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



## Echoes of the Decade – Oral History Strand

### Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date(s) of Interview(s)</b>	28 October 2020; 3 November 2020.
<b>Location</b>	Interview 1: Internet- based interview – Seosamh in Co. Donegal; Regina in Co. Kilkenny  Interview 2: Phone interview - Seosamh Co. Donegal; Regina in Co. Kilkenny
<b>Name of Interviewee</b>	Seosamh Ó Ceallaigh
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Year of Birth</b>	1971
<b>Interview Synopsis</b>	<p>Seosamh Ó Ceallaigh is a secondary school teacher and Celtic Studies scholar from Falcarragh, Co. Donegal. A native Irish speaker, he is passionate about the Irish language, the Gaeltacht and the history and culture of Falcarragh having published widely on this topic, including <i>As Smaointe tig Gníomh - Coláiste Uladh an Ghaeilge agus 1916</i>. In this two-part interview, Seosamh talks about life growing up in Falcarragh in the 1970s and 80s and the changes in the way of life there. He also recounts memories shared with him by older neighbours and relatives about the events of the early twentieth century. Themes and topics in this interview include community life in Falcarragh; the Irish language; the revolutionary period; Coláiste Uladh and its role in the Gaelic Revival and the subsequent 1916 Rising; education; politics; heritage and identity.</p>
<b>Time-Coded Interview Summary:</b>	<p><b><i>Interview 1: 28 October 2020</i></b></p> <p>00:00 Interview Introduction</p> <p>00:35 Seosamh was born in 1971. His father had the shop on the Main Street in Falcarragh and was also a teacher and County Counsellor. His early years were spent in the apartment above the shop.</p> <p>02:14 Changes over the years to the town, remembers fair days, town criers.</p>

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03:00 Story about Kevin O'Meara who had served in Vietnam and moved to town.

04:30 Living in the middle of town. What was sold in the shop, how goods were delivered, portioned out and sold. Talks about the phone system in the 1970s.

06:05 Involvement in politics in the household, Blaney supporters, Fianna Fáil supporters. Refers to Neil Blaney who was an MEP for Ulster. His father was a Country Counsellor. Talks about their relationship.

07:00 The huge changes in life even in his own lifetime. Talks about selling turkeys at Christmas.

09:00 Mentions Henry Cannon who used to sell fish to the shop. People buying on credit, selling local eggs before the EU regulations came in. Cleaning, salting and drying fish.

11:53 Quotes poem by Antoin Ó Dochairtaigh. Seosamh interviewed his daughters. Talks about a simpler way of life that is now gone. An understanding that people had around company and personality and chat.

14:18 Mentions Dr Eoghan Ó Colum who wrote *Toraigh na dTonn* and who introduced his parents. The shop as the heart of the community. Economic difficulties of the 1980s.

17:30 His father started teaching in the 1950s on Owey Island and stayed in the home of Daniel O'Donnell's grandmother. Next taught at Carrickart, the poverty he saw teaching.

18:45 Story about a boy from one the summer colleges.

[We lose internet connection and resume interview after re-connecting]

19:35 Running a shop was simpler at the time, mentions sliced bread as an example.

[We lose connection again, then the interview resumes again]

20:33 Mentions the large bags of flour and people baking their own bread.

21:44 Recounts story about two old women waiting in the shop for their bus and the hospitality given to them in the shop.

23:20 Talks about a man from Israel who moved to the area.

24:34 People coming in on Fridays to pay for the weeks shopping.

25:25 The Irish Army coming to raid their house during the Northern Ireland Troubles.

25:45 Getting to know people because of the shop. His father helping people as a county counsellor. The clinics he would have in the house, memories of seeing a queue of people going up the stairs to speak with his father.

27:21 Remembers big days like St Patrick's Day, fights on fair days.

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27:53 [We lose connection again and decide to resume the interview another day.]

**Interview 2 – 3 November 2020**

00:00 Interview introduction

00:45 Memories of his father's mother. Spent a lot of time with his mother's parents in Fanad, Cinn na Locha. Sheelagh Kelly was his father's mother and she was from Tearmann. How they came to be in Falcarragh.

02:45 Describes his grandmother Sheelagh who was in Cumann na mBan. Her parents were evicted when she was a child which may have had long term effect on her health.

04:34 The Ó Ceallaigh family was a large family. Soesamh's father was a teacher with a great interest in local matters and local development. His involvement in Údaras na Gaeltachta and Donegal County Council as a Fianna Fáil counsellor. Belief in a united Ireland and Christianity. Mentions Neil Blaney and the Arms Trial. Their belief in protecting Catholics in the six countries. Talks about housing Catholics that were burned out of their houses in Bombay Street in Coláiste Uladh in Gort a Choirce.

07:05 His mother was from Fanad. His mother's parents were Annie and Johnny Tomán. Memories of Nellie Bhec a neighbour of theirs. Talks about the way of life in Fanad. His memories of the 'meitheal' in that area, doors never locked, farming, the food, a simple way of life.

09:45 Talks about his father's mother Sheelagh. She was a strong woman, opened the shop in Falcarragh, good with money. His grandfather buying bales of cloth to sell in the shop.

12:13 Sheelagh's involvement in the War of Independence. How wise she was with business matters, a woman with her own mind.

13:54 She was born in 1889. She was young when she joined Cumann na mBan. How they were trained and drilled by the local IRA. Would not have been many republican families on the main street in Falcarragh at the time, it was sort of a planter town doing reasonably well. Good relationship with RIC before the time of the Black and Tans.

16:30 Interviews Seosamh conducted in the 1990s, 2000s with local older women about the War of Independence including the three Doherty sisters in Falcarragh, daughters of Antoin Ó Dochairtaigh who knew Douglas Hyde, Patrick Pearse etc all of whom were involved in the founding of Coláiste Uladh in Gort a Choirce. He also heard stories about his grandmother's involvement in Cumann na mBan. Talks about the aims of Coláiste Uladh, timirí, Conradh na Gaeilge and Pearse's reference to the education system as the 'murder machine'.

18:39 The foundation of Provincial Colleges for the teaching of Irish to teachers. Antoin Ó Dochairtaigh was central to that in Coláiste Uladh. This drew a lot of people to the area. His daughters lived into their nineties and Seosamh interviewed them

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about the War of Independence and those times.

21:25 He also interviewed Peter Butler who as an engineer from the town. He also had memories of those times. Talks about the old coins, bank notes and stamps we used to have and the wealth of cultural heritage that they depicted.

24:00 Talks about his uncle's memories of how few cars there were in the area and the changes that generation saw. Difficult to explain that way of life to younger generations.

25:18 Story about 'Joe an Mhúin' who collected urine which was used to clean sheep's wool.

26:21 Famine times around Gweedore and Cloughaneely. The famine in the 1880s was worse than that famine of the 1840s locally. Mass evictions in the area is 1889. Influence of this on those involved in the War of Independence who had memories of that. The government response to the famine and the how the clergy came to the fore to help people.

29:50 Leadership provided by the Church at that time, a population who were not educated, many of whom were illiterate. People had no leadership, unable to communicate, poverty. Priests brought leadership, mentions Fr Mac Pháidín in Gweedore, Fr Mac Stiofaine in Falcarragh both of whom were imprisoned in defense of the people. The guidance clergy provided to people socially and economically and spiritually.

32:00 Pearse's understanding of how Gaelic Cloughaneely was, that the language, the old Gaelic ways and Christianity were alive and well. Others who visited also appreciated this such as Joseph Mary Plunkett, Lord Ashbourne, Roger Casement, Maud Gonne MacBride, Percy French, Eamonn De Valera all of whom spent time there because of the cultural wealth it provided. The area as a 'well'.

33:14 In 1914 people were aware of World War I and were afraid, there was a local understanding of the conflict. Reasons people from the area enlisted in the British Army during the war, families who lost brothers and sons during the War.

35:12 1916 Rising, Donegal County Council did not support the Rising. People did not understand the intentions of the 1916 leaders. Home Rule was better understood than Republicanism. The change in the attitude of people in that area during the war years around Home Rule, it was no longer sufficient, people wanted a republic.

36:35 Good relationship in general between the locals and the RIC except for the period of the evictions in the 1880s. From 1910 onwards the relationship was reasonably good. Most of the RIC in the area were local Catholic men. Mentions Charlie McGee, an RIC man, one of the first people killed in 1916 shot by Seán MacEntee's volunteers.

38:00 Things changed when the Black and Tans came in, eg Dan Coyle who was in the RIC left the RIC and trained the local volunteers thereafter. Frank Matthews who had the hotel in Falcarragh left the RIC around the that time too, story about how the Black and Tans tried to burn down his hotel. Local people did get on well with the

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RIC because they were comprised of local people and many good people.

40:00 During the War of Independence it became clear that you had to be on one side or the other. The Black and Tans ensured that. It was mostly young people who were in the Volunteers, people in their 20s were the most active during that time.

41:06 Dan Coyle was the brother of Eithne Coyle and was an Officer in Command. Dan was with the men who were executed at Drumboe but not executed himself. Seosamh's grandmother knew Eithne Coyle. Talks about the experiences of Eithne Coyle. Mentions Maud Gonne. Eithne married Barney O'Donnell. Mentions her son Christopher O'Donnell who was a priest.

43:10 Seosamh also interviewed Johnny McKeever who was a volunteer and spoke about going on dispatches, drilling etc. The role of women in the independence movement and their treatment by the state there afterwards. Talks about Eithne and Barney's position on the Treaty. Eithne went on to become the President of Cumann na mBan

43:15 The organisation of the Volunteers in flying columns in West Donegal. Destruction of Coastguard stations, raids, burning of RIC barracks etc. The killing of Sergeant McKenna in Falcarragh.

47:00 The burning of the Coláiste Uladh Hall in 1920 by the Black and Tans as this was where Sinn Féin courts had taken place.

48:11 Talks about a raid on a house where there was a picture hanging of Terence McSweeney. The boycott of police members and reference to the sacking of Balbriggan.

49:15 Interviewed Brian McCallion from Carrowcannon who told him about his memories of his father coming from the bog with a cart full of turf taken from him by the RIC.

50:00 Shoot out on the main street of Falcarragh. A lot of local activity around especially by women. We must remember the context that these people were reared into, memories of the famine, witness to poverty, people with a strong sense of their identity. Reference Pearse who want Ireland not only to be free but free and Gaelic. Talks about the border and how removed Donegal from the rest of Ireland. How things may get worse after Brexit.

52:30 The Civil War, the volunteers in that area supported Sinn Féin and Joe Sweeney in the 1918 General Election. Great hope after the War of Independence and then the six counties were cut off from them.

53:44 The Northern Campaign. Outbreak of the Civil War and many like Daniel and Eithne Coyle being against the Treaty. The Drumboe Martyrs who stayed in Gort a Chóir in Síle Ní Uiginn's house the night before their arrest. Safe houses in the area. How the men were arrested and taken to Drumboe. The killing of Captain Cannon during a raid in Creeslough. These events described mentioning Dan McGee and Dan Coyle. Cardinal Logue stepping in to appeal for the lives of those to be executed. Dan Coyle and Neil Blaney amongst the men, nine of them in total. The

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five from Donegal were spared. Execution of Enright, Daly, Larkin and O'Sullivan.

58:03 Talks about Joe Sweeney from Cloughaneely who was in Frongoch with Michael Collins and was later a TD – his position on the Treaty. Mentions Charlie Daly who was on the anti-treaty side and who fought during the War of Independence. The executions at Drumboe.

1:00:19 Mentions Síle Ní Uiginn and letters that survive from the period talking about these matters. Certainly, a split in that area during the Civil War. Mentions Dan McGee who fought with Dan Coyle in the War of Independence. Dan McGee joined the Free State army afterwards and subsequently emigrated.

1:01:43 Falcarragh was a town and so it depended on 'the system' for business. People out the country were more active. Talks about plans to attack the Barracks in Falcarragh and the RIC being tipped off. People from the town would have sided more with the Free State after the War of Independence.

1:03:44 Locals who were Republicans such as his mother's father who was one of the people who founded Fianna Fáil locally. Changing attitudes of the people of Cloughaneely in terms of how they vote between Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael. His uncle who stood for Fianna Fáil and his father who stood as a Fianna Fáil independent. Electoral trends in the area.

1:07:00 Stories from the Revolutionary period and even from the period of evictions that should be let go as they can create animosity. Caution about commemoration of this period. The importance of this period as the foundation of our state and for our independence. The Irish language in the area.

1:10:46 Influence of locals and the Cloughaneely area on Pádraig Pearse, Plunkett and Casement etc in the development of their ideals. Talks about Coláiste Uladh. The story of that area and its influence on these men has been greatly underestimated.

1:14:01 Local commemorations and publications to mark the Decade of Centenaries in Cloughaneely. Talks about the nature of the 1916 Rising as a cultural movement to preserve a Gaelic way of life. Mentions Protestants such as Douglas Hyde, Alice Stopford Green and Maud Gonne who also understood this. Talks about the Gaelic Revival. The GAA and Conradh na Gaeilge. Mentions Máire Dobbs, Rose Young and Ida MacNéill from Protestant unionist backgrounds who were involved in Coláiste Uladh.

1:19:30 Quotes a poem about Parnell. Talks about political awareness in the area at the time. Post-independence attitudes. Talks about the legacy of colonialism and the legacy of independence in Ireland.

1:23:47 Division after the Revolutionary period and its aftermath. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael and elections.

1:26:38 His respect for Paddy Harte even though they were from different political parties. His father got along well with political opponents. People might have been opposing in politics but good friends. How communities are working together during

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1:31:09 The place of the Irish language in the new state. Difficulties of founding a new state, inexperience of those trying to establish the Free State. The amount of responsibility given to the Church eg in education. Mentions free secondary education brought in by Donagh O'Malley in 1966.

1:34:08 Talks about the restoration of the Irish language as a basic principles of Fianna Fáil but the language was left to one side for the Department of Education to take care of. Makes comparisons with Scotland. Mentions some of the attempts made to preserve the language. Mentions poem by Cathal Ó Searcaigh about where we are in terms of identity and the place of Irish in Ireland today. Talks about Gaelscoileanna and the current shortage of Irish language teachers.

1:38:00 His views on the system of teaching Irish in schools.

1:42:06 Talks about words and phrases in the English language based on Irish words. Richness of the language. Talks about place names as an example and the interest in the language in the unionist community. Talks about getting the logo of the RIC made to put up in the old barracks in Falcarragh. Impact of the border on Donegal.

1:49:11 Legacy of the Revolutionary period in his view. How people are moulded by their environment and the community they grow up in, their families, by their roots. Mentions Theodore Holmes, a poet who wrote about Falcarragh. Believes the legacy of that period is being eroded. Modernisation, pop culture, social media culture is causing people to look at outward culture rather than looking inward at native culture. The language is still alive there but the interest in that period is not really of interest to younger people.

1:55:30 The attempt to remove history from the school curriculum. Talks about changing values and interests. Mentions Joe McHugh, former Minister for Education who defended keeping history on the school curriculum.

1:58:32 Talks about the future and his own family. Responsibility of parents to nurture tradition and heritage and pass it on to our children and our community. His pride in his local heritage and wish to pass it on to future generations. Talks about the work of the local primary schools in promoting this heritage which they value. 100 years on, Irish language and culture is still strong in Cloughaneely.

2:03:35 [Line drops and call re-starts] Talks about Irish language organisations and the recognition that should be given to Údaras na Gaeltachta who support the area. Also commends the work of Donegal County Council for promoting the history and heritage of the county.

2:05:18 The old RIC Barracks in Falcarragh is now a cultural heritage centre which is very symbolic. Talks about its development by a local committee.

2:07:13 Interview 2 ends.

**Language**

Irish

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<b>Restricted Information</b>	None
<b>Field Notes</b>	This interview took place in the context of the Level 4 restrictions during the Covid 19 pandemic, therefore the interviews were conducted remotely. Our first interview was conducted using a podcasting platform called Squadcast but after having some technical issues with the local broadband and bandwidth in Falcarragh, it was necessary to move to a phone interview for our second interview for reliability of connection. The interviews took place late in the evening over two sessions. They were conducted in Irish at Seosamh's request and he proved very patient with the limits of my language ability. Seosamh has long been a keeper of many of the stories of the revolutionary period in Falcarragh, having interviewed people in the community, now deceased, in the 1990s and 2000s so it was wonderful to record some of the insights that had been passed on to him.
<b>Audio File Details</b>	
Recording Format: 48kHz 16 bit stereo	
Length of Interview(s): Interview 1 (27:48); Interview 2 (2:07:14)	
No. of Files: 4	
File Types: 2 uncompressed WAV files and 2 corresponding MP3 copies	
<b>Documentation Completed by Interviewee</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Registration Form</li> <li>✓ Pre-questionnaire Monitoring Form</li> <li>✓ Participation Agreement</li> <li>✓ Post-questionnaire Monitoring Form</li> <li>✓ Recording Agreement</li> <li>✓ Participant Sign-in Sheet</li> <li>✓ Photograph of Interviewee</li> </ul>	

**To be completed by Interviewer:**

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18 December 2020