

# THE ULSTER-SCOTS LANGUAGE SOCIETY

In 2002, Elizabeth McLeister interviews Bertie Connolly in County Antrim. He recalls growing up and working on his grandparents' farm - ploughing with horses, pulling flax and making drains before sowing the potato crop. He also remembers saving up for his first motor car.

Please note, roughly 3 minutes in, where [ph] appears in brackets, this indicates a phonetic spelling.

[00:00:01.23] Bertie Connolly: Well, me granda was oot ploughin wi the horses an warkin wi tha horses. A wus raised wi me granny and granda.

[00:00:05.10] An then whan he wus oot ploughin wi the horses or warkin wi them in the farm, breakin up groun for sowin seed; an harra'in the seeds in efter he sowed them wi a fiddle, a bow-fiddle.

[00:00:19.25] A went out then whan A got me tay, whan A cum hame fae school, A went oot an helped him.

[00:00:26.04] An, ah, then whan A left school, he sayed tae me: "Noo," he sayes, "You're left school," he says, "You have tae go wi the horses".

[00:00:38.16] Before that, whan A was at school, ye see, whan he wus oot warkin wi the horses, A haed thair supper tae prepare fur them...

[00:00:44.08] turnips tae boil an then pound them and püt meal in them - an leave them in the stalls fur them cummin in at night.

[00:00:52.06] Even if me father, me granda did bring them in, or mebbe if A haed been ploughin, I wud hae brought them in.

[00:00:59.15] A left school in 19 an 38, March '38. A left the week after me birthday - well it wus the end o the quarter, ye see. So, no but the teacher wanted me back!

[00:01:15.02] She said tae me... A told her at the end o March, A says, "A'm leavin the day," I says, "I'll not be back". "Oh," she says, "Bertie, A'd rether hear diffrent".

[00:01:23.14] A warked on at the farm wi the horses up tae 19 an 52.

[00:01:28.02] Well then we hired oot tractors fur the heavy ploughin an heavy wark - like it was too much for the horses püllin a big heavy disk tae break the ground up.

[00:01:41.24] So, but we still had the horses, like, an I wus daein light wark wi them like harra'in in the seeds, an openin or closin drills an seedle harra'in an grubbin an boordin potatoes.

[00:01:56.08] An then whun the potatoes startit tae cum through, we had tae hoe them.

[00:02:00.20] Well A had tae grub the drills wi a one horse grubber; an then whun the' wur hoed, A had tae mould them wi a one horse drill plough.

[00:02:07.16] Well then, that went on at different times from, ah, they wur plantit tae the' wur ready fur sprayin at the Twelfth o July; an then after that then, they done as well as good that tae diggin time.

[00:02:23.09] But then we grew flax and A had it tae wark wi.

[00:02:26.23] Elizabeth: That was hard, dirty wark, wasn't it, the flax?

[00:02:29.01] Bertie: It was, it was hard dirty wark.

[00:02:30.11] Elizabeth: Or we called it 'lint'.

[00:02:31.20] Bertie: Ay, the' cal'd it 'lint' now times. Well, I helped tae püll the flax (or the lint as they cal'd it). Well then it had tae be cartit tae the dam an püt in the dam;

[00:02:45.12] An then whan it wus aboot eight days in, it had tae be threw out ontae the edge o the dam an spread over fiels tae dry - an I haed all that tae do.

[00:02:55.18] Well, me granny an granda, they spread it or 'gaited' it. Me granda really gaited it, spread it.

[00:03:01.10] Elizabeth: 'Gaitin' it was settin it up in a kind of a stook?

[00:03:04.05] Bertie: Ay, settin it or spreadin it roon yer knee - an then walkin aboot, walkin away fae it. Well, that sut thair mebbe fur a week.

[00:03:15.16] Well, then ye had tae turn roun an shake that flax, that lint, iverie gait. Ye had tae shake it, ye see, separate the stalks.

[00:03:24.21] Well then after it wus properly dried, ye tied it an püt it... Ye püt it intae sheegs then. Well then after it sut in the sheegs a while, ye throwed [ph] it.

[00:03:33.08] Elizabeth: Sheegs? And what was sheegs?

[00:03:34.25] Bertie: Well, sheegs was built up - six rows o beets. They'd sit... Thair wur two set wi thair heid thegither; well then thair wur two ither rows then pit against that.

[00:03:45.12] Well then thair wur a heart pit up it wi beets o lint. Well then it wus roofed wi beets an thatched an roped doon.

[00:03:52.29] Well, they sut that - that sut thair then - well mebbe it wus threw oot o the sheegs intae the mill tae be scutched.

[00:04:00.20] An mebbe if the mill wus too füll o lint, me granda had tae stack it. Well I built the stacks an he gaited them; an then I thatched - an him an me roped them.

[00:04:12.00] Well then the thatch wus tuk off then whan thair wur a vacancy in the mill fur it gaun in - it was threw tae the mill to be scutched, an then after that it wus took tae the market in Ballymoney an sold.

[00:04:22.11] Elizabeth: Well is that mill still there or is it...?

[00:04:25.23] Bertie: No, the mill's all, lint mill's all done away wi.

[00:04:28.09] Elizabeth: Ay, what lint mill was that?

[00:04:29.22] Bertie: Well, at the beginning it was Wullie Armour's lint mill, ower at the top. Well, then Wullie gave the mills up then fur he wus got old an done.

[00:04:39.20] An then we haed tae take it, haed tae get it cairtit tae Stranocum Mill, Alec Chestnut's Mill tae be scutched there so...

[00:04:47.18] Well then, Alec, he took it intae the market in the lorry: we haed nae bother takin it in so...

[00:04:54.29] Well that was, like, in the winter time but then. ah, well if the weather was good in the month o January, the ploughin had tae be startit then fur anither yeir's crop.

[00:05:06.09] So that's the way things went roun an roun.

[00:05:09.05] Elizabeth: An what yeir were you born in, Bertie?

[00:05:11.02] Bertie: A was boarn on the 24th o March, 19 an 24 at a place the' call Drumafeeby, near Armoy.

[00:05:19.04] Oh A made drains an cleaned sheughs an faced hedges an done wark like that whun it wasn't the weather fur ploughin - or even before the ploughin startit, so...

[00:05:30.07] Elizabeth: When did ye give up the farmin?

[00:05:32.06] Bertie: Well, A gave up the fairmin in, what, 19 an 63. Of coorse ma grandfather wus dead then - he died in 19 an 60.

[00:05:46.29] But then we had a fiel o drains marked out an A had tae start an make them wi a spade an shovel at that time: thair wur no mechanical diggers then.

[00:05:57.23] Elizabeth: Hard wark.

[00:05:58.26] Bertie: A think so! Well then we had tae get the drains made an filled in agane ready for the ploughin - so oh, we done it one day efter the other so... one yeir efter the other.

[00:06:14.16] We had coarn tae cut an it wus tae be hutted: it haed tae be stooked whun it wus cut an then it had tae be hutted an then drew in an built in stacks.

[00:06:26.18] Elizabeth: And then you mind the thresher cummin?

[00:06:28.11] Bertie: Oh ay, A mine that.

[00:06:30.02] Elizabeth: That was a big day.

[00:06:30.28] Bertie: Ay you're right, you're right 'a big day'. Oh monie a time A hae warked at the threshers.

[00:06:38.07] Well then, me granny took over the farm but she said tae me (A wus merried at the time), she said tae me, she said, "Bertie, A doot A cannae afford," she says, "tae pay you a week's wages..."

[00:06:50.15] "But," she says, "If ye want tae dae a wee bit o farmin among us," she says, "ye'r welcome tae it". So then, well I got sort of part-time jobs then - but then ma granny died in 66...

[00:07:03.20] An instead o leavin me the farm, she left it tae me mother an then... Well we got stayin on til 19 an 70; so efter that me mother wantit tae sell the farm.

[00:07:16.26] Me da wantit her tae sign the fairm ower tae me but she wudnae dae it, she wus that thick an thrawn - an well then... Whan she wantit tae sell the farm, we left an then we got a house in Chatham.

[00:07:31.10] Well then the family wus beginnin tae get too big an the house in Chatham didn't hold us...

[00:07:36.10] Elizabeth: Chatham? Where's Chatham?

[00:07:37.23] Bertie: Chatham near Armoy. Well, eh...

[00:07:42.29] Elizabeth: Well then you'd mind the wartime?

[00:07:45.17] Bertie: Oh ay.

[00:07:46.17] Elizabeth: What did you do then or what were you doin at that time?

[00:07:50.04] Bertie: Oh A wus still at the farmin...

[00:07:51.15] Elizabeth: You were still farmin?

[00:07:52.15] Bertie: ... durin the Second World War, oh ay, A wus still farmin - an usually A got a bus or mebbe walked intae town, ma granny, granda an me oan a market day.

[00:08:01.12] An then, well if we'd groceries an meal an stuff tae bring home fur the pigs an the cattle, we tuk a horse an cart an on a Friday.

[00:08:14.19] Well then efter that, efter A left school a while - well, A wus left school a brave number o yeirs, well I wus savin up money at that time.

[00:08:24.09] Ma granny haed gien me, if she haed extra money, she gave me a poun or two tae lea in the bank. An then she lut me keep ducks on the farm: well I got the duck egg money.

[00:08:36.08] Well, they gien me a wee fiel tae put in early prootas in - well I got the money o them, so A built up the price o the motor - it wusnae very dear, it wus £55 at that time.

[00:08:47.12] Elizabeth: And that was 19...?

[00:08:49.03] Bertie: That wus 19 an 45 efter the War ended.

[00:08:51.10] Elizabeth: Jaist after the War.

[00:08:52.14] Bertie: So, well, ma granda bought the car. Mickey Dunlop cum out tae us an he sayed tae me granda, he says, "Wud ye be interested in buyin it fur this young chap?"

[00:09:04.28] An me granda says, "Ay, A wud because," he says, "A'll tell ye why. It wud be handy cummin oot an in tae toon, an mebbe on a nice Sunday, gaun fur a bit o a run," so...

[00:09:14.01] But me granda says, "He'll hae tae hae enough money put by him in the bank tae pye it".

[00:09:18.28] Elizabeth: Well, what kind of entertainment - did you go to any dances or ...?

[00:09:22.03] Bertie: A done no dances nor nothin.

[00:09:23.29] Elizabeth: No.

[00:09:25.04] Bertie: No. The only entertainment A had wus, whaur oor lane went oot tae the road, oan the main Kilraghts Road fae the house, thair wus a wee hill above it...

[00:09:37.16] An thair wus a wee narrow point an it wus about mebbe 12 yairds wide on the narrowest part o the wee hill.

[00:09:45.20] Me granda he says tae me, "Bertie," he says, "Whun ye're daein nothin in the summer evenins," he says, "Ye can make yersel a garden up there at that point". He said, "It's nae use fur turnin the horses in".

[00:09:54.27] Well, A startit an made a garden. A haed flowers an vegetables an iveriethin in it - so that kept me gaun in the evenins in the summer time.

ULSTER-SCOTTISH-IRISH-ENGLISH-SOCIETY