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Comhairle Contae
Dhún na nGall
Donegal County Council

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European Regional Development Fund

Coiste um Fhorbairt Pobail Aitiúil
Dhún na nGall
Donegal Local Community Development
Committee



Echoes of the Decade – Oral History Strand

Interview Report Form

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| Name of Interviewer | Regina Fitzpatrick |
| Date(s) of Interview(s) | 2 November 2020 |
| Location | Web-based interview - Stewart in Co. Donegal, Regina in Co. Kilkenny |
| Name of Interviewee | Stewart McClean |
| Gender | Male |
| Year of Birth | 1965 |
| Interview Synopsis | <p>Stewart McClean is from Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal. He is the fifth generation of his family to be an office holder in the Newtowncunningham Orange Lodge. In this interview, Stewart talks about the experience of being from the Orange tradition in Donegal. He talks about stories passed down from previous generations, the history of the lodge and his own life experiences. Themes and topics in this interview include Orange history and culture; religion; politics; migration; World War I; the revolutionary period in Ireland; identity; education; the Northern Irish Troubles; family tradition; music; Brexit.</p> |
| Time-Coded Interview Summary | <p><i>Interview 1: 2 November 2020</i></p> <p>00:00 Introduction to recording.</p> <p>00:30 Born in 1965, raised in Newtowncunningham for most of his life. Born in Derry/Londonderry. Common practice for Protestants to go over the border for childbirth for a sense of identity. Lived in Belfast for 10 months as a child, 1968-69 at the outbreak of The Troubles.</p> <p>01:30 Memories of living in Belfast – getting fireworks at Halloween; lived close to Castlereagh police station, remembers helicopters taking off and landing. Remembers general area, going to the shops. George Best came from the same area, his younger brother was a notable character in the area.</p> <p>03:46 Moved back to Newtowncunningham, Christmas 1969. Father was from there</p> |

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and his mother was from Londonderry. One of the few that moved to that side of the border

04:19 Grandmother died the day after he was born, named after her maiden name. His maternal grandfather was the only grandparent that he remembers, his name was James Berney – he was born in Letterkenny but left in the early 1900s as a 2-year-old when his family moved to the Fountain, Derry for work. Connection with Donegal.

05:30 Stewart's research of his family tree –ancestors from Donegal. Grandparents born in the late 19th century, turn of the century.

06:27 Stories handed down from his paternal grandparents. His great grandfather built the house he lived in. His great aunt lived until she was 103 and she had lots of stories. Stories about life in the early 20th century. Came from a farming background, made butter and took it to Derry once a week to Derry to sell. Story passed down about the day the Craigavon Bridge opened in Derry in the 1930s.

09:15 A member of his mother's family, George Henry Williams died in World War I but was never talked about. The discovery of his medals. 11th Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. This was the Donegal Regiment. Stewart's research into George Henry Williams. Mentions his schooling in Carrickart, joined the Royal Garrison Artillery, was stationed all over the world. Signed up as part of the UVF battalions in 1915. Killed on 1 July 1916 but it was never known about in the family. Stewart talks about visiting the World War I graves with the Newtowncunningham lodge to honour their members who had died. George Henry Williams had been in the coastguard. Mentions Mulroy coastal station.

13:01 Silence by and about those who returned from World War I. Another relative on his mother's side, Thomas Bovaird also died in World War I. The discovery of his medals. He had emigrated to Canada and joined the Manitobas with whom he joined the war effort as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Killed 8 November 1917 – no known grave but they have a photograph of his company. He was born outside Burnfoot, emigrated in 1900s to Canada. His people came from France at some stage via Scotland – tracing of that family record back to 1508.

16:39 Robert McClean on his father's side also died in World War I. He had also emigrated to Canada and signed up in Ontario and died in Europe at the end of June 1916. This was also unspoken about in the family. A hidden history for lots of families.

17:41 Remembrance weekend at the Newtowncunningham Orange Lodge. Albert Sproule from his lodge who had fought in the Boer War and was most likely a reservist in World War I. Sproule's wife lived to an old age. Memories of him and his family in the area. Staged a play about his life at the Lodge. Mentions the Battle of Festubert where he fought in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. Most people were assumed to have died at the Somme rather than in other battles. Mentions William Donaghey from the Newtowncunningham Lodge who died at the Somme on 1 July 1916. Mentions Charles Rea who died in Sept 1916 as part of a raiding party who went into the German trenches. Mentions Robert Gallagher from the Worcester Regiment. Got the flu and died of Pneumonia in the hospital in Amiens and is buried

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there.

22:26 Home Rule as one of the reasons that so many joined up to serve in World War I. History of the UVF in Donegal published by Quincy Donegan. Thomas Sproule started the lodge in Newtowncunningham and was second in command of the Newtowncunningham company UVF when it was founded. The relationship between the Lodge and the UVF and those who enlisted in the British Army during World War I. Mentions local Presbyterian minister, Rev John Knowles who volunteered as a Chaplain in World War I and went on to become a moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland. Emigration after World War I and the disappearance of family names from the area.

25:17 The origins of the UVF as a defence against Home Rule. Those who enlisted were trained at Finner Camp and then spend four days marching across to Co. Down to ship out to England and on to France.

26:51 A lot of these families left the area. Difficult stories from the period after World War I. Few stories passed down of the experience of the War in the area, as a contrast with World War II where stories were passed freely from generation to generation.

28:27 His family's involvement in World War II. His great aunt's husband, James Berney was captured at Dunkirk, his story about ending up in a Prisoner of War camp. Mentions Willie Black also. Another great uncle who was in a Japanese Prisoner of War Camp and his fate after he was freed from the camp.

31:25 The North Irish Horse becomes a tank regiment after World War I. His memory of listening to men from the bands telling their stories about being in the desert during World War II in the tank regiment. Mentions the Regimental band. Exposure to intergenerational communities.

31:46 Contrast between the numbers who went to fight in both World Wars. Change in attitude and demographic. His family members who fought in World War II. Considerations such as serving age and responsibilities at home when joining up.

34:49 His family were carpenters and had sawmills and this was essential to keep the flax industry going locally. Second sons more likely to enlist than first sons who might have had to keep a farm/industry going. Finance also a motivation for some to enlist. Also mentions the sense of adventure as a reason for people enlisting.

36:42 Derry a major port for emigration. Usually a one-way voyage, what it must have been like for people joining the British Army at that time.

37:38 Talks about his family's sawmill. Supporting linen industry, built lots of houses in the area. Stories passed down about cutting timber and about taking down trees, technical developments in that industry. By 1940s flax had become a small crop which lead to the demise of the sawmill and they moved into building.

41:13 His grandfather's involvement in Newtowncunningham Orange Lodge and the UVF. Five generations of involvement in the Lodge. Mentions a man called Mahon. Lodge founded in 1911 around the time of the Home Rule crisis. The signing of the

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Ulster Solemn League and Covenant at the Lodge in 1913. His grandfather was secretary of the Lodge in 1921 at the age of 21. The roles his family members have held in the Lodge.

43:45 Stories past down from the aftermath of the Civil War and Partition and the 1920s. The Lodge had been the town hall. History of the hall. It had been a courthouse and the UVF used to Drill there. Gaol on the premises from its time as a courthouse – story about people being interned there during the Civil War. Orange Lodges in the area being taken over by the IRA at that time. Talks about local electoral and Rural Council Districts. In the 1918 elections, that area was one of the last in in the South of Ireland to return a Unionist council.

46:50 Chairman of that Unionist Council was a man called Black whose house was taken over by the anti-treaty forces in the Civil War. It used was to launch an attack on the Free State Army coming through Newtowncunningham. Attack took place the day after the Treaty was signed. Three Free State soldiers on their way to Dunree killed on their way through the village. No commemoration of that incident in the village. Black's attempt to get his house back. Lots of tension around that time.

48:39 1930s petition drawn up by Unionist people in Donegal to have that part of Donegal moved into Northern Ireland. The promise of the Border Commission.

49:38 The 'Butter Wars' stopping the importing of butter from the Free State into Northern Ireland in 1932/33. Border dividing farms, members of the Lodge who had their farms divided by the border. Smuggling.

51:03 12th Julys took place as religious ceremonies in those days, took place in St Johnston, Carrigans and Raphoe up to partition. After partition people move across the border to have the 12th day. Stories from his father about walking as a child with his grandfather and being attacked in the village by stones on the morning of a 12th. Smuggling of instruments across the border on the night of the 12th.

53:12 What life was like for Protestants in that area during the War of Independence. His grandfather's sister, Edith McClean (b. 1902) married a RIC man who had been an ex New Zealand soldier. They left Ireland in 1922 and went to New Zealand through the Irish Refugee Board, had to leave Ireland after the events of the War of Independence. How she and her husband left Ireland and her return in later years.

57:14 10 His grandfather was the only member of his family to remain in Newtowncunningham. Movement of people out of the area after 1922 borne out in the Lodge membership numbers.

58:06 The role of the Irish Refugee Board to relocate members of the British administration from Ireland in the 1920s.

59:44 His father's sister married an American GI during World War II and went back to American with him.

1:00:00 Protestant people / people who had been in the RIC re-locating in the 1920s because they felt threatened, a lot of land sale around this time. A lot of the names from the Lodge and from the World War I memorial have disappeared from the area.

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His grandfather's brothers moved the Derry – a place of employment, a place that was more secure even though it was probably a more difficult environment to live it. Stories about checkpoints on the ground at the time. His great aunt would tell the story about taking revolver across checkpoints in those days because women were not searched.

1:02:57 Relationship between Catholics and Protestants seems to have been good before this period, his grandfather employed both Catholics and Protestants. Relationships decline in the 1920s and 30s and up to 1950s IRA activity in the area.

1:05:09 Returning through the village from 12 July celebrations in Coleraine in the 1980s. It was a normal event locally.

1:05:56 Riot on the 12th July 1972 in St Johnston. Protestant farms being burnt around that time, a time of heightened tensions. Stories from that time of families having to leave. Gardaí unable to protect them. Greater segregation of communities across Northern Ireland leading to a more divided society.

1:08:11 History of the Newtowncunningham Orange Lodge. History and culture of the Orange Order. Battle of the Diamond – the Defenders v the Peep O'Day Boys. The global reach of the organisation as far as Togo in Africa. Structure of the organisation. Christian, Protestant and British identity. Why people join.

1:13:10 Origins of Newtowncunningham Lodge – fear of Home Rule. Social scene of the lodge, organising dances, place to bring people together when they felt threatened. The dances as the highlight of the social scene up until the 1960s.

1:16:50 Flute band in original lodge. 1930s flute bands were replaced by pipe bands. Bands kept going until 1970s. Stopped because of the troubles. Accordion band formed in 2005. Importance of Protestant faith and cultural activities in the Lodge.

1:18:41 Evolution of the 12th July celebrations from the 1920s. Impact of partition on 12th July celebrations. Description of the 12th July in Raphoe 1947 and 1990. Reference to the relationship between the authorities and those that want to parade.

1:22:58 Relationship between those identifying as Protestant or Unionist and the Irish state after partition. Their affinity with Northern Ireland. Act of Republic in 1948 as a milestone - the closing of any door into Empire. People knitted together more to try and protect their identity. Fear that 'Home Rule is Rome Rule' had been realised.

1:27:44 The tri-colour flag – lack of recognition of the Orange and fear of that community to display their orange identity. The lodges work on generating greater understanding of the orange tradition.

1:29:09 Relationship with Northern Irish state post partition. Need for a work permit to work in Northern Ireland after partition. Getting a permit from the unionist party. Movement of people to Northern Ireland.

1:30:50 Commemoration of the Battle of the Somme in Orange Order. Tradition of Carrigans and St Johnston in this commemoration. Story about the playing of the British National Anthem at one of these events. Hopes of the Border Commission in

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the 1920s and 30s. This hope diminishing after 1948.

1:32:20 Lodge figures as a barometer of the migration of people from the area. People who went to fight in World War II and not returning. Economic life in Ireland from 1950s-1990s. Emigration of labour. Significant migrant labour to Scotland. Passenger boat went from Derry.

1:35:28 Until recently only those who farmed stayed in the area.

1:36:18 Story about a member of the Lodge in the 1960s sought to re-join the Lodge 40 years later in Glasgow. Political v economic migration. Donegal might have been better off in Northern Ireland. Shirt factories and out workers from the shirt factories.

1:39:54 The Irish state as a cold place for Protestants. His grandfather's animosity with the Gardaí and Irish army. The transmission of these stories down through generations. Struggles suffered by each generation. Stewart grew up through the Troubles, Orange Hall burnt out in Newtowncunningham in 2014.

1:44:14 Relationship with the State improving. Receiving grant aid from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Donegal County Council. Pride in his Orange and British identity.

1:45:19 Stories passed down from his father and grandfather about their experience of being Orangemen in Donegal. His parents attending the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Ulster Covenant at Balmoral. His father's memories of going to the 12th July celebrations. Mentions Derry and, Fintona, Co. Tyrone. Milestones in the Orange tradition – playing in the band, holding a drum, being made an Apprentice Boy. Days out as a big topic of stories. Stories about the weather and the uniforms/costumes they wore. Local 12^{ths} were done the old-fashioned way. All of the Lodges going to Belfast for the 12th one year.

1:50:13 The stories of the 12ths were the significant stories, the excitement of the day, the preparation, getting a band out, logistics of travel, the big day out – the characters from the bands, the teachers, the players.

1:51:11 One of Stewart's 1st memories was going to the 12th in Rosstown in 1969 and parading in Newtowncunningham that night. Not being allowed to go to the 12th in 1972 because of tensions. Growing up, 12th July and 12th August were the significant days.

1:54:06 Stewart has one sister and his father's sister and a gran-aunt also lived there. Memories of the whole family going to the 12th.

1:55:23 Stewart talks about his British identity. Mentions tea caddies of Queen Elizabeth II and King George VI; BBC and UTV as their TV channels of choice; The Belfast Telegraph, Belfast Newsletter and Londonderry Sentinel. The newspapers that carried Protestant death notices. Orange Order's tradition of publishing obituaries to their deceased members. Death notices on the internet.

2:00:14 Household more focused on the politics of Westminster than Northern Ireland or Dáil Éireann. Mentions Reverend Martin Smyth and Jim Molyneux

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2:02:23 Going to primary school in Newtowncunningham. Presbyterian ethos school. Going on to Royal and Prior in Raphoe for post primary education – mixed denominations at that time. The teaching of history in primary school. The proclamation was not displayed in his school. Post primary school the curriculum focussed on 1801-1970. Going on to study engineering and working for a French company. Did not identify with the material taught in the English and Irish literature curricula at school, the tension this caused. Mentions 'Easter 1916' by WB Yeats. His views on the Irish language.

2:09:07 The Royal and Prior was of Protestant ethos – one of the Royal Charter schools. Limited debate in school. His experience of expressing his identity at both primary and secondary school. How this influenced the development of his own identity.

2:19:53 Growing up in the Orange tradition in Donegal during the Northern Ireland conflict. Grew up in a mixed community, so he had a wider experience of everyone. Crossed the border one or twice a week, there were check points, questioning, searches – that's a significant memory. Sense that they would be better understood and accepted when they crossed the border.

2:22:33 Growing up under the threat of attack. His father working in construction in Derry at the height of the Troubles. The impact of this on him and on the family. Processing stories of his father's experiences as an adult.

2:26:02 Story about his father working on the Falls Road building a school with Gilbert Ashe when they lived in Belfast. Hiding building equipment, equipment being taken for barricades. Other stories his father had about working on construction sites in the North during the Troubles.

2:28:45 The experience of living in Belfast as a young child.

2:29:48 The work of the Newtowncunningham Lodge with communities who don't have the experience of seeing other perspectives in their day-to-day lives. The importance of the Orange growing up. Experienced a lot of anti-social behaviour in the 1980s – a brick being thrown through the window of their home the night before he sat the Leaving Certificate.

2:32:05 Orange events once you crossed the border were a safe place to be. Perception of Northern Orangemen towards them. Parades during the early 1980s. H Block protests. Legacy of 1972 and the riots in St Johnston. The Troubles probably made people more strengthened in their identity.

2:34:10 Drumcree and the localised situation of Portadown. Explanation of the circumstances around the that parade. Also talks about a similar circumstance in the Ardoyne in Belfast and the wider context of these situations.

2:39:25 Talks about a Peace IV project that the Orange Order are working on to try and de-bunk some of the myths about the Order. Media portrayal of the Orange Order. Trying to create a better understanding of the Orange Order through events, lectures etc. Mentions talk with the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

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2:42:49 [Stewart asks to stop the recording for a moment. Recording then re-starts].

2:42:55 Community Leader project with Donegal Education and Training Board and the Education Officer from Grand Lodge.

2:44:01 Anthony McIntyre coming to do a talk in the Orange Hall.

2:44:56 The Decade of Centenaries. Mentions the signing of the Ulster Covenant; Easter Rising; World War I; 'Carson's Army'; the Civil War. Parallels can be drawn with Brexit today. Their natural market being cut off as it was in the 1920s.

2:49:36 The movement of communities with the establishment of the peace process. The dramatic increase in the population of Newtowncunningham in that time. Fear that people will move back across the border if they don't have the freedom to move and work across the border post-Brexit. Talks about the dangers of Brexit. The importance of government and European projects for border communities.

2:53:25 Optimism about the future of Newtowncunningham Orange Lodge. Joined the lodge in 1983, the first new member since the 1970s. Process of re-building the lodge, buying new banners as part of their millennium project, re-starting the band, have re-built the lodge twice. Long arduous project to re-opening in 2018.

2:56:48 Role of women in the Order - Loyal Orange Women's Association of Ireland.

2:58:18 Interview ends

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| Language | English |
| Restricted Information | None |
| Field Notes | This interview took place using a podcast platform called Squadcast which allowed for a video conversation with audio only recording. Stewart participates in the interview from his office and so there is some background noise throughout the interview. The quality of my internet connection drops at times in the interview. It is noteworthy that this interview took place in the context of Level 4 lockdown during the Covid 19 pandemic. Additionally, negotiations were underway between the EU and Britain around Britain's exit from the EU with its consequences for the Northern Ireland border still unclear at the time of the interview. Stewart was knowledgeable and passionate about the Orange experience in Donegal and as such was a pleasure to interview. |

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Audio File Details

Recording Format: 48kHz 16 bit stereo

Length of Interview(s): 2:58:18

No. of Files: 2

File Types: 1 uncompressed WAV files and 1 corresponding MP3 copy

Documentation Completed by Interviewee

- ✓ Registration Form
- ✓ Pre-questionnaire Monitoring Form
- ✓ Participation Agreement
- ✓ Post-questionnaire Monitoring Form
- ✓ Recording Agreement
- ✓ Participant Sign-in Sheet
- ✓ Photograph of Interviewee

To be completed by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18 December