

Interviewee: Michael Fitzgerald

Interviewers: Maura Cronin, Ruth Guiry Cagney

Clarina

8<sup>th</sup> May 2015

Ruth and Michael: Social chit chat

Maura: now we are ready to roll, so, we will start the official bit here. Hope to god now, I'm paranoid about machinery in case it wouldn't be working.

Ruth: you have a red light on Maura here.

Maura: I have

Chair chatter

Ruth: ooops sorry

Maura: ya we look right. we look like we are working, hopefully. Am, and I'll put on this fella as well, just to make sure. So, I'll just start the official bit and then we'll, we'll am, start

Michael: the Doran's, where I lived on the Barrack Road, they used to sell the fish,

Ruth: did they? Doran's?

Michael: ya. Sixty years ago, we'd go down on a Friday, and, my mam would have five shillings, and you'd get anything, flounders, fluke, eels, trout, anything.

Maura: my god, where was that again Michael?

Michael: down the Barrack Road.

Maura: Barack Road. Hold on a second until I just introduce us, this is Michael Fitzgerald, from Clarina, well of Clarina, formally Barack Road, and am, we are talking to him about the whole Shannon reed cutting and fishing and this is Maura Cronin and Ruth Guiry, and I think we can go back to what you were saying about the Doran's Michael

Michael: the Doran's, ya they used to sell the fish, they fished the Fergus and bring the fish in (interference) for, and everything was done by hand, they was no ... at that time, and they would come up then by pony, and sell the fish then out of the house. they would come here to Clarina, come to all over, and all varieties of fish, they had a big variety of fish.

Ruth: umm

Michael: and they was another fisherman then, Jack Thunder? Fitz, they lease all the lighthouses in Ringmoylan, and Ballydolin (?)

Ruth: ok

Michael: ..all the way over, and one day, they, he had three children, and the son was handing up the dad the oil, for the lighthouse, and the child slipped in, and ??? came down after handing up his dad the oil, but they used to fish down there, down the Fergus river and down to abbeysheehan (?) and they would come back up and they would bring, turf with they, and they would bring it to Currans, and there was a swinging bridge in Currans, they would take the turf off the aul Currans and there was a weigh bridge at Currans where Mrs Curran used to have her car, and they would weigh the turf there then for a tonne or half tonne of turf, and then that boat would go up then with flour and meal, up to the manor in Adare, and Kelly was there, the man that would work the wench, so he would open the bridge, and let you up, and he would close it then, and you would have people coming from town then would pay him so much for a toll bridge, there at the Ferrybridge, there was great history there

Ruth: ok

Maura: and how far, would that be a long time ago, Michael?

Michael: my dad remembers it well, that (cough) would be 80 or 90 year ago, they lived solely off the water, and in Newtown, the fishermen 60 years ago, they left the cement factory, to go fishing permanently and cut the reed there was so much money on the water that time. ya

Maura: so fellas that would be working in the factory actually...

Michael: ya they all fished, we all fished as youngsters, it was pocket money for us like,

Ruth: right

Michael: so, it was nice

Maura: and where would you fish now when you were small

Michael: down, in Newtown

Maura: whereabouts like, I wouldn't know it that well

Michael: you'd go down through Corrie O'Brien's, to the boat bit right in there in Corrie O'Brien's, they were two, one was for shore fishing, and the other was for net fishing there on the water like, when you walked along the mud with one leg you know and the boat would be outside and you would bring it in, the other you were outside on the estuary fishing,

Maura: get ya get ya get ya...

Michael: and Coonagh, you'd be looking across at Coonagh there.

Ruth: ok... and how

Michael: and its lovely there..

Ruth: and how did you get involved Michael?

Michael: Pardon?

Ruth: and how did you get involved?

Michael: I just ah, met the local people I went to school with here, and they would come down, you'd go down as a young fella, and you would clean out the boat, and, and you would be an apprentice to them and they would show you what to do, how to pull the boats, make up the nets and that.

Ruth: okay...

Maura: um um ummm

Michael: they were very helpful, the old people, you know, and the farmers were great as well to let ya in across...

Ruth: ...across the fields?

Michael; ...fields, and it was great, and it was a few pound for us, and you'd get a fish to bring home as well... so it was nice

Ruth: your mum would be delighted, and was your dad involved?

Michael: my dad, no. he worked in the cement factory with Tommy Cliffe like

Ruth: ya ya.... so, you just got involved by doing down

Michael: working with the locals

Ruth: very good... and what exactly did you do Michael

Michael: I walked the mud, and I pulled the boat as well, like, help out

Maura: umm...and was, what kind of a boat was it Michael?

Michael: a gandalow

Maura: ok

Michael: ya, t'was, a standard boat, like, they made their own boats and repaired their own boats, ya they were fantastic

Ruth: umm ummm, and what did you have to wear?

Michael: oh nothing, only just, you would go barefoot if you didn't have wellingtons,

Ruth: would you?

Michael: waders, or, you take off your shoes and walk, the mud was soft you know,

Ruth: ok

Michael: you would walk along the ground, and you would have a pole then, a timber pole, and you stopped then, and they came in around in a circle and then you caught the fish for the dinner..

Ruth: ok

Michael: ...so then you brought the fish into the boat when you were walking on the mud?

dog barks

Michael: but it was lovely like

Maura: right... so like you...there is somebody coming is there?

Michael: that's Richard

Maura: that's grand...

5.47mins \*Irrelevant social conversation until 10.09min

Maura: no, we were just saying to you there Michael about a stick, that you would have a stick, and you would put in the fish, explain that a bit more now...

Michael: it was a pole at the end, and you would have a rope off it,

Maura: ya?

Michael: so, you pull back the pole and it takes? the rope then,

Ruth: ya

Michael: and your net was as good as that then, there was lead on the bottom,

Maura: ok

Michael: and the top was timber, so the lead kept it a float, kept it down.

Maura: get ya

Michael: and you'd have the depth of your depth gauge to let your net down with the mud like ya know

Maura: ok...and what kind of fish were you catching?

Michael: salmon...

Maura: salmon...

Michael: pale(?)

Maura: pale?

Michael: young salmon would be pale, trout, flounders, fluke, we'd get a lot of fluke in a, flat fish,

Maura: ya... somebody was asking us now, and I wouldn't have a clue myself but she was doing some study about fish, and she was saying to us to ask people if they ever met a thing called a Pollen? now not a Pollock, a p-o-l-l-a-n?

Michael: ya they're there...

Maura: you did meet them, did you?

\*signal interference\*

Michael: ya ya ya

Ruth: what, were the different to?

Michael: there were ya you would get them way out

Maura: ok

Michael: ya if you were down around the Fergus River,

Maura: ok

Michael: and down the labashe(?) then

Maura: ok then ok, and there they different to salmon?

Michael: they were ya, a different flavour.

Maura: were they?

Michael: ya

Maura: ok

Michael: Salmon is rich like, tis an expensive dish you know, seven pounds a pound,

Maura: is it?

Michael: ya, we'll say the licence is gone here, but we have a holiday home now in Ballybunion, and we go in there into Ballyheigue and the Cashel River, and the people are waiting there for the boat to come in

Maura: ummmm

Michael: but they do it different in the Cashel River because...we'd say you'd have, three men on the shore and the boat would come in, the three men would catch the net,

Maura: ummmm

Michael: and they would bring it in and all help out. Next boat that comes in, they help as well, the workers at sea,

Maura: get ya

Michael: whereas here you do your own thing here like, there would be three in the boat

Ruth: ok

Michael: they would one fella pulling in, two maybe, one on the floor, ya know,

Maura: ok

Ruth: uh hum

Michael: so, they work as a team in Kerry, like

Maura: get ya, get ya, get ya

Michael: ya, but am...

Maura: ok

Ruth: and did you fish the whole-time Michael? like, when did you start in the morning?

Michael: I started as a child, a young fella, 17 or 18

Ruth: ya?

Michael: fisheries...

Ruth: but like, was it like, had ye certain, weeks or months or...

Michael: oh ya yes, you had your season and we will say when you were a youngster you were inside in the boat, just cleaning up the boat,

Maura: ummm

Michael: you know, you saw what was going on then and you got wise you know,

Maura: ya ya

Michael: but am, the Doran's now, they would fish all the Fergus, they would pull a boat down for miles, and t'was hard work like you know, on the father and two sons.

Maura: ya

Michael: but they lived, they never ah, they never ah, (???) 12.47mins) they fished off the water, and when they closed the Barrack Road, they put another road there for the fishermen, another road in, in (???) 12.56mins), that's where I was going to show ye now, there is another road down there

Maura: oookkkay

Michael: and that was for the people of the Barrack Road, including myself, we were the last house on the Barrack Road, on the left

Maura: get ya

Michael: and Barry's were on the right, there were champion jockey, Ron Barry, and then Scott's, they had a house down there and they got flooded, and they moved to Kilkee, Scott's, and I met Mrs. Scott. I don't a video, the Barrack Road they called it, 'Last of the Barrack Road',

Ruth/Maura: ummmm

Michael: And ah, they let me into the cement factory into the quarry, and we took a photograph of the quarry, a video of the quarry, like, and the blasts...

Maura: ah right...

13.32 mins Michael: ...down to Scott's, but I went into dean in Scott's restaurant to get Dean, and I said to him, I said him, Mrs. Scott, you were a neighbour of ours one time, she was an old lady, and we had a lovely chat with her,

Maura: ya ya

Michael: but it was very popular that time, the Barrack Road like ya know

Maura: and was there a lot of people living down there?

Michael: oh god there were big families there actually I am in the historic society in Mungret

Maura: ummm

Michael: and there was a lady doing research on Mungret there last week,

Maura: ummmm

Michael: and t'was beautiful, and I asked her could I get a copy of it, but it went back to a market in Mungret, 300 years ago, and the first thing on the market was all goat, cow, cattle, horse, hides,

Maura: ummm

Michael: skins, that was the first thing, and the second thing was all eels, big baths of eels,

Ruth: oh god

Maura: go way

Michael: the next was all salmon

Michaels wife: toilet is in there if anybody needs,

Ruth: thank you

Michael: Salmon was next, and then they had hay, and this man was in between the shafts of a small little donkey's car,

Maura: umm

Michael: and there was a wind of hay above on it and his wife was pushing it, and they would come to the barrack road and they would buy the fish and stuff, in by boat, and take it out of Mungret then,

Maura: get ya

Michael: and that's our history there about Mungret

Maura: my god

Michael: we were there a few weeks ago and they had a gold find, in Mungret, and they had one in Ballydoole (?), where there got nuggets of gold, they'd bring the gold in, and they cut it into little bars, and they buy the land with it. it came from England like

Maura: ummm

Ruth: ok

Michael: (unclear) have you ever been up that end of the (unclear)?

Ruth: ummm, I don't think so`, no no..

Michael: Mungret college? uh its nice now. Dwyer's.

Ruth: ok

Maura: ah yesss, yes that's right

Michael: Gerry Dwyer's...And Nessian O'Donohue, (unclear) they would be very heavily involved. its lovely now, and you would have it there on a Tuesday night, an hour,

Ruth and Maura: ummmm

Michael: and there would be, there would be a teacher there,

Maura: ummm sure ya

Michael: and there is a video would stop then and explain everything and then all the local people would ask questions, you know

Maura; ya, ya,ya...but it was a big, like the Barrack Road like was, like its only so long now isn't it? its cut off?

15.40mins Michael: oh that's all, well`, part of the Barrack Road was the main road to Limerick

\*background noise\*

Michael: when you'd come, when you'd come, I'd say, out over the Ferrybridge

Ruth: ummm

Michael: this was all the, here, this was all the old road over to Hourigans, there was a little house there with white wash house along (?)

Maura: yeah

Michael: the (builders?) road (unclear) but that's, there is a galvanise gate there now where that's a garden now long ago, walking their dogs,

Maura: ummmm

Michael: Hourigans, right down at the bottom of that then was Bowlen's Cross, they did heaps houses (unclear)

Maura: ummm

Michael: not at the main road, across Bowlen's Cross, and you turn then to your right, and Jack McGann was the Barracks there, and the Barrack Road here, bicycle repair man, he just died here a few weeks ago, he was 94

Ruth: a great age

Michael: and you would come out his gate then, the main road, and up the Barrack Road, and that was the main road for Limerick, over 100 years ago

Maura: uh hummm

Michael: and there was no, no road in the Dock Road, it was all fields

Ruth: uh hum

Maura: Right

Michael: and across Rita Shanahan's pub,

Maura: yep

Michael: turn left, over to Raheen, and into Limerick

Maura: ah get ya

Michael: so it was a popular, the Barrack`, there was a Barracks there onto the main road as well.

Maura: ya...and so the people around Mungret now, say, say when you were 18,

Michael: a child yes?

Maura: I know the cement, was a big employer

Michael: oh t'was

Maura: but would a lot of them have fished then?

Michael: oh they would ya

Maura: would they?

Michael: Oh they would have all fished, ya. there was 700 people employed in, in, the cement

Ruth: ummm

Michael: and our house now and the cement factory, my dad used to be working the well drills there.. and they would be boring down, you know, and Back in Newtown, t'was all done there (unclear and unusual background noise) and he would have a cloth around his mouth you know,

Maura: oh, for the dust ya

Michael: and they would take over a little billy can of tea and a, a sandwich maybe,

Maura: go on

Michael: and we would be watching them drilling this

Maura: ya

17.22mins Michael: they would be doing 20 and 30 (phone interference) feet, Johnny Griffin was the man that used to let off the ?(jetty/jelly?) at night time,

Maura: ok

Michael: he would blast,

Maura: ya ya ya

Michael: and when he would blast, our house, would shake, we were right alongside it like

Maura: ya ya

Michael: but t'was lovely there, lovely and quiet. McCabe's, was, he owned all the land there, Willie and Hannah McCabe,

Maura: ummm

Michael: and they were married, them two,

Maura: ummm

Michael: and the O'Brien's, Tim O'Brien, he was in the lodge (background banging) unclear, he is Cooper Hill now,

Maura: ya ya

Michael: unclear and phone interference

Maura: that's right, that's right, that's right, and just, fishing now, what about reed cutting Michael?

17.54mins Michael: oh that was very popular,

Maura: tell me, tell me, something about that

Michael: ya reed cutting was very popular.

Ruth: ummmm

Michael: and they would have the sallies as well, they would cut the sallies as well inside under the metal bridge

Maura: ya

Michael: and they would come from Coonagh cutting,

Maura: ya

Michael: and they would come town to in there to the Ferrybridge, and they would come down to Newtown ? then, they are still cutting in Newtown, ? (unclear)

Ruth: are they?

Michael: and they are still cutting in Mungret, ya, the local people in Newtown still cut there

Maura: ok

Ruth: and what are they using the reeds for?

Michael: for thatching

Ruth: just thatching?

18.22mins Michael: and we have a local thatcher (dishwasher in background) and we have a local thatcher there, Roberts

Ruth: ok

Michael: he is actually thatching a house now, if you went down to Carrig, do you know where Carrig is?

Ruth: uh hum

Michael: well, there is a thatched house there, and that was the main road up to Newtown, up the back of Sarry Hackets, and his thatching there now at the minute.

Maura: ok

Michael: he is brilliant. brilliant thatcher. he is very talented.

Maura: ya - it's some skill, isn't it?

Michael: oh` tis a great skill. did you see the one in Adare?

Ruth/Maura: yeah

Michael: they have started it, it's beautiful,

Ruth: are those reeds from...around here?

Michael: they are. and they bring in reed as well from Poland. and they are bringing in thatchers from Poland.

Maura: really?

Ruth: that's unusual

Michael: yeah, yeah, it's unusual. The Hurler's outside now is done by a Polish man,

Ruth; ok

Michael: and its different culture, different status from the way here like,

Ruth: and how do you go about cutting reeds? I've never seen it or know anything about it...

19.00mins Michael: ya well you just have your big hook and you cut it but there was people in Corcamore there then, Costello's, and they used to cut it with a machine. a little, a little a, like a rotavator like, with cycl mower bar (?) in it, and it would cut, cut two 2ft six sward (all very unclear 19.24mins) and it would cut it all and you wouldn't have to bend down at all, only just to make shaves of it.

Maura: ummmm

Michael; shaves, shaves what do you call, your big bundles of it, and that

Maura: and like, supposing you went in now to cut reed, would you do, like what would you do, would you like, would you kinda, try and grab the reed?

Michael: a fist of it

Maura: a fist?!

Michael: you grab a fist of it ya,

Maura: ok

Michael: a fist of it ya and cut it

19.41mins Maura: ahh ok

Michael: but ah the machine was a, was the way forward to for the reeds.

Maura: yes

Michael: labour, saved a lot of labour.

Maura: sure, yes

Michael: and sallies then, they would cut them inside there,

Maura: where did they get the sallies?

Michael: along the sally bed, at ah, there at Cor a ri (?), there we will call it..

Maura: ooohhh yesss

Michael: there the metal bridge

Maura: I do yes

Michael: that bridge there that's dividing limerick from Mungret,

Ruth/Maura: ya ya

Michael: they cut it down there

Maura: ok

Michael: they cut hazel as well

Maura: really?

Michael: ya

Ruth: what's hazel?

Michael: Hazel is another, another timber they use

Ruth: ok

Michael: ya

Maura; the baskets and things... would they be? what would they use the sallies for?

Michael; ya, baskets as well ya

Maura: ok ya ya and like supposing okay, supposing, did you cut reeds yourself?

Michael: do ì saw them

Maura: you saw them, but say the people that `you were looking at now cutting the reed, would all of that have gone for local thatching?

Michael: oh t'would ya

Maura: would it

Michael: ya. Well they would get private buyers in too, you know

Maura: ok, and say with the sallies and the hazel, where would that go when they would have it cut?

Michael: oh they would season that and they would use that then, they use that then for thatching

Maura: oh yes, yes so for scollops, or...hollops (?unclear)

Michael: that's right, ya, right

Maura: for kind of like hair pins...to keep them tied in

Michael: right ya

Ruth: I don't know that at all

Maura: laughs, your too young

\*laughing\*

Ruth: and was this exported then or anything, or is it just for local use?

Michael: oh they exported too, you'd have buyers coming to take it abroad too.

Maura: ummm

Ruth: ok

Maura: and where would they sell it like Michael, would the buyers come to them, or would they have to bring it somewhere?

21.07mins Michael: oh the boys would come to them

Maura: ok, ok, ok ya

Michael: ya

Maura: and like would there be certain families that would reed cut more than others?

Michael: oh god there would yes

Maura: who, who would...

Michael: there would be families

Maura: who would they be, like around this area?

Michael: well you'd have Kenny's in Newtown, you'd have Byrnes, you'd have al them, the Doran's we'd say,

Maura: the Doran's...

Michael: and you'd have the Ferrybridge, you'd have Costello's were big, big cutters, back in the, and they were exporting it as well,

Ruth: ok

Michael: and Corcamore,

Maura: ok

Michael: and they were fishermen as well, the Costello's, and Burkes, here at Ferrybridge, they lived there at the side of the river there, ya...

Maura: right, and bring me back to the Doran's a minute, did you say they lived in the Barrack Road?

Michael: they did, last house on the right-hand side

Maura: right ok, ok

Michael: ya

Maura: and like, Michael, how's fishing now? I mean, is it dead, or...?

Michael: well, the lake now, you have great fishing in the lake now behind, in Curraghchase...

\*background noise from washing machine\*

Maura: ooohhhh really?

Michael: ya there's great, Bleach Lough (?) they call it there

Maura: ya?

Michael: but there's great fishing there now, trout and eel's and that like, you know

Maura: ok

Michael: but its fresh water`, but it's gone very popular and they are gone very busy there

Maura: uh uh uh

Michael: all the local lads, fish there now

Maura: ok

Ruth; and does any fishing go on down in Newtown anymore?

Michael; no,

Ruth: nothing?

Michael: no...

Ruth: ok

Michael: they are all born (?) off the water like

Ruth: and,

Michael: they bought the licenses you see, when two people, there were two people I believe didn't sell the license, like,

Maura: umm

Ruth: who were those two Michael?

22.36mins `Michael: I'd say Peter Byrnes would be one,

Ruth: ya

Michael: and, ah, Mrs. Hartigan would be another.

Ruth: ok, uh, sorry...

Maura: no go ahead Ruth, sorry...

Ruth: so, does, are they the only two that can fish down there now? or?

Michael: oh no, no one is allowed fish

Ruth: no, no one's allowed? and that's because of the licenses?

Michael: to build up the stocks,

Ruth: oh right, ok

Michael: ya but, we'll say, back in Ringmoylan, there is no fishing

Maura: umm

Michael: but, in Glen, now, we'll say, they rod fish,

Maura: ummmm

Michael: only off the pier`, you know, back there in Glen

Maura: and when did they put an end to the fishing...?

Michael: must be a few years ago, to build up the stocks

Maura/Ruth: ok

Michael: but they didn't ban them yet in Kerry off the water

Maura; oh right ya, so like what you said a good few years ago now, are you talking 20 years or...?

Michael: ah no,

Maura: ya

Michael: no, less, half

Maura: half, half that, ten years ago

Michael: ya

Maura: and, I mean, I haven't a clue like, I wouldn't know one end of a fish from another really, but, what do you think was happening with the stocks, was it that they were over fishing or was there...

Michael: overfishing, you see you had boats coming in from England as well, trawlers and that...

Maura: ahhhhh

Michael: and they were dipping into our stocks as well

Maura: right

Ruth: is this in more recent times that...?

Michael: yes

Ruth; ok

Michael: and the stocks were running low ya know

Ruth: and what about licenses Michael?

Michael: oh you had to have a license ya and your number on the boat

Maura: ummmm

Michael: or the bailiffs would come to you

Maura: ok....

Michael: ya they would be on the water with you, the bailiffs,

Ruth; ok so everybody has their own number on their boat

Michael: that's right ya

Ruth: and does that match your licence number then

Michael: that's right yes

Ruth: ok and....

Michael: you see you had to be on the water a certain time and off it a certain time and no...

Ruth: what were those times Michael?

Michael; well, you say you would have to be in the water Monday morning at 6 o'clock

Ruth: in the morning? ok

Michael: ya, and you'd be off it then say, Friday night

Maura: ummm ummmm

Michael: Friday at 12 o'clock and it depends on the tides (slightly unclear) you would be working with the tides

Ruth: ok, and where these certain months

Michael: ya there would be certain months of the year you would be fishing you see

Ruth: and what are those`, when were those?

Michael: well you see it would vary like you know... June, July, August, like you know

Ruth: are they your peak?

Michael: and they, would peak with the run of the salmon, ya know

Maura: ya ya sure,

Michael: and the run of the trout....

Maura: did you fish on the water yourself Michael

Michael: oh ya

Maura: you did?

Michael: off the boat like

Maura: tell us, what was it like?

Michael: it was lovely, ya

Ruth laughs

Maura: ya go on

Michael: ya, t'was lovely

Maura: ya

Michael: t'was tough going like, `you know, pulling the boat, and that, but you'd have great banter there and great craic, you'd meet, you'd pull in for a cup of tea or a flask of tea and you'd have a chat with everyone

Ruth giggles

Michael: and wait for your turn to go out

Maura: yeah

Michael: but it would be great craic in it like

Maura: ya

Ruth: and what do you mean waiting for your turn to go out?

Michael: you see, there could be six or seven boats all waiting along, and that man, when he is second, when his, second pole as we will call it, will hit the water, you had to turn in then like, that was his net out fully, and then he would turn in, you couldn't drift you see,

Ruth: ok

Michael: there was a group/crowd (unclear) on the water you see, they were drift fishermen,

Maura: uuumm

25.30mins Michael: and the others were shore fishermen

Ruth: right

Michael: and the shore fishermen, you walk the mud, you see, you walked along the brow of the river

Maura: ummm

Michael: so, when your second pole hit, you had to come in, so the other man was ready then to go out,

Ruth: ok

Maura: get ya, get ya,

Michael: so, the water was kept busy like

Maura: so, when say, when your second pole hit, you mean when the pole kind of came down,

Michael: came off the boat

Maura: yes, I get ya, I'm with ya

Michael: you just made a circle

Maura: get ya, I follow ya, okay, ok ya so there is kind of set of inbuilt rules...?

Michael: oh, there was built in, you had to understand them like, you couldn't go outside that area like

Ruth: ahhh

Maura: ok

Michael: and you had to respect landowners then as well like, like to close your gates and all that

Ruth: oh ya

Michael: but it was interesting like, you know, t'was lovely

Ruth: and was there three of ye working together on the boat...is that was you were saying

Michael: ya there could be two or three, there could be two one the boat you see, and one, walk along the brow of, of the river

Maura: ummm

Ruth: and you could pick who ye went with or was it just...

Michael: ah no, the one man would hire ya like,

Ruth: ya

Michael: they had their own crew so, like, Joe Skirret is an old fishermen there, he had his own crew with him there like,

Ruth: right

Michael: Frank Doran was another one back here, he had his own crew

Maura: ummm

Michael: Frank, would make a boat or repair a boat, he was very talented. but you had all them people like you know, they repair all their own...Aidan O'Brien, he was a fisherman as well

Maura: ummm

Michael: and, Jimmy Gavin, we'll say, he was a fisherman, and his wife used to take the fish into town, for the lads like

Ruth: right

Michael: it was very helpful

Maura: okay...

Michael: and there was no big fridges at that time,

Ruth: ya...

Michael: so, you'd have to get rid of them

Maura: Sure, ya, and say when them take them into town now, Michael, where would they go?

Michael: into Rene Cusack's

Ruth: ya

Maura: oh, to Cusack's

Michael: but the Cork man used to come then and buy them after that

Maura: oh okay

27.11 mins Michael: and he would weight them with his weighting scales,

Ruth: ok

Michael: ya but, I used to down to a place now in, ah, Ballyduff, and they was a little stone house they have, and they would lay they fish on their backs, inside in the stone house

Ruth: uh hum

Maura: yep

Michael: and it kept them fine and fresh

Ruth: like preserved it is?

Michael: and preserved like you know, and they would stay there for the day, like, they would be out in the heat

Ruth: and did they put anything on them?

Michael: no

Ruth: just left the fish as it was?

Michael: just, the cold, stone

Maura: ya, get ya

Michael: would keep them intact

Ruth: how long would they keep them for?

Michael: a day...

Ruth: just a day

Michael: the boys would be coming that evening for them then

Ruth: right ok

Maura: get ya yeah

Ruth: and would ye catch many fish? everyday?

Michael: oh, god ya, oh god ya, we'd catch 20, they could get 50,

Ruth: right

Michael: ya, there was a fella fishing there one day with a rod, and he say the bailiff coming and he put a potato onto the rod,

Ruth: laugh

Michael: you see, what he had for his dinner, and the bailiff came over, and he pulled up his line, and he says you're ok, so didn't the bailiff end up bringing his car, his boat like, his car, to end up have a cigarette like or whatever, and he walked along the bank, and he saw to salmon alongside the fishermen, and he said, did you catch them with the potato? no, I caught you with the potato he said,

Maura/Ruth: laughing

Michael: I caught them with the bate/bait

Maura: talk about bait, what bait would you be, I know with the nets now it's different

Michael: eel

Maura: eel...

Michael: for eel now they'd have worms like you know

Maura: okay

Michael: they would have all different baits, for different fish

\*Maura laughing\*

Ruth: and was there different ways of catching the fish bar the rod and... what you were saying with the boat

Michael: you'd have burst nets (unclear), nets as well like, you know, a net, now would allow the fish in, and he would go back to the very end of the net, I have one outside there, and at the end then he would get trapped he couldn't come out of it,

Maura; ok, like a bag then

Michael: like a bag yes,

Maura: and who made the nets Michael, where would you get the nets?

Michael: ah you bought the nets inside off of Rene Cusack, or...

Maura: ok...

Michael: or Nester's or you order them like you know, you repair them then yourself then

Maura: ok

Michael: ya, and they had ah, they had their own gut then

Maura: ok

Background noise from the washing machine

Maura: what were they made of, gut or, or...

Michael: or hemp

Maura: hemp,

Michael: but you repair them yourself, if they got caught

Maura: and what, I know it sounds like a stupid question now, but what would you do to repair them, was it sort of a bobbin, or a needle or?

Michael: a needle like

Maura: ok

Michael: you got your needle and repairs it, you stretched it out and you saw what was damaged and you put a piece into it or repaired what was there, that was very important

Maura: and would you have been shown how to do that by someone

Michael: ya, you would see the older people doing it,

Maura: would ya, ok ok

Michael: and, you made your own anchor then as well like, your own anchors were made, I often made them here

Ruth: I didn't know that

Michael: ya

Maura: I suppose being a smith, you would have the capacity to do it

Michael: ya a 5A (?) round and flatten the ends of it, and you have a T piece across it then and an eye for the rope, so they can throw that out and no matter what way it landed, the spike would catch then

30.05mins Maura: and how big would the anchor be

Michael: It would eh, be 18inches across, down and three quarter along the bar (unclear with background noise)

Maura: ok

Michael: (unclear with washing machine)

Maura: can I ask you something else there, I think, used guys from the city come down fishing this far as well

Michael: oh, god ya

Maura: where, any memories of that like, who?

Michael: ah, we'd know them coming out, we'd know the lads from the city, they fished as well, and a lot of them just, fished for say, small fish, they wouldn't be salmon fishermen, fresh fish

Maura: ok, ok

Michael: flounders and fluke and, trout and eels, that's...

Ruth: and did ye compete Michael?

Michael: ah no no, they, the Abbey fishermen would come down

Ruth: right

Michael: (all very unclear at 30.57mins) and you'd see them in Ringmoylan as well, they would be fishing there, off the pier in Ringmoylan...

\*dog bark\*

Maura: ok, yeah yeah yeah

Michael: they come there from Pallaskenry, and they come there from Askeaton

Ruth: uuummm

Michael: and Aughinish was another place they used to fish there, there was a river there heading into Aughinish

Ruth: right

Michael: and they would start there, and they would fish along

Ruth: there was loads of spots along? wasn't there?

Michael: oh, there was ya

Ruth: ya uh hum

Michael: Ringmoylan, into Askeaton and all the way back, Glen was another place there, Tarbart,

Ruth: ok

Michael: and the catchment was (unclear)

Ruth and could you go up as far as you want wanted?

Michael: oh, you could,

Ruth: you could, there were no boundaries where you...?

Michael: we'd go as far as Ringmoylan now, I remember going back with Frank Keane and ? Lyons, and Frank Keane knew the area, and he said he'd show us where to go in Ringmoylan, t'was sandy nature there, so you go to Ballydoole point, and that was your mark then like, you couldn't, you'd have to lift your anchor then, and come on to Newtown then like

Ruth: ok

Michael: but Frank Keane was an experienced fisherman, he was an old man like you know

Ruth: uh hummmm

Michael: he showed you everything, he was very good that way, and then he showed you the danger points, where your net would get caught in the rock, you know, and am, you couldn't fish that area, he'd show you where to fish, where not to fish, dangerous areas,

Maura: and like, Michael, if you're out on the, on the Shannon say, how did you kind of get your bearings you know, what?

Michael: see you took a mark,

Maura: ok

Michael: and you worked off that mark then and that was handed down say from father to son, there, the dangerous areas, that you couldn't fish in

Maura: so, say, when that old man was telling ye where to go, I know it's stupid now again, but, what would he say, would he say keep your eye on that?

Michael: ya you'd have to line up with this, you line up this, we'll say, you'll line up the cement factory you see, you line up something else with that, and you line something else up over in Coonagh,

Maura: ah yes

Michael: and the three would line up, and you'd throw out your net then, and get to work

Maura: get ya, get ya, get ya,

Michael: t'was a rule that was handed down from father to son

Ruth: yeah

Maura: is it, is it gone, or is there some of it left?

33.09mins Michael: I'd say tis gone you know, the interest wouldn't be the same as what was there before you know, and a lot of the boats are gone as well now you know, and the boat, and the boat repair men are dying off as well,

Maura: ummm ummm ummm

Michael: (unclear) but Frank Doran behind, would be another great lad like you know

Maura: ya ya ya, and what made a good boat, like from your memory, what would make a good boat now for ..

Michael: well you see, the boat builder was the man like

Maura: ummmmm

Michael: because you could get a man that would be a great boat builder, and your boat wouldn't be straight on the water it would be slightly tilted like you know

Ruth: sigh/laugh

Maura: ok

Michael: ya

Ruth: and could you all swim Michael?

Michael: no, a lot of people never swam

Maura: ummm

Michael: a lot of the fishermen couldn't swim

Ruth: right

Michael: and there was no such thing as life jackets or anything that time, you know

Ruth: and do you remember any, accidents or...

Michael: oh there were several accidents, the fella's going down there late at night with a few drinks in them...

\*Laughing\*

Michael: there was great craic down there like, and play football then waiting for the tide, so we had great craic

Maura: yeah yeah yeah

Michael; and all the lads, and Tommy Cliffe now we'd say and Normoyle and all the lads, we'd be all down there playing a game of football

Maura: laughing

Ruth: ok

Maura: not all work

Michael: not all work no

Maura: right

Michael: I was, I remember one day, we were fishing for a man, and he was very strict, and we, got two fish, and we took the bottom out of the bag, the bag to bring home your fish, so we had the bottom taken out of the bag, and we started pretending throwing all the fish in, we threw in nine and nine fell out the bottom, so he thought we had this big big bag of fish you know, so he was watching us,

Maura: laughing, oh god

Michael: there were only two

Maura: oh gee

Michael: just to annoy him

Maura: laughing, oh god.... were there characters?

Michael: oh god, great craic down there, mighty, and there were women fishing as well with their husbands

Maura: ok

Michael: ya

Maura: I didn't know that now

Michael: oh, god ya, they did ya, they were great, fantastic,

Maura: who now, would you remember?

Michael: Mrs. Burke, near aul Ferrybridge, Kit now she would be called, ya she used to be in the boat, and there was a woman in Newtown,

Ruth: uh hum

Michael: she'd be in the boat as well, there were several, help out

Maura: ya

Michael: and they were great help, and the farmers were great, they would have the gate open and that to let you in, they give the right away the fishermen would like, they say you can't block a fisherman's walk like

Ruth: right

Michael: you have to keep it open. when I worked in the OPW now, (phone interference) we'd be going into places like, and you'd have to have a licence or a permit, but they tell you that like, the OPW were the same, and a lot of them would be open you know, we'd only be going in checking the bridges and that. actually, we had a bridge over here, and tis, build over a hundred years, and I was feeding a few birds there lately, ...

35.58mins social chit chat about a bridge and man with a drone / washing machine noise until  
38.05mins

Maura: can I just bring you back for a second, do you remember you were saying someone would be coming over from Coonagh fishing as well

Michael: that's right yes,

Maura; would you all, be, kind of in the same area of the river, or would ye kind of tend to take different sides...

Michael: oh, different sections,

Maura: ok

Michael: different sections, they would all have there, and the Coonagh crowd would have their own sections like you know,

Maura: ya ya ya

38.26mins Michael: (unclear due to washing machine spinning)

Maura: ok ok

Michael: there was a little island there and they would go across to that island

Maura: ya ya

\*machine spinning\*

Maura: and Michael, let's say, go back to the gandalows for a minute, would all the gandalows be the same make or would there be a difference

Michael: there would be deeper ones, well where my father came from now, Ballydoole, there was fishermen there, and they take across the sheet of land(?) to the hull (?) in Shannon

Ruth: uh hum

Michael: the farmers, (unclear...)

Maura: ok

Michael: so the use it for transportation as well

Maura: right right

Michael: and bringing food, sort of, as well, so when fishing season is over, the boats were just laid out on it then

Maura: get ya, get ya, they were multiple uses

Maura: can I, Ruth, I was just going to say, if Michael, we probably wouldn't get to the sailors haggard today, but would you be willing to take us down...

Michael: sure I'll take ye, were only ten mins from here

Maura: alright, sure that would be grand

Ruth: I'm totally fine, ya

Michael: sure I have the car, I'll take us down

Maura: that's fine, absolutely, and before we go, because it will be harder to record down there, tell us a little about the sailor haggard, just before we go to see it

Michael: well, just, Peter Byrnes owned the land there, that fisherman,

Maura: ummm

Michael: and the two roads meet at, at the root of Newtown Hill,

Ruth: uh hum

Michael: and they got this piece of land, and all the local labour, the local tradesmen, they all got together and they did seal (?) work, and they done carpentry, and metalwork, and fantastic

Ruth: very skilled

Michael: and they built a memorial shire, and they are building a little house next to it, so you'll be able to go in there, and have a game of cards or read the paper

Ruth: that's nice

Maura: very nice

Michael: and it's going to be done in local thatch

Ruth: ok

Michael: all local tradesmen, they all helped out

Maura: fantastic

Michael: so it is fantastic like you know

Maura: that's brilliant

Michael: and there is great credit due to them like you know

Ruth: it sounds like it alright

Maura: and who did you say that got the idea first, or do we know...

Michael: all the, we'd say Liam Coughlan, Peter Byrnes, all them

Maura: ya

Michael: Jimmy Kearns, all the local people

Maura: fantastic

Michael: and actually, we were sitting there at the opening of it, and Mrs. Byrnes, who died since, it was her birthday, they were married 66 years I think

Maura: well well

Michael: and a local girl, she made a beautiful cake, lovely cake, it was like slate

Ruth: ya?

Michael: and cutting of the cake, I was with the priest, and we were, I made a little thing for them as well, a little north, south, east and west, and this, bird, a (? type of bird), he comes there every day over the house, to the river for fresh food

Maura: oh ya ya ya ya ya

Michael: they are a big big big wide span of a bird

Maura: ya

Michael: but am, they took photographs, overhead

\*machine beeping\*

Michael: of, of the event, and they went down, and developed it to give it to this man, he was going back to England, and said, there's your photograph,

Maura/Ruth: that's lovely, smashing

Michael: but they all helped out with the food and everything,

Ruth: there is a great community isn't there?

Michael: ya its good

Maura: ya its great

Michael: but that woman there now, the food was fantastic, on the day like you know

Maura: fantastic

Michael: and they had the kids there

Maura: ya

Michael: now, I'll take ye down there

Maura/Ruth: ok, brilliant

Ruth: thank you

Maura: and thank you very much