Limerick Memories

Athlunkard Street

Would you listen to a fool from Limerick? I'm walkin' around the streets of Limerick – a beautiful place; I hate the sight of it - just to meet a man that slept with my wife. Am I entitled to do that? I found out about a year ago. I was upset. I committed suicide in my own old way - it didn't work. If you found a man in bed with your wife what would you think of him? Today I've walked all over Limerick. I remember no streets and I don't want to. Now I'll show you where I live. It's not in there. There was a woman who ran a shop there. I did know the woman very well but it's closed now. The ones that took it over close the door as soon as they see me. It's in behind here. On the roof of this derelict shed. It's a spot out of the way. I saw a rat here once and killed it. I think I'll go away and get drunk for the day. Would you agree with me? I'll go and shoot my wife. A shot in the head will wake her up. I can't shake your hand brother. Its cut by glass, here, take a look. I don't care about my wife. I know her car, I know the registration. I can pull the car in. Now I'm going up this street to kill that man. You don't mind if I kill him?

Ballynanty

My father used to have chickens. outside in the-back. He made a shed for the chickens and as a child I used to go in there and would play on my own. I'd have bits of cups and bits of money that's to make a little shop and I'd say to some imaginary friend 'What would you like today,'. I'd set a table, I'd be drinkin' tea, a sup of water, and I'd be thinkin', who'd be there with me, and now, 'Mary and how's your husband? My husband went out last night and he came back langers'. I might have another friend and she'd say, 'My husband came in and he's langers too'. We'd be chattin' away and we'd be thinkin' we were mothers and often be thinkin' 'I'm pregnant now,' so I'd put a cushion up me, and putting on little barnbrack rings on my hand and I'd have my purse and I'd say, 'Now Mary I have to go and get the messages'. I have to get bread and milk and jam.' Basic necessities - what I knew but I wanted to make my world a nicer place. I would have wanted it to be like that when I was older, I was trying to make it like that but it didn't happen. I would be in my own world until I came back into reality and heard my mother and father fightin' and roarin' at me.

Carey's Road

I had one brother, he got married the year before and moved out. He had a child and the child was born on Christmas. Early in the new year my mother was sick for about a week with a flu type illness. At that time, I worked at the Krupps factory. A few of us arranged to visit a fortune teller, this was big at the time. We went to see him one at a time. When I went in, he said, 'Your mother is sick. She doesn't need a doctor; she needs a priest. Your mother could be dead in five days'. It played on my mind. I remember coming home and not telling anyone. I told one of my aunts in her house on the fifth day, the sixteenth of January. Later that night I was in bed asleep. I woke upon hearing a commotion. I heard my father screaming and shouting my mother's name. I ran into their bedroom and he was shaking her, trying to revive her, then giving her the kiss of life. I ran out to the woman next door, then ran back in. I didn't know what to do. I was only seventeen, there was only the two of us in the house. I started screaming, calling out that fortune teller's name cursing and blaming him. My mother was only forty-seven. She got a brain haemorrhage. My father was devastated. I can see it in my mind. It never leaves.

Catherine Street

I was working on the refurbishing of a building. In the course of the construction work, I was installing some beams up on top. I reached out to take a stone out of the hole in the wall to receive a beam and I missed the wall. I fell twenty-seven feet. All I had was a mark on my head and a mark on my knee but my spine was broken. I was taken to the Regional Hospital. Then I was taken to another hospital in Dun Laoghaire. I spent three months on a rotary bed. My bed would rotate slowly, I was tied in so I wouldn't move. The movement is to keep the muscles and bodily functions moving. Your dinner is put on your chest and you learn to eat from that by looking in a mirror above you. After three months I was put into the recovery ward and I was put sitting. I then seen lads been fed around me. There were some people there, young boys and all they could do was move their heads, one could only blink his eyes. I never looked back after that. I had the use of my hands. I thought this was a big bonus and at least God left me those. I was brought meals and fed myself. I did physio and one day a nurse came in and said you'll dress yourself today and I did and showered myself. I did everything myself from then on. I left after six months.

Clarina Avenue

There was waste ground across from a neighbour's house on my street. When the builders were building, they would keep their shed, tools, and dumper there and when the building was finished, they just moved everything and left. It was an eyesore. It being a Marian year this woman decided she would build a grotto in this spot of wasteland. We were the first parish in Limerick to start a grotto. Local people collected rocks for the rockery. They brought the rocks in prams, handcarts, and box carts. Some were lucky to have a banger of a car. Some people even gave the rings from their fingers to make a crown for our Lady. I've never seen the crown but this is what I've been told. In recent years it has been run-down and kids, young people, adolescents started messing about it and playing ball and eventually horses went in there. Two years ago, we came to a decision to refurbish the grotto. Though it can never be returned to its former glory it is now in a proud position in our area.

Cosgrove Park, Moyross

I suppose it was the routines our parents had us in. There were seven kids in our house. Saturday evening was bath time We'd all have our baths and we'd all go out in our pyjamas to play. There were kids from each household on our particular street, a street with ten houses. The O'Connor's would come out after their bath and all the kids would be out, all in their pyjamas, wet hair plaited. We'd play elastics and we'd play skipping and we'd play games like tag. Games like that where you're asking questions and taking jumps across the road. Our play was different to the way kids play now. During the summer the fields were just cut and we would get the grass together. We used to do the shape of a house with cut grass. You know, pile it up and we would have the sitting room, and the living room, doors, windows and even the shape of beds. It would be a dream house. I remember my friend I went to school with lived in a big bungalow. I loved that house; I loved the house I lived in but you dream of what you haven't got. We all wanted our own bed rooms but it wasn't possible.

Dock Road

There was no security, nobody in control, everything in chaos. I had to leave if I wanted to live. I went to Nigeria. It was by road, through bushes, by lorries. I had to pay my way - to get a lift. I went through many struggles. You sleep wherever

you can. I didn't have much money on me. I had someone who was assisting me. Someone helping me and I pay him back if I have to or can. I stayed in Nigeria some time. I had to do whatever I was given. It was no safer than my country. Somebody helped me get a visa. I was just looking for anywhere to go and I happened to get Ireland. It was providence. I had no notion. No means of looking at it. I was penniless and homeless; all I could do was seek help to go anywhere. I got on a plane and went to Ireland. I stayed in Dublin three or four days. Someone said if I wanted to come on a work permit, I should have got one before. I will not be running from here to there so I asked for asylum. They just said, 'Well you are going to Limerick'. I did not know where I was going. I didn't know anyone, I thought, it's my chance and I should take the challenge. A bus took us to where we were to stay in Limerick. I was given a room to stay.

Donough O'Malley Park

Three or four of the girls got together and between them they decided to tell him that I liked him. He was old enough to get into the pubs like, but I wasn't. We all used to hang around the local shop down the road here. I remember seeing him get off the bus. He called me and said, 'What's this about you and me getting together? People seem to think we're together but we're not like'. He asked me then if he could walk me home because I was living in Weston. It's on the other side of the railway gates. It was a summer's night. Now, at that time there was a lot of aggro between the Weston boys and the South Hill boys and it was a bit embarrassing passing through the gates like. The gates were the divide. I remember goin' through the gate and people givin' me a look, 'What are you doin' with a South Hill fella?' like. At the same time, I was in heaven, the fool that I was at the time and mad out about him. We walked side-by-side, not even speakin' to each other. Then standing side-by-side at the corner for twenty minutes, starrin' into space. Then I said I have to go home now. It felt strange like, I was crazy about him yet when it came to going out with him, I was terrified of it. Twenty years on we're still together. We have two kids now.

Dooradoyle Road

I'm come here two years now. I come from South Africa. I was in the U.K. for short time. Then these people here not have any priest or anyone to lead the prayer. I was going back to South Africa and maybe someone got information and they phone me and say 'Please come here and lead the prayer'. I don't know

exactly the number of Islamic people - two hundred or three hundred. Most are doctors who work for hospital. Mostly men from Pakistan or Sudan. Many are going away from religion, away from the practice, from the teaching of being a Muslim, or being a Christian, or being a Jew. Few people regularly practice. These effects of environment. They are busy with the worldly things, with the working, the earning, the job. Some get married to Irish women who accepted Islam. They come, they want to get married, and they want to convert according to the rules and regulations of Islam. It is up to them if they want to practice or not. No difficulty with local people. Nature of human being - not all five finger the same in every community in Muslim, ¡n Christian, in Jew. I can't say one hundred are the same good. Most are very cooperative.

Dublin Road

It was just all green fields, all cabbage gardens, all wheat fields. We used to stay there when there when there were no houses. We used to stay down there a couple of weeks or only one week. Then we might have to move on. At that time there was a council man. His name was McCarthy, he used to go around on a bike. He'd call to us and tell us we'd have to move on. He'd tell us like where we could go, another site or something else. There were no sites in those times like, just other places where there would be other caravans like. We'd have to move because if they ever get a complaint like about anything you know. He'd tell us if there was a place available that we could go to so we'd move there. Sure we stayed all around. My husband would do a bit of anything he could to make a living because in those times there wasn't much dole like. We had kids like and he'd help support the kid by getting a bit of scrap, or dealin' on a horse, or dealin' in wooden made cars that he'd make and sell so as to get a bit of money for the kids. We got on alright. We reared our kids, got them their sacraments and got them a bit of education and things like that.

Edward Street

Thirty years ago, I joined the army. I was fed in the army. My rent was paid. The army was my mother and father. They owned me. I came under their rules. I had to abide by them. I was living in Barracks. I was billeted with five or six different blokes. There was some comradeship there. The lads would be slaggin' you and ball-hopping you. But they were there for you. You trained for sixteen to eighteen weeks. We would have done tactics, marching, how to discipline yourself. We learnt to use various firearms and engaged in various manoeuvres. We weren't

allowed hearing protection. I wouldn't have known I'd get this buzzing in my ear after shooting. I thought, like the others, that it was normal. It was weeks before I realised that something could be wrong. I've got tinnitus and a perforated eardrum. They say it's from birth but I've been speaking to others who say that I cannot be dictated to about what happened when I was born. They don't even know for sure if you're deaf or blind until your six. I'm taking some treatment for it but if I get a cold in my head it infects the ear and you get a discharge from it. It can be distressing but it could be worse. I can hear you talk all right.

Fair Green

My Father would go to the meetings and fairs to shoe horses or sell horses or buy one and sell it again. There were fairs up at the Fair Green, up there by the Tipperary Road. Big horse fair up there years ago. It's all built up now. We'd drive there in the horse and cart. My father wouldn't give up the horse and cart for all the motors in the world. It was great. There'd be three or four hundred people. It would be kind of on a field. The horses would he trotting up and down the small hit of a road. If my father had a horse someone might come up to him and say, 'Are you selling that horse there?' He'd say; 'Well if it's here at the market, it's here to be sold'. The punter would open the horse's mouth and check the teeth to see how old it was. Then lift the legs to see if it were lame. My father would sell it if he thought he was getting a good price. Years ago, it was mostly big working horses that were for sale - Clydesdales. Big horses for to pull the caravans, the wagons. But many of us are in houses now. A lot of travellers are in trailer but I hardly see a wagon now. My father would keep one but he would never live in it. I know a lad who makes model wagons, which he sells.

Garryowen

A lot of Limerick subies worked on Canary Wharf. Twenty thousand men worked on it. We used to live on the site. They had mobile homes, forty or fifty of them. We worked together, we knew one another, talked about old times, might have a drink at weekends, but may often have been too tired. We worked seven to twelve-hour shifts. Seven at morning to seven at night mostly. There was the hours. I was driving a dumper and attending bricklayers. Our accommodation was for nothin'. Ate our meals on site, breakfast was only sixty pence, dinner was only one pound twenty for the lads. There was Irish, Scottish, Jamaicans, you name it, every nationality. All got stuck into the work. We'd meet in the

canteens. Sometimes you'd hear of men falling off the scaffolding. Some were lucky – fell in the sand underneath, a lot didn't. There was no protection; you were getting cash in hand. The wages was six hundred pound a week. You could afford to send good money home. I'd send about five hundred a week – a lot of money then. My mother would put most of it away, pay the mortgage, and if she was stuck she could work away on it. The house is ours now. Maggie Thatcher paid for it in my sweat and blood.

Garryowen

It was quarter past twelve. Something woke me. I heard this really loud crashing noise, like it was right beside me. I didn't know where it was coming from. My first instinct was to bang back - someone had broken in. With my fists I started banging and screaming just to let, them know there was someone there. My sister was staying upstairs. She started shouting down to me. I rang her then and we stayed on the phones the whole time. She rang my mother who rang the guards. I hadn't thought to ring them. We stayed in our rooms until the guards arrived. They hadn't taken anything; they were probably frightened off when we started shouting. The glass on the back door had been broken. My sister's boyfriend's sister lives across the road with her boyfriend and when it happened, they rang them straight away and asked them to look out to see if they could see anything. Later, my sister's boyfriend's mother met this woman in town and told her that this girl from Moyross had moved in and had been broken into and that she is her daughter's sister in law. The other woman says, well it's okay, I'll tell the boys to leave her alone. I'll tell them not to do it again. It was her sons that did it.

Griffith Avenue

When the legion of Mary came around to the house to educate my brother my Father told them to bugger off because it was a stigma to have someone in your family with something wrong with them. My brother was a bit slow. He never made his confirmation or communion. We were a family that kept things to ourselves, no one knew we were needy. My brother was moved into Saint Joseph's Psychiatric Hospital because he broke a shop window, He was nineteen. At the time you could only visit Saint Joseph's two days a week, Thursdays and Sundays and there was a specific hour to go in. I never lost touch with my brother. The hospital was grubby and smelly. John would run out of it and come home. My mother would get a fright and she would say, 'Ah John, you'll have to go back'.

He'd have a cup of tea and some bread before the fellas from the hospital came for him. They'd come out to the house in a car. They'd be wearing the white coats. When they were let in, they'd say, 'Come on now John'. He would always return freely. After a few years he got used to the hospital and we would bring him out. In the afternoon he would say, 'I have to be home at five'. The hospital was his home since he was nineteen. He died at age fifty-four.

Hyde Road

There was no church, no estates, and no school. There was no main road - Just fields, all the way down. I was two when my parents bought the house. Only a row of small trees separated our back garden from Baker's field. We used to play in this field. When you went out into the field, turned left and kept walking you would come to a small little flowing river. Carey's stream we used to call it. The boys used to put stuff into it to damn it so we could swim in it. Carey's stream used to flow under the railway track. We would walk along by the railway track out to Sandy. There was a stream there also. We used to bring our nets and go to catch Eel Fry or Tadpoles. We would put them in jam Jars, bring them home, keep them for a few days then return to let them go. We'd spend the whole day inside that stream walking in the water. We also used to go out there to pick black berries and sloes. My Father used to make sloe wine. On Sundays everyone would walk out to Plessy's. It's a river. We would bring sandwiches in a biscuit tin. People would sit on the banks of the river. We used to spend our summers here. It was like going to the seaside for us. We never got to the seaside until years later.

Meelick Road

I was on top money, near the top grade of my job. Done overtime all over the Saturday and Sunday, never seemed to have money. Every evenin' was a battle, my wife, shoutin', roarin', screamin'. Sat down and asked what's wrong? She said, 'It's my parents, every week their askin' me for more money. You know my Father backs the horses; well my mother is left without'. I felt sympathetic so I gave her more money. Went out each day with only the price of cup of soup so's she'd enough money to support her Mother. Went on for ages. One day I came home - the house was in darkness. I called out, 'Are you there? Where are you?' My kids were eight and ten - no answer. Switched the lights on, off - nothing. Stumbled in darkness, found a candle. Opened the oven, the fridge, no food. Thought she

must have had a problem with her parents. Too late to get to a bus and I'd no car. Got up the followin' mornin'. I'd no choice but to work. Thought maybe her parents had a serious row and someone got hospitalised. Kept thinkin' she'll let me know. I didn't work overtime. Came home early. Pushed open the front door and found a note on the ground. It was hand written and unsigned. It said, 'Dear John, I don't want to be the one to tell you this but your wife has a major problem with gambling'.

Mill Road

When we moved into the area there were six little houses with mansions on either side. Other big old houses extended along the entire road. Each house had its own colourful history. We were the first non-exclusive people in a very exclusive area. There was a huge house across the road from us. The man of the house had white hair and a goatee - like the man on the Kentucky fried chicken logo. He used to police his land with great rigour. The house - a mansion - was falling down around him. It had a place in the front lawn for a flagpole. This was installed almost a century ago by a high-ranking British military officer who used to raise the Union Jack every morning, and take it down in the evening. Steps led up to a door that did not open. This door was framed by a grand crumbling entrance. There were fields out the back with a neglected orchard that was almost choked by briars. It was thousands of square feet in size. It was a complete wilderness but the trees still produced apples, which were never picked by the owner. It was raided regularly. To raid the orchard, you had to climb over this high wall that surrounded it. This wall was so thick you could walk along the top of it. One day a group of us were out playing. I was about ten at the time.
One of the older boys was walking on the wall when he let a roar out of him and fell to the ground. Later we found out he had been shot in the arse. The owner had shot him with an air gun.

Mulgrave Street

I was there twelve months. It was part of the buzz of being with the lads - drinking, and robbing. I felt I belonged to something. I had a single cell with a single bed. A room to myself. I'd get up in the morning around eight O'clock when they'd wake me. I'd slop out wash my piss pot. Then go down to get breakfast. I'd be locked up to eat in my cell for an hour. Then I'd wash my bowl, and clean my cell. I'd slop out again after breakfast. Around nine thirty I'd meet

up with the rest of the people. I'd be allowed out of my cell until twelve. You might be working, playing soccer or handball. I wouldn't work; I didn't want to do anything for anybody. I'd play handball. Then I'd get my dinner. I'd be locked up. I'd eat alone in my cell then lie down and sleep. They'd come for me an hour and a half later to let me out till five. Then they'd lock me up again for my tea. I'd be allowed out again for an hour then locked up from half seven. It was a lot of time wasted but there was nothin' else to do with my time because I would have been out bored on the streets. I would still be caught up in a prison in my head. I felt I was tied to somethin'. I felt there were only certain limits I could go to. I was tryin' to make a small pitch bigger and brighter all the time.

Mulgrave Street

My mother would fix my father's cap on his head and get his bicycle and he'd go to work. She died a very young woman. She died in hospital. I remember going into the ambulance. I'll never forget it. The ambulance came to the house. It was the nerves. She was put into Saint Joseph's. She was there six years. I was six when she went in and twelve when she died. She had just had my youngest brother. I went to see her in hospital many times. I went in one particular time and I saw nurse there hitting her across the knuckles with bunch of keys. I got very angry. I ran over and kicked the nurse. They wouldn't let me visit her after that. They only let me see her when she died. Even then I wasn't allowed go into the graveyard. They wouldn't tell me where she was buried. Yet my head was tellin' me that I should know. They wanted me to forget. I don't know why. When my mother died, I said, well you're on your own from now and I went with the travelling people, I went off to the fairs. Whatever couple of shillings I made I'd bring home and give to my eldest who reared me. But you don't get the same love.

O'Connell Street

I would have been drunk at the time. If I was sober, I wouldn't have done it. I would have drunk some bottles of cider in the open. For me getting drunk was like dousing a fire with petrol. I didn't plan it. It just came to mind. It must have been around four O'clock. I went to a house on O'Connell Street. I broke some glass, put my hand in, opened the window, and went in. It was dark, but I could see this house was a palace. There was so much in this house. I went up the stairs first, I thought there was no one in. There were things everywhere. Big pictures of

sceneries, big ornaments, big antique chairs. I came back down the stairs. In the living room I stopped to think and decide what was the best I could take. There was nothing useless here as far as I was concerned. Then I saw the clock. An old clock with Roman numerals in a face set into silver. I never saw a clock like it before. It was sitting on the mantelpiece. I was about to lay hands on it when I heard a shout. Through an open door I saw someone at the bottom of the stairs. I got a fright and ran past him out the door, but the guards were out there. I was arrested, charged and knew I was going down.

O'Connell Street

I saw this girl who was working in a bar in O'Connell Street and I said, 'Wow'. There was a little bit of chat and a little bit of progress and that lasted about two weeks. I'd pop in for coffee; I would greet her and chat nicely to her at the bar. I'd be in there two or three times a week. I'd make sure I picked my time when she was there. Then one night she came out to me and started talking about serious stuff. She was having difficulties with a relationship. It had got quite nasty, quite dirty. She had to get out of it. She didn't have anyone she could talk to about it. I was her newfound friend and from there it developed. The magic started. I was very upfront I told her look I'm married and had children. We went back to her flat. I liked it there. It became a safe haven. I spent nights there and weekends. My wife never found out. I was so good at lies, so good at deceit, or I might have had a row with my wife. There was always some manipulation to achieve the desired result. I wanted to leave my wife everyday but I didn't have the balls. The fear had me in its grip. I was too comfortable at home. I wasn't able to let go of her. I wasn't able to make that move.

0'Connell Street

I met this guy from Wales once that I liked. When I entered the bar downstairs, I could feel someone looking at me and my friend was saying, 'Do you know him?' and I said, 'No'. That's how he got my attention. He was talking to someone 1 actually knew, a friend of an ex-boy friend. I sort of liked him straight away, just by looking at him. It's not me at all, for some reason I just walked up to him and started talking to him. I think he was a plasterer working on some house down the country. There was some attraction between us but he said he was just out for a few pints and was going home. He returned about half an hour later. He had got a cab to Dooradoyle where he was staying, got his pass card, went to a pass

machine then returned to the disco. He came straight up to me. We were dancing most of the night. We also spent some time chatting on the stairs where it was quieter. He was listening me and I was listening to me, it was two-way. He wasn't married but he had three kids with his ex-girlfriend and that was a turn off for me. He had reared the third one, which I thought was decent of him. But he was only here for a couple of weeks working on a job. He asked me back but I just didn't. He gave me a number. Later I spoke about him a lot to my friend Karen. She asked mc where he lived and that we should go there and see if we bump into him.

Parnell Street

I'd got serious information. Someone telephoned me and I got it straight from the stable that this horse could not be beaten, would not be beaten. He said, 'This is gone by, this is a serious machine, if you back it today you'll get five to two and if you wait till tomorrow it will be seven to four on'. As I went into the bookies, I was high. I gave over a bank draught for ten thousand. I got it five to two on and it was returned six to four on. I had two days of happiness in anticipation of the race. It was an evening meeting in Kempton in England. I went back to work; I was a bookie at the time. I didn't go home; my wife would notice if I was happy and would have asked me for money. The next day I watched the race on the S.l.S - a satellite thing we had at the time. The race was over after the first furlong — he was way out in front. I collected thirty-five thousand. I had a success, I thought that if I could do that I could do more. I thought my bets were too small. I couldn't stop myself. Five weeks later I was stony broke and I owed a fortune.

Parnell Street

I heard it was booming over there. That there was work there. Three of us went. The other lads - they knew where they were going. They had people belonging to them in London. We'd mix in the Irish clubs because that's where we got work. On some nights the sub-contractors would arrive and they'd be hiring lads out. I spent eighteen years there. I was with so many subcontractors everywhere. When I went with them, they would pay for accommodation. We stayed in guesthouses. That was put on the bill for the job. Met a few women. You couldn't bring a lady back to your guesthouse in those days. You'd have the landlady waiting for you at

the door. You have the door open and they all start fucking giggling - lights go on upstairs and they all scatter. Anyway, you'd just be getting to know one another. All of a sudden, the boss says, 'We're leaving' or you'd hear of another job and you'd be saying, 'Goodbye', and moving on. I moved from guesthouse to guesthouse. I was like a hobo. Six months on this job and then another job a hundred miles away. Another six months later finish Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, then on the road again to the next job starting Monday.

Parnell Street

I remember leaving Halifax. My Mother's brothers were over there. My uncles were there all their life. They worked in foundries. They got my father a job. There were nine boys and six girls in my family. My father stayed over - he was working. A brother of mine stayed over as well - the youngest of us left. We were after making friends in schools and we had to leave them. I thought I'd never see them again. We got a train from Halifax to Holyhead. A bumpy ride - thrown all over the place. Got the ferry to Dublin. On this boat you had cattle at the bottom, then you had passengers, then you had more passengers, then you had the crew. We were on the middle deck. You could hear and smell the cattle. They were loaded on at Holyhead and unloaded at Dublin. Got the train to Limerick. Looking out the window I thought the country side was strange because I never saw countryside in England. We left the railway station. Got two side cars to bring us to Grandma's house. A couple of weeks later I settled in and went to St. Joseph's school. Come fourteen I left. I went to work around the city on a messenger bike. Come eighteen I heard of a boom in England and I went back over. I remember waiting for the train.

Pery Square

We wanted to keep it for a few days as we wanted to take a break from Weston. We robbed it from Pery square - the car. As I drove I felt like a fire inside, a buzz, a freedom, and the breeze through the open window. It was a summer's evening - the sun was still shining. We were heading to the beach - heading to the Wild West, no one behind us, no one in front of us. We stopped for petrol half way there. I had the radio on and we were singing along to Bob Marley and UB4O, stuff we liked. I felt happy - if I stayed in Weston I'd be bored. Now I was on an

adventure. We got to Ballybunion. We got to the beach, sat down, drank some cans of beer. If We got hungry, we went and bought a bag of chips. We stayed up all night and walked about drinking, laughing, joking. When we got tired, we slept in the car. Then the cold came in with the night and I was away again, like a lark flying around the place. We were out driving when I went around a bend, didn't see it. The car slid on gravel when I tried to turn. The side wing hit something. A concrete pillar for gates. My head hit the windscreen. I got out, into a field. Tried to get away through the fields, but tripped and collapsed. Guards came along and caught us. Just as well, my head was killing me and was bleeding and swollen. Guards brought us to the local station, put us in the cells, locked us up, charged us, then threw us out of Ballybunion. We thumbed lifts back. I had a pain in my head for three days.

Plassey Park Road

I went back to college as a mature student. I had completed a two-year course and got a diploma in computer programming. I was called to an interview for a position with an American Company. They were a health insurance company. Their IT section was here. At the interview they said they employed plenty of people from the course. They asked me about the course, about how I got on, about my results. They asked me how I expected to develop with the company. I said I expected to develop my skills with them, that I hoped to move along with the technology and stay in the forefront with the company. I said to myself that this is it, I've got my job after all the time I've put in. Then they asked me where I worked last. I said I worked in Limerick prison, as a prison officer. They asked why I gave it up. I told them for medical reasons. They asked what the problem was. I told them it was epilepsy. Now I can't say explicitly what happened then, but I could see it in their faces. It was like when someone makes up their mind to say no and they're trying to think of a way to let you down gently. I wasn't getting the same interaction as I was before I mentioned that word - epilepsy. I felt the books had closed and the shutters had come down.

Post Office Lane

I had been living in England but I had come home when we broke up with my first husband. I had a little girl with him. Then I met someone else and I was expectin' my second child. John was eleven years older than me. He was a Danish confectioner. There was another Danish man called Jorgenson who sent for John

to come over from Denmark and work for him. He worked in Post office lane. would go to the same pub as my Father. My Father started bringing' him to the house for a bit to eat and he introduced me to him. I got to know him. He asked me out a couple of times though he knew that I didn't want him and that I was expectin' another man's baby the father of which I was crazy about. But that man didn't want me. He called my first child a bastard, a little later he wanted to marry me and I said, 'Well, I love my daughter. I knew her before I knew you'. Which was not true because he was my second cousin. My Father didn't want me to take my second child home. I didn't want to give him up for adoption. John said, 'You marry me, you keep baby'. I married John. I married for to keep my two children and to give them a name. I was nineteen.

Prospect Hill

'1 remember going with my sister in law to the man at the Community Welfare office for a fuel voucher, a turf voucher we called it. They were worth one and six. Then we would leave the building and we would go and change our clothes and scarves and we would go up again and get another voucher. With two vouchers I could get a bag of coal. Every Friday we'd go there, then swap coats and get a second voucher. Often, we'd tap the gas metre. The gasman would come and take out the fuse. Then we would buy another one and put it in. I'd get caught again and I'd get a warning. I'd cut lino in the shape of a shilling and I'd put it into the gas and I'd turn the dial on the gas and I'd get half and I'd turn it again and get another half. I often burnt clothes in the fire to keep warm. I remember boilin' the family dinner on the fire because the gas was cut off. I was cheatin' but it was a way to live. To survive bad times. In some ways I was happy. I had no dept over my head. I didn't have to look to where your kids were. They were out on the road skippin' or spinnin' a top or kicking a football up against a wall.

Rossa Avenue

From the ages of about four and seven he was very contrary, crying and screaming and then wanting to be out walking the whole time. He'd want to walk irrespective of the weather or the time. Once he was up and awake one of us had to be awake. He would often get up in the early hours and we would go on our walk. You'd be under pressure the whole time, trying to keep up with him, trying to keep him calm, stopping him running too far ahead. I found it hard keeping up with him. Regularly we would go to Arthur's Quay Mall. On one occasion I

remember resting on one of the seats outside the empty mall watching him running non-stop in continuous circles. It might have been five or six in the morning. At that time the republican prisoners were over there in the jail and at night there would be two squad cars driving slowly in opposite circles around the jail. During these walks I often stopped to talk to them. Over time I got to know the boys and often sat in the car with the young fella driving with the guards around the jail at three, four, five O'clock in the morning. Then we would go home and he might settle down to sleep for an hour then he'd be up, alive, ready to go again. We knew there was a problem. But there was no one telling us anything. It wasn't spoken about. We were confused as to what to do.

Roxborough Road

Have you heard of Prozac? I was on eighty milligrams of those. I was on tranxene. I was on forty milligrams of those. Then I was on some other tablet. I was on sixty milligrams of that. I was on all that at the same time. I visited the psychiatrist at the hospital every month. They said I had manic depression. I got cross one day with the psychiatrist and I said to him, 'Look every time I come here, I get tablets and they're driving me cracked. Then I said, 'Do you know what depression is?' He said, 'Well I read a lot about it'. 'But', I said, 'Do you know what depression is?' He didn't reply. 'You don't,' I said, 'You're only reading out of books and you can tell me what tablets to take? I'm on about two hundred milligrams of tablets and they're driving me crazy'. 'But you need them,' he said. He didn't listen to me. He did his own thing. Later I went to a place in Dublin. They took me off the Prozac straight away. They said if you stay on the Prozac another three weeks, you're dead. They meant it was affecting my brain. They said I'd either get a heart attack or a stroke. I got the stroke.

Saint Nessan's Road

I took only the clothes on me. The house was burnt. There was nothing else for me. I was, taken along with some other people. I spoke to no one. I was just having this silent prayer within myself. The journey started in the evening. The weather was cold, but not as cold as here. It was a long journey to the airport. Twenty-four hours. I couldn't sleep. It's a small airport. It was dark when we got on the plane. All I knew was that I had to be taken out of Nigeria then and there. We stopped at Amsterdam. took another plane. The final destination – I did not

know. I did not talk to the others. I did not want to talk to anyone. When I left the plane in Ireland I was shivering - freezing from inside of me. The officers, they were ready to send me back. I applied for asylum and later was sent to Limerick. My first day there I have a problem. I was having pain, around my stomach. I thought I should just hold myself and everything will be okay. Then blood was coming out. You see I was pregnant. I was given an ambulance. I got a miscarriage. The hospital. They were beautiful. I was well attended too. I was in a public ward. There was an Irish woman who was having the same problem. Her mother was there consoling both of us that we must be strong.

Wolfe Tone Street

Myself and my brother speak a lot about it. We look for an answer, we can't find one. I remember going to a shop on Wolfe Tone street and I'd go up and ask for the time as an excuse. The potatoes would be on the ground beside a weighing scales. I'd kick potatoes out in front of me. I'd take them home and we'd half fry them or eat them raw. I was nine or ten at the time. I had this feeling of hunger the whole time. My brother used to go to Corkanree. It was a big dump, there was always a big fire there. My bother would go there to kill pigeons and eat them. He'd kill them with stones. Never got nothin' for Christmas. I remember down in Wolfe Tone Street as a child, a milk woman would come down the road with a tankard. I would do a milk round for her. She would give me a farthing when finished. I used to go to the Model Dairy and she used to have toys in the window. Each time I finished my round I left my farthing into the shop and I bought my brother a toy for Christmas. A plastic train in a box. That was the only toy my brother ever got. As I got older, I knew something was wrong. My Father was so proud. My Mother was the same. They wouldn't look for help from anyone.

Chris Reid May 2010