

Interviewee: Patsy McCarthy

Interviewer: Ruth Guiry Cagney

Askeaton

13.6.17

Ruth: here with Patsy McCarthy, am, in Askeaton, on the 13th/06/2017, and Patsy was a fisherman.  
Now Patsy, ok so... (background noise of wind)

Patsy: part, part-time we were to clear that, part-time fisherman ya

Ruth: part-time, lovely

Patsy: ya we, we done a share of fishing in the, in the, in the eighties, nineties, more, we were trawling, like so that would be, a net after a motor boat, right, with, with, probably, a just a handy net there, but, the, the secret was always the fish travel again, again the current, so you'd have to fash, you'd have to fish, running with the tide, which was very dangerous because the net could get caught in the propeller if you didn't watch it, it did happen, a couple of times, but there was a good lot of fish, we, we, we fish mostly, over on the, in the Fergus. Now there was a good, a good stretch at that, there was always good like, so you'd get, flounder, and you'd get, ah, sole, and you'd get skate. now the skate would be, they'd have big wings on 'em, and that was the best part of them, you'd cut the wings and you could make am, you could make fish fingers out of them you know, but, before like, that was our fishing, young, but for the last couple years there's nothing over there anyway. We tried it once or twice, and nothing there now,

Ruth: nothing

Patsy: but we enjoyed it while the craic was on. Ah, actually I've photographs at home I must get 'em for you

Ruth: do Patsy

Patsy: we, we were, an old fisherman was showing my son how to, to cut the skate,

Ruth: right

Patsy: and he has the skate up, I have them at home. But, they, they were doing salmon fishing for years and years and years and that's the way they made a living, during the war and they sent the fish to England,

Ruth: did ye fish salmon here Patsy or was?

Patsy: oh, outside ya,

Ruth: ye did?

Patsy: out there, well I didn't, but my ancestors did, the Nash's, the Moran's, the Corbett's, ah, the, the McMahan's, they were all, they were all the fishermen of the day. Now, I'll get you to talk to Roger Moran because Roger is, was doing a pile of it in his time, because he would be a lot older than me of

course, but ah, he would know more about it. But, they, again, what they done was, they had the net on the, stern, of the gandalow, shack bottom (?) of the gandalow, one man would stand on the bank, and he'd hold the net, and they row out around in a big circle, and they'd come back in again then to the same spot, and there was weights on the net which would keep it open, and they'd pull the net right back in again, right in, and, and, that was a great salmon river.

Ruth: here is it?

Patsy: even for rod fishing, t'was fantastic up along the river

Ruth: and how far up and down would ye go?

Patsy: oh they, they, they would go down, way out into the Shannon,

Ruth: right

Patsy: and they would head for the Clare River as well

Ruth: right

Patsy: they would, they would, you know, but salmon was very plentiful at that time, not like now. see the river was cleaned in 1956, and ah, they, since then, I'd say a lot of the spawning grounds were, were ruined. see if the fish don't go out they can't come back. And they come back to the same river

2.55mins Ruth: right

Patsy: it's amazing the fish will, you'd often see the ones there, do you ever see them in Canada in the films, there on the programmes

Ruth: no

Patsy: all fantastic, and the bears fishing, and the bears would know when they were coming, when they would be running like,

Ruth: ya...

Patsy: Jesus, there would be a big claw out and he'd tuck (?) him into the shore, for, fine salmon like you know

Ruth: ya

Patsy: so, but, for a long number of years now, there is nothing has happened here,

Ruth: right

Patsy: I don't think there is any salmon, in the river now really

Ruth: and what were you saying earlier, there was one of the fishes that had, had,

Patsy: oh, that was the skate, he had, what we call a torn back. he had little, torns, turned, on along his back, well if he caught you he'd tear you, he would rip you. I remember he caught the, the leg of my trousers one day and he tore the thing right down to the ankle, right down. Talk about deadly like

3.39mins Ruth: and how big were they?

Patsy: oh, they'd be oh that width, and then suppose, about that length I suppose,

Ruth: so ya fairly long, about a metre long

Patsy: and his tail with, with all his little turned up yokes on it you know. but ya, so that's the story, I like, I mean I wouldn't have an awful lot of information, but as I say

Ruth: right, but how, how did you get involved Patsy? how did you end up fishing?

Patsy: I was with the lads, because one of the lads had a, and I was very grateful to him and he had a boat, and I went with him, now I have my own boat now but there is nothing to fish for.

Ruth: right

Patsy: but ah ya, that's how I got on, and we'd, and we'd go out during the week and we'd go out in the evenings or go out

Ruth: ya

Patsy: always of a Sunday, for, going on the Fergus now you always needed a spring tide, probably, 7, 8 o'clock in the morning, and you'd arrive over there at maybe two hours before low water, and you'd run down along see because the mud banks would be showing

Ruth: right

Patsy: when the, when the tide would be going low. And we'd fish down, when the, with the last hour, hour and a half of the tide, and we'd fish back up again with the first hour of the coming tide,

Ruth: ok

Patsy: so tis, its opposite you seen then, the fish now were coming down because the tide was going up, you know

Ruth: ok, so you'd a whole technique

Patsy: well, high! the boys knew it well 'cause the crowd I was with, they were an older crowd and they were there during the

Ruth: and were these family, these older crowd?

Patsy: they were the Fitz's ya,

Ruth: the Fitz's

Patsy: the Fitz's I used to be with ya from Ringmoylan. They, they were fishing during the war, and sending the fish to England,

Ruth: go 'way?

Patsy: ya, wouldn't you imagine how they would be fresh to arrive in, they'd would nearly arrive in fee...in the the fish market in in ah, England, on the following morning, wasn't that amazing to go across the boat

Ruth: and how did that happen Patsy?

Patsy: they they'd take them into the station in Limerick they go by train then up to Dublin, then they go across by boat to England, and they'd pick them up over like, that's the way it use work, you know

Ruth: that is ma, isn't it?

Patsy: t'was, and, they would go down the river fishing now that time now they'd go way down and, they mightn't be back for three days, even though they might be ten miles from home. the weather was bad like they'd have to pull in, they'd have to go in to the islands over,

Ruth: and where are the islands?

Patsy: the islands are straight across now from here (interview located at the Rowing Club) between us and Clare, and the Clare mainland over there, she, you know so,

Ruth: and do you know what they were called?

Patsy: oh, but sure there is a pile of them there

Ruth: there is too many?

Patsy: there is, well, there is, Cooney Island, there's Lowe Island, there's Cannon Island, ah, there's Ca-Cooney Island, there's a pile of them there, Horse Island, Shore Island,

Ruth: oh!

Patsy: you could be naming them for the day like you know

Ruth: ok

Patsy: there's a pile of them over there, but they go in there to the families and they'd stay for the night, and you know, there was families living in the islands in those days

Ruth: was there?

Patsy: oh, there was ya

Ruth: and they didn't mind fishermen coming in

Patsy: no no because they were fishing as well like, do you know it was kind of part, part of the course like

Ruth: right ok, and ammm, Patsy, do you know what price it was... for the fish

Patsy: oh, I couldn't say now, your man will be able to tell you that now, I wouldn't be

Ruth: the guy we're going to see?

Patsy: ya

Ruth: ok brilliant,

Patsy: right

Ruth: and, do you remember where did you get your boats or anything?

Patsy: the boats were built, th- th- they built them around locally the gandalows, that were built,

Ruth: uh hum

Patsy: and they were built in Clare, they were built inside in the city there inside in Limerick, there were several of them

Ruth: and who locally built them?

Patsy: ha?

Ruth: who locally did it? was there anyone here in Askeaton?

Patsy: I don't know anyone here, locally actually, actually doing it, here locally, but I do know, up in Coonagh now and up in Newtown, they'd be building there like

Ruth: right, and that's where ye got yours?

Patsy: ya,

Ruth: ok

Patsy: now, they were fishing in Coonagh up to very recently I'm sure you'll be talking to them as well

Ruth: ya, oh ya, (unclear)

Patsy: ya

Ruth: ammm,

Patsy: there's a

Ruth: and licences and all that Patsy?

Patsy: there was, you had to have a licence, all the relations

Ruth: and how did you get yours then?

Patsy: well I didn't, I didn't have any, t'was, t'was ah Fitz's licence and Sirel Ryan's licence, that they were working on you know

Ruth: ya

Patsy: there was only a couple, a couple of licences is all you, but there all gone now because

Ruth: ya

Patsy: there, the fishing stopped!

Ruth: ok

Patsy: you know, they are trying to let the salmon build up but I don't know will it ever happen like, you know

Ruth: I know, I haven't a clue,

Patsy: now, I'll take you to the other fella

Ruth: ok!

Patsy: he'll, he'll talk to you

Ruth: I'll stop these so

Patsy: ill come out now (of the car park)

END