11. What was your favourite subject at school?

I liked Maths.

12. What was your favourite game?

At school we used to love playing catch. At home I was a bit of a tomboy and played football with my brothers.

13. When was your bedtime?

In winter, it was 8.30 to 9pm. In summer, it was later, around 9.30 to 10pm.

14. What were your favourite toys?

A little piano!

15. What was one of your best memories from your childhood?

Having my cousins come to stay in my house during the summer. They came for a few weeks and we were playing in the hayfields and had great fun altogether. I also loved going to Galway on holidays to my other cousins.

16. What did you want to be when

you grew up?

I always wanted to be a teacher.

17. What was boarding school like? For example, what was the food like?

I went to Taylors Hill Boarding School in Galway and I was very happy there. Because I was an only girl, I loved having the company of girlfriends.

We had nice food there. We had cereal in the morning and on Sundays we had a sausage. We had a nice dinner with dessert and a light tea - something like salad.

We had a tuck shop and we could buy a treat before we went into the study hall. I used to buy Tayto crisps!

18. When did you get to speak to your parents when you were at boarding school?

We could write letters to our parents but never phone calls. They came to visit me about once a month.

19. What age were you when you went to your first dance?

I think I was around 17 years old. It was either the Easter Sunday carnival dance or St Stephen's Night dance.

20. When did you get your first car? When I began teaching in 1971.



Sports Day at Scoil Padraig in Ballina in 1962. Picture: Western People Archive

Picking dillisk and seaweed to sell

Reporter: SHAUNA RUANE (age 9), Attymass NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandmother Bridie Ruane

My Granny's name is Bridie Ruane. She was born at home in Sligo on April 18, 1945.

Granny had one sister and four brothers. She and her siblings went to Quignabar NS, near Enniscrone. They had to walk through fields to get to school. At lunch, she would walk to her grandmother's.

My Granny would walk to the sea and pick dillisk and seaweed to sell for food. They would cycle ten miles to the bog to get the turf ready. They would stop to get a can of water for tea.

At the age of 16, she emigrated to Manchester, England, to work for her uncle in his restaurant. Granny worked there for four years and then came home to

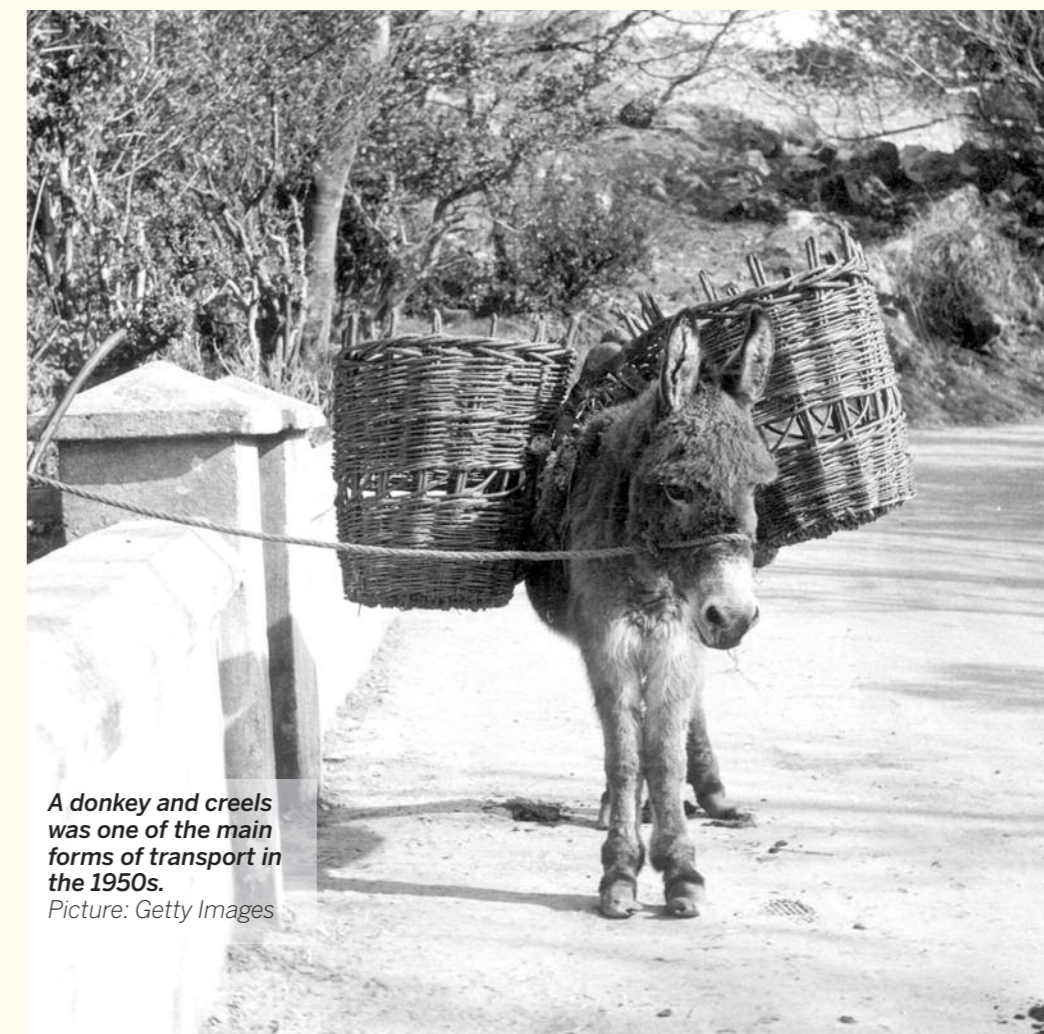
meet her husband-to-be, my grandad Sean Ruane (RIP). They got married on November 30, 1968. They were really young - Granny was only 23 and Grandad was 24.

A year later, Granny started to have her first of nine children, four boys and five girls. She stayed at home to care for them while Grandad worked driving lorries and managing the farm.

They were blessed with 21 grandchildren and one on the way.

Grandad Sean passed away on March 2, 2017, after 49 years of a wonderful marriage to Granny.

My Granny is a hardworking woman who is always there for her family. We love her so much and would be lost without her. Granny makes the best dinners, it's like a restaurant. I love her to the moon and back.



A donkey and creels was one of the main forms of transport in the 1950s. Picture: Getty Images



Pupils from Killala National School pictured at the Ballina Liturgical Festival in 1958. Picture: Western People Archive

When a pair of nylons cost more than a day's pay

Reporter: Rachel Smith (age 11), St Joseph's NS, Killala
 Interviewing: Her grandmother Bridie O'Hora

THE following are some of my grandmother's memories of her childhood.

"I grew up just outside Monaghan, which is a 15-minute drive from the border.

"In my young days, when I was going to school, from April onwards we never wore a shoe, we went in bare feet and when we did wear something it was wellingtons or boots with a tip on them and nails in the soles. There was nothing, no money.

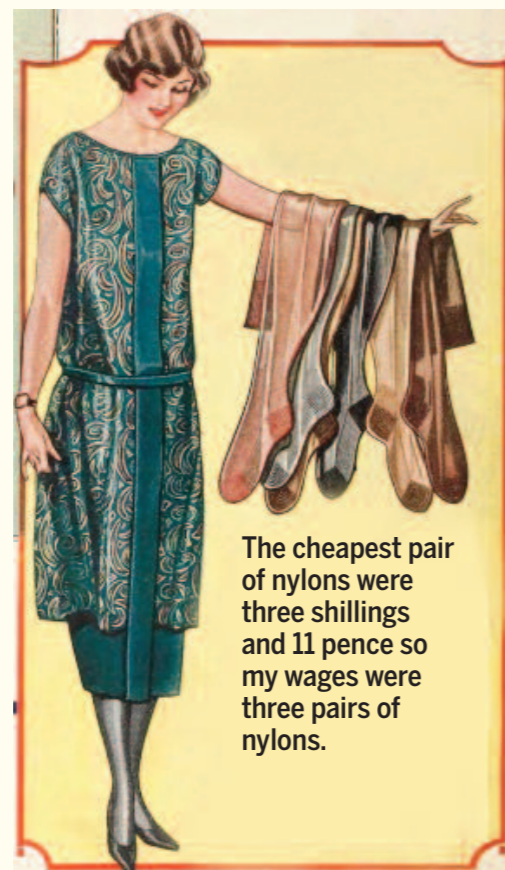
"In September, when school would open, you'd be kept home to pick blackberries and they were sold and that made money [to buy] the wellingtons, boots and a bit of clothes for the children for the winter.

"We wore the same clothes all week and they were washed on Saturday to wear again on Sunday and for the rest of the week. There was no such thing as loads of clothes. They were all handed down. Times were bad - and very bad.

"I was born in 1936 so I knew no difference. I was nine when the war ended. Everything was rationed, tea, sugar, flour, which was awful bad, like black really. People never bought bread in those days, you baked your own. We were self-sufficient. We had our eggs, a pig to fatten and grew our own oats so it would be porridge for the year.

"For fun, we played hopscotch and skipping but we were always busy with helping out at home or with the neighbours. Or we'd be in the bog or planting potatoes or doing the oats.

"Children should be seen and not heard in those



The cheapest pair of nylons were three shillings and 11 pence so my wages were three pairs of nylons.

days. If you spoke you got 'a look' and if that didn't work you got a slap of a wet dishcloth across the face. "My Confirmation frock was white and belonged to both Maura and Eileen (older sisters) and after my Confirmation, it was dyed green so I'd knock more wear out of it. Nothing went to waste.

"Later in my life, in my late teens, the IRA was about and the 'B Specials' if you went into the North. The 'B Specials' were bad yokes. You'd be pulled out of a car and searched. You'd be afraid to make a wrong move because they all carried guns.

"My first job was in a draper's shop in Monaghan town. It was owned by Mr Lee. He was very superstitious and wouldn't spend a penny. I was working there on New Year's Day and when I went to sweep the dust onto the street where the sweepers or dustmen would collect it like normal, he made me bring it in again. Nothing was given out for nothing on New Year's Day or it would be like that for the rest of the year. They wouldn't put out ashes or let water down the sink.

"He'd take all the money he could get. He'd talk football from morning till night. He'd be out chatting to the dustmen all day about football.

"My wages were 10 shillings a week for the three years I was there. The cheapest pair of nylons were three shillings and 11 pence so my wages were three pairs of nylons.

"I was there from the age of 16 till 19 but I had to leave because Mammy had bad health. I liked it, it was busy. After the war years, things were scarce in the North and people would come down [and] they'd steal the eye out of your head. They'd have a bag with a false bottom and put stuff in there like nylons, which were expensive."



Herding cattle to the fair at four in the morning

Reporter: RONAN DOYLE (age 12), St Oliver Plunkett NS, The Quay, Ballina
 Interviewing: His grandfather Frank Doyle

My Grandad was born in January 1940 in rural Co Kerry, just a few short months after World War II commenced. Even though he was too young to remember much, he remembers being scared when he heard planes, thinking they might be bombers.

Of course, in rural Co Kerry, there was no running water or electricity. Paraffin oil lamps were used to illuminate rooms until they were replaced by tilly lamps, which were more efficient and gave more light.

They could also be used indoors and outdoors. Electricity did not arrive until he was 14 or 15 years of age.

Alongside his older sister, he remembers doing jobs on the farm from a young age. Before school, they would milk the cows and head off on the three-mile walk across fields to school. He remembers being hungry coming from school, so he picked turnips from a turnip field and ate them.

The war meant that goods were rationed. You would go to the shop and hand in your book and would receive what you were down for. Flour was in short supply. Their aunt, who had emigrated to Amer-

ica, often sent sacks of flour and clothes to them.

They had 25 acres of land and rented extra. They grew vegetables and kept cows, pigs and chickens. Eggs were plentiful so were used to barter for other produce. He did not see his first banana till 14 years old. His mother baked bread every day to feed the children.

Back then when a pig was killed, the good parts were kept and the rest was salted for bacon. The blood was used to make black pudding. Tea leaves were used multiple times as they were scarce.

He helped his father on the farm and also bought and sold cows in places such as Killorglin and Killarney. Often, they

would transport the cattle by train from Cahersiveen and then walk the four miles back to the farm, sometimes at night. Going to a fair meant a 4am start to go the two hours to the fair with the cattle and then the two hours back to go to school.

Summer meant harvesting. A man with a threshing machine would visit the locality. He would go from house to house with all the neighbours following him to each house to help the family harvest. This was known as 'Meitheal'.

Grandad went to secondary school at about 13 or 14, which was unusual in rural Ireland, due to secondary schools being fee-paying. He went to the

Carnegie in Killorglin. The fees are minimal compared to private schools today, but they were still pretty large.

They looked forward to big events such as the Puck Fair in Killorglin. On St Brigid's Day, musicians and dancers went from house to house in the locality. They collected money, which was used to hold the Biddy Ball at someone's home in the following weeks. All of the village looked forward to this night of entertainment.

From his home in Co Mayo, Grandad remembers fondly his early days growing up in rural County Kerry and looks back on a time so different to the one his grandchildren grow up in now.



Swimmers and officials from various clubs in Connacht who competed in the Swimming Gala in Ballina on June 28, 1959. Picture: Western People Archive



One penny lollipops from the travelling shop

Reporter: **Niamh Kelly (age 11), Attymass NS, Ballina**
Interviewing: **Her grandmother Della Ginley**



THIS is the story of the travelling shop as told to me by my grandmother Della Ginley.

"When I was young and attending the local national school in Currower, the travelling shop was one of the highlights of the week.

"There were three travelling shops in the area: Hughes', Flannelly's and Mulherin's. The one my parents dealt with mostly was Flannelly's who had a big shop in the village of Attymass. They stocked a very wide range of groceries. They also were egg exporters and stocked some animal feed and fertilisers. They also had a petrol pump, which was unusual for that time due to the small number of cars or vans in the area.

"The travelling shop was loaded each weekday morning by the driver and salesman. Each day they had a specific route and timetable. They covered all the parish townlands through narrow roads, some of which were sand roads (not tarred). The travelling shop was expected at our house between 5 and 6pm. I remember the lorry clearly. It was a red Bedford lorry with double

doors on the back. On the right-hand side of the lorry, there was a sliding window. It was at this window that the customer stood and gave their shopping list.

"The salesman was Paddy Hughes from Treenoughter and he had his seat on the left-hand side of the sliding window. The driver was Sean Devaney from Ballina. The two were complete opposite characters. Paddy was a serious gentleman, taking his accounting and sales job very serious, while Sean, who was young and single at the time, was very jovial.

"Paddy wrote each item into his day sales book with a 'puce' pencil. The 'puce' pencil was

an indelible pencil and the colour of the lead was a purple/blue shade. The writing could not be erased and did not fade like the ordinary pencil would. Neither did it leak as an ink pen would.

"Sean packed the shopping into the bag or box that the housewife brought to carry the goods. If there was a bag of flour on the order, Sean would jump out, open the double doors at the back of the lorry and carry it on his shoulder to the house for her, reminding her of the great service she was getting.

"At the time, there was no shortage of free range eggs. Each household had poultry and the hens played a big part

in providing for the family. The eggs were on the menu daily (which I hated as they made me sick and at that time there was little known about allergies and I was allergic to eggs). My mother, God rest her, was very sympathetic towards me and regretted that I could not eat eggs as they were considered to be very nutritious.

"The travelling shop bought eggs from the customers. The day before the travelling shop would come, the eggs had to be washed and cleaned for sale. The eggs were washed in tepid water. Baking soda was used to take out any soda on the eggs. It was a job given to the children, especially the girls. It was time consuming and care had to be taken not to break the shells. There were many eggs broken during this cleaning job, but they did not go to waste. Cakes and pancakes were made with the cracked eggs.

"The eggs would be brought out to the travelling shop and Sean would count the eggs and place them in containers. The value of eggs was deducted from the shopping bill. They were a great source of income for the housewife and she always had the responsibility of the fowl, which she took pride in.

"The eggs were bought per dozen. Duck eggs were not in the same league as hen eggs and were not in demand. But in order to make up a dozen, an odd duck egg was slipped in.

"But Sean Devaney would always pass a sarcastic remark, letting the housewife know she was not "pulling the wool" over his eyes. Comments such as "The ducks are laying well these times" or "your hens are laying big fine eggs, Mam" (duck eggs are bigger than hen eggs).

"We didn't get sweets every day back then so the highlight of the travelling shop was the one penny lollipops that we looked forward to. If we were very good or Mam was in a generous mood, we go a three-penny bar of chocolate. It was a thin bar of chocolate about three inches long. It had a purple wrapping paper and there was also a silver paper to keep the delicious chocolate fresh. The currency in those days was pounds, shillings and pence.

"Another novelty was loaf bread. During the week it was all homemade brown or soda bread so a fresh white loaf with lashings of strawberry or blackcurrant jam was a big treat.

"The travelling shop was a great amenity for the country people. Their weekly supply of groceries was brought to their door. This service continued up to the early 1970s. By then, supermarkets were coming on stream and could offer better value for money. The travelling shop was expensive by comparison and could not offer the same variety of goods. Employment in the local towns was on the increase and cars and vans were being purchased. The local shops were losing business to the competition in the towns. The days of the travelling shop were coming to an end. By the late 1970s, they were a thing of the past with fond memories left in the minds of those who looked forward to their weekly call."

Cattle dealers and farmers gather at Ballina Mart in 1960. It was the first TB-tested mart in the West of Ireland. Picture: Western People Archive



Pet pig would run to meet Granny after school



Reporter: **CONOR CUNNINGHAM, (age 10) St Brendan's NS, Loughrea, Co Galway**
Interviewing: **His grandmother Mairead McDonagh**

HI, my name is Conor Cunningham and I interviewed by granny Mairead McDonagh and, hey wait, this isn't new, it's when she was younger. And back then she was a Colleran. She lived with 11 other people with only one toilet in a big house on a farm.

They had lots of animals. She was always on the farm but then she also walked two miles to and from school but on the way home their pet pig Curly always ran down the street to them after school.

Her three brothers Noel, Brendan and Cyril and cousin Enda Colleran were mad into Gaelic football and Enda played in the three-in-a-row Galway team.

One day Mairead came home from Croke Park and saw their turkeys on the roof.

She also brought their goats on walks.

I forgot to tell you that she grew up in Galway. I'm also from Galway. Back to now, she is living in Ballina, Co Mayo, with husband Christy (who I'm sorry I didn't interview but my granny wanted me to do this) and two hens.

Well, stay safe everyone.
The End.

When there were only two channels on the television

Reporter: **FINLEY JOSEPH FRANKLIN (age 9), St Peter's NS, Snugboro**
Interviewing: **His Grandmother Daphne Davidson**

I AM writing about my Nanny Daphne who now lives in London. I'm going to tell you how life was when she was younger. I'm writing about her because she tells me good stories.

My Nanny Daphne was born in Omagh, Northern Ireland, in 1948. She is now 71 years old. Her family lived in

a small terraced house with no electricity and no fridge. They used the fire to keep warm. They used oil lamps or candles to light the place up. They would bath in the tin bathe in front of the fire.

All their food was homemade. She made the best chips and cake.

For fun, they played skipping, hide and seek, snakes and ladders, snap and draughts. She liked to listen to music and as she got older she liked to go dancing to Irish showbands.

Once a week she would go to the neighbours to watch the kids shows on television. Nan was eight years old when she got a television. There were only two channels.

For sport, they played badminton, tennis and soccer. My Nan played table tennis and won competitions. They also played rounders and netball.

The shops were butchers, clothes, groceries and record shops. Treats were penny chews, ice lollies or a Dairy Milk



Pilgrims pray at the foot of the statue of Our Lady at Knock Shrine on August 21, 1933.

Picture: Getty Images

There were no sun holidays in the 1950s!

Reporter: **JAMES MCKEON (age 9), Ballyvary Central NS**
Interviewing: **His grandparents Danny and Mary Brosnihan**

MY Grandad Danny was born on October 17, 1948, in Kilfea, Islandeady. My Granny Mary (nee Staunton) was born in Ballinamogue, Islandeady on March 6, 1950. They both grew up in the countryside and on farms.

Grandad went to school when he was five years old. He lived three miles from the school. Everyone had to walk to school. There were no cars like now.

There was no central heating either, just an open fire. In the winter time, there was not much heat in a big room.

Everyone in the country was self-sufficient. They grew their own vegetables and potatoes and had cows, pigs and hens. The cows were milked every morning and evening. The calves got some milk but most of the milk was brought into the house for everyone to drink.

The cream was taken off the top of the milk. Every week there was a churn made. It was the woman of the house that looked after that. The butter would be made. The milk that was left after was called buttermilk and was used for making

homemade bread, which was baked in the open fire.

There was always a pig killed in every house. Everyone had bacon, pork and rashers so no-one went hungry.

Eggs were sold to the travelling shop. It paid for the grocers, such as flour, tea, sugar, etc. People did not go to town often, only if they wanted clothes, shoes or to go to the doctors or dentists.

Transport was cycling or walking, there were very few cars. All the work was done by hand - turf was cut, hay saved, etc. Everyone had to help. There were no sun holidays.

Those were the times they lived in as children.

chocolate bar.

They walked to school every day. If they were naughty they'd get the cane as punishment.

My Nan's dad (my great-grandfather) had a car and they had five different strengths of petrol. They would go to the seaside in the summer.

As Nan got older, she went to the movies with her friends, which cost 20 or 30 pence. Nan got married at 19 and moved to London.



The strongest horse in Cortoon

Reporter: Gavin Walsh (age 12), St Joseph's NS, Killala
Interviewing: His grandmother Margaret McGuire

MY Granny has been cocooning over the time of the pandemic. I have enjoyed asking her these questions about her life when she was young.

On the farm they grew dif-

ferent vegetables such as cabbage, turnips and onions. Usually, you would have two horses but they only had one because it was the strongest horse in Cortoon. This horse was able to do all the work by himself and, incidentally, they bought the horse off my other grandad.

On the bog, they would cut the turf with the turf spade because there were no machines back then. It would be turned

and footed in the good weather. Finally, it would be put into creels which the donkey would carry home.

They had a wireless that was run by a glass battery. When it was dead you would have to walk a few miles into Killala where it would be charged there for a few shillings.

I was interested to know about when they got electricity, so I asked her and she said

"it was the day when Heaven opened up" because there was light everywhere.

When people were building a house or looking for a well they would ask grandad because he was the diviner in the area. That meant he would be able to find a well by using a branch of an ash tree in a certain shape.

I have really enjoyed asking my Granny these questions about the bygone days.

Making a cup of tea was not always an easy task

Reporter: GARETH DOYLE (age 7), St Oliver Plunkett NS, The Quay, Ballina
Interviewing: His grandmother Annie Mullarkey-Garvin

ICANNOT wait to visit my Granny and have a nice cup of tea with her. My Granny told me it wasn't always as easy to make a cup of tea when she was young. There was no electricity or running water so she had to:

1. Get water from the river in a bucket.
2. Make sure the fire was on to boil the kettle.
3. Pour the water into the kettle and hang it over the fire.
4. When the kettle boiled, add tea leaves into the teapot, pour in water and allow it to drain.
5. Pour tea into a mug.
6. Add milk, milked from cow earlier (optional)
7. Enjoy!

My Granny told me that during World War II, tea was rationed and each person only got half an ounce of tea per week, which only lasted two or three days. When it was gone, they drank coffee, milk or water.

Crossing two rivers just to get to school

Reporter: RONAN DOYLE (age 12), St Oliver Plunkett NS, The Quay, Ballina
Interviewing: His grandmother Annie Mullarkey-Garvin

MY Granny (Mam) grew up in Glencullen in North Mayo. She was the second youngest of a family of six with three brothers and two sisters. One of her brothers passed away at six years of age. Mam's mother passed away when she was only four and a half years old.

School life was very tough. You would get beaten with a cane if you didn't know something you were supposed to know. There was no such thing as playtime or break. When you finished your lunch you would go out to the bog and save the turf and other duties.

During the first years of her schooling, a man from the vil-

lage would take them to school on a horse and cart. On each side of the cart, there was a bench and you could sit on either one. For the last two years of her schooling, she had to walk four miles to school and over two rivers. A man living near the river put planks over it so they could get across, but if you slipped off and fell in you'd get wet, but no mercy was shown and you'd spend the day in soaking wet clothes.

She finished school at 14, which was normal in rural Ireland at the time. There was no word of second-level education for most. She worked on the farm alongside her father and siblings. Her two older sisters emigrated to England at that time.

Glencullen, even being a small community, had many young people, and visiting neighbours was common. Every so often there would be



Cleaning the grounds of the Augustinian Abbey in Ardnaree, Ballina in 1960 were Jimmy Casey, Tommy Ginty and Tom Forde. Picture: Western People Archive

The days of the horse and plough

Reporter: Orla Kelly (age 6), Attymass NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandfather Hughie Kelly

GRANDAD Kelly was born in Walsh Island, Co Offaly. He was the eldest in his family.

He worked on the farm. He ploughed the fields with a horse and plough. He cut turf by hand in the bog.

He married and moved to Borris, Co Carlow. He was a truck driver. He delivered coffins around the country. He was a great handball player.

Everyone gave a hand with the butter churning

Reporter: Róisín Kelly (age 8), Attymass NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandmother Della Ginley

BUTTER making was part of life for rural dwellers.

The cows were milked and the fresh milk was put into crocks (heavy, quality, big delph bowls).

The following day the cream was skimmed from the top of the milk and was put into a separate crock. This practice was repeated for a few days until there was sufficient cream to churn and make the butter.

The cream was poured into the churn. One was called the dash churn and the other was the swing churn. Granny's family had the swing churn. It was round in shape and had a han-



dle on the side. The handle was attached to a mixer inside the

churn. The person churning would keep turning the handle and the mixer inside would be eating and mixing the cream. It was hard work and everyone in the house gave a hand with the churning.

It took 20 to 30 minutes to complete the churning. By then, the cream would have turned into butter. The butter was taken from the churn with a large wooden spoon. The spoon was like a wide ladle with holes in it. The butter was salted and patted into a roll of butter with butter spades. The butter spades were again made from wood.

What was left after the butter was removed was called buttermilk. It was used for baking. It had a bitter taste and was also fed to the pigs.

Working on a bog in Bonnickon circa 1970. Picture: Western People Archive



Pictured at a Fancy Dress in the Town Hall in Ballina at Christmas 1960 were Sean Reddington and his sister from Lord Edward Street. Picture: Western People Archive

a school dance, which meant a dance would go from house to house in the area. This would go on for a week. At these dances, music was played, people played cards and stories were told.

After Christmas, someone would hold a raffle dance to celebrate the new year. Then anyone could go and there would be an added bonus to the raffle.

In her late teen years, her family moved to Shanakilla, near Bellacorick. It was much quieter with not as many youths. It had a single shop, so they often cycled to Bangor to get messages.

At 19, Mam met my Grandad at a St Patrick's Day raffle dance in Glenamoy. A year later, they got married in

Belmullet Church. That evening there was a party in Mam's house with food, music, sing-song and a barrel of Guinness and some other drink. The party went on until the early morning.

They stayed in my grandfather's house for two weeks before going on their honeymoon to England. My Granny hadn't been before and wanted to see what it was like. She worked in a sweet shop in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne for a while and helped out a local farmer.

After a few months, they returned home and bought a house in Sheskin. My Grandad continued to travel to England for the next few years to do seasonal work. My Granny (Mam) stayed home and had my uncle Paddy aged 22. They employed helpers as their family grew and my great-grandfather was a great support when my Grandad was away. He would walk three and a half miles across bog and mountain to get her supplies.

She remembers my grandfather visiting Shrataggle and his family had just bought a

radio. The first thing he did when he got home was to write a letter to a shop owner in Ballina, asking to order one. He also said to bring a few more because he thought the neighbours might be interested. The shopkeeper arrived and many hours were spent listening to the radio.

After nine years, Grandad was tired of farming and of travelling back and forth to England. He wanted to be at home and the children were now of school-going age. They decided to buy a house in Ballina.

Many thought they were foolish. But Mam saw many young people leaving rural Ireland for England. They saw Ballina had public transport services, which meant their children could go to live in a city and still come home.

Grandad was able to find better work until he retired. They never regretted leaving Sheskin. In 1961, he bought a Ford Prefect car so he could visit relatives.

Mam says she is blessed by God to have all her children in Ireland.

Better be a rabbit than go to school!

Reporter: NIAMH KERRIGAN (age 8½), Killeen NS, Louisburgh
Interviewing: Her grandfather John Tiernan

MY Granda walked to school in his bare feet, part of the journey by road, then soft bog. He started in Junior Infants when he was four years of age.

Each parent (back then) brought a cartload of turf for the open fire in the school to keep the kids warm. Each child brought a glass bottle of tea for their drink at lunchtime and left it in front of the fire so it would be nice and warm by lunchtime.

He walked to school with his

brothers and sisters and his neighbour's children too. He did not like school. He would often wish he was a rabbit because a rabbit is so carefree. He would go home to do his homework while he ate his dinner. Then he went out to help his father on the farm.

He brought bread for his lunch at school. His teachers were mainly nice, they got cross sometimes like all teachers but they were mainly nice. His schoolwork was sometimes very hard and sometimes very easy.

He was born and brought up in a thatched cottage where nowadays lives a big fat pig called Peppa. His house was pretty small, just two bed-

rooms and a kitchen. They did not have running water or electricity so they got their water out of a well. Their mother did all the cooking on an open fire.

They had a very warm and cosy house. Every night the whole family gathered around the fire and said the Rosary.

On the way to school it was usually rainy so they had to sit in their wet clothes all day long. Some people say that schooldays are the best days of your life but my Granda's weren't. He finished primary school when he was 12. He didn't go to secondary school or college. He just helped his father on the farm. He is now 72 years of age.

Nanny met the love of her life on a day trip to Mayo

Reporter: ELLA MAHEADY (age 11), Killala NS
Interviewing: Her grandmother Ann

MY Granny grew up in a small village called Mohill in Co Leitrim with her mum, dad and brother. She went to school near Mohill and played with her friends around the village.

When she was three years old, her mum got very sick with an unknown sickness (at that time) and Nanny was moved from house to house as her father had to look after her mother. Her brother had

moved away to England to get a job.

When Nanny was five her mother passed away. Nanny moved back in with her father when she was eight and carried on with her life.

When she was 15, her father remarried and Nanny got her first job in a laundry shop. She came down to Belleek in Mayo with her cousins for a day trip and saw the love of her life, Jimmy Maheady. They got together and she moved down to Mayo when she was 16 to live with Jimmy and they got married seven years later.

Going to school in the carrier of a bicycle

Reporter: Orla Kelly (age 6), Attymass NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandmother Della Ginley

ORLA is our youngest reporter at the age of six. She interviewed her Granny Della Ginley about her first day at school. This is what her Granny told her.

"I went to Currerower NS, Attymass. My Mum brought me to school on the carrier of her bicycle.

"Mrs Cunney was my teacher. The room was very big. We had wooden seats with two children at each desk. We learned Irish on the first day, e.g. bord for table.

"I started school in May. I brought brown soda bread and a bottle of milk for lunch each day. There was a big fireplace in the classroom. The fire was not lit in May. In September, each family gave a cart of turf for the fire.

"I liked school and walking to it with my friends."

The blood of an Orangeman

Reporter: Róisín Kelly (age 8), Attymass NS, Ballina
Interviewing: Her grandfather Hughie Kelly

MY Grandad was from Walsh Island, Co Offaly. His uncle was Terry Shields. He was in the Old IRA and in the first class of the new Garda Síochána.

He was shot on the Donegal border and would have died but got a blood transfusion from an Orange RIC officer. He lived.



Members of the Bangor Erris branch of the Irish Countrywomen's Association (ICA) celebrate their fifth anniversary in 1960. Picture: Western People Archive

Grandad's family were deported to Siberia from Latvia

Reporter: SILVA JOYCE (age 10), Ballyvary NS
Interviewing: His grandfather Guntis Kažotnicks

MY Grandad, Guntis Kažotnicks, was born in Debele, Latvia on January 21, 1933. He was christened in Džkstes Church. He lived with his Mum, Dad, Grandad and Granny in a farm called 'Kšiš'. He had a dog called Džimis.

There were cows, a bull, sheep, hens, pigs, ducks and horses on the farm. They grew wheat, barley, potatoes, peas and sunflowers.

My Grandad had a friend, Kristaps Cimermanis. He lived in a farm one kilometre away. They used to walk across the fields to play with each other. In the winter, they skied across.

At Christmas time, they had a very tall Christmas tree in their house. The tree was brought home by a sledge from the forest.

The family went visiting their relatives in Tukums by train and a sledge pulled by horses.

My Grandad was in school only once to look around. He was supposed to start school that autumn, but the family was deported to Siberia by Soviet officials. They ate a lot of nettle soup as there was nothing else to eat. My Grandad had to start working when he was 12. After 16 years, aged 24, he was allowed to return to Latvia.

Eating sweets in the 'fourpence seats' in Ballina's cinemas

Reporter: Ronan Doyle (age 12), St Oliver Plunkett NS, The Quay, Ballina
Interviewing: His grandmother Una Doyle

MY Granny was born in August 1944 in Ballina, Co Mayo. Life was a little easier in the town than it was in the country. There was no television at the time, only the radio. Luckily for her, electricity had arrived in Ballina. She remembers listening to a soap on the radio called The Kennedys of Castleross.

The children played marbles, shop, skipping and hopscotch. At night they told each other stories. During the day, when not at school, they helped their mother around the house.

Summers were spent in Ballycastle. They would get the

bus to Ballycastle and then walk the three miles to her grandparents' farm. There they would explore Ballycastle and help out on the farm.

For Granny, unlike my other grandparents, school was only a few 100 metres up the street. They came home from school for lunch every day. Secondary school then came and she did her Leaving Cert in 1962.

Highlights growing up included going to the cinema. At the time, Ballina had two cinemas, the Savoy and the Estoria. If you had sixpence you could sit in the 'Six or fourpence seats'. Usually, she would sit in the fourpence seats and spend twopence on sweets.

There was a swimming pool in the River Brusna where the youngsters of Ballina would mingle. Other events to be

looked forward to were the Corpus Christi procession and May Day celebrations, which included the Maypole Dance, and Bonfire Night in June.

After the Leaving Cert, Granny taught for a year in the convent as a Junior Assistant Mistress (J.A.M.)

In 1963, Granny's sister got married in England and she travelled to London for the wedding. While there, she applied and got a job in Lloyd's Bank in the city centre. The following year she returned home to Ireland and got a job in the offices of supermarket chain H. Williams.

Granny and Grandad recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in the company of all her family. She cannot wait until we can all get together again when Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.

Hot potatoes in pockets to keep the hands warm

Reporter: CIARA MCKEON (age 7), Ballyvary NS
Interviewing: Her grandfather Jimmy McKeon

MY grandad Jimmy McKeon was born on December 31, 1949, in Currane, Ballyvary. At the age of four, his parents moved to Redhill, Ballyvary. He started school in Straide at the age of six.

His dad was a shoemaker. He and his brothers helped by picking up the shoes that needed to be fixed. The next day they would drop the shoes back to the people.

The price for ladies' half-sole and heel was three shillings and sixpence, men's cost seven shillings and sixpence. Sometimes they would get extra for a lollipop or a gobstopper.

They walked three and a half miles to school every day. From April until the summer holidays, they would not wear shoes. In frosty weather, they would have hot potatoes in their pockets to keep their hands warm. When they got near the school they would eat them.

His first teacher was Mrs Crean. They had to bring a sod of turf to keep their classroom warm. At lunchtime, they would play rounders. There were 22 people in his class. He is one of ten brothers. He is the fifth oldest.



Performers in Ballina pantomime Little Red Riding Hood in January 1962 when the Moy Drainage project (see sign) was in full swing. Picture: Western People Archive



Telephonists at work in Ballina Post Office at Christmas 1960. Picture: Western People Archive

Fun sports days in the village

Reporter: SÁRÁN MacAODH (age 8), Gealscoil Bhéal an Átha
Interviewing: Her grandmother Ann (King) Salter

NANA grew up on a farm in Co Wicklow. They had sheep, cows, pigs, chickens and turkeys. They also had cats and dogs. Nana had a pony called Bobby.

Nana had to collect water from the well before school every morning and bring the cows in for milking.

Nana walked three miles to school every day. She remembered fun local sports days in the village and sheepdog trials.

Nana says her mother looked after the gardening and growing of vegetables like potatoes, carrots and cabbage.

Nana went to Jervis Street to train to be a nurse. She met granddad there. He was training to be a doctor.



Playing marbles and conkers and feeding the 'old man of the roads'

Reporter: ISABELLA JENNINGS (age 13), Knock NS
Interviewing: Her grandparents

Mayo Day this year was different to any other we have witnessed before. We are in the midst of a pandemic, one that I at the age of 13 have never witnessed in my lifetime.

I spoke with my grandparents to see if they had ever witnessed a pandemic before. They were born in the 1940s and hail from Co Kildare, although they now live in Co Mayo where I myself am proud to come from.

I was interested to know how they lived when they were my age, so I began to talk to them, at a safe distance, as they are over 70 and have to cocoon to protect themselves from this Covid-19 virus. I found out that life was very different compared to how we live today.

My granddad grew up in a small village in a family of 13, whilst my granny lived on a farm with a family of 11. Most of the food they ate they grew in their own gardens. Potatoes and vegetables would have been the most important food they grew. All of the bread they had was homemade and my granddad's family sourced milk from the local farmer and meat from the local butcher. Any fruit they had was from a neighbour's orchard.

Granny was lucky enough to be raised on a farm and her family had their own milk. They also had chickens and turkeys, which they reared and ate. I must say I wasn't too impressed when I heard this; it's not something I would like to do.

My granny told me Sunday was a special day and they always had a homemade currant cake. She looked forward to this each week.

They both had dogs, two each, and they were a great

comfort to them. I was delighted to hear this. I now know where my love of dogs came from. I have three myself.

School was very tough in those days, especially for my granddad. The teachers were very cross and would slap you on the hands often. Granddad didn't like school and certainly didn't like to be slapped so he left at the young age of 14, which was acceptable in those days. He went to work instead and I am proud to say he is still a hard worker to this day.

My granny was very different. She loved school and from listening to her I can well imagine she was very clever. Maths was her favourite subject. She stayed in school up to the age of 18 and then went to work in Dublin.

I was interested to know what games they played when they were younger, as we have so much now to entertain us, and I wondered how on earth they weren't bored. Granddad loved to play Cowboys and Indians, that was his favourite game; he also played football, marbles and conkers, and he climbed trees for fun.

Granny loved nothing more than to spend hours reading a book and gazing at the sky under the big oak tree that stood on her farm and which is still there to this day. I might add, she also liked skipping and dancing, and sometimes she played marbles too.

They always walked to school, carrying a sod of turf for the fire because everyone had to bring one in those days. They also walked to church on a Sunday.

My granddad's family had one bicycle, which they all shared, so I'm sure you can imagine how many times he got to use that. They also had a car, which was used on Sundays to go for drives.

When my granny was 14 she got a bike and cycled everywhere. Her family had a car and a truck, which they used for the bog and to go to the markets.

Summers were long and spent in the bog. My granddad worked hard at the turf, my granny not so much; she loved to spend the day playing and collecting flowers.

There was no electricity until the 1950s and no televi-

sion until 1964. How would we cope nowadays with no television, I wonder?

Most of the clothes they wore were hand-me-downs from older siblings, but my granny was very fortunate to have an aunt living in America who sent home parcels with clothes for all the family. Granny was also one of the youngest, so was lucky to have an older sister who would buy her clothes as she was working in a big house as a servant.

Christmas was a special time, although there were no big Christmas trees or fancy lights like today; they only had a candle, which was lit for the occasion. There was no crib or Christmas tree until the 1960s or early 1970s.

One thing they always looked forward to was the Christmas box they always received from the shopkeeper. This contained sweets, biscuits and other nice things. If girls were lucky they would get a doll for Christmas and boys would get a cap gun. From listening to them, I could tell they had happy memories of their childhood, even though they may not have got much

compared to what we get for Christmas today.

Granny's family would often have an 'old man of the roads' call into their farm and they would feed him and give him a mug of tea before he went on his way. They also had Traveller children calling each evening for milk, which they would give them for free. The Traveller women would call selling bits from a basket, like needles and threads and other items.

I was amazed by some of the stories my grandparents told me. They lived a simple life and it makes me wonder about how we live today and all we have at our fingertips.

Unfortunately, my grandparents were among the many who had to emigrate for work in the early 1980s, but thankfully they returned home eventually, unlike so many Irish abroad.

I am so glad I spent this time talking to my grandparents. I have learned so much from them and hopefully next year for Mayo Day we will all be together again and not talking to each other through a glass door.

Life on a Mayo island long ago

Reporter: DONNACHA WALSH (age 10), Currabaggan NS, Knockmore
Interviewing: His grandmother Kathleen Walsh (nee Barrett)

ON Sunday, May 10, 2020, I interviewed my Nanny by Skype. This was due to Covid-19 restrictions and my Nanny having to keep safe.

I asked Nanny how she was coping with isolation. Nanny told me that it reminded her of her mother's life on Glass Island in the early 20th century. Back then, isolation was a normal part of island life in rural Ireland.

I then listened to Nanny as she told me stories about her mammy's life on Glass Island.

My great Nanny Celina Barrett (nee Madden) was born on Glass Island in Lough Conn in 1913. She had five sisters and three brothers. At that time, there were five families living on Glass Island.

Great Nanny attended Pontoon National Schol. Her teacher's name was Mrs Hanley. The daily trip to school was made by boat. However, when the weather was bad she could not attend school and had to homeschool

just like me today.

Great Nanny had jobs to do after school, for example, helping in the vegetable garden, orchard and the bog, which was located on another island.

The people would row into Knockmore Bay for Sunday Mass and to buy groceries in Maloney's Shop. The postman would stand at a location they called Glaslough. He would wave a flag to indicate if there was post for the island.

Great Nanny would go to dances in Rutledge's Hall, near Currabaggan. I do not love to go to a dance just yet, but I would like to go back to Gaelic football training to meet my friends and play.

My great nanny left the island when she was 16. Sadly, in January 1953, my great-grand nanny Kate and her son Tommy Madden left the island for the last time and isolation was no more!

When the restrictions are lifted, Nanny and I will visit Glass Island and take a walk down memory lane to see all the old houses and the monastery. Nanny and I love living at home.

Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin.



Thatching a roof on a cottage in the West of Ireland in 1950.

Picture: Getty Images



Young boys enjoy a game of road bowling in an Irish country lane.

Picture: Getty Images

Schools Folklore Collection captured a wealth of Ireland's oral history

Through The Ages is modelled on the remarkable Schools Folklore Scheme of the 1930s. Historian **Jim O'Connor** explains the background to that scheme.

One of the largest and most important folklore archives in the world was created through the Schools Folklore Scheme of 1937-38. It was originally to run from 1937 to 1938 but was extended to 1939 in specific cases. The scheme resulted in the creation of over half a million manuscript pages, which are generally referred to as 'Bailiúchán na Scol' or 'The Schools' Collection'.

The School's Scheme was devised by Séamus Ó Duilearga (1899-1980) from Co Antrim and Seán Ó Súilleabháin (1903-1996) from Co Kerry of the Irish Folklore Commission and carried out in co-operation with the Department of Education and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation. The success of the scheme relied heavily on the co-operation of the teachers. It represented one of the greatest initiatives ever undertaken in the field of folklore collecting. Roughly 100,000 children, sixth class pupils aged between 11 and 14, in 5,000 primary schools were involved in the task of seeking out and recording for posterity material dealing with a wide range of subjects relating to Irish folk tradition. The Commission set out the topics for investigation in a small handbook titled *Irish Folklore and Tradition* which was distributed to each school. The booklet was compiled by Seán Ó Súilleabháin, the IFC's archivist, and was issued to the principal teacher of each primary school. It contained

instructions as to how the scheme was to be carried out. In the foreword he wrote:

"The collection of the oral tradition of the Irish people is a work of national importance."

On selection of a topic, under the guidance of their teachers, the students would interview mainly their parents, grandparents or, any elderly member of their locality who could assist them in gathering the information. Collecting from family and neighbours was done after school hours. It was undertaken at a time when television and the internet were off

in the distant future and the seanachie, though in decline, was still part of the furniture in parts of Ireland. It was a time when entertainment was provided by the fireside through the telling of tales when the final task of the day was to "smoor" the fire. This was done by burying a sod of turf in the ashes to ensure there was a spark for fanning in the morning. The practice was accompanied by the belief that it kept the fairies happy.

The study investigated folk tales and folk legends, riddles and proverbs, songs, customs and beliefs. Holy wells, cures, games, buried treasure, pas-

sages, as well as descriptions of traditional work practices and crafts – e.g. old methods of farming and many other topics were covered. Occasionally several different versions of the same story from the same area appear in the transcripts, highlighting the diversity of the oral tradition. The material was written first into the children's homework copybooks and then re-written into the larger official notebooks that had been distributed for the scheme. The children's handwriting is in itself a notable feature of the original scripts. Approximately 740,000 pages (288,000 pages

in the pupils' original exercise books; 451,000 pages in bound volumes) of folklore and local tradition were compiled. The collection covers each of the 26 counties – it did not extend to Northern Ireland – the material recorded, from many parts of Ireland is in both Irish and English.

The Mayo section of the collection contains over 1,000 transcripts on a wide range of topics from the United Irishmen to local traditions customs and cures. It contains, for example, 43 stories connected with 1798 and 99 stories associated with witches. In among these are tales of 'The Night Of The Big Wind', 'The Strange Man Seen At Every Crossroads', 'Spinning At Night – The Hags', and 'Going For Poitin - Led Astray By The Fairies', to name but a few.

It is a fascinating unique record of the rich tapestry of our cultural past. Former director of the National Folklore Collection, Séamas Ó Catháin, has described it as "a snapshot of the state of Irish tradition across the greater part of Ireland, a long exposure... taken over a period of eighteen months". It is also "representative of a wide body of lore and custom as varied and diverse as the communities from which it was originally gathered".

The following excerpt is an example of the lore included in the collection. This is the story of how Swinford got its name:

"In the olden times there dwelt on the hill of Kilbride a witch who was remarkable for the good deeds she performed for those to whom she was well disposed and for the good spirit she displayed towards others, particularly the favourites of the fairies in the neighbouring fort at Rathscanlon. She had been a queen of the fairies but having been deposed and turned into a

Local Place-Names

How Swinford got its name.

In the olden times there dwell on the hill of Kilbride a witch who was remarkable for the good deeds she performed for those to whom she was well disposed and for the good spirit she displayed towards others, particularly the favourites of the fairies in the neighbouring fort at Rathscanlon. She had been a queen of the fairies but having been deposed and turned into a witch, she nursed her resentment and eagerly availed herself of every opportunity to give trouble to her old friends.

The witch was sitting outside her hut one day compounding some of her evil potions. She had accomplished part of her task and had set the liquid on one side to cool while she proceeded with her work. A neighbouring farmer's pig, out on a foraging expedition, came a nosing round as pigs will do. He approached the hut and upset the devil's brew which had been set out to cool. The witch uttered a yell of rage, jumped up and seizing her wand rushed in pursuit of the pig, which had scampered off



Pupils from Lowpark National School, Charlestown, pictured in 1937

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"Across the ditch and through the hedge the witch followed the pig. Soon the pig grew tired and the witch was gaining on him. Along the bank of a little river, which flowed nearby, the poor grunter rushed, seeking an opportunity to cross and put the running water between them. At last, he espied a spot which seemed to provide a chance of escape and stopped for a moment before crossing. The pause was fatal for the witch,

coming up while he stood on the bank, struck him with her wand, and turned him into a stone. It fell forward into the bed of the river and has remained there until the present time, and has given to the town its name "Béal-átha na Muidce" or the "mouth of the Ford of the Pigs."

The result of the Schools'

Scheme was the Schools' Manuscripts Collection, a body of material that extends to more than 500,000 manuscript pages. A significant part of this collection is bound and paginated in 1,128 volumes; the remainder is contained in a large collection of the school copybooks in which the bulk of the raw material was origi-

nally taken down by the children. The Schools' Scheme also contributed to the further development of the workings of the Folklore Commission as a number of its later volunteers were school teachers from throughout Ireland who had developed an interest in, and an understanding of, folk-lore traditions in their local areas as a direct result of their participation in the project. The Schools' Manuscripts Collection is now preserved in the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin. The returns from each county are available under licence on microfilm in most of the respective county libraries throughout Ireland. The index to the Schools' Folklore collection held on Microfilm at Mayo County Library is accessible at www.mayolibrary.ie.

The complete school's collection is also accessible online, at www.duchas.ie, where it is possible to view the original scripts from the schools. The scripts are gradually being

transcribed by groups of volunteers under the Volunteer transcription project. This project has opened up the collection to a broader audience as the stories in Irish are also translated.

The material in the collection is of value and interest to all. It is an incredible source for research scholars not only in the field of folklore but also in the area of local history and genealogy. It goes without saying that it has a particular interest for the family and friends of those associated with the original contributors and collectors. The collection is an important part of our social, political, and cultural history. Through this scheme, communities were brought together and into contact with the many aspects of their local folk traditions. The scheme captured the oral history of a generation for future posterity at a time of great cultural change in Ireland. While some of the stories are written with a certain amount of innocence and informality, others are highly entertaining. As it is with all folklore there is a kernel of truth in there somewhere in each story. It is up to us to find it.



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