

# General Interview

## Family Life

Mention the date the interview was taken, the name of the interviewer and the name of the interviewee. Make sure the Consent form is explained and signed

- Is ..... your full name?
- Do you remember why your parents selected this name for you (e.g. was it common for the first born to have the same name of the grandparents)?
- When and where were you born?
- Who were your mother and father?
- How big was the family?
- What do you know about the origin and meaning of the family surname?
- What stories have come down to you about your most distant ancestors?
- How and when did your family come to live in the area?
- Did your family have an auxiliary name to distinguish it from other ..... families in the locality?
- How many of your family still live in the area? Who are they?
- Did you have any famous or notorious relatives? Were the stories about them relished?
- Are there any special heirlooms or memorabilia that have been passed down in the family? What is their significance?
- Do you remember the old house and how was it laid out or divided?
- What source of light did you normally have? (Lanterns, lamps, oil lights)
- How was the fire lit or the seed kept? What was the main fuel?
- Were there any special items in the house that you remember?
- Can you describe the typical family meals of the day? Did the family all eat together? Who did the cooking?
- What was the typical grace before meals?
- What meals were cooked on special occasions (e.g. Christmas, Easter)?
- What types of household vessels and utensils were used?
- What luxuries did you have (e.g. tobacco, snuff, alcohol, jam, sweets)?

- What was the house water supply (e.g. well, stream)?
- Did you have any pets? What can you remember about them?
- What did you and your family enjoy doing together most of all?
- Have you any special memories about what life was like, or goings on that happened in the family home?
- What did your father work at?
- Did your family have much land of your own? What crops were generally planted and how were they harvested? What livestock and fowl were kept?
- What were your typical daily chores at home? Were there any you particularly liked or disliked?
- What was school like for you as a child? Who were the teachers? What were your best and worst subjects? Were there any subjects you wished you had been taught?
- What kind of games and pastimes did you and your friends play when growing up? Who were your friends?

## **Farming**

- What livestock and fowl did you have on the family farm?
- What crops and vegetables were planted? How were they harvested?
- What machinery did you have and how were they operated?
- What diseases or ailments did the animals get and how were they treated? Was there a vet or did people rely on traditional remedies?
- How did people predict the weather for important activities such as saving the hay?
- Can you describe the fairs and the process of driving the cattle to them?
- Were there road tolls at the time?
- What goods were bought and sold at the fairs?
- Was there any entertainment at the fairs?

## Community

- What are the local place names and do you know what their meaning is?
- What are the other most prominent family surnames in the locality and do you know anything of their history?
- What was the main source of employment for people around here?
- What did you work at yourself?
- Do you remember who the trades-people were? (Blacksmith, shoemaker, cloth manufacture and dyeing, Tailor and dressmaker, knitting and lace-making, woodwork, wickerwork, masonry, milling, butchering and thatching)
- What were the most common diseases and ailments?
- Did people ever seek out local folk healers for certain ailments?
- What was the main method of travelling in the community (e.g. horse bicycle)?
- What was life like here during the time of the emergency (2<sup>nd</sup> World War)? Can you remember accounts of the rationing of certain goods?
- What was the main source of fuel for the fire in the area?
- What was the local tradition of travellers (e.g. did they sell goods and ornaments or work for the local farmers etc.)?
- What kind of local gatherings and events can you remember in the area? (e.g. fairs, patterns, fleadh-ceól's )
- What did people buy and sell at the local fairs and markets?
- Can you remember the process of driving cattle or other livestock to the fair? Were there road tolls at the time?
- What was the tradition of matchmaking, courtship and marriage at the time?
- What can you recall of the custom of arranged marriages, the dowry (fortune) or how the lack of a dowry could affect someone?
- How were the holidays and feast days (e.g. birthdays and Christmas etc.) celebrated in the area? What sort of presents was received at Christmas for example?

- What were the main sources of entertainment in the area (e.g. rambling, cards, music, song and dance)?
- Did you go to the ballroom dances, wren parties, and fleadh ceól's?
- Can you describe the storytelling at night?
- How important was religion to the community? Was it important to be seen as devout in the practice of the faith (e.g. never missing mass, blessing yourself passing the church etc.)?
- Did any of your family take up holy orders?
- What holy days in the year were most prominent and how were they celebrated (e.g. bone fires at St John's and barn brack's at St Brigit's)?
- What was the tradition of wakes and funerals in the area? Was it important to have supplies of drink, tobacco and snuff for wakes?
- Was substitutes such as turf or dandelion ever used as a substitute for tobacco?
- Who were the first to have cars in the locality? Can you recall the excitement or amusement associated with their arrival?
- When did the first radios come to the area? Did they generate a lot of excitement? What type of radios was there at the time and how were they powered?
- When did electricity first come to the area? Did it bring about a major change in people's lives? What about the first TVs?
- What else do you think have been the biggest changes to occur in the area over the years?
- Have any major or historical events affected your family or the community here?
- Do any stories and memories of the local community come to mind?

## **The Land League**

- Can you recall any accounts of the land league in your locality?
- Was it a bitter dispute?
- Who were the local landlords and agents?
- How were they regarded?
- Do any of them still live in the area?

## **The Troubles**

- Can you remember any accounts of the war of independence and the civil war?
- Who were the participants in your area?
- Did any of your family participate?
- How were the RIC regarded by the locals as most of them were Irish anyway?
- What were the general elections like after the troubles?

## **Relics of the Past**

- Can you tell me anything about the remains of historical buildings in the area (e.g. old landlord houses, and castles etc.)?
- What can you tell me about the forts and holy wells in the area?
- What taboos were associated with interfering with holy places or fairy forts (e.g. not interfering with the forts in case something bad would happen)?
- Can you remember any stories or superstitions connected with them?

## **Superstitions (Puisseógs)**

- Can you recall any of the local superstitious practices or puisseógs (e.g. omens, child with a caul etc.)?
- What was the purpose of puisseóg practice such as breaking eggs for example in a farmers hay stacks?

- What child bogeys do you remember (e.g. the bogey man etc.)? Were these stories meant to frighten or discourage children from going out at night or from going to certain places?
- Can you recall any stories about encounters with fairies or ghosts (fairies dancing, banshee, etc.)?

## **Emigration**

- Did you ever emigrate?
- What age were you at the time?
- Did anyone travel with you?
- What other relations did you have there and did you have a close relationship with them?
- Did you find life there a major change and how did you like it?
- What employment did you have?
- Are there any particular events or occurrences that you remember there?
- Did you come home on holidays very often?
- When did you come back home for good? Did you notice any major changes from the time you had first lived here?
- Have any families from the locality disappeared completely due to emigration?

## **Personal**

- When did you retire?
- If you could have had any other profession what would it have been? Why wasn't it your first choice?
- Of all the things you learned in life, which do you feel was the most valuable?
- What accomplishments in life are you most proud of?
- Finally what is the one thing you would like people to remember about you?