

Oral History Project	Achill Oral Histories
Oral Historian	Dr Angela Maye-Banbury
Interviewee	Peter Masterson
Track no	1
Date and time	Tuesday 18th July 2023 11.00 a.m.
Location of interview	Peter's home in Achill Sound
Running time	47.52

1 Angela: So my name is Angela Maye-Banbury. I'm an oral historian and have the pleasure of being here
2 with Peter Masterson in your beautiful home in Achill, Peter, in Achill Sound. And we've just had a tour
3 of the wonderful garden. I'm just going to try and describe it here. Maybe could we take a couple of
4 pictures afterwards, maybe, in your favourite part of the garden?

5 Peter: Yes, by all means.

6 Angela: That would be nice. Maybe with Frankie (Peter's wife) and Ash (Peter's daughter) too – it would
7 be very nice. And I'm just delighted you're able to share your memories of Achill of growing up and
8 memories of your life in and around Achill and the various places where you've been. And I know about
9 the homestead as well and have listened to your beautiful poem several times and heard everything,
10 different things in it every time I heard it. And the music, and I just got a flash of, a sense of who you
11 are as a person. And it's just going to be really nice to hear a little bit more. So can I just begin by asking
12 you, what is your first memory when you were a boy? What is the first thing that comes back to you?

13 **1 min 16 secs Early Memories Of School Aged Five**

14 Peter: Well, the first that comes back to me is my first day at school, you know. I was...I went to school
15 when I was very young. I went to school...usually, it was six at that time. But for some reason or other,
16 I was sent off at five. And I don't know why and I never questioned it. I do remember going with my
17 older brother and two sisters and we went across the fields. Now we didn't...there was no school
18 transport at that time. We went across the fields. I remember going up...there was a little boren (sp)

19 I remember going up and then onto the road and going into the school. And the school – I can still see
20 that school...it was painted yellow inside. And around the walls were timber green, up to about three
21 feet. And that memory, that's still with me.

22 Angela: And where was the school?

23 Peter: The school was about a mile and half away from where we lived. We had to walk about a mile
24 and a half every day and a mile and half back.

25 Angela: Yeah. And where was the place that you lived then? What was it called?

26 Peter: I lived in a village called Kildun (sp). It's in by the sea. Very near the Atlantic – it comes in beside
27 it in the inlets. It's a beautiful place really but hard enough to find.

28 Angela: Was it hidden away kind of style?

29 Peter: I think the first time I ever brought Frankie was down there, I think she thought we were lost.
30 She didn't say anything – I knew (laughs).

31 Angela: Yeah (laughs).

32 Peter: But anyway, at school that day, I remember there was 13 of us in infant class. Now...and it was
33 a two room school. Two teachers – a lady teacher Mrs Corrigan was our teacher and on the other side,
34 there was a Mr Ball (sp?). He was a Louisburg man but he taught in Drumgallagh. Drumgallagh was the
35 name of the school but he was from Louisburg. He was a very good teacher, actually. And I liked him
36 as a teacher. But I remember there were 13 of us when we started in infants and by the time I left
37 school...and by the way, I left school at fourteen and a half and that was the end of my education as
38 far as school was concerned.

39 Angela: At fourteen and a half?

40 Peter: Yes. Yeah. And by the time I left in this sixth class, there was only, I think, six or seven of us at
41 that time. They had a whole flock off from school older than me, you see and they probably finished
42 at fourteen as well.

43 Angela: So you went down from thirteen to six or seven pupils.

44 Peter: Yes, in that particular class. Yeah. Some of them went away – maybe immigration or.... But
45 anyway, I think it was seven that finished in the sixth class when I finished. And that was the school...it
46 was an old school. It wasn't...I just missed being able to go to the new school. They were building the
47 new school by the time I left the old school and just the two rooms – fireplace at one end. No heating
48 in the other end. And sometimes we did feel cold in the winter time. I didn't have great heating system,
49 now I tell you.

50 Angela: Did it have a fire? Did you bring your sod of turf for the fire?

51 Peter: In one room. But the other room didn't have a fire. It had an old stove that didn't work.

52 Angela: What did you like about school? Was there anything about school that you enjoyed?

53 **5 mins 14 secs Peter's Love Of Geography And History At School**

54 Peter: I always loved geography and history. They were the two things that I loved going to school.
55 They were definitely. Maths...maybe average. English, yes, Irish, not so good. That was about all the
56 subjects that was taught at that time. I was pretty good at like oral mathematics – in the mind, I could
57 do that. But when it came to paper and when it came to the upper classes, I didn't seem to be able to
58 put it together so good.

59 Angela: But you could see the arithmetic in your head and could see how it would work out. So very
60 visual

61 Peter: But I couldn't get it onto paper.

62 Angela: But you really liked geography and history.

63 Peter: Pardon?

64 Angela: But you liked geography and history.

65 Peter: But history maybe even more than geography. I was very happy with both of them.

66 Angela: Tell me what happened after you left school.

67 **6 mins and 28 secs Peter Works With His Father On The Land**

68 Peter: After I left school, I worked with my father on the land for a while. My older brother went to
69 England. He was five years older than me and he went to England and I was left to help Dad at home.
70 And Dad was also what they called a 'border works ganger'. And he worked a lot of the time maybe
71 away maybe at Achill in times. And he stayed in Achill. And he worked on Inisbiggle Island. And he used
72 to work in there on the roads – and different...Ballycroy as well. And sometimes he was gone and I sort
73 of... he told me what to do. And during the busy time then, then he would be at home maybe during
74 the summertime, he'd have a few months off, they wouldn't be working. So I had, for about three
75 years, and I learnt to cut turf.

76 **7 mins 23 secs Saving The Turf And Life On The Bog**

77 Angela: Tell me about that, Peter. Tell me what it was like when you were cutting turf.

78 Peter: Actually, I loved it. I loved going to the bog. Well, the bog was quite near to us, we didn't have
79 to go far.

80 Angela: Which bog did you go to?

81 Peter: It was the bog...in Kildun. it was on the farm. We cut the turf on our own land. And we use to
82 see a lot of turf. When my brother came back from England, we used to cut turf, we used to sell it. The
83 lorries used to come from Westport and Newport and take turf in summertime. And I think you got
84 maybe £6 at that time for a lorry load of turf– which was a lot of turf and it was hard work. But when
85 you are young, you didn't seem to mind.

86 Angela: You don't feel it. You were saying, so this was when you were about 15, 16 when you were
87 cutting the turf.

88 **08 mins 26 secs Peter Works For Mayo County Council Aged 17.**

89 Peter: Then about 17, I worked for Mayo County Council for a short time.

90 Angela: What was your job there?

91 Peter: Yeah. Well, I did two different things. I worked as a labourer on the roads quarrying stones out
92 of the quarrym you know. They were doing the roads that time from Mulranny to Ballycroy. They were
93 tar spraying and paving the road. And they had men working in quarries. It was hard work in the stones.
94 And then for once summer after that, there was a horse and cart on the road maintaining the road,
95 patching it. Sometimes, you'd have to draw stones maybe from one to another. But I didn't wait at that
96 for too long. But at 18, I went to England for a short time.

97 **9 mins 20 secs Peter Goes To England Aged 18**

98 Angela: Where did you go in England?

99 Peter: I was in a place called St Ives. Now it's not St Ives in Cornwall – it's the one in Huntingdonshire.

100 Angela: I've actually camped there. But I'll tell you that maybe after our interview. I've been there. A
101 camping holiday.

102 Peter: Well, I spent six months in that town.

103 Angela: Did you really? What did you do there?

104 Peter: I'll tell you. My best friend at home at that time -and it was through music and I got to know,
105 was a man called Marty Murray. He's dead - he died two or three years ago. he was a year older than
106 I was. But his brother was a contractor in England. He said to me one day "Would you like to go to
107 England for a while? I'm thinking about going he said, when August comes. We'll stay for the winter
108 months." And I can arrange work for us.

109 Angela: How did you feel about that proposition? Were you happy enough with it?

110 Peter: I was happy enough with it. And we arranged to go. And he arranged work with his brother for
111 us. And we went for, I think, about six months.

112 Angela: What did you do there?

113 Peter: I was on the airfields. They're RAF airfields now. The RAF in England. They were those fields and
114 we used to... The lighting along the runways, different runways. We dug little trenches and we put
115 down cables and that was for the lighting along the runway.

116 Angela: So the planes could see the runways when they were coming in. Really important work.

117 Peter: Now It wasn't for the commercial airlines. The American Airforce had been based there in a
118 based there called Alconbury just outside Huntingdon.

119 Angela: I know: What year would that had been approximately? When would that have been?

120 Peter: I was there when I was 18. That would have been 1959 – 60.

121 Angela: So long after the Second World War had ended. You were just in that wave just after that
122 period.

123 **11 mins 42 secs Peter Returns To Ireland (Achill) From England in 1960: His Apprenticeship At**
124 **Sweeneys Begins.**

125 Peter: That's it. Then after six months, I came back. Again, my brother was in England at that stage. I
126 don't know why but he was back again in England. And I waited with my dad during that summer – we
127 gathered up the hay or whatever had to be done. I remember in 1960, I came to Achill.

128 Angela: Tell me about that. Peter.

129 Peter: Well, I can remember it well. I was...let me see now...my brother had a car and he seemed to be
130 at home at that particular time. He left me up in Mulranny. I caught a bus from Mulranny into Achill
131 Sound. I think...sorry... it was the 19th August 1960. Now I'm not so sure about the date.

132 Angela: Oh, it doesn't matter. It's not important.

133 Peter: It was definitely August anyway.

134 Angela: You knew it was August. Was it hot? Was it a hot day?

135 Peter: I was to stay there for four years. I left in July in 1964. Yeah.

136 Angela: Had you planned to stay for four years? Or was that just how it worked out?

137 Peter: At that time, they were looking for apprentices and you more or less had to do four years before
138 you, you know...that was... at that stage...you were supposed to be qualified.

139 Angela: What was your apprenticeship in?

140 Peter: You know were supposed to take up a job in a shop at that stage. Now there was no supermarket.
141 It was all counterwork.

142 Angela: So tell me what your apprenticeship was in.

143 Peter: It was a happy time, actually. There was a grand bunch of lads and ladies working down...there
144 was a staff house. When I came to Sweeneys now, I didn't go home. I stayed in Sweeneys. I used to
145 home maybe an odd weekend.

146 Angela: Sweeneys had a staff quarters, did they?

147 Peter: They had a staff quarters. By the time I came there, I can recall at one stage twenty seven or
148 twenty eight people staying at that staff house.

149 Angela: Is that right? So whereabouts were the staff quarters? Are they still in that main building?

150 Peter: The building is still there. But it's been done up since that, of course.

151 Angela: Which building is it? Is it the Supervalu one?

152 Peter: Do you know where the electrical store is?

153 Angela: I do:

154 Peter: Siopa Claddaigh. That was – all the staff...

155 Angela: Is that right?

156 Peter: And there was girls...the girls worked some of them in the office and some in the drapery shop
157 were at one end of it - and they had their own apartments. And the boys then were across the road,
158 across the yard. Do you know where the coffee shop is now?

159 Angela: I do surely.

160 Peter: Well, upstairs there, there were five or six rooms.

161 Angela: Is that right. Oh, my goodness.

162 Peter: And as well as that, at the other end where the electrical store is now, there was another four
163 or five rooms there. Men were in there as well. There was about twenty seven people, I think....there
164 were two fellas to each room or two girls to each room as well, I suppose as well. And we used to have
165 some good fun there at times. Dancing was a big thing. There was three or four very good ballroom
166 dancers on the staff at that time. And I was reasonably good as well.

167 **PART 2**

168 **1 min 0 secs Peter Describes Ballroom Dancing: Life As An Apprentice**

169 Angela: You used to do ballroom dancing?

170 Peter: I used to a bit of ballroom dancing.

171 Angela: Oh, wonderful. Which dances did you do? Did you do the waltz, foxtrot?

172 Peter: The waltz. Quick steps and foxtrots.

173 Angela: Was there space to do ballroom dancing?

174 Peter: In the halls. You see, there were céilís as well. Every Wednesday night, there was a céilí down in
175 the hall there. Not the hall that's there now. There was an old hall there. And there was a céilí there
176 every Wednesday night. And they brought in, as well as the local bands, at times they brought in céilí
177 bands from Galway, Richie Fitzgerald from Donegal. And I learnt some céilí as well at that stage.

178 Anegla: So talk me through what your average day – not that there is such a thing – but what would
179 your average day have been like when you were working in Sweeneys. What time would you get up in
180 the morning?

181 Peter: We used to start at half past nine in the morning. And then that changed during the time I was
182 there – that changed to 9 o'clock.

183 Angela: Oh, that doesn't good. (laughs).

184 **1 min 15 secs Life in The Grocery Department At Sweeneys**

185 Peter: But anyway, it consisted of... first, everything was weighed at that time. I was in the grocery
186 department. And everything – sugar, tea – everything – raisins was weighed in pounds.

187 Angela: So you had your scales and paper bags, was it?

188 Peter: Yeah. You had your scales and your bag of sugar. The sugar came in 200 bags at that time. Big
189 bags.

190 Angela: Did you have a scoop that you used to put it into the bags?

191 Peter: A scoop. And there was a certain way of opening the bags. You just filled them first. You always
192 made sure there was a little bit of extra on the bag. So when you put it on the scale, you didn't have
193 to come back. You just took out the surplus and put it into a spare bag.

194 Angela: And was this in where the main Sweeneys supermarket is now? Is that where you would have
195 been working?

196 Peter: That's where it was. All the weighing was down in what we used to call the cellar and stored.
197 That was where all the stores were at time.

198 Angela: And would you mark on the bags how much everything weighed?

199 Peter: Well, yeah, for sugar, for instances, there was a four pound bag, a two pound bag and seven
200 pound bag. And the tea was all loose. There was no tea bags.

201 Angela: What kinds of foods were for sale at that time?

202 Peter: At the time, it was a modern shop as shops went at the time. But there was no such things as
203 the supermarket. There was counters. Can you remember counters?

204 Angela: I do remember counters in Tyrone, aye, I do surely.

205 Peter: The counters was all round at one end and most of the stuff was to the inside of the counters
206 in shelves.

207 Angela: Did you sell any meats there? Or fish? Or any meat?

208 Peter: They used to sell fresh meat at one stage but they gave it up for some reason. But there would
209 be herrings. Salmon, there was a lot of salmon sold there. Salmon was very plentiful in Achill at that
210 time and fishermen used to come in and buy some and it was sold across the counter. And it was sold
211 nearly as a full salmon. Seldom you'd have to cut up the salmon.

212 Angela: So you were working really hard during the day and you had your evenings when you could
213 relax. You were dancing.

214 **4 mins 01 secs Football And Playing For The Team**

215 Peter: Half past six and we were off. There was football as well. There was a competition going on at
216 that time. It was exclusively for Achill teams. The Scanlon Cup they called it. Now I wasn't a great
217 footballer. But I used to enjoy playing sometimes. I played with the Sound, the local Sound team, for
218 maybe one or two years. And then, as it happened, Ballycroy where I came from were starting a team

219 as well. You know, in a rural place, the numbers weren't great. So some of them asked me would I play
220 with Ballycroy. Or would I help to start the team. And actually, we did. And in later years, we were
221 successful, actually.

222 Angela: So you went back to play for Ballycroy.

223 Peter: I went back to play for Ballycroy.

224 Angela: Achill must have missed you on their team maybe.

225 Peter: I knew so many good footballers at that time, I wouldn't have been featuring anyway that much.

226 Angela: So how old would you have been when you were playing football? How old would you have
227 been then?

228 Peter: I was in my early twenties. And I kept playing until I was 31.

229 Angela: Wow. You kept it up all those years.

230 Peter: I think I had my last match at 31 for Ballycroy. Yeah.

231 Angela: So after you finished your apprenticeship, tell me what happened that. Did you stay in Achill
232 after that?

233 Peter: Not exactly. But almost.

234 Angela: (laughs) Sounds interesting.

235 **5 mins 45 secs Peter's Job As a Van Driver With Sweeneys Delivering Ice creams Begins**

236 Peter: When I finished in Sweeneys, I took a holiday for a month or so. And then I got a place called
237 Galway Lacka – Turlough Mór (Turloughmore). There was a big store there called Flynn's. They were a
238 big cattle deal there as well. Bar, grocery, grocery, coal, manures – that sort of stuff. And they were
239 exporters of seed potatoes. They used to buy potatoes from the local farmers and export them to
240 England and France as well as far as I know. So I go that job and stayed there probably from September

241 until February. I wasn't that keen on it to tell you the truth. I was sort of glad to get out of it. But one
242 weekend, I was down at home. I got the weekend off. I hired a car in Galway. Came down to Ballycroy.
243 On the way down in Westport, I stopped off and I bought a 'Mayo News'. And on that Mayo News,
244 there was an ad for Sweeneys and Son looking for a van salesman to see ice cream to the shops – like
245 to distribute ice cream to the shops. So I rang them up right away, actually. And Niall Sweeney the man
246 I worked for for years after that, he said: "Can you come on tomorrow at such a time to the garage." It
247 wasn't Sweeneys where I worked before. It was across the bridge.

248 Angela: I know the one. They hire bikes there from there now. Is it the garage just before the turning
249 for the Green Way.

250 Peter: Yes. There was also a coal room stores. The Atlantic cold stores were at the back as well. So I
251 came in in the Sunday and he interviewed me at the4 garage there and I got the job.

252 Angela: You must have made a very good impression. You'd seen the job and you thought, that's the
253 for me. You struck while the iron was hot.

254 Peter: Well, so I had nine very happy years working for that particular man.

255 Angela: So what did you do then?. You were driving around delivering ice cream...

256 Peter: Delivering but you had to sell it as well. You were a salesman and delivery. You know, both. And
257 you had the take the money. It was cash at that time too.

258 Angela: What kind of ice cream was it? Was it in containers or...

259 Peter: You know the bricks of ice cream and choc ices, the boxes of choc ices. Ice lollies. Tubs. All that
260 sort of thing.

261 Angela: Did you send them around Achill or did you go further afield?

262 Peter: Achill. But mostly, during the summer, they had another man who used to do Achill and I was
263 nearly completely...I was out the country – all down north Mayo. I knew every village in North Mayo:
264 Westport, Louisburg, Knock, Ballina.

265 Angela: You covered a wide area in this job.

266 Peter: You had a different run each day, you see

267 Angela: Right. How long did you do that for?

268 Peter: I did that for twenty nine years altogether. The first nine was with the Sweeneys – they were the
269 best times. Niall Sweeney retired from the business then. And the business and the store went to
270 Belcarra, Castlebar and I did another nine years in Castlebar working out of Belcarra and distributing
271 all down towards Achill, Mulranny, Westport, parts of Castlebar.

272 Angela: Right. It was a wide geographical area that you covered then. You said that the nine years in
273 Sweeneys was the happiest years of the job for you.

274 Peter. They were the happiest years. Of course, I had another nine years in Belcarra. By that stage, I
275 was married, of course.

276 **10 mins 20 secs How Peter Met His Wife Frankie – Dances And Showbands**

277 Angela: So how did you meet Frankie? Can you tell me that story? Maybe that's a different chapter.
278 How old were you when you met?

279 Peter: During the time I was working for Mr Sweeney across the bridge, I was living in Ballycroy. But
280 again, the dancing was a big thing. I went to dances all over the place. I had a car at that stage.

281 Angela: Did you?

282 Peter: So I could move about a bit (laughs)

283 Angela: So where did you go?

284 Peter: Oh, we used to go to Newport, Westport, anywhere near to Achill – to The Wavecrest Ballroom
285 in Achill.

286 Angela: Oh, wow. Did you have bands playing then? Did you have the show bands?

287 Peter: The showbands were on at that time.

288 Angela: Which showbands were on at that time?

289 Peter: Well, in the Royal Ballroom in Castlebar, there would be the Royal Showband. They'd be Larry
290 Cunningham. They'd be Dickie Rock.

291 Angela: Well, he was very big at that time.

292 Peter: Dickie Rock. He's still going. There was Joe Dolan. They were the most popular bands. There
293 were other good showbands as well now.

294 Angela: Yeah. And is that how you met Frankie? Did you meet at the dances?

295 Peter: One evening, one Sunday evening, I decided to go to Castlebar. I was going to go to dance in
296 Mulranny and I came to Mulranny for some reason, I said I'd go to Castlebar. And I went to Castlebar.
297 And when I came out at the start of the dance, I saw a lady standing up at the side of the hall. And the
298 lady was Frankie. And I went up and I asked her to dance and she said she would. So we danced a
299 round. And then I asked her for another dance. We had a mineral, I think, in the mineral bar. And then
300 I asked her could take her home and she said, well, – she hesitated for a minute. And she said "No."
301 But I tell you what I'll do. I'll make a date. She wanted to get to know me more. The date was for the
302 Tuesday or Wednesday night. She told me where she lived. I knew because I had to travel that road
303 twice a week. The date was fixed for whatever it was – nine o'clock or something. I went and I stood
304 out at the house at the road. And I saw two girls coming at a distance walking towards me. And when
305 they came near the car, one of them came over to me and she said "Frankie is not available tonight.
306 She's gone a funeral with her mother. Her mother had to go to a funeral in Louisburg and she has taken

307 her to Louisburg so she's not here", she said. "But she said she will meet you next Sunday night in the
308 Royal Ballroom." Yeah. But there was a little bit of a doubt about that.

309 Angela: So you'd heard this from another person. You hadn't heard this from Frankie herself.

310 Peter: Later, I heard Frankie was inside the hedge. And I never check whether there a funeral in
311 Louisburg or not. But anyway, she was inside the hedge. Well, she told me actually she was later.. But
312 she wanted to find out more about me, I think So the next Sunday night, I was in a position then should
313 I go to Castlebar. This girl might be having me on. But I thought I'd go to the dance anyway and I'll see.
314 And sure enough, Frankie was at the dance and I did take her home that night. That was the start of
315 that.

316 Anepla: And that was how you met. Such a lovely story. So how old were you when you met Frankie?

317 Peter: Twenty five,

318 Anepla: Twenty five. Right. And did Frankie live close to you...or where do Frankie live?

319 Peter: Frankie lived near Westport –on the Westport/Newport Road.

320 Angela: And you knew that road because you'd be travelling around.

321 Peter. I travelled that road twice a week.

322 **15 mins 13 secs Peter Describes His Family**

323 Angela: So how old were you when you got married?

324 Peter. Twenty eight.

325 Angela: So you were courting for three years. Yeah. Yeah. How many children do you have? I know
326 about Ash obviously.

327 Peter: Well there's Caroline and Fiona and there's Peter Junior and there's Aisling.

328 Angela: Ash is obviously here. Where does everyone else live? Where do your other children live? Are
329 they Mayo as well?

330 Peter: Caroline's in Dooega. They have the Coláiste. She married to Marty Mangan. Do you know Marty
331 Mangan?

332 Angela: I haven't met him. But Ash has mentioned the connection, yeah.

333 Peter: And Fiona is married in Castlebar. And Peter Junior is married. He's in Portlaoise.

334 Angela: OK.

335 Peter: He's a woodwork and maths teachers there up in Portlaoise.

336 **PART 3**

337 **00.01 secs Building A New Home: Family Life in Achill**

338 Angela: So we got up to when you met Frankie and you got married three years after three years. So
339 where were you living then?

340 Peter: Well, we rented a house outside Mulranny. My sister was living out there at the time and she
341 knew of a house that was there. So we rented a house there. And at that stage, we had this site bought
342 here now.

343 Angela: Ah, right.

344 Peter: It was just a site. It was a piece of...very...

345 Angela: There was nothing on it.

346 Peter: There was nothing on it at all.

347 Angela: And you've built this beautiful home and this beautiful garden. It looks like its always been
348 here.

349 Peter: And there was nothing that side or nothing on the other side.

350 Angela: Wow.

351 Peter: We were the first to come here and build. That one was sold. But nothing built on it. And this
352 was the next one then that was sold. And eventually that one was sold. There was...there was just an
353 old fence out there along the road there and a few rhododendrons bushes growing. And that's what it
354 was...a bit of land just. Flat land.

355 Angela: And what year did you move here first?

356 Peter: I bought the site in 1968. I had it bought before we were married. We bought it. And 1969, we
357 started to build on it.

358 Angela: Did you build it yourself?

359 Peter: No. My cousin in Balycroy was a builder and I gave him the contract to build the house. And
360 Sweeneys supplied the materials – or most of it anyway. And the house was built in '69 and finished in
361 1970.

362 Angela: That's very good – that's quick. From start to finish from 1960 to 1970.

363 Peter: Yes. It was. And we came in here to live in the house in April 1970.

364 Angela: Right. And when was your first child born and who was that?

365 Peter: Karen was born was born the August after that.

366 Angela: The August after that. Right. OK. Describe to me what it was like during that period. . Were
367 you working then.

368 Peter: I was still working for Sweeney's across the bridge at that stage. It was a busy time, you know.
369 You'd have to arrange to have stuff for the men. There were very good. They did a good job in a short
370 time really. But it was busy – and then Caroline came along and made to more busy.

371 Angela: Yeah (Laughs).

372 Peter: But again, when you are young, you don't seem to mind. It's just a job.

373 Angela: You just get on with it. Were you still doing the ice cream delivery at that point? So twenty
374 none years you were doing that job for. So tell me..

375 Peter: For years.

376 Angela: So tell me when the next children came.

377 **2 mins 50 secs A Growing Family**

378 Peter: Fiona was born about two years after Karen. And Peter came a year after that. And Aisling didn't
379 come for a long time. I don't know where - she came from somewhere anyway, didn't she.

380 Angela: Is Aisling the youngest?

381 Peter: She's the baby. Yes. She's the baby. Yeah.

382 Angela: Well, we share that in common. We're both the babies.

383 Peter: She's almost eight years younger than Peter.

384 Angela: And you've got your lovely...do you have any other grandchildren? Do you other children have
385 children?

386 Peter: Do we have grandchildren? We do. We have thirteen grandchildren.

387 Angela; Wow. Do they often come here together? Do you ever have them all here at the same time.

388 Peter. If you had came here on Sunday at 1 o clock, there was six of them here.

389 Angela: It's a lovely garden for them to come to.

390 Peter: Caroline's three and three of Peter's were here on Sunday.

391 Angela: Yeah.

392 Peter: And there's Marty and Carolyn in Dooega have four children. Aisling has three, Fiona had two
393 and Peter has four.

394 Angela: Tell me about the music because that's a really important aspect of you, Peter, isn't it?

395 Peter: I always played a bit of music. Even before I left Balycroy, I used to play music in the local band.

396 **4 mins 10 secs The Amethyst Trio: Peter Talks About Life As a Musician**

397 Angela: And your instrument is the accordion, isn't it?

398 Peter: Accordion. Yeah. And during the times Sweeneys then and when we got married, I sort of took
399 a back seat. I didn't ...the children coming along and everything. Music...I didn't so much of it. But there
400 was a local band here was a trio. The Amethyst Trio. And one of the men in the band, he decided to go
401 to England. And he left it. So the leader of the band Mick Gallagher was his name, I stayed playing...we
402 played together for twenty five years after that. He asked me would I try it a night or two to see if I
403 would fit in. And of course I loved it.

404 Angela: Yeah. So there was you, there was Mick Gallagher...what was the name of the other...?

405 Peter: There was a girl called Katy **Graven (sp)**. She worked in Sweeney's actually. We were busy
406 actually. You see the music at that time, the music in the pubs, always at the weekends – Friday,
407 Saturday, Sunday night. And maybe during the week a night or two. And when it came to July and
408 August, we could take four or five nights if we wanted.

409 Angela: So what other instruments were there? There was the accordion...

410 Peter: Katy played the accordion as well and Mickey played the drums. He was the vocalist as well.

411 Angela: Did he have a little drum kit that he...

412 Peter: Oh, he had the whole kit.

413 Angela: What songs did you play? Or what melodies did you play?

414 Peter: They'd be a lot of country and western and there'd be the old time waltzes like. Ballads like
415 'Danny Boy' and 'The Green Glens Of Antrim', 'Sliabh na mBan and all those old waltzes.

416 Angela: Song sthat people would have known. They would have been melodies people would have
417 known well.

418 Peter: Oh yeah. We were popular with the older people – you know, people who would like to have a
419 waltz or a quick step. And we used to have Achill Sound hotel down there– they gave us a lot of
420 business. The Slievemore Hotel which is no longer there in Dugort. Masterson's in Dugort. I don't know
421 if you know it. There was a man called Mc Hugh at that time had that. And then it was McMenamins
422 after that. It's changed hands several place that place, actually/

423 Angela: What was the Slievemore Hotel like when you there? It's obviously all boarded up now.

424 Peter: It was a lovely homely place. It had a real old atmosphere about it. There was a big stairways
425 going up centrally when you'd go in the door. The bar was to the right. The kitchen ...the stairway going
426 into the bedrooms.

427 Angela: Did you ever play over in the Strand Hotel?

428 Peter: Oh yes. But not as much as the Slievemore. And we played a lot in

429 Frankie : Johnny Pattens.

430 Peter: And in Dooega in Mickey's. We used to always have some good nights there over Christmas.

431 Angela: So how long did you play for the Amethyst Trio.

432 Peter: Katy opted out for health reasons or something at the time – she left it And my brother over in
433 Balycroy, he played the guitar and fiddle. And he came to join us. And then one of the original fellas,
434 Petie Kilbane, who left when I took his place, he left. Well, he came back again. There was always
435 different line ups. Marty Murray sometimes from Balycroy as well. We'd make up a trip anyways. But

436 the two – Mick Gallagher and myself were the two mainstays of the Amethyst Trip. And I think Mick
437 played his last gig when he was 81 years.

438 Angela: Wow. And you're still playing too.

439 Peter: Oh, not much. Since the hearing went bad...he music. I can't get it together.

440 Angela: Would you still have a feel for it?

441 Peter: The fingers are still quite good. But the hearing, getting the music from the air up to hear. You
442 see, I play by ear. I don't play by notes.

443 Angela: That's brilliant that you play by mean. I mean, it's a gift.

444 Peter: Well, they say it is yeah.

445 Angela: So you lived here for...so how long have you been here now? You've lived here for many, many
446 years.

447 Peter: Since 1970.

448 Angela: Goodness me. And you wouldn't live anywhere else now, I'm assuming. You're definitely here
449 for keepers.

450 Peter: The house we have here – from start from finish.

451 Angela: It must feel really special to have built your own home to the way you want it.

452 Peter: And we'd done a lot of work to it. then we extended it like, the bed and breakfast came into it
453 as well.

454 **9 mins 50 secs Running The Bed And Breakfast In Achill**

455 Angela: Wow – you did bed and breakfast. Do you still do bed and breakfast?

456 Peter: Oh no, no. We retired years and years ago from that.

457 Angela: What was that like when you were doing the bed and breakfast? Hard work, I'd imagine.

458 Peter: Well, Frankie was in charge of that. I think we did forty years. Yeah.

459 Angela: It's a long time, isn't it? You must have seen hundred of people come through your doors.

460 Peter: And when we started first, it was mainly continentals that was coming: Germans, French, Dutch,
461 they were our business for the first couple of years. And then a lot of Irish started. This week, at the
462 moment, this week the 12th July, they'd be a lot of people down from Northern Ireland.

463 Angela: Yeah. The mass exodus from the North (laughs). My sisters are down here at the minute. You
464 always have that exodus from people in the north. It always gets very quiet in the north at this stime
465 of year.

466 Peter: To get away from the marching bands.

467 Angela: It's beautiful here too.

468 Peter: But from the 10th of July to 20th July, there's usually a lot of people from Northern Ireland.

469 **11 mins 30 secs What Makes Achill Special For Peter – And Achill Of The Future**

470 Angela: What is it about Achill that's special for you, Peter?

471 Peter: I just can't put my finger on it. But the people are very nice in Achill. I've fitted into Achill. There's
472 very little difference between Achill and Balycroy for living, So I always fitted in. It was the place I
473 wanted to be, in other words. And it's great because you can have a drive round and go to the beach
474 if you want o.

475 Angela: Do you have a favourite beach?

476 Peter: We love Doeega beach.

477 Angela: It is beautiful there.

478 Peter: Keel. And Keem but Keem is overcrowded. Well that brings us up to date.

479 Angela: What would an Achill of the future be liked for you, I mean, if you were to allow yourself to
480 thiknk of what Achill could be like for you and your family of the future?

481 Peter: Well, I think the tourist industry could be expanded more, I think. I think we want a good hotel
482 in Achill, a really good hotel. At least one – maybe two. They say that it wouldn't pay. But Mulranny
483 Hotel, Mulranny Hotel was closed for a good while – then a big job was done, they did a lot of work on
484 it and it was opened again. And I think it's going very wel a s far as I can see

485 Anegla: It is.

486 Peter: And I can't see why another one couldn't go. I'm taking about a hotel with a swimming pool
487 now with all the facilities, you know. And I think there'd be business there in winter time even for that.
488 And then you have all the lovely walks, you have the Greenway, it's in a better position to have a hotel
489 than ever it was as far as I can see. And that would be one thing. What else? If there were small
490 industries where the young people could stay and live in Achill. We have several people living in
491 Castlebar, in Westport and Cork. Achill people. The youth has done from Achill now and that is a shame.
492 Even if you get a fifth of them to stay in A chill, it would make the place a better place. You'd see...when
493 they went to school to McHale College, there was almost 500 when Peter was going. Now it's 250.

494 Ash: About 200.

495 Angela: More than halved.

496 Peter: You had a school in Dereens, a school in Doeega, you had aa school in Ashleam, you had a school
497 in Beal Fearsta in Corraun. Two schools.

498 Angela: Bunncurry's gone.

499 Peter. Young people that would be supporting those schools with children are in Castlebar or Westport.

500 Angela: So there's more that needs to be done to keep young people here on the island, to create more
501 opportunities for them.

502 Peter: That's what I think.

503 Angela: I think you're right.

504 Peter: Because it a shame as it is such a beautiful place to live.

505 **Ends 47 52 mins**