



# Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Archival and Oral History

A project funded by the



<b>Reference Code:</b>	MAGOHP/40
<b>Oral History of:</b>	Mary Creighton
<b>Pseudonym?</b>	No
<b>Status:</b>	Survivor
<b>Keywords:</b>	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity Magdalene Laundry, High Park, Drumcondra; Sacred Heart Mother and Baby Home, Castlepollard, Co Westmeath (St Peter's); Nazareth House, Sligo; survivor views on anonymity; positive effects (for survivors) of social media and access to information technology; childhood physical abuse; illegitimacy; working conditions in Mother and Baby Home; conditions giving birth in Mother and Baby Home; symphysiotomy; escape attempt from Mother and Baby Home; physical abuse in Mother and Baby Home; forced adoption; denial (natural mothers); natural mothers' coping mechanisms following adoption; differences between administration and regime of Mother and Baby Home and Magdalene Laundry; Ireland to US adoption scheme; transfers from Mother and Baby Home to Magdalene Laundry; racism; domestic violence; abortion; rule of silence; sex work; emigration; psychiatric institutions; survivor attitudes towards the Catholic church, religious sisters and clerics; inter-generational effects; temporary/informal fostering arrangements; deaths in Mother and Baby Homes; effects of institution on relationships; impact of heightened awareness and publicity around Magdalene Laundry and Mother and Baby Home issues; attitude towards apologies.
<b>Date of Interview:</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
<b>Transcript:</b>	132 pages
<b>Number/Format of Audio Files:</b>	Two .wma audio files
<b>Interviewer:</b>	Dr Katherine O'Donnell
<b>Records/Papers included:</b>	No
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript and anonymised audio.
<b>Conditions Governing Reproduction:</b>	Interviews can be reproduced, however the citation below must be used at all times.

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## Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

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Interviewee Initials: MC  
Interviewer Initials: KOD

### Key

... = Short pause (or where words are repeated or the speaker changes direction mid-sentence)  
(pause) = Long pause  
*blabla* = spoken with great emphasis  
(*blabla*) = Additional audible expressions, body language  
[blabla] = background information that might be helpful

### Notes on Redaction Process

- Named individuals have been assigned pseudonyms
- Some locations have been assigned pseudonyms to protect the identity of third parties
- Some dates have been removed to protect the identity of third parties
- A number of short sections of the interview have been removed to protect the identity of third parties

### List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
Barrytown	Interviewee's home town
Colmstown	Town near interviewee's homeplace
St John's College	Interviewee's former workplace
Ruth	Friend of interviewee
Ursula	Interviewee's sister
Dr O'Flynn	Psychiatrist
Sr Aloysius	Third Party Religious
Kinsella Family	Interviewee's relatives on her father's side
Walsh Family	Interviewee's relatives on her mother's side
Dorothy Kinsella/Kennedy	Interviewee's aunt
Antoinette Fitzgerald	Interviewee's former workmate
Dr O'Halloran	Local doctor in interviewee's home town
Sr Benedictus	Third Party Religious
Jones	Interviewee's married name
Fiona O'Dwyer	Interviewee's former employer
Denis O'Dwyer	Interviewee's former employer
Paul O'Dwyer	Son of interviewee's former employer
Gary Kinsella	Interviewee's brother
Fr Hearty	Priest who interviewee asked to marry her
Mrs Gunning	Social worker who put interviewee into Mother and Baby Home and Magdalene Laundry
Sr Kieran	Third Party Religious
Rachel/Gráinne	Interviewee's daughter
Nurse Maguire	Nurse in Mother and Baby Home
Brenda	Mother in Mother and Baby Home
Ronan	Child born in Mother and Baby Home
Susie/Susan	Woman in Mother and Baby Home (Ronan's mother)

Doherty Family	Neighbours from interviewee's home town
Donal Kinsella	Interviewee's brother
Dolores Kinsella	Interviewee's sister or cousin (unclear)
Peter Kinsella	Interviewee's brother or cousin (unclear)
Maurice Kinsella	Interviewee's brother or cousin (unclear)
Alan Doherty	Neighbour from interviewee's home town
Aidan	Child born in Mother and Baby Home
Pauline	House name of woman in Mother and Baby Home (Aidan's mother)
Andrew	Aidan's adoptive name
Fred	Child born in Mother and Baby Home
Eilís	House name of woman in Mother and Baby Home (Fred's mother)
Miriam	House name of woman in Mother and Baby Home
Arden Hotel/Street	Hotel in which interviewee stayed as a lodger
Broadbend	Town where hotel was located
Julia	Interviewee's cousin
Olive MacKenzie	Woman who assaulted interviewee
St Stephen's Children's Home	Children's Home in which interviewee's children stayed
Agatha Kinsella	Interviewee's aunt
Helen	Headmistress of school in Edinburgh
Imelda	Interviewee's daughter
Leah	Interviewee's daughter
Swanville	Location interviewee moved to after Scotland
Nancy Fitzmaurice	Neighbour from interviewee's home town
Margaret May/Maggie May	Older woman in High Park
Frank	Father of interviewee's daughter (Rachel/Gráinne)
Monica	Interviewee's daughter
Morgan	Father of interviewee's daughter (Monica)
Caroline	Mother of children cared for by interviewee
Brian	Caroline's son
Simon	Caroline's son
Alice	Interviewee's friend/neighbour
Vivienne Morrissey	Interviewee's daughter Imelda's foster mother
Samuel	Interviewee's neighbour
Edward/Eddie	Interviewee's son
Fr Luke Scully	Third Party Cleric
Shirley	Interviewee's sister-in-law (Donal Kinsella's ex-wife)
Christine Kinsella	Interviewee's mother
Tracy	Interviewee's friend
James	Son of interviewee's friend (Debbie)
Adam	Boyfriend of interviewee's daughter (Leah)
Julian	Adam's father
McHugh Family	Irish relatives of Julian's
Bennett Family	Maiden name of mother of interviewee's friend (Ruth)

Patricia McHugh	Julian's mother
Marianne	Child which interviewee helped

### Basic Data from Interview

<b>Name/Pseudonym</b>	Mary Creighton
<b>When Born</b>	1951
<b>Born outside marriage?</b>	No
<b>Raised by</b>	Family until she was sent to a Mother and Baby Home
<b>Education</b>	Primary
<b>Emigrated?</b>	Yes
<b>Physical ailments?</b>	Yes (as a result of symphysiotomy and lifting in Castlepollard)

<b>Of Note</b>	<p>Interviewee was taken to Mother and Baby Home in an ambulance, however she was not sick.</p> <p>Interviewee was subjected to a symphysiotomy.</p> <p>Interviewee's parents emigrated and put most of her siblings into an Industrial School.</p>
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<b>Order (Mother and Baby Home)</b>	Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary
<b>Institution</b>	St Peter's, Castlepollard
<b>From</b>	1967
<b>To</b>	1968
<b>Duration of stay</b>	Almost one year
<b>Age on entry</b>	Fifteen
<b>Entered Via</b>	Interviewee's mother brought her to a nun, and she was then transported to Castlepollard in an ambulance.
<b>House Name/No</b>	Yes
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	Yes
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	A neighbour from her home town paid to get her out

<b>Order (Magdalene Laundry)</b>	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge
<b>Laundry</b>	High Park
<b>From</b>	1974
<b>To</b>	Unclear
<b>Duration of stay</b>	Unclear
<b>Age on entry</b>	Twenty-two
<b>Entered Via</b>	Social worker and nun drove her.
<b>House Name/No</b>	Interviewee's middle name was used
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	No
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	Unclear

[Audio File 1 Begins]

[End of conversation prior to interview]

MC I have to read it out?

KOD *No, I can...I can read it for you, so you'll...*

MC Oh are you a doctor?

KOD *Yeah, I'm a doctor, that means I've done a PhD. I'm not a medical doctor.*

MC No, you're like me friend, my friend Ruth [pseudonym].

KOD *Does she work in a university too?*

MC She's...no, she's a Doctor of Philosophy...

KOD *Okay.*

MC ...she's done her PhD, is that right?

KOD *That's what I've done, yeah.*

MC She...and she got her thesis.

KOD *Yes, okay.*

MC It was...it was her that gave me...she was my old neighbour, she was born in Liverpool, went to Canada as a s...a child immigrant...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...with her parents and that, and she's come back when she was thirty odd and she's my...my old neighbour and she gave me the computer.

KOD *Oh great.*

MC She said, 'cause she...she...she said you need to be on the comp...and then she said a few months ago when she seen what I was on about, 'oh,' she said, 'I've created a monster!'

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC She was laughing!

[Interview begins]

KOD *Yeah, so, yeah, I'm a doctor and I work in UCD, a Doctor of Philosophy and we've got funding from the Irish Research Council...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...so I have two other people working on it with me, Claire [McGettrick] who's been in touch with you, and Sinéad [Dr Sinéad Pembroke] and we're going around England and Ireland and we're collecting wh...what are called oral histories.*

MC I was just going to say that. Although I had no education, but I picked up on all these big words you know.

KOD *Yeah! (Laughs).*

MC But it's not a case...it's a case of having to, if you...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...you know what I mean?

KOD *Yeah.*

MC You cannot be...you see I...I...I never had an edu[cation]...I only had three and a half years education in my entire life.

KOD *Gee.*

MC 'Cause I was in and out of hospital Merlin Park [hospital in Co Galway] and Colmstown [pseudonym] with...I had osteomyelitis on my leg.

KOD *Oh right.*

MC And there was no...no schools in the hospitals then and if there was a teacher going around she'd just give you a bit of paper and say, 'I'll be back now in the morning'.

KOD *Right.*

MC But she'd never come back.

KOD *Right.*

MC So...

KOD *Well, you're an intelligent woman because I've seen some of the things you have written on the internet and I loved them.*

MC Villain!

KOD *Loved them, yeah. (Laughs)*

MC *(Laughs)*

KOD *So, this is a...an oral history project and we're collecting documents as well, so it's also...that's called the archive, and we're going to type up what you say...*

MC Yes.

KOD *...we'll post it back to you, make sure you're happy with it.*

MC Yes.

KOD *And we'll put it into UCD Archives, but we're also going to put it up on the internet...*

MC Uh huh.

KOD *...so that people can download it and read it...*

MC Yeah...

KOD *...on the...*

MC ...yeah.

KOD *...internet, then we'll...if you agree we can also put up your...the actual tape...*

MC Yeah...

KOD *...so people can hear you...*

MC Yeah...

KOD *...but we're going to bleep out anybody you mention who hasn't agreed to be part of the project.*

MC Yeah, like...say like the social worker.

KOD *Yeah, exactly...*

MC Or the nun.

KOD ...we'll bleep out her name. Yeah.

MC Yeah...I'll...yeah...

KOD We'll just say 'the social worker'...

MC ...I'll just say the s...

KOD ...so you can speak freely so don't...you can use any names you want...

MC ...yeah, yeah...

KOD ...but we'll take them out of the actual...

MC ...yeah well they're dead anyway so it doesn't make a difference.

KOD But even...even at that...

MC Oh God, what I mean is they're dead, I...I said when all this is over I have promised myself I'll get a hold of Gunning [pseudonym]<sup>1</sup> I'll put firecrackers on her grave...

KOD Uh huh.

MC ...them big *bangers* that you put on Christmas Day. When I find her grave I will do that to her...

KOD Uh huh.

MC ...because of what she done to me, she really put me away.

KOD Right.

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<sup>1</sup> Social worker. See page 27.

MC You...I was supposed...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...to be heading for Dunboyne.

KOD *We'll get all of that on the tape and...and then the...yeah, so I just kind of want to go through...so it'll be available from the 28<sup>th</sup> of September...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...so it's going to be kind of live then, and it's going to be available publicly to whoever wants to read it.*

MC That's fine with me.

KOD *Yeah, and they can make whatever use they want of it...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...artists or teachers or general public or whatever.*

MC Hmm.

KOD *Okay, so I just want to go through this, I'm going to leave you that [Information Form] so...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...you've all our contact details and everything. So you have the Information Sheet, you understand that your participation is voluntary, that's your choice?*

MC That is correct yes...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...that's right.

KOD *And u...until th...September anyway, you are free to withdraw from the research at any time.*

MC Oh no, I won't r...I...I've no intention of withdrawing it at all because I want them to...I want the people to realise what we did go through and that they can't do it again and they...you know...so it's...the younger...the next generation...we'll be dead and gone, but what happens with the next generation? They'll think it's a fairy-tale.

KOD *Yes. Thanks Mary. That's one of the reasons that I'm...that I'm...*

MC You know what I mean, see...

KOD *...keen to do it myself, yeah.*

MC ...now.

KOD *So...so let's see, you understand the purpose of this study and what we're doing, you can ask questions any time and you've been in contact with...with Claire [McGettrick] about it, and the explanation that you've been given has mentioned both the possible risks and...and benefits to participating in the studies. Okay, that means that, I suppose one of the risks is that...around...you know, do you want your identity known or not?*

MC Hmm.

KOD *We can put u...you under a pseudonym if you like?*

MC No, I'll just let me name go out, I don't have parents to answer to.

KOD *Okay.*

MC I answer to myself.

KOD *Alright.*

MC Since I came out of that place I answer to myself!

KOD *And the...the name will be Mary Creighton or Mary Creighton [identifying information removed]?*

MC No Mary, just Mary Creighton.

KOD *Mary Creighton.*

MC Yeah.

KOD *Okay. Now Mary, you're certain of that? What about your daughter and...?*

MC No, I've told them.

KOD *Okay.*

MC I've told them I'm going through [with] it. My other daughter, the little one said, 'Mum,' she said, 'if I was in your shoes I'd just go right through with it'.

KOD *Okay.*

MC She said, 'it's no good making half...saying yes and then halfway through saying no'.

KOD *Okay.*

MC And I said, 'well, Leah [pseudonym] you think like me'. [Identifying information removed]

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC [Identifying information removed] Because it happened in England as well.

KOD *Uh huh. Right.*

MC I said, 'this is only the tip!'

KOD *Yeah. Okay so, you're down as Mary Creighton. Okay, so you're going to be identified immediately...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...as Mary Creighton. The...your transcript, that means when we type it all up, that it can be released in September...*

MC Yes.

KOD *...immediately.*

MC That's right, yes.

KOD *Okay. And you're happy that the audio tape is also out and released?*

MC Yes, oh that's fine yeah.

KOD *Okay.*

[Unidentified background noise]

MC Well I already went on that thing [computer] when it w...well it was on that one because that one's got th...what do you call it? That...that's got a camera on it.

KOD *Oh right.*

MC Oh, I called them out for everything, I sent [uploaded] a tape of meself. I left them nameless and shameless, *before* it went really deep [before there was widespread publicity about the Magdalene Laundries].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Before it was like...I'm talking two years ago.

KOD *So two years ago you were on the internet and you made a video of yourself?*

MC I made a...some people still got it. I took...I took some of them off it, I don't know, I might have one or two still there, but there'll be somewhere in the...whatever you call it...and you want to hear the language that came out of me – *sister!*

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC *(Laughs)* You're no...you're not...you're no sister of mine!

KOD *Heh!*

MC They've...they've caused the...the breakup of my family and everything, like m...my family doesn't want to know me, I've got two brothers here. One brother's got his foot with the...with the...me siblings...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...in Ireland and the other brother is still in contact with the siblings. I don't bother with them. I got a phone call two years ago, me sister, she said, 'now Mary,' she's a nurse...she's a head nurse in the [location removed] Hospital, and she went, '*now Mary,*' (*imitates sister's voice*) you know they talk *that*...kind of like that...

KOD *Heh!*

MC ...when she was halfway through it I turned round and I said, 'look Ursula [pseudonym], if you went through with me,' I said, 'you couldn't walk five minutes in my shoes, now,' I said, 'if you ever lost a child or two children or three children,' I said, 'well think about it, because you've only got three haven't you?'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said, 'well,' I said, 'you won't...I wouldn't sit down and tell you to light a candle, write a bit of paper and then get a felt tip pen and draw lines across it,' I said, 'are you a psychiatrist as well as a district nurse?' She shut up. So anyways I...I didn't speak to her for...I didn't...don't even know how she got me phone number, but anyways I didn't speak to her until I had to s...I had to phone her up there a week ago, a week and a half ago, because me brother's si...terminally ill.

KOD *Ah.*

MC Sh...the one...one of the ones that's here.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I said, 'oh by the way, as I'm on the phone,' I said, 'you were very cutting the last time I was on the phone,' I said, 'An Taoiseach [Irish Prime Minister] now,' I said, 'apologised, so now,' I said, 'you pull your little...wind your necks in'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said, 'I don't want to know yez, I don't want to know me family'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I don't want to know them. Speaking maybe on a phone, that's it. Go into the town – never.

KOD *So, we'll g...we'll get to kind of talk about that right from the beginning, but at the moment if you could just sign your...*

MC Yeah. Me John Henry [signature].

KOD ...*your...yeah.*

MC I phoned the psychiatrist up about twelve months ago, twelve o'clock at night, I found out where he was living and I said to him...he's...I said to him about his signature, I said, 'oh I've got your John Henry'. He said, 'it's not me,' I said, 'well I've got your J...' He said, 'my John?' I said, 'your signature is on a piece of paper that I got with the Freedom of Information Act'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC He said, 'where...now,' he said, 'where are you?' I said, 'put it this ways,' I said, 'Dr O'Flynn [pseudonym],' I said, 'if I were you from now on, sleep with one eye open'. Twelve o'clock at night. (*Laughs*) And it is him, a hundred percent it's him...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'cause the person that told me was...already sent a letter to him, but I didn't get the letter, what she said, it was a Mercy nun.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said, 'the person that told me where you are is your friend the Mercy nun,' and I named her.

KOD *So let's just take it right back to kind of, who your family was...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...when you were born, where you came in the family?*

MC Yeah, yeah.

KOD *So tell us about yourself.*

MC I was born in Barrytown [pseudonym]. Is that on now, that yoke? [Referring to audio recording equipment]

KOD *Yeah, uh huh.*

MC I was born in Barrytown. One of 10 children, two died, one in...a few weeks old and another one about eighteen months old...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and there was five boys and three girls left. And I'm the...now I'm the sec...I'm the oldest now...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...me older brother died eight years ago. And I went to the Barrytown c...the convent of Mercy.

KOD *But...when were you born Mary?*

MC [Exact date of birth removed] '51, [exact date removed] 1951.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And I went to the convent school, and everything was alright, and then...in the...the baby class. And I had an accident and I went into school one morning and Sr Aloysius [pseudonym] the same one, this Sr Al...this nun, she's the one that put me in with the social worker to High Park, 'cause she's the one I confide[d] in, and I had a fall and she took me in from the...well me Mum sent me to school the next day and she must've thought I was only joking 'cause I couldn't feel me leg. And I went into school and a young girl pushed me in the playground at dinnertime. And that same child that pushed me died in a fire two weeks later. And the nun went in, Aloysius went in and started playing the music...choir, the choir practice and I was screaming the place down and she was telling them to sing louder. And over the years she did say to me,

she said, 'Mary,' she said, 'I didn't realise how seri[ous] it was'. I ended up having osteomyelitis, nearly had to have me leg off over her going on...her incompetence. Anyways...

KOD *So you had an infection in the bone?*

MC Yeah...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I was in and out of hospital. I was in and out of Colmstown [pseudonym] Hospital, the Barrystown Hospital and then eventually I went to Merlin Park Hospital. I never got on with me mother's mother, because every time they went out visiting to the countryside, she always shouted, 'someone's up in the...' – what do you call it? – 'the lea, the meadows'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And I could be sitting in front of her, I think she was doting. Anyways, and my mother's brother, I didn't get on with him, because when he...when I was four...when I was...I was fifteen I was pregnant, he ran at me, because he used to come into me m...into our house every day, five days or six days a week and have his dinner from one o'clock because he worked for the ESB [Electricity Supply Board]. And he ran at me with a kick on the...and he aimed it at the bad leg that had been just fixed...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...after seven...six or seven years. Anyways, my father went to America you see, when I was el...in 1963, the same year President Kennedy died, me Dad went, he left Ireland on the...Sunday the 13<sup>th</sup> of October and I never seen him again until he come back to this country...to England when...in 1978.

KOD *Do you think...would you say that he abandoned the family?*

MC No.

KOD *No.*

MC He went for...looking for work...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but he had sisters, and his sisters were the Kinsellas [pseudonym] and they only...there was six sisters and one died. And he...his six sisters never were interested in his children, that was me...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and mine. They'd talk to the other ones, but as the...I always knew there was something strange and it transpired that they never liked my mother, and they...I suppose they seen traits of my mother in me.

KOD *And why do you think they didn't like your mother?*

MC My mother was come from...from a decent family...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...she was...you know, she was...they were well to do people and they were law-abiding people and my father come from a well...you know, but they were like a bit poorer I think, than the Walshes [pseudonym]...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'cause the Walshes were me mother's side. They were farm people and they...I think it was because of that, and he went off to America and he said when he come back that he had gave his sister Dorothy Kinsella [pseudonym], he gave Dorothy money, his w...weekly wage or whatever he'd be getting, monthly or whatever it was, and to send X amount to my mother. Well my mother never got...she got...she got money off him I think about three or four times. Then

she didn't get any money then for about the last (*pause*) oh, the last three years that I was with her, with the family as a whole...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...until...right until I left in '67. She never got no money and there was no dole, there was no social security, she was knitting night and day. We were going to bed...we were...basically I was starving all the time I thought that was....then I got a job in the St John's College [pseudonym].

KOD *And what age were you then?*

MC Thirteen.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I got a job...

KOD *So you left school at thirteen?*

MC Thirteen.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Well I wasn't getting an education...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...because every time I come back I'd be moved up a class, not because I was academically clever, but because of me age...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...they'd just move me up. I might be in hospital for four months and come back, I wouldn't know. And then when you'd go...the nuns...the nuns...when you'd go to write say...say y...you're supposed to do an 'S' and you would write a 'T' or something, well you were the class fool...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and you'd get nothing but battered on the knuckles, on the hands and then put back at the back of the class. And there was...there was a few of us, there was about six of us, we were always at that back of the class, and it's only now looking back, that I think the reason that I was at the back...put back...the back of the class, they had certain ones, if your Daddy didn't work, he didn't own a shop or he wasn't a big builder or whatever, you was left there and you were the next workforce for scrubbing floors and doing anything, because that same nun (*clears throat*) that taught me from eleven to thirteen when I left school, she already had a job for me in St John's College. Scrubbing floors, mopping floors...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and then, there was a woman there (*coughs*) excuse me, a woman there called Antoinette Fitzgerald [pseudonym] she's dead now, nobody knows but she come from Longford, but when I think back, that Antoinette Fitzgerald was put there by the nuns, they were very fond of Antoinette, they were put there for the br...she'd come somewhere from...these places.

KOD *What do you mean, 'these places'?*

MC Where I was, in the Magdalene Laundries...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...she's...something or something wasn't right. She told me one day, she said, 'do in behind,' – a big mahogany desk – 'do it properly, get in between it and clean that desk'. Well as a thirteen-year-old you...you're frightened. I think I was nearly fourteen then. And what happened, the desk tipped over, it trapped my big toe, me left foot, burst the artery. I didn't know until then that you have your main arteries in your left toe.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Burst it. The president of the college took me to the doctors. Dr O'Halloran [pseudonym] [identifying information removed]...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...Dr O'Halloran. Dr O'Halloran couldn't do nothing, he put me in the Barrytown Hospital and waiting for a n...waiting for an ambulance, well them days it was an hour. So in the meantime they sent for my mother and when they p...when they put me in the Barrytown Hospital they put me on the maternity wing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...in a m...in where women's having babies and of course sent for my mother because I'd been working in a boys' college. My mother comes through sees a...a bowl with blood in it, you know those...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...cotton wool swabs, and runs at me and gives me a slap across the face, more of a punch than a slap. Didn't ask or didn't say nothing to me. I...looking back, she'd thought I'd had a child! And it wasn't, it was only my...my friend.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC Next thing anyway she'd thought I'd had a child, so someone...nurse came along, something...said something and I pulled back the cover on me foot. So I went to Colmstown I had an operation. I was in...four-weeks in Colmstown Hospital. They sacked me, St John's College sacked me. Said...couldn't come back to work again and well that was it, me mother then was picking on me all the time, so in the...

KOD *And...*

MC ...and...

KOD ...had you been working from the age el...of eleven or thirteen?

MC Thirteen.

KOD *Thirteen, uh huh.*

MC Thirteen. But that nun, I'd been in the...in the school...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...under that nun from eleven...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'til I was thirteen.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And that nun didn't get off my back...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...'til last year or the year before, when I told her to *fuck off*...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...on the...on the...what do you call it, the Internet.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said, 'get off my back!' That woman was 50 years on my back. Her...her niece died two years, three years ago, she was forty-two years old and she left two children behind her. 'When I went to the graveside and when I buried her it was late...a late, late night funeral,' she said, Sr Benedictus [pseudonym]. She said, 'on the way back to my...' – down to [location removed] where she's living – she said, 'the first name that...I stopped off at a little place to get a little drink of coffee, at a little café or something, and I had my laptop with me and I stopped off'. And she said, 'the first name that come into my head,' she said, 'was you Mary'. And she said, 'I asked...' and some boy put her email address...put my email address, her email address on a Facebook account. So she comes on Facebook and says, 'hello'. So I said, 'hello,' or something, I don't know what I said. And she's still on that account, I don't use that account...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...so that's why I in...I added the 'Jones' [pseudonym].

KOD *Uh huh. So Jones is just to put people off the...the...*

MC No...

KOD *...scent?*

MC ...no. Jones was my married name...

KOD *Okay, right.*

MC ...because I...I did eventually...I...I got married.

KOD *Uh huh. So let's take this back to...you got sacked from the college, and what happened then?*

MC Got sacked from the college and then (*pause*) got sacked from St John's College, and then I went working for a woman out in...out the [location removed] Road. She was Fiona O'Dwyer [pseudonym] she was...her husband was Denis O'Dwyer [pseudonym] they were business people...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...that like...they used to do fact...their own...they had their own business going. And I went out and I was aft...looking after her three children, which the youngest was only one and a half, the other fella was about three or three and a half. And the big fella Paul [pseudonym] was about seven, six or seven. And I...I met me boyfriend, took him back, was there a few months with her. But she was going to...that woman was going to Dublin. Her husband was an alcohol...a chronic alcoholic, her and the husband was going away to Dublin for weekends and leaving me with three children right by the river, from here to that...that fence over there (*demonstrates distance*) that was the river. It was isolated...the little boy went missing one day, I was two or three hours looking for him and then we found him, I thought he was gone down the river. Anyways she'd come back, she'd go on the Thursday nights or something to Dublin and she'd come back on the...maybe the Sunday night or Monday. And there was h...barely any food in the house, and she was the businesswoman. And how could you leave a fourteen-year-old...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...like that?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Well anyways when she come back, I met this boy, hadn't done nothing with him, he was coming in and he'd sit down in the house with me, he'd sit down the back kitchen. And the little boy said to his Mum, he said, 'oh Mary had a boy in the house,' or, 'a man in the house'. Well the next day I was sacked. Now she let me take the little boy to school the next day, I had to bring the kids...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...in school, come back, 'you are sacked you had a fella in this house last night'. I said, 'yeah I did. I did, but,' I said, 'I wasn't doing nothing,' I said. 'Youse were gone,' I said, 'youse were gone for the weekend,' I said, 'this is an isolated place,' I said, 'I was frightened'. I said, 'but,' I said, 'I wouldn't leave the children'. So anyways it transpired that she sacked me. So I...I...I

have met the woman after...a couple of years down the line, she said, 'oh had I known Mary,' she said, 'I'm awful sorry about that'. I said, 'look it, don't be sorry,' I said, 'the best thing you can be is careful 'cause you've yet to rear your own daughter,' – 'cause she was pregnant – and I said, 'well you'll have a daughter,' and she did actually, it transpired she had a daughter. I said, 'let my...let my words ring in your ears'. So, anyways she...I...I got sacked from there, so then I wasn't working for a while. Then I got a job in the German factory doing drill bits on a...like a grindstone.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC You know when they say...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'your nose to the grindstone'? I was working there and I liked it but then I...I left, I don't know what the reason was that I left, it was too...too hard a work, and I wanted to go working in the plastic factory. But me mother said no. I don't know why or something but she just...just wouldn't let me. I did eventually get a job in the...I could walk in and out of the job in the plastic factory 'cause I was...they liked me, the foreman...I used to say, 'oh I'm not working here, I...I'll leave,' and I'd come away to England and I'd go back...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and go to Scotland and whatever, and me job was always there, they were...they were nice, I liked it. And I...I got on with everybody, I got on with everybody in the town, I just never got on with my own family. They just didn't like me.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC Period. And I think they didn't like me because I al...I'm al...I ask...up to this day I still ask, if the post office building where all the birth certificates are...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...kept...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and it was burnt down, why is another person's birth certificate there and my Dad's was burned? My Father never had a birth certificate...

KOD *Right.*

MC ...and that makes me query, was he the child of a relative? I don't mean...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...because his sisters look a bit like him. But they would do if they're family and cousins, 'cause w...all the Kin[sellas]...we all have a strong resemblance of each other...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and they didn't like that. And I still say...in '78 my brother went back to...with my mother and – the father's ill now – and they went to whatever that certificate place is [General Register Office] and you look on big ledgers...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and my father apparently, Gary [pseudonym] said he seen my father look in a big ledger and close it dead fast. So there's something not right...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...as regarding that. But the way I look at it is, I said to...to my brother, I said, 'well Gary, it's like this, if...if my father...if my grandmother is not my grandmother, and maybe because they took...because the grandmother took maybe my father in as a baby, 'cause he's the oldest...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and they're overly, overly loving him'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said, 'but you'd be like that when you take a stray dog in, but when that stray dog would have pups you wouldn't want the pups, you'd still be...and they were like that [close knit],' I said...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...that's the way I...and Gary said, 'you know what Mary, you might be right because there's definitely something there'. Even to this day, I went to America, well they all come, well not them all, a couple of them come round to meet me daughter and that, but I didn't like...I...I couldn't take to them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I couldn't take.

KOD *So, you're...you're in the factories and you're kind of working in the German factory?*

MC Yeah and then I left that...

[Sound of dog barking intermittently in background]

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and then I was going out with the boyfriend...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and next thing I got pregnant.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And next thing s...

KOD *And you're about fifteen are you?*

MC Fifteen yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And then...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I was with him for about...over 12 months I was with him, and [sound of dog barking in background] can you stop that [recording device]?

KOD *Yeah, I'll put it on pause.*

[Interview paused briefly]

MC So I got pregnant and the boy asked to marry me, went down to see a priest Fr Hearty [pseudonym], little bald-headed man, and the excuse I got was that you needed your father's permission which really is a load of bull. So anyways, next thing I knew a couple of weeks went by, me mother didn't hit me or nothing like that. She was vexed but she didn't hit me, which there was a time, because she used to hit me when she'd dance...she'd dance on you with a stiletto. So anyway...but she wouldn't touch the rest of them, she'd only...me and me o...me and me older brother, and Gary that's very ill now. We were the three that got it...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...we were the...she had one that's called the 'blue eye'...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and he gets it from us now because he's here, and I don't have him near my door, and my little daughter says, 'you shouldn't be like that Mum'. I don't care. But anyways, she come one day and she said...without any warning, me mother said, 'you've got to go to the convent'. In the clothes I stood up in. She didn't...like you just come in, and then got up in the morning. She says, 'you've got to go up to the convent,' she says, 'you've have to be up there at nine o'clock'. I said, 'what for?' I said, 'I don't have to be at the convent,' I said, 'I'm not at school'. I said, 'did you get me a job or something?' Thought Sr Benedictus. She said, 'no you've just got to go up and see her'. So I went up to the convent, nine o'clock and she brought me into a little toilet, not a toilet...was like a hand basin I think...I don't think there was...there was no toilet there, I think there was a hand basin...that little room is still there. And she made me strip, told me to strip and get me clothes...but I knew...I didn't know then it was a maternity skirt because it had kind of like adjustments.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And she dressed me up in them clothes, took my jacket, gave me all baggy clothes to wear, and next thing she said, 'you're waiting now,' she said, 'you'll have to wait with me now,' she said, 'we're going to see this place and you'll like it'. So I waited with her, the place was Castlepollard [Sacred Heart Mother and Baby Home, Castlepollard, Co Westmeath].

KOD *Tell us about Castlepollard.*

MC Hah! Well, you got up in the morning like you did in High Park but...

KOD *So they drove you to Castlepollard in Longford [sic]?*

MC Long...is that where it is?

KOD *I think so.*

MC Co Westmeath, I never ever...

KOD *Well...yeah, okay.*

MC Yeah, I...I haven't heard that word...name 'Longford'...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...in years but anyways, yeah, Castlepollard. And, we got there, and they come in, but they only come into the main hall...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and then they weren't...I wouldn't even say five...ten minutes, less than 10 minutes they were gone. Gunning that social...same social worker that put me in High Park [Magdalene Laundry]. And next thing, w...went up the corridor...this nun brought me up a corridor, she...sat down and she come back and she said, 'you'll do...be doing some work with us now Mary'. Oh no – sh...first she said, 'you'll...you'll...you'll be doing some work with us, but your name's not Mary'. I said, 'what do you mean my name's not Mary?' I said, 'm...I know my own name'. I thought [to] myself, 'these things are nuts'. So she said, 'no,' she said, 'while you are here with us,' she said, 'your name will be Francesca'. Oh and you know what, I liked that name but I didn't like it. I...I liked it before...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but never ever thought...I...I've heard the name Francesca. She said, 'your name's Francesca and you'll be here with us and that's your name while you're here'. Anyways, 10 minutes later th...

KOD *And it was the social worker and the nun who took you from...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...[interviewee's home county removed] there?*

MC From [interviewee's home county removed] yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC It was the social worker and...no the social worker...the nun didn't...the first nun, B...that one that was on my back, was 50 years [Sr Benedictus], she didn't take me, I can't remember now, did she take me, but I know it w...I went in an ambulance, an ambulance come, it was an ambulance that took us, as if you were sick. Now I cannot be certain did Benedictus...from that...that puzzled me to this day.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because it was all a blur, I wasn't told that I was going to go anywhere...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...as far as I knew I was only going to see her and go back home.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC That was it. Anyways I gets to Castlepollard and in 10 minutes changed the name and brought this big, big pile of cotton wool, we had to make balls. I said, 'I don't want...I'm not doing this'. 'Oh,' she said, 'oh you will do them,' she said. So anyways, doing the cotton wool balls and anything that...and then they come...they...one of the girls says, 'I'll take you down now and we'll...' sh...she said something to the girl, show you...show you around...down...show you this dining hall and a little kitchenette off it like this, she said, 'this is the dining hall'. But it went...instead of it going like this ways it went *that* ways, and the kitchen was in the middle...not the kitchen, it was a kitchenette...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'cause the kitchen was way back. I'd only been in that kitchen once and I was there for...from the...I was there from the fourth of October until the end of September '68, so I was there for almost...I was there for almost one year. And the routine there was you get up in the morning, you had different jobs, I was doing that first and then...until she found me a place and she found me a place to work down in the laundry. And it wasn't a laundry like High Park, it was

like...when you went into the laundry there, to the left there were big ironing boards, they were electric, but they were auld-fashioned electric things...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...big...but they were electric anyways, and there was about...I think about four or five of them in a row there, and then over there there was a big table and then here was a big table and it might be here. But I liked it in a way being there, because there at the back of you was a big cooker, like a...a big...and there was this thing that you pulled out, you used to hang the sheets on...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but they used to have this...this had a...like, instead of being a coal fire it was like...you put the...these irons in...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and they come out and you have a cloth around your hand, around them, you pick them up and do the ironing with it, but you were getting heat because...

KOD *So it was a range, as they call it, was it?*

MC *'Twas a big, big black thing...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...it was built from...it was built from...there, going round, s...say the end of this wa[ll], half...three quarters of this wall.

KOD *About 20 feet long?*

MC *Yeah.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And it was all one...it was from the floor to the top, it was all one black thing.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And it was kind of like...there was numbers on it like...

KOD *Solid fuel range fire, yeah.*

MC ...no...it...it was...it was burning...I don't know, it must have been burning coal or something...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I don't think it was burning electricity.

KOD *Yeah, uh huh.*

MC Do you know like...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...burning turf or something?

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

MC But you couldn't...we'd a...l'd...I never seen the turf going in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I can't remember that part of it. I can remember the part that was like shaped that ways...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...a shelf on it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and that would be *red* and you'd put the irons in and you'd take another one out. You could never be...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...there was a big nun there, I can't remember, I think her name was [Sr] Kieran [pseudonym] I'm not sure of her name but, but you couldn't be seen to be not having an iron in your hand...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and you'd be ironing and ironing and ironing all day long and then through that other door there was a big washing machine but that was nothing to do...that was for the nappies and whatever.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Baby clothes and whatever, they...but you'd have to hand wash your own clothes...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...even though you were...and you couldn't get a...your hands near an iron to go ironing them 'cause then you were thought that you were...oh you're looking at yourself in a different light.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC So anyways I was down there and then they took me from there when I got a bit too far gone and I was up...I used to have to go around washing d...washing the dishes, or helping wash the dishes because you'd have to take turns. And because I took...high bl...high blood pressure, called preeclampsia...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but because I had that, aft...they couldn't give me heavy, heavy duties and they couldn't excite me.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because you could take a brain haemorrhage with that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But at the time I didn't know...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...anything about that. All I knew was that I...that I wasn't well, so they gave me light du...well, we'll say light duties, sweeping floors, mopping floors and things like that, but no...nothing to what was to come. So next thing when I went a bit further on they moved me to doing the...doing the nappies, I was still pregnant, but they call this light...light duties, doing the nappies at six o'clock in the morning, maybe you could have two hundred nappies. Used to have to wash the crap off some of them, that had the crap on them. Open the big square, put the nappies after they've been squeezed out put them into this kind of like...like a solution, some kind of a solution, and then you'd have to wring them out of that, they'd be in that for 20 minutes, wring every one of them out by hand, put them in that bale and two of youse would carry that from here about quarter of a mile back down to the laundry and that was in the early morning. Come back, go to Mass, come back from Mass, have your breakfast and do your...whatever chores that you had to be doing but you had to be seen to be busy all day long. And...but that was it, there was no lounging around. In the evening then, you'd have...after tea, well the time was your own, well when you say your own there was nothing to do. There was no television – there was a television, but there was no television. The television was for a half an hour on a Thursday evening – *Top of The Pops*. And this...the nun that used to run that she used to say, 'now girls you've got this television because I got it, I think you should have a television'. And I felt like saying, 'like hang on a minute, a half an hour of television, I fecking worked all day for this t...television,' you know 'cause we watched...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...*Top of The Pops*. But I wasn't really into *Top of The Pops* but it was nice [having] something to do, you know what I mean and you couldn't get out, because Castlepollard is right in off the road, no one would hear you screaming in that place, no one. Anyways...I had the ch...I had the...Rachel [pseudonym] was born. I call her Rachel now but Gráinne [pseudonym] was her name, I gave her the name. She was born on...I went into labour on the Friday, and they gave me sleeping pills, 'cause they must've been sleeping pills, 'cause I've had children since and I've never felt the way...felt like I was drunk, I fell off the bed three times and they gave me a big silver bedpan. They gave me...enema, you know the...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...old fashioned things? That's...now I know...realise, they gave it to me to have the child in the bedpan, kept giving me bedpans. (*Coughs*) Excuse me, so next thing anyways [unidentified background noise] – I have this in me bag...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...next thing anyways I was in labour and...on the Friday from half past eleven in the morning, all day Friday, all day Saturday, all day Sunday, took me to the Labour Ward on the Monday morning, well about two o'clock in the afternoon, and I was hysterical by this time in pain, I mean *hysterical*, you could've heard me all round...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...nothing, no painkillers or nothing like that. Next thing, I'm sitting up on this bed and I see the nurse coming to...towards me, Nurse Maguire [pseudonym] I said, 'I'm gone blind,' my sight just went. That Nurse Maguire wouldn't look back, she was a pervert, she used to line us up every week or every...maybe every eight days, shave down below, there was nothing there I was only a child! And she was doing that, she was getting her kicks out of that, 'little sausage fingers' I used to call her.

KOD *So, she was shaving you, yeah?*

MC Yeah, every week, every...every eight days and then she'd say...when someone had a child she'd make sure that you went in and you had a good look, and she'd tell you...no she would tell you, 'don't look,' but that was so that you would look 'cause that's reverse psychology, course we'd look, well I only looked the once but I sat...I stood on the middle of the floor and started *dancing*...I...a woman had twins and it was...all the afterbirth was left in bowls...was just like a...like a muslin...piece of muslin cloth on top, it looked like somebody's *guts*. I...well I thought the person was murdered! Now here I am, in the Labour Ward, went blind, and that was on the Monday, I woke up on the Tuesday night in...still in the Labour Ward and the woman was in labour, this woman Brenda [pseudonym] was in labour, a red-headed woman from Cork, she used to s...you know the Cork accent. (*Puts on accent*) 'I had the child last night Mary at half-past-six, sure they had to do a procedure on you'. You know what the procedure was? They broke me pelvis.

KOD *You'd a symphysiotomy?*

MC Yes, yes. And I never knew what it was and a few months ago I seen that word on that there [the internet], if I was to move, go moving a couch or moving a chair out of your way, you know like you'd use it with your knees...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I always felt me...

KOD *...your...your pelvis opening...*

MC ...opening...

KOD *...as though it was breaking, right.*

MC ...it kind of...yeah. I said, 'what?' *Oh!* And I...and looking back, a doctor in the Royal Hospital...'cause I went down...like, going back years ago, you go down to...you have to ch...check for any STD and that same doctor done an operation on me that went wrong, in

Liverpool, and he said...he passed a comment that I didn't pick up on, and he said...it was to the effect that 'your pelvic was loose'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But what he was trying to say was, it's been broken...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...but he didn't say that to me because the...s...I nearly passed out, well I didn't know what he was talking about. And then I...

KOD *So...so they induced you with the...an enema?*

MC They induced me with the en...enema.

KOD *They didn't give you any painkillers?*

MC No painkillers.

KOD *You were in labour for almost four days?*

MC I was in labour from half-past-eleven on Friday, 'cause I remember I was sweeping the corridor, mopping the corridor...

KOD *Uh huh...and you had preeclampsia...*

MC I had...

KOD *...anyway, uh huh.*

MC ...and...and that's what made me blind.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And...

KOD *And then they did a symphysiotomy where they broke your pelvis?*

MC Yeah, yeah.

KOD *They sawed through it?*

MC Well I always had a tiny little scar and I always wondered what it was...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...because don't forget I was in bed for a week and a half after the baby. I couldn't walk, I couldn't see...I was in pain, no painkillers, but I...not only was I in pain, I couldn't see. What I could see...what I could see, when I think about it, what I could see – and I...I always think does blind people see the same thing – just like...you know, th...like a dull cloud?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Like a...it's not white, it's like a grey white, nothing else...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...no shadows or nothing. I was like that for a week and a half after the child was born. Then I...a few weeks after that I took...I was in bed one morning and I took a pain in me head, and the pain...whatever the pain in me head...whatever it was, it pulled me whole head back and me heels were going back to meet me head and they come and they gave...someone run for help and they were coming to give me an injection, to this day I don't know what that was.

KOD *Uh huh. You'd some kind of fit you think? Uh huh.*

MC I don't know, me head was going back like that in...in the bed, I remember me f...I couldn't control...it was going...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and the pain was just there. The pain was dragging me head back, whatever it was. Anyways they gave me an injection and I was on me feet again doing the work but this...this was months this was like maybe a month, maybe six-weeks after, eight-weeks after, 'cause they put me down working in the nursery with babies, scrubbing floors, mopping floors, whatever. But after that, the woman said, 'they done a procedure on you'. She was a lovely woman that was in...thing...she was having her baby. I said, 'when did I...wh...wh...what do you mean I had the baby yesterday...yesterday evening? Why, what day is it now?' She said, 'it's Tuesday'. So whatever they done to me, when I...from...I went blind at...from two o'clock, maybe half-past-two on the Monday afternoon...I don't know, they...apparently they got a doctor from outside...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...some doctor from some hospital, 'cause the woman said there was a man doctor in, they had to bring a man doctor in.

KOD *And h...*

MC I think meself I was dying.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC I had that...what do you call that thing, eclampsia?

KOD *Preecl...preeclampsia, yeah.*

MC I had the full thing.

KOD *And so Castlepollard, how would you describe it? How many girls were there? Was everybody pregnant? Would you c...describe it as a Mother and Baby Home?*

MC No, I never describe them these days...looking back, they were a mother and baby *farm*.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They were farms, w...we were human farms, like you'd have cattle, only that we could talk.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Before the child was born...oh no, sorry, when my daughter was...she was born in the January, about the July or August, I took a notion one day I said, 'I'm leaving this place. I'll get out one way or the other even if I have to leave the child. I'll get her back, I'll find a way'. And I said to this little woman, the woman wasn't even five-foot she was about four-foot-ten, she was about that much shorter than me.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC A little fragile little woman with great thick dark hair but going really grey through it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...s...pepper and salt, but...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...a nice little woman and she had the most beautiful baby with massive big head of curls, Ronan [pseudonym]. So I said to her, 'look when they're all gone into Benediction,' – she...this little woman worked on the farm but she had to come up and feed her child every...th... – 'when they go into Benediction...look Susie [pseudonym],' I said, 'we're off'. Says she, 'where we going Francesca?' I said – she used to call me 'Sisco' – 'where we going Sisc...?' I said, 'we're going,' I said, 'we're going out of this place, that's where we're going, we're getting out of here, I'm not staying in this place for the rest of my life 'cause it looks like we're not getting out'. So we...I said, 'do you know,' I said, 'oh I don't...I don't know how to g...' I said, 'I don't know how to...where we're gonna end up, but we're not going out that main gate, and w...we'll go back over th...w...we'll go over th' – this was my idea – 'we'll go over the fields'. Went through

the fields – I had a pair of slippers on me – went over the fields, and...about say, 20 minutes or something or half an hour later, I'm up to me waist in kind of like a bog...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and there's no one. And I'm terrified to this day to walk on muddy grass even in me own garden that I know, petrified if it's soggy. I was out there and it must have took your woman nearly an hour to get me out. Sure by the time she got me out she was up to there in her feet herself. But the w...that little woman got me out. And then we...we went to...got [to] a little stream, washed me legs and all that and g...oh I was...f...this...f...but because it was a summer's evening, by the time we got lifts, the clothes on me, well they weren't dry 'cause it was only cotton material that I had on...light...light dress that one of the girls had gave us. So I remember that we hitchhiked to my hometown, the two of us...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and we were all night on Barrytown Bridge looking up at the clock at a quarter to twelve that night and I went to the Dohertys 'cause my mother and father...I had no family, I had siblings, they didn't want to know me, but...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...well they never bothered 'cause I got a letter from my mother's sister when I was...only been there for...I'd say maybe a week, m...ten days whatever it was. 'Your mother has gone to America now,' 'cause my mother followed my father to America and put all the rest...the other five children below me in Saint...Nazareth House, whatever it's called, in Sligo. Put them into Nazareth House in Sligo, she hooked her stick with the blue-eyed boy, Donal [pseudonym] me brother...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and went to America. W...he wasn't seen...he come back when he was twenty-one, he was fourteen years old. But she always had him because he was like sick you know, the little sick baby?

KOD *Hmm.*

MC The little sick... with a bad chest, she wasn't interested in me with a bad leg. But anyways, however, she put them in there and then when she was gone, my...her brother took them out. He was a [location removed] footballer, of course he had to show face for all his cronies...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...wouldn't give two...two hoots for none of them. And he took them out put them to school and everything and they all done well for themselves – I say good luck to them. But don't ever be penalising me for something because I was only fifteen. Their children might be growing up, I always say this, their children might grow up and might be perfect adults, Ursula, Dolores, Peter and Maurice [pseudonyms]. As they – Maurice's got no children – eight children could grow up and nothing, it could come out in their grandchildren that they might have a wild grandchild...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...would...would they be...like to be getting their child pu...put up in Castlepollard and all that business?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC All the whi...anyways...the next morning...we went to the D...I went to the Dohertys, Mr and Mrs Doherty, a *beautiful* couple, lovely, still like family to me to this day. Now, Mr and Mrs Doherty died – he died there January or February there, Alan [pseudonym] – and I turned up at their house, well the nun got wind of it, that nun from 50 years, Sister Benedictus, oh she had the police, the guards at the door. Oh the guards picked us up – me – couldn't get Susie because Susie ran away but they...they found her in Waterford, the same day, Waterford. Heh! And they took her back, but, I thought, 'well, you're not going to say nothing to me because I'm not going to give you the satis[faction], I'm neither going to cry, I'm not going to roar, I'm not going to be cheeky, but you'll get no information out of me,' 'cause I thought to meself, 'I'll definitely get out of here again'. So when I went back, a few hours later they brought Susie

back, they hadn't said nothing to me but they took her into a side room in the corr...a little room down the ground floor took her in and they slapped that woman, and that woman come out of there, all she wanted to do was sleep for about a week, she was like that (*demonstrates*) drugged her up to the eyeballs. But they hadn't done it to me, but it transpired that...I found out about two years ago, Susie, I found out through Facebook – Susie, Susan [pseudonym] they used to call her, I used to call her Susie – she was a woman that was married in Ireland, *legally married*, a mother, and she had all her children to her husband, but her husband was going back and forth to England looking for work 'cause times were bad. They'd already took all her children off her, when he'd come back and she got pregnant again, they took them children off her, that child, in some...down in some coun...some Mother and Baby Home down the country and then she was in Castlepollard and they took Ronan off her, the people that took Ronan, never changed Ronan's name, they called him Ronan and their surname. And Ronan's wife traced me, on here...

KOD (*Whispered*) *Wow.*

MC ...and I described Ronan down to a 'T', the...his curly hair, ringlets, he had a head...he was born with a m...massive head of ringlets, he looked like a...he had a head of hair that you wouldn't see on a five-year-old, beautiful. And I remember them two and another one, Aidan [pseudonym]. And that woman was thirty-three years old, and that's what they done to her, so they blamed her for taking me and they weren't listening to me. It was me that took her, I took Susie.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC 'Cause she was a timid little woman, a f...f...and I said to the daughter-in-law, I said, 'she was about five foot ten?' 'Yes'. Four f...yeah...four-foot-ten, sorry, I said, 'and she was a tiny little petite woman,' I said, 'wouldn't say boo to a goose'.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC I said, 'and they...the Irish State, and social services and c...church robbed *all* of her children and they would never tell her where they were and they would never tell the children where she

was'. But eventually they found her, they found her on the 18<sup>th</sup> of I think it was March and she died the 18<sup>th</sup> of April. One month was all they had with her.

KOD *And when did they find her, where did they find her?*

MC They found her somewhere in...I think it was [location removed]. It's...I...I...I'll have to look up that another time on Facebook.

KOD *In an in...in another institution?*

MC No, no, she wasn't in an institution, she was out, she was living in a little flat or something, bedsit or something. But that woman actually saved my life.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC 'Cause if that woman hadn't been with me and I had went on me own and went down that hole I'd have been...well I wouldn't be here...sitting here today to tell the story.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And there was another girl there called Pauline [pseudonym] and...not her real name...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...that was her house name, Pauline, and that little girl's...she was only seventeen, she was older than me, she was seventeen, beautiful, she looked like Mia Farrow, I always said she looked like Mia Farrow. And they took her...she had a little boy Aidan, they took Aidan, I never ever seen...out of all the women, I never seen a woman cry like her, I never seen a girl tear the hair out of her head. But unbeknownst to me the girl went off her head, she blanked it right...when I say off her head, she blanked the *whole* scenario right out of her head, because years la[ter]...a couple of years down the line – that Castlepollard was sold and it become a

hotel<sup>2</sup> – she went back working in that hotel not realising that was where she lost her child, and that came from her child’s mouth, her son, through another friend on Facebook, I...she...who...who the woman is, actually is, I won’t name her name, but she’s a social worker, but she’s also a ‘banished baby’.<sup>3</sup>

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And she said, ‘oh Andrew [pseudonym], sounds like Andrew,’ and I said, ‘well I’ll tell you Andrew’s real name...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...as I knew him’. I knew him as Aidan,’ and I said, ‘I knew his mother’s name,’ by...I...I won’t say it now...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but I knew his mother’s name as ‘something something X’.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So she looked and she said, ‘you’re right’. So now he’s on my Facebook, he’s now my friend...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...on Facebook, and I always say...I said, ‘I wouldn’t be able to lift you now and change your nappy’.

KOD *Hmm.*

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<sup>2</sup> The former Mother and Baby Home in Castlepollard is currently in HSE hands and, until recently, was used as a facility for people with intellectual disabilities. It is possible that the interviewee may be thinking of the Good Shepherd Mother and Baby Home (Árd Mhuire) in Dunboync, which was sold and redeveloped as a hotel.

<sup>3</sup> A person who was adopted from Ireland to the US as an infant for adoption. The name ‘banished baby’ is associated with Mike Milotte’s book *Banished Babies*, which outlines the circumstances surrounding the export of at least 2,000 Irish children to the US between the 1940s and the 1970s.

MC Heh!

KOD *Ah God.*

MC A lovely little thing and he's nev...just a big man, but the face is the same. Ronan's exactly the same face as I remembered.

KOD *And did he...*

MC It's uncanny.

KOD *...did he ever get reunited with his mother?*

MC He found his mother through Facebook...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and his mother went on to marry his father but his father sadly died...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...before he got the chance to meet him.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC But it wasn't...that was...I think...I think the reason...I think it was her mother put her in there. I think because she didn't want her father to know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...bring shame and whatever...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...you know the old-fashioned way they were. She was a lovely girl, she...and she still lives in the same house, I still remember her address, which I won't say it now.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC But I still remember and I told the person on there [computer], I said, 'that's her address'.

KOD *And how many were in Castlepollard?*

MC When I was there, oh must have been 50, 45, 50.

KOD *And the laundry was it a commercial laundry or was it just for the...*

MC No...

KOD *...institution?*

MC ...Castlepollard wasn't, no.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Castlepollard was just for the institu...'cause I only had one...I only...I can remember just one big machine, but when I say a big machine it was from there to there (*demonstrates distance*) it was about...I'd say a good eight foot.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC A *massive* big monster of a thing but what they used to do, they used to do the whites, then they'd do the colours then the thing. You wouldn't put nothing...you couldn't put a pink in with the whites...

KOD *Right.*

MC ...no matter how delicate it was.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC I still do the same work, the same ways...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...anyways, if that's what I...the...the thing I've learned...

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC ...I know how to wash clothes, that's about the only thing I've learned out of it *(laughs)* oh but I couldn't...no Castlepollard was...Castlepollard was...it was very hard work because I had to scrub floors in that place, I had to be up in the morning, I had 16 babies under me and Pauline had 16 babies.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And there was...the oldest when...the oldest when I was there...because they had put the rest off to...what do you call them places...to different parts of the world, America, whatever. But at the time I didn't know where the babies went. I mean, I knew obviously that they were adopted but I didn't know how old they were, because I seen this baby Fred [pseudonym] [identifying information removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Fred, and his Mother was Eilís [pseudonym], was her house name, she was from [location removed] [identifying information removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And he was thirteen months old and she...I think Eilís thought that he'd never go, she didn't...she thought she'd have him for life.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And he was...then, and then there was as I said, there was 15 more babies including my own and including Pauline's.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So altogether there was 16 babies and they went like that (*demonstrates*) through the room, they didn't go straight along, they started that ways to make them fit in.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC The biggest cot was by the window, was Fred's, I taught him how to walk, me and...between me and Pauline we taught him how to walk. And in the nursery there was...

KOD *So they were in a semi-circle?*

MC ...semi-circle...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and...I was going to say a crescent.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But anyways, they had the wall up to there, (*demonstrates*) up to there, and from there up it was glass.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC One, two, three, four partitions I think it was, about four partitions, bit of wood like, thick wood like that in the middle, white.

KOD *So there was glass from kind of three-foot, four-foot up, yeah?*

MC Yeah...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...it was glass, and you could see into the next room...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and then you went into the next room, you could look into the next room.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I think there was three...if I'm not mistaken, there was three more nurseries or four more nurseries, but to look into them it was like...there was...you know cars that like, are three year old, but they were made in proper metal...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...antiques today?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They were just laid down around but you still had to go in and dust them...

KOD *Right.*

MC ...and wax the floor. No...no one used to walk in there.

KOD *So at maximum capacity, all of that would have been about 60, 70 infants in...in all of those rooms, is that what you're saying, in all of those cots, if all those cots were full?*

MC If they were all full...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but they wasn't all full because the babies that was downstairs were all over three months...

KOD *Right.*

MC ...they were the three-month babies...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...there was around 16 of them that was there. But up the stairs there was about 40 babies, maybe...oh no, let me see, I'd say maybe there was about 30, there could be any...at any given time, because some of them wouldn't come down, some of them would go for adoption straight away so there was about 30 or 40 babies up the stairs. Do you know what I mean?

KOD *Hmm.*

MC And then there was a...a...a...there was a woman there, she had a...first time in my life I ever seen...an oriental baby...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...as I called it, 'cause I didn't know, (*whispered*) *it was a beautiful little thing*, and I can't remember if it was a boy or a girl. But I do remember one thing, it was...it was snowing, it was the winter time and...was I...I must have been pre...yeah, I was pregnant at the time, and I used to help out at the nursery then, downstairs. And...what...it was snowing, so it wouldn't have been the winter time it might have been about February, March, but it was...the...the hills were white, everywhere was snow, it wasn't...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...when I went there first, because I...I'd had me daughter I was w...working down there, and this...this woman had the baby and the baby was...li...I looked at the baby and I said, '*oh*, like,

oriental baby,' I said. 'Oh the...the...the father was a spirit'. Someone else asked her, she said, 'oh, the...the father was a spirit'. The woman's name was...house name was Miriam [pseudonym]. Now...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and they will re...they will recogni...them nuns will recognise that house name as Miriam if that part comes out...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...because that's not the person's real name...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...know what I mean?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So anyways Miriam come this Sunday morning and she said, 'out the back, out there'. In every nursery...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...well not in all the room[s], but in the nursery part every nursery had a door. There was a window and a door to the right...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...so you'd open that door to let fresh air into the nursery when they'd all be washed and dressed and they'd all be lying in the cot. There was no pillows, they were never sitting up. My daughter couldn't sit up when she was eleven months old. She was never propped up, we weren't allowed to.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC There were babies, babies the only one that was up was Fred. So she comes...they were all at Mass and she comes with the baby wrapped up in a blanket. I said, 'where are you going?' She said, 'I'm going...getting out of here'. And she took off for the hill out the back ways. Well when the nuns come back I couldn't do nothing because I had 16 babies. So when the nuns come back over and took Mass, it must have been an hour gone by, and I didn't think first until someone said it, because I...I thought to mys[elf]...I think I t...mentioned it to Pauline, and Pauline said, 'well we'll have to tell them, but how can you tell them,' 'cause really that baby had come from upstairs, from the middle floor...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...don't forget there was babies on the bound...ground, middle and then there was new ones on the very top. So anyways I decided...I said, 'well I'll tell her'. So I said, 'excuse me,' I said, 'can I have a word,' I said, 'Miriam, she's gone'. 'Where has she gone?' 'She's gone home, (*laughs*) she...she's got the baby and she jumped up to the hills'. Anyways they located her and the words...when I said, 'did she get it?' I...we were basically told to shut...mind our own business but, 'you won't be seeing her for a while,' or 'you'll nev...' no, 'you'll never see her for a while,' or something, or, 'no one will see her for a while,' that's what was said to us when we went quizzing about where she was. A cigarette. [Interviewee moves elsewhere in the room to get a cigarette]

KOD *And where do you think she was?*

MC From where I'd been in High Park...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...from...I didn't know them places existed...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...so they must have took the child, either that or put her in a mental institution. Because the woman, when she was pregnant she wasn't washing herself.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She'd never ever washed herself. I felt sorry for her really. And she was about...in my eyes looking at her now I can still see her face. I'd say she was about thirty...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...maybe twenty-eight, thirty, thirty-two, something like that. Judging from the...you know what I mean?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But I can still see all their faces.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And when...then...when...when I was...be doing the nursery, and then you'd have to wax the...feed the ki...you...they'd get the mothers to feed the children, but if you had a child that was really extra hungry or something like that you'd give it a little bit and...or...Pa[uline]...one of us would do it. And then we had to scrub the big corridor. Now Castlepollard's corridor goes from here to that woman's front door maybe even longer, or maybe it just looked longer.

KOD *Right.*

MC It was the whole length of Castlepollard...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...from wall to wall...from door to door, 'cause at the bottom there was double doors, you'd open that door and beh...they had them big...*I hate them*, every time I see them, big vase and a big flower, but they weren't flowers, they were like *grass*...

KOD *Uh huh, yeah...*

MC ...you know them?

KOD *...yeah.*

MC Like, they reminded me...[if] I see them, I get the shivers because that...and that's all they had between them doors, them doors were never opened...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...nuns would go down, they had...they was like...they were all like...there was no colour, they were like...like wheat colour.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Anyways I don't know what they were for, but they were flowers, and that's wh...that's what they had, and you'd never see that door opened. So, one day they said to me...this nun said to me, sh...well she didn't say it to me, she said it to Pauline, 'will you come over and I have got [a] little job for you, (*imitates voice*) *would you come over now*, that...little job,' trying to be nice. 'Oh,' I said, 'you can do it,' I s...I says to meself, but Pauline was fe...wasn't feeling well, so I said, 'alright,' I said, 'I'll go'. So I went out and she went with her and out...out the front door...out the front door, out onto the front lawn, into where the front ways. And I thought to meself, 'why is she taking me out in the front?' Anyway she took me to this little building, opened the door. Well when she opened that door I nearly passed out on the floor when I seen what was in behind that door on Castlepollard grounds. And if it's not there now, there'll still be evidence if someone wants to go digging or looking. When she opened the door all I seen was a labour bed with stirrups. When I say stirrups, leather straps...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...darker than...darker than...like lighter than that (*demonstrates*) the lightest colour you can see in that like.

KOD *So a kind of a tan.*

MC Tan straps...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...to strap your feet in. A bed...a...a chair for...a...a bed for...giving a...a woman having a baby. And there was a little room inside in it, it was single and there was built in cupboards and there was a hand basin and there was *massive big oxygen bottles*, like would...would...the...the top...the bottom half was all black and the top half was like a grey-ey colour, like a grey-ey...like a grey-ey...and I thought to myself, 'what this?' And I had...there was women's clothes in there, we had to just go in and mop. I went in and I cl...mopped it out and that, brushed it out and mopped it out and then she comes along and closed the door and she said, 'are you sleeping here?' I said, 'who sleeps in here?' And she lift...she just shut the door to...she didn't...and it was the nun from the laundry that got me to do that.

KOD *And what do you think that was?*

MC *(Pause)* I...I...the...what do you call it...when I...when I was having my daughter I was doing an awful lot of screaming and they didn't put me in that place. So it couldn't have been for someone screaming, I've been thinking maybe it was for a TB case, or they were taking in someone maybe...

KOD *That they didn't want seen?*

MC ...they...d...yeah, would it be like something like that?

KOD *I don't know.*

MC But I was thinking that it could ha...it could have been one of three, could have been someone that's...perhaps they didn't want anyone to see, could have been one of their own having a child, could be a TB case.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But then again if it was a TB case why would they ask me to go...opening the rooms?

KOD *Hmm.*

MC Everything was there it was like a little...every time I see one of them like, the shape of the thing, it reminds me of the electricity where they keep saying, '*Danger Keep Out*'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But it had a green...bottle green door, and on the side it had a little window and the glass in the windows in that place was bubbles, little bubbles.

KOD *So that you couldn't see in?*

MC You couldn't see in.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC All bubbles, bubble, you don't see that glass anymore.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I clo...I cleaned it, she locked it and I just got off on me way and I told Pauline. But then again that girl's mind is gone she wouldn't re[member]. I mean it's not gone now...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but she's blanked that part of her history out.

KOD *Uh huh, uh huh.*

MC Perhaps one day it will come to her...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...because her son told me that he's asked her and she doesn't remember. She was probably...the woman was broken hearted...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...on the other hand...she's...she's better that she did, better, 'cause I wished I did, but maybe some of us do. But one day I said...I was doing the...supposed to be doing the corridors, well I was doing them, but I was supposed to be doing them while I did what I did. When...in Castlepollard you went down the corridor and you went round that ways to the kitchens, and a bit further down like, not directly, if I...if I can remember rightly, the...the corridor then went round that ways you went down to the kitchen, the big kitchen. But you come a little bit and the stairwell was right in the centre and you were in the main...front of a big, big c...went around in a c...in a curve. But didn't I go in under the stairs and I...I...there was a c...not a cupboard, there was a door, I opened it I was surprised it was open, I opened it, *ah* I was mesmerised with what I found. Anyways the time passed and I...I didn't realise, 'cause none of us had a wa[tch], well I didn't have a watch anyways, and besides I was up...I was too mesmerised in lifting up the photographs. Three cornflake boxes, now you know when you say cornflake...I mean a cornflake box, buff coloured thing like a brownie, tanny colour that you keep...you know when the supermarket gets cornflakes delivered, well you might have 24 or maybe or...40...or whatever's in them, the box is that high (*demonstrates*) it's about the length...nearly the length of the table and it's about that height...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...cornf...there was three of them.

KOD *So a big huge chest kind of...box of...*

MC Photographs...

KOD *...of photographs in there, so about...*

MC ...passport photographs.<sup>4</sup>

KOD *Two-foot high and four-foot...*

MC Yeah...

KOD *...long, yeah.*

MC ...whatever...Kello...ex...the name was on the box...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *...Kellogg's Cornflakes.*

KOD *Okay so it was the...it was a...*

MC ...and the...the boxes had never changed unless they went metric they might have changed...

KOD *Okay.*

MC ...but they were full to capacity.

KOD *Of passport photographs?*

MC Of...well, there was photographs, some of them were like that size, some of them were that size (*demonstrates*). Some of them were like fancy around the edges.

KOD *Uh huh.*

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<sup>4</sup> Passports were required for infants travelling to the US.

MC They were all different, they weren't like taken with the one camera, and some of them was coloured, some of them – I've got an ashtray here [interviewee is smoking] – some of them were coloured, some of them were...the majority of them were black and white...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...some of the children were like babies, like when I say babies like...about maybe eight months, ten months. Some of them were like little children, like two and three.<sup>5</sup> And I've seen...seen some of them photographs on there [Facebook groups], but there was three of them, so how many bab[ies], I alw...I keep asking how many babies could...I'm...how...how many...how many photographs could fit in one box?

KOD *In one big cardboard box...*

MC Yeah.

KOD *...that would have stored 24 cornflakes boxes, yeah?*

MC Yeah but how many passport...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...photographs would fit in one, and then multiply it by three.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And that was only in Castlepollard, was the same kind going on in another place because they're saying that 30,000<sup>6</sup> went out...

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<sup>5</sup> Infants under two years old could not get a passport in their own right.

<sup>6</sup> The interviewee may be referring to the inaccurate, but widespread claim from many news sources that 30,000 women were incarcerated in the Magdalene Laundries. At least 2,000 infants were sent to the US for adoption, however the true figure may never be known as there were an unknown number of illegal adoptions in this cohort, i.e. cases where the adopted person was registered as the natural child of the adoptive parents.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...well by...judging by the amount [that] was in that and how many different places that they were having...places for women and babies...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...30,000 is...is...is even...is just not even a spit in the ocean.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC There was a hell of a lot more that went than 30,000...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...from what I seen. Because I was looking at it like that and then I went like that (*demonstrates*) I always remember doing...looking at them, doing that and (*whispers*) *then I went like that, letting them all flitter through me fingers.*

KOD *Scoop them up and then let them down.*

MC And let them flitter through me...yeah. And I still...and I always call them 'the cornflake babies'. And I never knew nothing about *banished* babies...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...but to me they were the cornflake bab...the cornflake babies, 'cause they were in cornflake boxes.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And I got a clap in the face...next thing I knew I got an awful slap across the face – out of nowhere! The nun come round and caught me red-handed, just as I was flit...them...not...what do you call...flicking them down...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...letting them out. And she shut it, next thing there was a lock on it...closed. And then a couple of days...that was when I come back – that was after me coming back with the girl, with Susie – and next thing, I just got a...one day they just said, ‘pack your stuff, you’re going’. I said, ‘pack what stuff I don’t have...really have any stuff,’ and next thing a suitcase full of clothes was there, baby clothes, my clothes, and we were going home. I was bought out that place, that’s how I got out of Castlepollard,<sup>7</sup> Mr and...Mr Doherty, Mr Doherty, because of me running away...seen the state of me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I was gone like a skeleton in comparison to what I was, I was like a rake. And I only found out f...about four years ago when I asked Mr Doherty, I said, ‘Alan,’ I said, ‘can I ask you a question, it’s been on the tip of me tongue for the...many years,’ and I said, ‘I didn’t,’ I said, ‘but I...I need to know, did you pay money to get me out of Castlepollard?’ He said, ‘well,’ he said, ‘yes but Mary we don’t...that’s irrelevant, we got you out’. And then they didn’t know that I went into that other place in ’74. But in Castlepollard I had to scrub floors...wait ‘til they dried, made sure they were dry, wax them, add paraffin to the wax but they...all...all nuns used paraffin in the wax, to thin it out, big yellow stuff, I used the same in St. John’s College, if...in case anyone thinks that I’m making this up.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC The same wax they were using, you know, and you’d have to put it on, then you’d get buffers, no electric polishers, *nothing*, big block of wood, same thing as I was doing in St John’s College, big block of wood and you’d have to do that once a week or maybe twice a week if there was a visitor coming. And the visitors, well we...we didn’t understand at the time, the visitors was adoptees...no people who were coming to look at the babies [prospective adopters].

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<sup>7</sup> Women and girls who paid a fee (anecdotal evidence suggests it was approximately £100) could leave the Mother and Baby Home after giving birth, however those who could not pay would have to stay for a longer period (at least 12-18 months), in order to work off their debt. In most cases, the woman or girl would not be allowed to leave with their baby.

KOD *And why do you think that your baby wasn't adopted?*

MC 'Cause I wouldn't...I said no, I kept saying no...they kept...they kept me there. And then when the Dohertys got me out I took the baby home with me.

KOD *So you refused to sign the papers for Rachel?*

MC They never asked me to sign the papers, I kept asking to see that Mrs Gunning, that social worker, 'cause she promised me that I...she said to me...I didn't want m...I wanted to keep my child...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but she kept saying to me, 'the baby will be gone before six weeks'. Well the baby was six weeks, six months, and it was going on and on and on. But I never seen her, from the day she dropped me off, I never seen her until 1972, 'til I'd been to Scotland, come back from Scotland, she wanted to take the child off me in Dohertys. And she done that (*demonstrates*).

KOD *She poked at you.*

MC *P...really poked*, I was after finishing work and then...the same nun was with her, and she took the cigarette out of my hand, Mrs Gunning said, 'you won't smoke in front of me,' and she threw it out the window. The...she topped the cigarette like...some ways like that...which I...I've smoked for 40-odd years and I can't even put it out like that, but she got it some ways like that 'cause I'd burn me fingers (*demonstrates*).

KOD *She squeezed it, yeah.*

MC Yeah but I'd burn me fingers if I tried doing that.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC So, she put it out and that...which...she put it on her finger. And it was of a Friday evening.

KOD *So y...so the Dohertys took you out and you were living with them, and Rachel was with you as well?*

MC I was living with the Dohertys with Rachel...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and then my cousin come from Edinburgh to take me to Scotland. But, when my cousin took me to...my...she was actually my...her mother is my father's first cousin, she was actually my...second cousin.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She took me to Edinburgh and I thought, 'she really wants *me* there as well'. But, she didn't want me, 'cause a couple of weeks went by and she kept saying, 'get a job get a job,' so I got a job. But they wanted me to go to the social security, at the time I didn't understand, but I had always worked.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC I didn't want to be on the social security, I wanted to go and get a job. So eventually I got a job, I refused to go near the social security. I went and got a job, I was in the job a few weeks and then...it was...I...I was homesick so I moved into another job. I got a job in the distilleries, I didn't keep it, I couldn't keep any job down 'cause I wasn't well...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'cause I'd had that operation, what they'd done...what they'd done to me, I couldn't stand all day.

KOD *You couldn't stand all day, yeah.*

MC Couldn't stand all day, and I couldn't...

KOD *And what other type of symptoms did you have after the symphysiotomy?*

MC I had...well I've always had...since then, I've always had...me hip, especially my left hip, and I've been to the doctors, I went to the hospital, asked in the hospital what it was, the doctor said it was nothing. It clicks, it gives a big click, a big *grinding*...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...my hips grinding. Back pain...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and when I had my last daughter in Liverpool the doctor said, 'I'm going to give you [an] epidural, 'cause I think...' he didn't s...explain to me, but he s...his words were, 'I think Mary now you have suffered enough'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So he must have known.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC The m...the doctor himself must have known, so he gave me the...the...the epidural in me back, and as he put the epidural in...in me back, he said, 'don't move, now,' he said, 'I'll be right back, whatever you do don't move,' he said, 'it's in the wrong place...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...it's...' he said, 'you've got a curvature of the spine'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Now the only way that I would have got that curvature of the spine was I'd hurt me back when I was lifting them...bine...them wet nappies...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...well you coul...wet bun...bales, because when I was lifting them, me back went...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I couldn't even lift that [a saucer] for months.

KOD *Couldn't lift a saucer.*

MC Couldn't lift that, so that was me back snapped and that was in Castlepollard.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But that was...wh...when...can you stop that [recording device] for a second 'til I...?

KOD *Sure, yeah.*

[Interview paused]

[Irrelevant conversation prior to interview resuming removed]

MC But anyways...talking in the middle of a sentence and forget what you're saying.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Then, what do you call it, so...he gave me the epidural and it was wrong and he went out and he come back and he done it right and then he said, 'you've got a curvature of the spine,' but then I explained about...that I'd hurt me back as well. I...I thought...I always thought to meself it must have been a slipped disc, I don't know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but I've always...and if I go moving something I feel something moves.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So anyways he gave me the epidural, that was the reason he gave it to me. I didn't ask for e...epidural or nothing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and...I th...I do believe that the doctor realised, because why did he come out and say those words?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC 'I think you've suffered enough Mary,' and then I had my daughter, my...that was my last daughter.

KOD *Let's take you back to Edinburgh, so you're in Scotland you...you're not able to stand for long so you're moving from one job to another?*

MC Yeah I was moving from one job to another, and then I was out of work, got in with a crowd, I wasn't working, I got in with these...crowd, bad crowd, and I got pregnant. And this cousin...oh, I got a flat, not a flat, I got a room in the Arden Hotel, Broadbend [pseudonyms] and I didn't have to pay rent because the...the landlord...the landlord's friend, I was going out with him. I wasn't...wasn't really going out with him, there was more to it than that but I don't really want to go into *that* details of it. And I got pregnant and I started working for the landlord collecting the rents and that from the other tenants, so I got free rent. And then I went in, the...the baby's Dad went off and then I had the baby and me cousin...I woke up and she was in the room, but she was out there like that, pregnant herself, but I never p...passed any...any remark...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...remark to her and it transpired that she had a baby. I think six weeks later her son was born, her...her child, I think it was a son she had. But that same...before that, pr...prior to that, sorry, before th...before I got pregnant, her mother – that's my father's cousin – her mother used to take...she was in the change of life, in what they call the floods...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and she used to take haemorrhages and be rushed off to hospital. So my child was there with the mother...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and she...Julia [pseudonym] would be going to work. So I comes in the early morning at half past eight, no answer, no answer at the door. So I'm thinking...I'm waiting and waiting and waiting, I said, 'oh she must b...what can I do?' I didn't understand that you dial 999 I didn't understand nothing about that 'cause I'd only been in the country...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...a few months. So next thing anyways I gets a bit of wire after...after about an hour and a half, two hours I gets a small bit of wire, put it in the lock and thinking I can get in with that. I think...I'm thinking, 'she's in there dead and my baby's in there'...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and maybe go into the fire, 'cause...anyways when I...I'd no sooner done...done that, about 20 minutes later I heard 'clip clop' up the stairs and it was the daughter, with my daughter in the pram. And I...she said, 'oh hello Mary,' I said, 'hello'. So she said...'cause I left there, couldn't stand...she was a bully, a little bully.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And I said, 'I've been knocking, has something happened your mother?' So the b...why...the bab...she said, 'no my Mum's in hospital,' she said, 'me Mum's in hospital'. So she went to put

the key in the door and I said, 'Julia, don't put the key in the door,' I said, 'I'll have to get a...a locksmith,' I said, 'I'll pay for the locksmith'. [Identifying information removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She took her shoe off and with the heel of her shoe, the f...multi-coloured fan of glass, she broke the glass, 'cause she's th...'cause I told her I put the thing...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and I did offer to pay for the locksmith. She broke the glass, opened the door, went in with my daughter and called the police, had me removed. I was remanded in [location removed] Prison for two weeks. I hadn't done no crime, I offered to pay. I had no one, I had...I didn't have...I didn't understand about solicitors and all that business. And...someone gave me a sheet of paper and I was to write down...I don't know whether it was going to a solicitor whatever it was going to, I think eventually it went back to the judge in the courts...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and said...I told them like I've just explained now, on the piece of paper, wrote it all down and two weeks later I ended up in court and the judge apologised to me because I shouldn't have been locked up for that. [Identifying information removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I never spoke to her from that day to this, and I took me children then to live in the hotel, me daughter...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...off her, and then I was...as I said I had another daughter. And it was bad housing, and...

KOD *So you'd three children now at this stage?*

MC No, no, no, I had just...

KOD *Oh this is...*

MC ...this is two.

KOD *Two, yeah.*

MC And I'm in...I'm in...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...Arden Street, Broadbend...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...in the Arden Hotel, Broadbend, it was called. It was just like a doss house, it was really a horrible place. But, then I started going out and I got a babysitter, a *male* babysitter...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I stayed out all night. But I ha...I'd been in all the time, and I thought, 'with all of this, I'll go out'. I went out one night and I stayed out all hours. And next thing when I come home...'cause the person I left was a genuine person to leave...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...a trustworthy person to leave watching the children.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And an ex-boyfriend's sister called the police, or whatever you call it, NSPPC [National Society for the Protection of Cruelty to Children].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I'd only been the night before to the launderette, done all the laundry, done all the bedding, brand new bedding on the beds, I come home the next morning, there was not a smite of my clothes, there was no furniture, the place was cleared out. The person that had got the NSPPC to take my children, cleared *all* my stuff. I got...there was...the phone was there, I got the phone call, 'we got rid of your nigger,' because my daughter was mixed race...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...the second one was mixed race. And this girl from [location removed] she turned round on the phone, she said, 'we got rid of your nigger now, haha'.

KOD *And why did you think she did that? She was the sister of an ex-boyfriend?*

MC Yeah, yeah. A bully, a b...he beat me up a couple of times. He was in the army he was a bully. Just drink...I didn't like drunk people, I mean I liked a drink, but I didn't like drunk people...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...not people that would go around battering you. And in that hotel where I stayed in Arden Street, Broadbend, [sound of dogs barking in background] when my daughter was about two months old, I went out one night for a drink, come back with friends...come back, I woke up, I was tied up in a...rolled up in a carpet, tied up, I never told the police. The girl...the girl that done it was Olive MacKenzie [pseudonym] and the landlord's nephew.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC And I said, 'why did you do such a thing, tied me...could have smothered...could have choked on me own vomit...anything'. She said, 'well you were doing a bit of noise, you were a bit too drunk, we couldn't leave you with the child'. I wouldn't have harmed my child, but she...she...I think she had something to do with...when the child was eight months old, the child went, she...Rachel as well. And after that I went to visit...I used to always visit them and take them out and as I said, one day I went in and the house was empty, she'd moved.

KOD *This was the foster parents, is it?*

MC Yeah, yeah.

KOD *So they were put into foster care?*

MC No, they were put in St Stephen's [pseudonym].

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Sound of dogs barking in background]

MC And there was a girl working in St Stephen's Children's Home and she took a shine to the baby...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and they took the baby home with her, and she became fostered...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...with that family...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and that family moved without telling me, no...never notified me, because I took Rachel out, well Gráinne's her real name, but I called her Rachel, took Rachel to Ireland...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I took her out for the weekend, never brought her back, went to Ireland.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Met Gunning, the social worker in Ireland who left me black and blue...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and on the Friday...the social worker in Ireland went back to her office obviously, and a week later she come back...

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Continued sound of dogs barking]

[Interview paused briefly to stop noise of dogs barking]

MC ...a week later she come back and told me...no she didn't tell me, she left a message with Mrs Doherty, the social worker left a messa...the social worker in Ireland left a message with Mrs Doherty, because I went into them when I come from work on the Friday, a week after getting the poking off that woman in the chest, black and blue. I noticed the bone china cup was out, Mrs Doherty had visitors, the...the way they do it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And she said, 'oh,' she said, 'she's gone,' she was getting the tea...getting the tea ready for...she said, 'she's gone'. I said, 'who?' She said, 'Mrs Gunning,' she said, 'oh I...'. I said, 'what did she say, what did she have to say now?' 'Cause I couldn't take her 'cause I...really...that day I was going to kill her and I think she knew it in the end, I would...I was actually going to murder the woman...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'cause Mr Doherty got me with a big lu...a big rock...and her brain, I would have pulverised it, her and the nun in that same front parlour in the Dohertys. So, Mr...one of the Dohertys, one of the lads took the big rock off me 'cause that's how...I...I went. So she had left the message, 'she won her case, she can keep her child'. So I got to keep me child, even though I'd taken her

from Edinburgh for the weekend and never told them or anything like that, well if I'd have stayed in Ireland I could have kept my child. But I still had to go back because I left me other daughter in Edinburgh, fostered and that was the vital mistake that I went back and my cousin's mother, the auld woman that originally took me over, she had Rachel, and my father's sister and her husband come from America, and the two s...me father's two sisters went down to the cousin – this is the story I got told – down to my cousin's house, which my cousin was like forty...about forty-eight at the time, and they wanted to take Rachel.

KOD *How old was Rachel at this stage?*

MC She was about f...this was in '71, she was three, she was just turned three...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and they wanted to take her to the States...right? But, what the social services in Edinburgh didn't know was, that that...my father's sister in America, Dorothy Kennedy [pseudonym], and I don't care...she was known as [identifying information removed] 'cause she was a crook. [Identifying information removed] Dorothy's still alive. She lives in a big, big...she lives on the [location removed]. She made her money. (*Lights a cigarette*) She knows I know, she knows I know. [Sound of dogs barking in background] And she went there, she denied any knowledge of it, when the brother died she denied anything about that, that she'd ever...but Helen [pseudonym], she's a headmistress in school in Edinburgh, she's a s...she's the daughter of the woman...she said, 'Mary,' she said, 'what happened was they come, they wanted to take Rachel, me Mum didn't know what to do, she called social services, social services took her back'. But whatever my father's sister and the other sister said to social service about me, when I went to the cou...home, there was nothing about me running away with the...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...child and taking her to Ireland, 'cause I'd won me case in Ireland, whatever was said (*pause*) when I went to the...St Stephen's to take Rachel out to visit her, I was told I can visit her but I can't take her over the door. And the Matron said to me, 'Mary,' she said, 'can I have a word with you?' I said, 'yes'. Now this Matron, I don't know what her name was but she had a...she had an operation with her goitre because she had a big...it was like someone had cut her

throat, and over the years since then I have said, 'well if someone didn't cut your throat I felt if I had of got my hands on you today I would really cut the head off you, never mind just cut the throat, I'd take the whole head'. And she said, (*whispers*) 'you have more chance of getting Rachel if you fight for her than you ever have of Imelda [*pseudonym*], you'll never get Imelda off that family that took her'. So their daughter was working there and she seen her and fell in love with her and just took her home as if she was a stray pup...so... (*Pause*)

KOD *And you'd won the court case in Ireland that said you could keep Rachel and now you needed to do another court case in Scotland?*

MC Yeah, but I didn't understand, no one...there was no one to help me, who was going to help me in Scotland, I didn't know what...I couldn't take her out over the doorstep. [Sound of dog barking in background] And so I was there as I said and then I was...I was pregnant and I thought well, 'you took two of my children and this child won't see this life because this life...this world is not good enough for it'. And I went down I went up to the...to the Western General Hospital and what I'm going to say next will shock the world, never mind shock the Catholics in Ireland, I demanded that I have an abortion, that they take that child out of me there and then, because if they didn't I was going to cut my own throat right in front of the doctor, and I was 26 weeks pregnant. And I've since had grandchildren born at 26 weeks and survived. And that's all because of social services in Scotland, social services and housing, mainly social services telling me to go to the housing and then I could have my children back and the housing saying, 'bring your children and we'll give you a house'. There's no end to the story, the doctor took me in off the street in the hospital. I didn't have an appointment, I didn't have nothing, just said...he took me straight in there and into a bed, and it was done the next day. And then I went on to have other children, because I wasn't a bad person and as they say, they call themselves Christian – oh, you know, 'by the grace of God people go on to have more children'. Well I did have more children because I know I've g...I'm not wrong, I know it's not my fault. 'Cause that's the only thing, by me telling myself that it is not my fault. Had I had that child, that child would have been like the [other] two and if I was that bad a mother that they took my children in Scotland, I'm still living in UK, why didn't they take my other two that I had in this country? Because obviously every hospital had social workers, I never changed me name when I went in.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They never took these children. I *never ever* had a social worker inside my door, no matter how desperate I was I never went near them...even as an adult, just the name. There was a...the...the...the two years ago there was a Baby P thing,<sup>8</sup> there were doing a purge of Liverpool and they tried to...went into my...went around as an excuse – ‘*Healthy Homes*’ – I said, ‘well you better come in here love,’ I said, ‘me daughter’s overcrowded, think she should get a bigger house’.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because she’s got a couple of children with disabilities. *Oh* they come into the house alright and next thing she had...oh she must...it was like an army every day, *every single day*. Then the Health Visitor turned round and said, ‘oh you want to go to the doctor and get yourself something you need, really...I think you really need something’. My daughter went over the doctor, the doctor gave her anti-depressants. I said, ‘Leah [pseudonym], don’t take them, don’t take them’. I stayed three months, I said, ‘I’m going to face these, ‘cause I know what this is about’. I never mentioned once about my children, about my past. I’m a big woman now, I’m a grandmother, these are mine, fighting for my grandchildren. I got rid of every...I ran a psychologist, she was a psychiatrist, children’s psychologist. I said, ‘*see you, don’t look,*’ I said, ‘the...the door’s that ways, keep running and don’t look back ‘cause if you look back I’m frightful for what I might do to you’. I said, ‘there’s no mental illness in this house,’ I said, ‘the only mental one,’ I said, ‘is maybe me, you might classify me, how can you come in and say a one year old has got mental h...mental health issues?’ I said, ‘is it money grabbing, [location removed] Hospital?’ Anyways, got rid of them all for her, all got off, and I would fight in anyone’s corner for that ‘cause I know they stole my children, they didn’t just st...steal my children. And then when I come to England, the snow was about three-foot-high, and I took a notion one night, one o’clock in the morning, I said, ‘I’m on the road,’ and I hitchhiked it, it took me all night and all day, I come to Liverpool, I come to...over the water at Swanville [pseudonym]. Met up with some people as you do, just...thing...connections and whatever, with another two Scotch girls, the two Scotch girls got fed up after a week and went back to Scotland, but by that week was up I’d already made my mind I [was] never going back to Scotland. So I never went back to Scotland. Is that thing [recorder] on?

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2009/aug/16/baby-p-family>

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I never went back to Scotland. Then...I just...I went to Ireland.

KOD *And what age are you now Mary?*

MC Hmm?

KOD *What age are you now, what year is it?*

MC What year is it now?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC It's 2000...oh what year...you mean...

KOD *In Swanville, you're in Swanville and then you went back to Ireland.*

MC No, no, no. I'm t...I made a mistake, I was in Scotland and I went down to...yeah I did, I went down to Swanville. I stayed in Swanville for...I was in Swanville for about 12 months, 18 months and then I decided I'll go to Ireland...I don't like drinking...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I'll go home. Stopped drinking for about a month, I went home, well I went home to Ireland, and I stayed with Nancy Fitzmaurice [pseudonym], she was like...a neighbour of the Dohertys...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...because by then Mrs Doherty had another child so I thought I'd stay in Nancy's and get a little job.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *(Lights cigarette)* But, in the meantime I got engaged, well I actually got engaged...I got engaged in '72, even though I'd had the children and all that...and the fella knew – for a Sicilian – I got engaged, I was engaged for seven years, so I was still engaged when I went to Ireland, and I stayed in Ireland, and I was in Ireland all the summer, '73. No, that's wrong. I went to Ireland in th...the end of '73, I got pregnant in '74...just a...I'd known the person...I've known the person since I was that size...

KOD *Heh.*

MC ...from a little kid, I knew the person, not a bad person actually. Anyways I got pregnant and he turned round and said, 'I'm married'. Well I don't go with married men, I don't go with ma...I'll go with a married *seaman*...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...if he's off a ship, I'd go...'cause to me that's...you know what I mean, 'cause my...anyways, next thing I realise I was pregnant and went to the doctor, next thing I ended up in...High Park Street (*tuts*) – High...High Park Street – High Park Laundry, I call...Drumcondra, Dublin 9. And I ended up there, I was only supposed to be there for the one night as I said.

KOD *And who took you there?*

MC Gunning.

KOD *The social worker.*

MC And...and S...Sister...Mrs Gunning and Sr Aloysius took me there.

KOD *So they drove you up from [location removed]?*

MC Yeah. And when I was there...when I'd been there for about two months, three months, Sr Aloysius come up from [location removed] to visit me and brought me 40 cigarettes, 40 Major.

And I said to her, 'where did you get the cigarettes,' I said, 'from the...from the parlour?' In the big table in the...in...in Barrytown Convent they had a big table in the parlours and at the end of the table was a big drawer and it was...it was like a tobacconists for the priests, and I told her that, 'when you're coming up,' any time, before I'd leave...before she'd left I'd said, 'oh and don't ever come empty handed,' I said, 'come,' I said, 'bring the cigarettes for me'. Brought the cigarettes, well I think I nearly smoked the 40 cigarettes in front of her.

KOD *And tell me about High Park, how old were you, and what was it like there?*

MC Well...

KOD *What was your...your first...*

MC ...the first...

KOD *...day or...first...yeah.*

MC ...well the first day, well now, as I said, when they all scattered to...off to their little place, their little jobs, I didn't know anything about...that there was a laundry there. I never knew *nothing*, a...absolutely nothing about it. All I thought...the way they were...just were doing...I thought it was a place like Castlepollard, but with the *age* of the women, when I seen the...when I seen them in the morning, I dr...I thought, 'Jesus these are not having babies!' But...because I was twenty-two...but the...the nun took me to there and put me in the laundry. And the first...oh...the first job I was put on was, you'd get dirty bags of laundry they were all in like...like check pillowslips and some of them was in white and some was cream and some of them was just in bags, and you had to take them out, get the...the numbers on them like you'd get a laundry thing to...put them in this thing and '*click*'. You had to do that *dead fast* and you had to make sure that you got all the numbers in that bag, you didn't empty two bags at the same time in case they were different people.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But you'd have to look was there two bags from one but normally there was only one. The odd...the odd...the odd time there was maybe two, but you'd have to check them. And I was on

that for about a week, a week and a half, and then they put me...one day they said, 'come down,' they took me off that, maybe I was too slow I don't know, but they put me on this...this big thing. It was for putting doctors' coats on, you...you'd put the coat on...thing you...the sleeves and all that, you'd come out and *press it*. Steam...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...you'd press the thing...

KOD *Steam press for doctors' coats.*

MC Well that's what I was on...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I was on that, and I was on that other thing that was there beside me. I was on that, sometimes I'd be on that for different things. But very...I wasn't...I was mainly on the coats.

KOD *And do you know where the doctors' coats came from?*

MC Yeah from hospitals, big hospitals. I didn't see them when they come in. I'm glad I didn't see them because I can just imagine the state they were in, but when th...when I got them they were white. They were washed, they'd been laundered.

KOD *And did they give you another religious name like they did in Castlepollard?*

MC No, no they used to...they called me Catherine, they asked me me middle name...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I just said, 'Catherine'. I don't know what they were...they used to call me Catherine.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But...they didn't...I...they never ever hit me. I was never ever hit, actually the only time I was ever hit by a nun was in...was when I was in...what do you call it, Castlepollard and at school.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Castlepollard I got the slap across the face for...for the cornflake boxes.

KOD *Looking at the photos, yeah.*

MC I...yeah, another day a girl put some eye-shadow...not...something...I don't know what she put on, a bit of make up on me anyway. I thought I was lovely, bit of lipstick or something. And when I went round, when I turned round the nun was behind me and she got me by the hair of the head and *slapped* me into...made me s...made me wash me face with...what do you call that soap? Carbolic soap? Stuff that you...that you scrub the step with and I was made scrub the steps *afterwards* with the same bar of soap.

KOD *And so...so in...in High Park you're called Catherine, you're pregnant, you're in the laundry, you're with all of these older women?*

MC Old...all old women, and they wouldn't talk, none of them...there was one woman, I can't remember now if her name was Margaret May or Maggie May [pseudonyms], I think it was Maggie May, *Maggie May* was her name.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She had dark hair to her shoulder, fringe was there, it was...not a fringe...it was like...parted there and it was clipped over like that...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...like you'd go...like that.

KOD *Okay.*

MC To the side. She had a haircut on her that you'd see on a five-year-old starting school...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...a...a clip crossed in her hair there and she had a red cardigan on her and like, everything was like red and...red and black or something. She had a red cardigan on. She always had the same clothes on as far as I could see. And I was there, and the nuns when the...when the...when the weekend...when...on Saturday afternoon...after dinner on the Saturday, the nuns...you used to have to queue to go into the nun, I don't know what it was for...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I don't know, someone said it was for pocket money...or that they were putting their name down for...to go out for a walk with the nuns. But I...I...I was never invited on that walk, that was on the Saturday.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But then the odd time there was like two...there was three occasions that they...that I went out with them but it was in the evening time. One was to the park, it was...supposed to be going to a church actually to see some saint that they had...his head was in some place. I don't know what the man's name was, but it was supposed to go to...we never got to the church.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I think...looking back I think it was just an excuse to get out of the place, They took us...one...one nun she took...I think there was about 12 of us, maybe 14, and we went down to a little park not too far away from the convent, wherever it was it was a little park.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And we were like dickheads walking round, round the grounds. *Pure* dickheads, id...id...idiots, I...I'm included with them and none...not one of us talking to the other because we never conversed.

KOD *Why didn't you converse?*

MC I don't know, they just...they...they weren't talking even to each other. Once the work...even when we was working they weren't talking to each other. You weren't allowed to talk, for one you weren't allowed to talk at the breakfast table, 'cause sh...the nun was sitting up there...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...this was in High Park, she was above in the dining room she'd just be sitting there, observing. [Sound of dogs barking in background] You never talked to each other. And then the next time was they took us out to a...a jumble sale, I...I wrote that on the internet that they brought us to a jumble sale, only that there was no...only that there was no jumble sale, there had been a jumble sale...

[Unidentified third party enters the room]

[Irrelevant conversation with third party removed]

MC [Continued sound of dogs barking in background] ...only that there was no jumble sale, there had been a jumble sale. And I can still see the church now, actually it wa...it was part of a church I think, like a hall part of it, you could see the shape of it and everything, the big door and...and...I...it went up like that bit kind of like a big [sound of banging in background] like a big terracotta type...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...something there on it [unidentified background noise] and anyways we went in and there was kind of like a porch-y type bit, we went into this room, it was all one big long hall [sound of banging in background] not too...not too...

[Irrelevant conversation with third party removed]

MC [Unidentified background noise] And next thing there was old-fashioned benches like church benches, but you couldn't see through them, they were high-backed, and they were...instead of being one, two, three, they were all stretched up at the side of the...each side there was benches pushed back this side, benches pushed back that side, and *covered* in rags, covered in all clothes and you could help yourself Sister said. 'Help meself, 'I said, 'help meself to what? I don't want none of these'. So just to pacify...I always remember I took a green cloak. Just to make it like...'cause you had to take something I just took this green cloak, I al...I always liked cloaks but I...I...when I think about it. (*Laughs*) Anyways they were killing each other over rags. But they didn't understand, they was not jumble sale, they was the *leftover rags* from the jumble sale...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and they were coming back with handfuls of...s...you'd want to see the size...old handbags and whatever, they were killing each other as if they were j...as if they were just found gold. I wouldn't have liked to see them if they just found gold.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But anyways that was it, and that went on for about, I'd say an hour or maybe an hour and a half, whatever, back down, we all disappeared. Next thing they were all dressed up in their fineries, (*laughs*) in their finery, and me included in me lovely cl...me lovely green cloak, a moss green. I wouldn't...I wouldn't...when I look back...when I look back, but I suppose, I don't know, when I look back, and I always imag[ine]...I can see it because I...I had a passport...I got me passport phot...photograph taken...I took it [the cloak] with me and years later I got...I liked it, I got me pass[port], *and when I look now I say, 'oh,' I say, 'little doll's head on...on that thing,'* whatever, it it must have been out of the army or something, I don't know where it come from. But I always say to my daughters, I said, 'you know what, when...when I went for my very first passport, and I w...what I was wearing I wouldn't like to be buried in it, let alone go out in the street'. I had no sense. I just...just took it because they were taking a load of stuff. I got told I could take it. That's all...the only one thing I came out from that place and they was killing themselves. But anyways, they used to...

KOD *And the third time, you said it was three times they took you out?*

MC They took us out another time and that was just for a walk.

KOD *On the grounds?*

MC No, outs...no, not on the grounds took us right out...

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Sound of dogs barking in background]

MC ...they took us out, but they took us in a group. They would tell you that you were going someplace but you wouldn't be. You wouldn't be...you would never...I...some saint was...his head was in a box in a...in a...he's in some church in Dublin.

KOD *Blessed Oliver Plunkett...or in Drogheda or...?*

MC That's it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...wherever we were supposed to be going, but sure you couldn't...could you walk from Drumcondra to Drogheda?

KOD *That's a long...about an hour in the dr...in the car, in a bus.*

MC Well how did they tell...they told us...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...that we were going to go there, we were walking it.

KOD *Maybe it was on tour or something, I don't know.*

MC It wasn't in the park...they took us into...

KOD *Oh well...*

MC ...a little park.

KOD *...yeah.*

MC It was only like a little park...when I say a little park, it was...there was like a main road nearby.

KOD *And how many women were there when you were there?*

MC Oh in the park, they took us about...there was about 12 or 14 of us.

KOD *And how many women were in High Park...*

MC Oh in High...

KOD *...working, yeah.*

MC ...w...what, in the laundry?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Let's see, there wasn't that many when I was there in '74...there was...not in the actual laundry part....

[Sound of phone ringing]

[Interview paused]

[Audio File 1 Ends]

[Audio File 2 Begins]

[Irrelevant conversation removed]

[Interview resumes]

MC And so for that couple of...that gap, she [interviewee's daughter] got all the information she wanted out and all that then. And I...I look at it now and I...I look back and I think, 'well you don't take from my side of the family, you must take from the *rats* that bore you, that...that...that...'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because while I was away in Castlepollard having her [interviewee's daughter, Rachel/Gráinne], he was out with another one and he married her. And years later when I was home in Ireland, about...16...15 or 16 yea[rs], well about 14 years ago, with me mother, there was a Fleadh Ceoil in Barrystown...in [location of county removed]...was on, and I didn't want...I thought [to] meself, 'I'll walk in there,' but really I didn't want to go down, it was my mother who wanted to go down, 'cause I thought, 'no, I...I don't want to see that little...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...woman,' and out of the blue she comes over and she says, (*puts on voice*) '*oh hello Mary, how's the grandchildren, how many have you got now?*' [Sound of dogs barking in background] And then in the next breath it was, '*how's Rachel?*' [Interviewee's daughter's original name] His wife, he was sending her out for the information, he's sent her out for the infor... 'cause I'd been home the summer before with my other grandchildren...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and he probably was thinking which one is his. So I turned around and I said...looked her straight in the face and said, '*Rachel? Rachel? I don't have a Rachel, I don't know any Rachel. Are you sure you've got the right person? Are you sure you've got the right name?*' She said, '*yeah Mary,*' she said, '*you had the child to Frank [pseudonym]*'. I said, '*I had a child to Frank, oh,*' I said, '*that was a lifetime ago, how am I supposed to remember that,*' I said, '*I can barely*

*remember when I met yez an hour ago*'. End of story. End of story. She's probably a grandmother herself now, I couldn't care...I don't...I really don't care if I never seen her again.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC After what she [Rachel] said to me and after what I went through to give birth to her, [redacted] and I've said it to my...my kids say, 'Mum you can't be li...' I said, 'I don't care, no one says a thing like that to me, I wasn't a dirty person...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I said, 'Ireland left me the way I am, I was homeless, I was on the streets, I was going on shifts with men to live'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Was that...was that living? That wasn't living, that was *surviving*.

KOD *Uh huh. And that's what you did after you came out of the psychiatric?*<sup>9</sup>

MC Yeah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Yeah, I thought, 'right that's it, right out'. Always got accused of it...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...so why not do it? If someone said it to me now, I would be out in a flash. If someone accused me of doing something now, I'd do that thing. If someone said to me, 'you done whatever...you went robbing and whatever and this...' and *insisting and insisting*, when you know yourself

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<sup>9</sup> See pages 86-88

you're not.../ would go out and do it and get caught and say, 'well now I done it, and *now* I'll say yes'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC For a...for a...for a multitude of other things now.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And tha...that's how my daughters...the youngest one's [identifying information removed], Monica's [pseudonym] [identifying information removed] and the other daughter that is in...well fostered is [identifying information removed], but she was...she was a rape case, the daughter in [location removed]. That's a thing I never ever divulged but I don't care, I'll divulge it now.

KOD *That's Imelda?*

[Identifying information removed]

KOD *And so you...you were in Liverpool then? And did...you said you got married here?*

MC No, I come to Liverpool and I discovered I was pregnant, well I had an idea I was pregnant, and I thought, 'I've got to get out of Ireland, got to get out'. So I done it on the weekend...and (*pause*) in actual fact if the truth be known I was pregnant in [location removed] Hospital, I'd already been pregnant when they caught up with me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and put me in the psychiatric. [Identifying information removed] That...that paraldehyde.

KOD *Uh huh, uh huh.*

MC Do you know what I mean?

KOD *Yeah.*

MC When I was pregnant, 'cause she was born in the October and I didn't leave there 'til the end of...I didn't leave that psychiatric hospital 'til February.

KOD *She was born in October?*

MC Uh huh.

KOD *But that means that you were made pregnant in the hospital?*

MC No, no wait a minute, no I got out but...it...it...I got pregnant when I'd had the tablets, don't forget I was getting...taking them Artane [medication].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I would have had a couple of doses of Artane...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...in the morning before I left. Because I had to take them twice a day.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I would have took them that day, that...would that affect the foetus? Straight away like that? It would still be in your bloodstream for a week.

KOD *Uh huh, uh huh.*

MC It would still be in me blood stream for a week.

KOD *Uh huh. And...*

[Interviewee is briefly distracted]

MC Go on.

KOD *And...and so when you came to Liverpool then, how did you live or...?*

MC When I come back to Liverpool I still had money in the bank, growing in the bank.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And a...as actual fact I still had money going into the bank until 197...6...77. [Sound of dogs barking in the background] And I finished with him in '78. But I'd finished with him before that, I never seen him but the money was still going in the bank every month. And I didn't know it was going in...and for 18 months I didn't know there was a penny going in the bank. And then one day I thought it was...oh I thought (*laughs*) *me birthday* all...come all at once! I went down and got all clothes and everything done, I paid off the...helped Leah's dad...was in financial...bit of financial difficulty, so when I got a whisper that there was something, I went straight down to Allied Irish Bank, come back and handed him a wad of money. I said, 'get an extension built or whatever, whatever,' and then I left.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC I left him then with the two children. Because I had...I was pregnant when I met him.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I didn't marry him. And then...because he was good to me and that and whatever, I just lived with him and I got pregnant with Leah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And he was years older than me. And when I was pregnant with Monica, social services...not social services, the Catholic church, a canon from the Catholic church over in the water, sent some kind of Catholic social services something to the shop – I owned a shop – with clothes...for adoption clothes, because I'd took an OD and ended up in the hospital over in

Swanville, over all...at the psychiatric unit...the whole lot...thingy. That's me daughter going down. *(Points out daughter who is walking past)*

KOD *Hmm.*

MC So that's how they knew I was pregnant...

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Sound of dogs barking intermittently]

MC ...and followed me all the way to Liverpool...this...but not social services, Catholic social services. *(Points to grandson walking past)* That's me grandson, that's one of them. And the...what you call it...he...he sent...I can't remember his name now but he was a canon, and he sent...one of his...you know the people that he sends out to look for the...thought he was getting *another baby*. My s...younger daughter's father, Morgan [pseudonym], turned around and said, 'there's no babies in this house'. *(Laughs)* Sh...he...s[aid], 'that's my child'. And when Monica was born he went into the hospital with his uncle, come in, and he said...I said, '[I] gave her a name,' and he said, 'that's not the name,' he said, 'that's not the name *no, no,*' he said, 'her name is Monica'. And then I had Leah and he said, 'her name is Leah'. And everything...we didn't need for nothing, we didn't have social services round the door, nothing like that. The only time...thing we had round the door was I had to go to the health...you know, to get like...the inoculations...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...like you do that, everything and they were all...they were made up and everything. And not...I never ever mentioned them children in Scotland, I never divulged that. I thought, 'no,' what am I bringing pressure on myself. I never mentioned the one in Ireland. I just said a child was adopted in Ireland...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I didn't mention Scotland. And they went all the way through school. I got praised, they said I was a very good mother in...all the way through my children's education. And they were...they went to school impeccably dressed. I...every...they...my children didn't have a school uniform, as in they did have a school uniform...my children had a school uniform for every day of the week for five days. Each of the two girls had *five* uniforms, so they'd have...every day they had it clean and that's how they went. And people used to...the...the headmaster of [location removed] they said they were impeccable, he couldn't believe it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And that...now if I had been a...*nuts* as *that thing* in Colmstown said, would I have been able to do all these things? No. And in the meantime in all the years, I took in two little boys. I had them for just under three years so the social services wouldn't get them and they went back to their mother's, they're now...one of them is a...a dad himself and...

KOD *So you took them inst...so instead of them being put up for adoption, you minded them?*

MC No, no, no, no they were...their Mum just was a bit wayward and...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I said, 'Caroline [pseudonym], I said, 'I'll...I'll look after them for you,' I said, 'I won't...I'll put them into school, dress them, put them in...move them from that school put them into the school right at the back of my house'. Not on this side, the other house. And they went to school there and I went over to the headmaster and...because she was wayward...and I collec...I claimed for them from social security. [Sound of unidentified third party entering the room] Claimed for them...social...social security paid...paid...paid me every week and [sound of third party leaving the room] and I gave Caroline back the...Brian and Simon [pseudonyms], she got back her children. Then there was an alcoholic in the street where I lived, when my children were younger. My youngest daughter said, 'there is a baby over there Mum, you'll have to help her'. I took the three children in, my friend took two, Alice [pseudonym] took two and she had them for a while and I had the younger...the little girl which...I had to bring a neighbour in and I had to get social services, because the reason I had to get social services involved there was the little child had a little skin tag...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...well that was what they called it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I sent the child to be medically examined before I would have her under my roof.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC 'Cause I didn't want the child of an alcoholic coming into my house. Maybe...you don't know, been messed at or something...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and then I'd get the blame.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So when they...when the child come back from the [location removed] Hospital, come back to my house, the social workers, they come back and I temp...I...they paid me temporary, we had her for two months. Now, it was a baby that if you put her like that or you'd do that or you do that (*demonstrates*) she'd stay in that position.

KOD *Wow.*

MC But she was coming for two [years] but everyone said she was only coming up for one. The mother didn't know when she was coming up for.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But the mother had another younger baby in the kitchen in a pram. I seen it, he was in that much piss, I didn't...and his back was all like funny, like as if he'd been in a swimming pool too

warm, she never got him back. He was a...there was like scribbled...one of the kids had put a scribble on the wall...there was all bin bags round and I ended up...he ended up going into foster [care]. But the girl was with me for two and a half, three months something like that, and the social services paid me. And because the little girl couldn't do nothing, absolutely nothing for herself, I thought...and the little boy, the older boy, the boy was about five, he...when you give him food...he was hiding food...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC And when social services went in there was a quarter of the cot – the little girl had been kept in a cot all the time – a quarter of the mattress was ate...I d...well I don't know if it was ate but there was only three quarters left, that's the state. Anyways now, that...that type of a person doesn't deserve their children. Anyways I didn't say nothing but for that two months, I got that little girl...I put her back on a bottle. I had her a week on a bottle or a week and a half on a bottle.

[Irrelevant background whispering removed]

KOD *So you put the little girl back on the bottle?*

MC I put her on the bottle, I put everything...everything, and when that two months...the...the...some fella come from London, some big...I don't know what he was, something to do with social work but high up, he come from London, and he asked me how did I get her...because by the time she come to my house she couldn't do nothing. You could...like a little ornament, you could do that with her.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Everybody thought it was funny. I didn't think it was funny...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I had her from...gone from that...from a little baby in arms to that she walked out the door, 'bye-bye,' potty trained, everything. And this man come from London and I said, 'well you

know something, I would never divulge how I did it,' I said, 'for the simple reason is you are the experts, you should know how to do it, fathom it out for yourself, sir'. I says, 'I have done my job, I got paid for it and that's it'. (*Dusts hands*) I didn't tell him, but in actual fact what I did was I just put her back to being a baby...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...let her be a baby for a week and a half, a week, two weeks, bottle the...like you know, like you do...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...change them...this...this...this...tell...get the cream and talk *kindly* to them...*coax* her and then I got an auld glass p...an auld gla...I didn't have a...a...'cause I had no...I had only my children, I didn't have grandchildren. I had an auld ornament...I had an auld piss pot as an ornament.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC You know them big dish...delph ones with a flower on the side of it and I got...I didn't...I just washed it out. Put it down and said, 'you'll have to sit on this,' but she was only a little light thing anyways. And, 'go to the potty there,' I had a thingy in there...

[Unidentified third party speaks in background]

MC ...what you call it, a plastic box with all powder and cream and all that business. And I said, 'you pet, you got your nappy now...this...this...this,' 'cause I put a nappy on her in case she weed. But then it come to the day then when she didn't need the nappy. So she could go all day and just overnight...when...even when she went... she had a nappy on for bed. That's all.

[Irrelevant conversation with third party removed]

MC So by the time she went she walked out the door. She...they...they took her they...to go to foster parents. They took her...they come and said they'd take her for a weekend and then

bring her back, which they did. They done that for about three...three or four times, took her for the weekend and then one day they just took her and that...that was it. Oh, they took her for a day out first, it was a day, and then it was the weekend a couple of times. And then it was final.

KOD *Wow.*

MC Because they said, 'she was attached to you and you might be attached to her'. I said, 'no, I would never get attached to another person's child'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I'd never ever do...never ever do what was done to me with my children.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I'd never...I could...if you had children I could look after them for 20 years and say, 'here, here's your mother there'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Never ever done...no, I don't believe in that at all.

KOD *Because you don't want to take the children away from the tie with their mother?*

MC Exactly. As bad and all as she was...to get treatment, which the woman did, she got treatment, she got all her children back. She just didn't get the disabled one that was in the pram.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC He was...I don't know, brain damaged or something. Not that...she hadn't done it but...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...the woman just needed help, she got the help.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She's a grandmother now. That same little g...that same little girl that I had, she's now a mother.

KOD *Wow.*

MC Hmm, she's g...she's got a little child, must be about three or four...about four now.

KOD *And what...what are you most proud of Mary?*

MC What?

KOD *What are you most proud of?*

MC I'm most proud that I had my two daughters here and I now have 11 grandchildren, which if I had stayed in Ireland I wouldn't.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And besides my children would have been classified... 'cause Ireland is very racist, my children would have been classified as *(pause)* they wouldn't have been...they wouldn't have been adopted, they would have been put in a home, reared up in homes. Abused and abused. I reared them myself.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Although I do say about Scotland, the...that Vivienne Morrissey [pseudonym] that had Imelda, they absolutely adored her.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They absolutely adored her. The woman's husband, he's dead now, he was a nurse. I don't know what she was, I don't know what Vivienne was. And I always remember going visiting and he took out...must have took out a dozen coats. But I...still, no matter how good they were, I wasn't happy. They still stole my child.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But it was better than someone that didn't like her, that done it for the money.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because there is a lot of them out there too that done it for the money.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because they said to me, social services said to me, 'would you like to foster, you're good...' I said, 'no'. I just done this...I don't even...didn't even want to temporary foster.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC This was a child, a neighbour's child...not on this street...in...years ago. This was a child that...my daughter brought this child in. Then my daughter, the same daughter brought in a neighbour, he was seventy-nine, and I had me mother already who was sick, my mother was bedridden. No, I'm telling a lie, my mother wasn't bedridden at that...me mother had had an accident and she broke her leg and I'd had her in the recliner 'cause she had...it was in plaster.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And my Leah...it was a bad wind, and this man had been knocked down because we seen all the police taking Samuel [pseudonym] a little Nigerian man, and seen the police and the ambulance coming and taking him...he'd been shopping, and in the bag they found a dozen packets of biscuits and six cans of Carnation milk...

KOD *Heh!*

MC ...you know, that condensed milk. That was, that was his...his...that was his shopping. And he lived on the third floor, but to...to get to it you had to go up five flights of stairs because they were like...say like, eight steps...a landing...another few steps, and he lived up there. So my daughter used to do the messages for him, and you'd always see him running round in his nightie, he had...in his nightgown...dressing gown and pyjamas...never used to get dressed. And one day the...the ambulance took him away and we never seen him again and my Leah said, 'Mum I'm going to the hospital to see Samuel'. So she went to the hospital to see Samuel and she come back and she went again to see him again the second time. And the third time she went to see him, she...when she walked in the doctors had a piece of paper like that (*demonstrates*) with a nurse and the doctor was asking...the nurse was saying to Samuel, '*sign this now*, you're getting a nice house, sign this'. And my daughter just walked in and said, 'excuse me, is this a psychiatric hospital or a geriatric ward or a psychiatric hospital?' [Location removed] Hospital. 'That's a blank piece of paper, you mean you're putting him in a home'. Well Samuel had a young person's mind but an old body...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...so...although he was seventy-nine...so my Leah said, 'alright,' (*coughs*) she never said she was taking him or nothing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...what she done was she got him...went out and got a wheelchair and said she was taking him down to the shop, the café. She didn't, she put him right in a taxi and took him to my house. I opened my front door and there's a man...I don't know whose clothes he had because the trousers fell at his legs...fell down off him. They...they...he had a blue shirt...and it was a good job the shirt was long...

KOD (*Laughs*)

MC ...ten times too big for him, and he was naked outs...that's all he had on him...just a pair of trousers and he didn't know where he was. It was a week, a week and a half before he had the senses to know that he was in *my* house. And it was two weeks for social services to come

knock on my door. Oh I let them in. I said, 'oh come in'. The wo...woman had a wizened face, she was about...she looked...she was about mid...my age now, but she looked about eighty. *Lines* everywhere, *oh* it was like tram lines, sh...she went...but the other woman that was with her was a lovely young woman, maybe in...about thirty-five, forty, lovely, you could talk to her. But *that thing*. So she went...I said, 'he's here now love,' I said, 'he's not going back to [hospital location removed],' I said, 'he...I'm keeping him here with me,' I said, 'he's my grandfather'. So she...

[Unidentified background noise]

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC ...this is not a word of a [lie]...I told social security and everything...

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC ...I said, 'he's my grandfather'. So she says, she said...and me daughter...my daughter...my daughter had a boyfriend from my home...well from [location removed], an...an Irish lad. He says, '*(whispers)* he's not your fucking grandfather'. I said, 'look, he's my grandfather if I say he is, my mother went out with him years ago'. 'So he's my grandfather in my eyes, I...I knew him as a child'. *(Whispers)* I hadn't!

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC So I said, 'he's staying'. So sh...she said, 'oh you will get fed up of him in about a month or two, you'll be fed up and you'll be calling us back'. I said, 'look love, *I don't like women*, now if it was you that was in the case, like him in his position do you think I'd take you? *No way*. I love men now fuck off – *out!*' And I came out with him, like that. And I said...he was sitting there and then...and he was coming back to himself and...he always knew Leah. And he was...he...they didn't expect that he'd live...that he...maybe...th...I think they thought...that the doctor thought that he'd only live maybe six months. Do you know how long he lived for? Seven years he was in my house.

[Sound of unidentified third parties speaking in background]

KOD *Wow.*

MC Even when he was on his deathbed, the ambulance man...squeeze your hand...the ambulance man said, 'we're going to take him up to the [hospital location removed] down the hospital'. They just leave them in the side room and they just die peacefully, they don't give them no...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I said, 'he doesn't want that, he won't want to be left out there like. He was...when he was born he t...we knew his life story...he was born in Nigeria and when he was...his mother died at birth...giving birth to him. So therefore he lost out from the beginning he's not going to lose out,' I said, 'now'. I said, 'Samuel squeeze the man's hand if you want to stay and if you want to go just pretend, don't ev...don...don't even squeeze no hand'. Anyway the...the ambulance man was a proper little scouser, he was laughing. (*Whispered*) *Samuel squeezed his hand.* Because he was a...a...he was a war veteran. He'd already been in the Second World War, he deserved more than that. And they left him and he died, and that...that was in the morning, about ten o'clock and all day long he lingered on, he died that night. And when he died...when he gave his last breath my daughter said...there was two beds in the room 'cause we had a bed in case he took sick. My...my Leah said, 'I'll stay with Samuel and watch him all night Mum'. So, when he was giving his last [breath], I had...I had Edward [pseudonym], 'cause I kept wet...wetting his mouth all day...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...and I had...Edward was only...let me see, June, July...Eddie was only five months, five and a half months old. (*Whispered*) *Well as that man gave his last gasp, the screams out of Eddie. The child took a...a fit of screaming, fit of terror, whatever it was.* Two nurses come, they were waiting on that call, my Leah said, 'the nurses said they're waiting, 'cause he will go'. Oh...and anyways when the nurses did arrive to check him over and that, in the meantime, I...oh...the nurse...the child wouldn't...was inconsolable, so the nurse said, 'did you open the...any windows or doors?' I said, 'no'. 'Oh no,' she said, 'the children...babies are not supposed to be up, they can see things,' or something.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Is that true?

KOD *I don't know.*

MC They said...they say you're supposed to open a window straight [away]. Well anyway, there was no mess.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And the man had been bedridden for nearly four years. Completely bedridden but what I didn't tell them was...that me and him...I used to climb, (*whispered*) *that's why I had a bad back, and bad hips, and I used to hike me skirt into me knickers like that and climb up on the bed...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *...and I used to put me hands behind his back and I'd lift him up and I'd have him propped up. And then I got a slip sheet...*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *...and then I could slide him up. I nearly slid him out over the head of the bed! (Laughs)*

KOD (*Laughs*)

MC And I used to take him out and...three or four times a day sometimes, if...if he was in a good mood and I...I was up to it, we'd take him out maybe six times a day. We'd have him stand up, looking out the front window. [Unidentified third party speaking in background] Wheel him in, in the chair and have him standing up...really to take the pressure [off]. He never had...his own doctor phoned me up to say thank you. [Inaudible 24:45] Not one bedsore on the man. Neither had my mother.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And she was bedridden. And I...when my mother died in the January, he died in the November and Eddie was born in the June. Eddie was a prem [premature] baby. So I had a prem baby on my hands and I had a geriatric.

KOD *Wow.*

MC A big baby...

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC ...because he had to have a catheter for to wee.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC He was doubly incontinent. So I had all that, I had nappies, I was...oh the washing machine was on all day. But they were happy...they were the happiest times...they were the times, happy times. And...then he...but the same night that...the...the same day that Samuel was dying all day, my Leah decided to...she had this thing about...you know that stuff you put on children's hair if they got dirty heads?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She didn't have a dirty head. She took it in her head...a notion in her head to put this smelly stuff on her head...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and she put that smelly stuff on her head while the man was dying and she put a towel over it, and she said, 'well I'd like to be careful in case there was anything, I wouldn't like to be thinking,' 'cause she had long, beautiful long hair.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC Anyways I didn't notice about the smell of the stuff all day while the man was dying...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...but as soon as...she went...when the man died and the nurses come, she relaxed then. She...unbeknownst to me...what I didn't notice was, she took the towel off her head and left it sitting on the other bed. So when the undertakers come to remove the body...'cause that would be...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...five to twelve they'd come, she...she'd dozed off in the living room and she had...half asleep, now, the dirty towel with that smelly stuff...I hadn't noticed the smell all day...was on the bed. The body went...when the body was gone, I woke her up. I said, 'this is...this bed (*sniffs*) what's that smell? *Oh,*' I said, '*a horrible smell, oh the smell of death!*'

KOD (*Laughs*).

MC Now...well...you know...cause the body...I realise now...he's gone, the smell of death wa...it wasn't off him, it was off...you know the two men that come to take him?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC 'Oh,' I said, 'the dirty things,' I said, '*the stink*'. She said, 'what's the matter?' I was nearly hysterical. 'Leah wake up, wake up,' [inaudible 26:55] I said, 'you'd better get up,' I said, 'smell it, *smell it!* It's back...I opened the back door and everything...everything off the bed, oh *everything*. I *stripped* the whole room in five minutes. And it wasn't until I picked [up] the towel. I said, 'what?' Leah said, 'oh that's me,' she said, 'my head'. I said, 'I thought it was the smell of death off that...them two men. She said, 'what two men?' I said, 'the body is gone,' I said, 'didn't you notice the body gone?' She said, 'why didn't you wake me up when the body was going?' I said, 'I didn't...you were exhausted,' I said...we'd been...she'd been there since...all...since morning from...since he's...well since half-past-nine, and then by the time that he...he...he...I tried to feed him you see, I used have to spoon feed him and I used have to make the food like...like ice-cream.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I used to put it in the blender, like baby food...first baby food, that's what I used to do. And that's what they used to do in Castlepollard, that's what...what...in Castlepollard...they didn't used to blend it. They used to...my daughter was off...well all babies was, at six weeks old. Say your baby was born on the first of...say...say the tenth or whatever date, well when it's six weeks...goes by, by that date, your baby is taken off the bottle. And you get...you're given a plastic beaker like that sh...like the shape...exactly the shape of that... (*demonstrates*)

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...but it's plastic and it's that auld dirty plastic...thick auld...and you have to squeeze it so that it gets a lip like a jug.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And pour the stuff into the child. And then in the other one you'd have milk. *Pasteurised* cow's milk and...six weeks old, no bottles. (*Dusts hands*) My daughter didn't know what a bottle was...we...we left there and the Dohertys made a bottle...went to send for a bottle. I said, 'she doesn't have a bottle'. 'What do you mean?' I said, 'she hasn't had a bottle since she was six weeks old'. Couldn't believe it. But she didn't even know how to suck and that's what Castlepollard...that's the...that's the worst nightmare between that and that...between the...the babies that was force fed...and well, fed up for fattening for market...that's why I call Castlepollard and all them Mother and Baby Homes 'the baby farms of Ireland'...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...because they fatten the children up quickly and if a baby vomited while it was being force fed in Castlepollard while it was being...it wasn't a tube...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...it was just like the thing...if the baby vomited and you went a bit nervous, well they'd just get another mother to do it for her. And they...and they say a lot of babies died...a lot of them babies were choked to death, truth be known.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC A lot of them babies were choked to death. There was a baby in there and had its spine...its...a Spina Bifida baby...its guts were outside...its insides are outside or something. Do you know that that baby didn't go to a hospital. They had that baby th...in there for about...oh must have been three or four...maybe a month, maybe even two months old and then it died. They didn't get it outside help. I still say that child would have survived if it had been born today in a normal hospital.

KOD *So do you go back much to Ireland Mary? What do you think of the country?*

MC I love Ireland, I love it, it's my country (*pause*) I wouldn't live in it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I'll never live in it.

KOD *And why do you love it or what do you love about it?*

MC It's the place of my birth, just the place of my birth, for no other reason. It's not the country.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC It's not the island of Ireland. It's not the island, it's a beautiful isle, a beautiful island but it's the...the...it's the treatment I got. The way I was treated, treated like a piece of garbage.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And these nuns, they're not my sisters. The priests are not my fathers. And the Reverend Mothers are not my mother.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They're infertiles...they...they choose to go that ways...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...they choose to be in there. I got a cousin a priest and all that business. I don't bother with them. I seen...I seen...while the people were starving in their houses in Ireland years ago, I seen what's in the parlours...what was in the parlours and it was my wish that I would outlive...the convent be closed down before I ever go beneath the sod.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And I got the best news a few years ago that the convent...because I used to always say...'how many is left now? What age are yez? Who's the youngest now?' 'The youngest is fifty'. 'Oh,' I says, 'getting there, getting there'. The [location removed] is closed down. I don't know what it is now but it's not a convent.

KOD *Is this the Mercy convent that you're talking about?*

MC Yeah, yeah, yeah so there's no one joining that. No one in their right mind would. And I found out that Mother Teresa's Missionaries of Charity...*oh* they're very bullish in that place over there, they're only...it's only a stone's throw from here...but they were going round people's houses and getting the kids, so I...I just started to go a bit, watching with my Monica and Leah, where they were taking the kids for prayers and all this palaver. [Unidentified third parties speaking in background] I started going...I seen them, the way they talk to the homeless and the way they talk to the...but the homeless are so...so sub...sub...you know, obedient to them and, '*oh Sister this,*' and, '*Sister that*'. Half of them, Mother Teresa's nuns have been married, they're widows, widows, nuns...widows that's had children and they're nuns and they're supposed to be all virgins. 'Oh,' I said, 'not one of them, go away'. So they come to my house when I lived in the other house and he's a witness, and I didn't answer the door, I was upstairs and I looked out the top window, I lived in a big Georgian house. Banging – *Mary!* – screaming in me letterbox! We was told if you don't get an answer walk away.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So I waited and I went back down about two hours later, I waited, and they were just coming again, I opened the door and I said, 'I don't belong to your faith, now *don't ever* come near my door. You *never, ever, ever* knock, and *don't* shout through a letterbox, wherever you come from Sister,' I said, 'don't you...don't you understand?'

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC There was even a woman...there was even one of them there from Galway. She was one of them, Mother Teresa's nuns. I caught her looking [licking] at her lips in the...in the saucepan, the lips... (*demonstrates*)

KOD *Heh!*

MC ...she said...oh this is it...she says, 'oh, Mary what can you do?' I said, 'well you know what,' I said, 'you joined,' I said, 'and that's it. I wouldn't throw me life away to that for nobody'. Jilted I think, some of them's...half of them is jilted, sure who'd have them? Sh...barking like dogs at the people. But when there's...you know when there's outside visitors, they are very nice to you in front of the outside visitors.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC You know, because they're getting a big donation in. I seen money handed in there to that place. I decided...well now I didn't feel a bit well, I felt a bit depressed, 'well,' I said, 'I'm going down, I'll stay with them one night'. 'Oh yes,' she said, 'you can,' where my children used to go. I went down, locked meself...well the place was locked up but because it was...you couldn't get out, I took a pain in me head, took a migraine, all night long there was a bulb, a baldy bulb in the room. All the auld women, plastic sheets and nylon sheets, I was slipping this way, slipping that way, you were frightened to move, you'd slide out of the bed that ways. A little la...it was like a plank, like a bunk bed you know the old-fashioned ones, a four-foot bed, anyways...two-foot-six sorry, not a three-foot bed, a two-foot-six. If you turned that ways you were gone out this ways, and it was bri-nylon that had been donated...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC I tho[ught], *oh...thing...anyways* the one bulb in it, and not even a headache tablet all night, so you could imagine. And you could bang and bang and bang. *Ah*, I couldn't, never again. And then anyways next day me daughter said, 'did you have enough of that place?' I said, 'I'll tell you what,' I said, 'I need a migraine tablet,' right from there to the chemist. I said, 'take me to the chemist,' I said, 'I'd never be so nosy as to go into a place like that again'. 'Cause I was going to do the same thing...I only went in to see what it was like, but when I found out...realised I was locked in, to me I was locked in another place. I said, 'I was going to do the same thing above in [location removed] Hospital,' I said, 'hide under one of the hospital beds to see are they ill-treating the elderly'...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'cause me mother had a big bruise across her forehead. And she...you know how people with dementia or...that they've got like...when they forget things...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...that much tablets down them. She said that of a night time she tried to pull the cord, he'd take it and throw it behind the bed and that she'd fell on the bed. I believe that that happened.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC I believe my mother [more] than I believe them, 'cause I said...they said, 'well she wasn't well and she wouldn't...' I said, 'no, but she had lucid moments, she had, you know...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...pockets...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and that's where people has to listen'. All professionals are supposed to listen when they have the gap in that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC You know what I mean?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I have no time for the...for the Catholic church I always go...I was in the [location removed] Hospital I was going for a major operation and a priest come along and you're all getting, 'are you Catholic, Catholic?' Blah blah...this...this...the nurses...[the] priest's coming along, got the little thing [communion receptacle] and he's giving them all out and he comes to my bed and he said, 'are you married?' I said, 'yes, I was married in [inaudible 35:54] but not for you'. 'No communion for you'. I said, 'look I see the lay of you, no communion for me'. So with that the...this woman in the bed said, 'my minister is due'. The minister, a black man with glasses on, I don't know what church, I think they were Baptists, I don't know what they were. He come in as your man is talking to the woman and the man said, 'come over here,' I went over, closed the curtain and gave me a little glass of wine a little glass of...something...there was something else and he blessed me. I was going for a major operation the next day and I *actually* nearly died with the operation. Anyways I never bothered with them since. And then my sister-in-law wanted to...to...she's dead now, she went to Fr Luke Scully [pseudonyms] one time, she was sh...short of money she had a baby and Fr Luke Scully, he's the main doc...the main priest for the [identifying information removed] hospital in Liverpool and he started coming out with all sorts of preaching this and preaching that, and in the middle of it all he came out with, 'fallen women,' and you know, 'fallen...' and I said, 'hey Fr Scully,' I said, 'Fr Luke Scully, *I never fell from fucking anywhere,*' I said, 'but I'll tell you what,' I said, 'you've got a big, big fucking mouth on you,' I said, 'that word fallen woman is not even in the dictionary, in the English dictionary'.

[Sound of television or radio in background]

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And with that we got off and we left and he gave Shirley [pseudonym] five, five pound, he gave her and she said, 'oh I'll give it back,' this was on a Friday, he said...she says, 'I'll give it back, I get my money on the Monday,' and come the Monday, he said, 'oh no,' he said, 'oh it doesn't matter,' he said, 'I'm giving it to you,' he said, 'out of my own pocket, I'm giving it to you'. I think he's [identifying information removed] I don't know what he is, but I'll tell you what, he...he knows what I am and who I am. So when it come...that was in the February...March...that was in the March, the end of March or beginning of April. So come...the five pounds was business gone...he told her don't take it...don't...don't bring it back, so obviously she didn't. So my father was alive at the time and my mother, they lived up there when I did, and come Christmas time, you know pensioner...they have pensioners' parties, so they were up in [location of church removed] was having a pensioners party, so my mother said to me, 'Mary would you take me up to the pensioners party?' I said, 'I will not take you up to no pensioners' party, I don't want to go see that thing that's running that place,' I said, 'I'll tell you, I'll get our Shirley'.

KOD *Heh!*

MC So I got our Donal's ex, right – she's dead now the Lord have mercy on her – and I got Shirley to take me mother up and she done it, she took me mother in, and me mother's sitting here...'cause I had to...I went up after to collect her...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...with Shirley, I d...and I peeped in, and there was the table there and there behind it was the big bar in the club, you know the Catholic club thing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and me mother...they didn't offer Shirley a cup of tea or nothing, even a mineral which is all wrong...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...'cause whoever takes them should have got something as well, watching them tucking into all sorts. So my mother turned around to Shirley and says, 'here's a pound Shirley, go up and get yourself a little glass of lager,' not thinking anything of it.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC So next thing...she's getting a glass of lager and that Fr Luke Scully was down at the corner of the...the bar, come up to her and said, 'oh,' he said, 'I see you can afford a glass of lager but you couldn't afford a tin of milk'. So my mother said she felt mortified, but it was me mother gave her the pound. So anyways that was in an evening time, the next morning I went over visiting my mother and I...all I seen was me father coming out of the hall and when me mother went to open her mouth to tell me something, me Dad was, '*Christine [pseudonym] I begged you, I begged you not to tell her*'. I said, 'what was she not to tell me now, forget the begging we don't beg, just tell me what is it?' So my mother said, 'last night blah, blah I went and gave Shirley a pound, Fr Luke Scully slides down the counter he said, "you and Mary Creighton",' meaning me. Now had he not mentioned my name and left it, but when me mother said, 'your name...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...so what did you do up there when he's mentioning your name and she could afford a pound for a glass of lager?' Well I...I said, 'I might as well tell you, she went up with an excuse, I don't know what she wanted the five pound for but anyways she went into Fr Scully and she got the five pound and she was giving it back to him on the Monday but he said, "no doesn't...bother...charity," then he started talking about fallen women and I got after him over it'. So I said, 'that's what's up with him'. So the...what do you call it...me mother told me that he'd mentioned my name to Shirley...the...at the party and I said, 'did he now?' So I went like that (*demonstrates*) in my jeans pocket and I had the most crumpled up five pound note...

KOD *Heh!*

MC ...I've yet seen on this planet, it was like that (*demonstrates*) and I got it, it was all like...it was like tissue paper and I ran up the road to [location removed] actually ran (*coughs*) actually ran, banged on the door. There was no answer, and then I kept rattling again, next thing an old

woman came out she said...I said, 'who are you, is Fr Luke Scully in here please?' She said, 'no,' she said, 'he's away, he's at his mother's'. I said, 'oh he *would be* at this mother's, he loves his mother doesn't he? He's always talking about her even at funerals. Someone dies he's always patronising his own mother, it always comes up, his mother'. So next thing anyway she said...I said, '*can I take a message?*' I said, 'no, better still, I'll leave a message,' so she said...I said, 'have you got a pen and paper?' She went, '*oh no*'. I said, 'see this, I'll have this,' and I took a letter off the side, ripped the envelope, right, ripped the envelope, I said, 'there's your letter...his letter...whose letter it is...there it is, get a pen there'. (*Smacks lips*) I said, 'Lu...Fr Luke Scully,' now this is the truth, what I wrote to him...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...'Fr Luke Scully,' I said, 'Shirley...Shirley come up,' I said, 'and asked you for the lend of five pound, she ask...only borrowed it to give it back to you on Monday, you refused, all you went on about was fallen women. I told you that I was no fallen women, that there was no such word,' I said, 'so there's your five pound and make sure you do not preach my name from the pulpit again,' I said, 'because,' I said, 'obviously it wasn't the pulpit,' I said, 'it was at the party...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...last night'. Blah, blah, blah. And gave the five pound and I said (*dusts hands*), 'now give that to Fr L...' I signed my name on, 'give that to Fr Luke Scully because my sister-in-law borrowed that five pound off *that prick*,' I said, 'and I'm going to get him'. So that was then, few years went by, I never seen him. My friend – she's also dead, Tracy [pseudonym] used to come to us – she took...she had a tumour and she had a baby in the...she had a little boy James [pseudonym], in the [identifying information removed] hospital and we're outside having a ciggy and a cup of tea and he comes along now because he's got the job, the [identifying information removed] hospital, he's got the job, he's the senior...the only priest going round [identifying information removed] and you tell me there's none of them fallen women in there, there's loads of unmarried mothers. This is Liverpool, nobody gets married.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So he's going round anyways but he didn't see me 'till he come round and he said, 'oh hello,' 'cause he'd met Tracy, Tracy said, 'look who's coming'. I said, 'how do you know him, does he know you?' She said, 'yeah he's coming round the bed'. I said, 'it's a pity it wasn't me that was lying in that fucking bed he'd never, never go near another bed'. So he come round and he spotted th...s...and, 'oh hello Tracy,' and he looked at me and he said, 'oh hello Miss Creighton,' I said, 'hey, don't even bother, don't even...' – my daughter was with me – I said, 'don't even bother,' – Monica was going, 'Mum, shh!' – I said, 'no, you've got no cause to talk to me for what happened. Did you get your five pound by the way?' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'I did Mary,' he said, 'and I got the letter to go with it, very...' he said a very funny word, like 'innovative' word or something, innovative, the way I...I got the thing and scribbled on the thingy anyways.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC And he tried to pass it over as joke. Then he went in his wallet like this (*demonstrates*) in his pocket, and he went, 'I'd like to take an appointment with you Mary,' he said, 'for two or thr...side...set aside an appointment time for two or three hours, to see what the Catholic church has done to you'. And that was 20 years ago.

KOD *And did you ever meet him?*

MC No, he's still sitting up there. Oh I...I went to get me passport signed...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I said...just in...quick in and out. And then the next time I'd need...need me passport signed I went to a teacher, I wouldn't go back near him.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said...I...I had to go to get me passport signed for me mother's funeral. And then I didn't go my mother's funeral.

KOD *She died in America?*

MC No she died here...

KOD *Yeah.*

MC ...she died in Liverpool...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I sent her home, I didn't go to it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Didn't take her home. I thought, 'let all the siblings go,' which they all did. Because that was their plan, they thought that, 'oh well the mother is gone now, we'll all be together'. Although they're not talking to me but [inaudible 44:35].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They...they couldn't say nothing to me, I'd knock the shit out...seven bells out of the lot of them. But they're all like reserved, they don't like no one to know their business...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and you know people like that, well you catch them because you talk louder than them, and you talk and you say, *(raises voice) 'it's like this now, so I had a child out of wedlock but it doesn't mean to say that you wasn't shagging up the alley does it? Just I'm the lucky one, nice girls has babies, sluts don't have babies before wedlock'.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Right? So that was it, I don't...I don't...don't bother...I didn't...I didn't go to me mother's funeral. Me brother come from America but then I went to America when my father...when my brother died, my eldest brother died. Eight years ago, I went to America to...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...see him off. And none of the rest of them...considering that they were all well to do and well with money and all that now, but it took...it took...him...went down...but he had a little job and he broke into the...what do you call...the gambling machines...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...straw...the gambling machines and got me dau...phoned me daughter up because it was that heavy...to go cash them in the bank, and he cashed all the money into get me ti...me ticket to go to me brother's funeral.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And then he went and got...friends gave back the money.

KOD *Uh huh. So he broke into gambling machines to get the money and then borrowed from friends to pay back the...?*

MC No, it was paid back again...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...paid back, because the person that owned the gambling machines...a...absol...was...the person that owned the gambling machines was actually gone to a funeral that morning...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...that the news...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...had he been there I would have had the money for me brother's funeral...

KOD *Right.*

MC ...instead of having to go robbing.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But it was paid back.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC It was all paid back.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC It was all above board.

KOD *Yeah, yeah.*

MC Heh! But when you think...that's how...that's how I got to my brother's funeral, I w...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...Hell...nothing was going to stop me not going to it.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC And...now when I went to...me daughter come with me and you know when you go to a funeral...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...you're supposed to stay three days or something like that.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC She'd come back, I stayed f...I...I was 92, *(laughs)* 92 days in America!

KOD *(Laughs)*

MC I went down from New York and I...I stayed for a few weeks in New York with the Dad's sister that I don't like...the aunt one, [identifying information removed] 'cause I...I had to get them two together...

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Identifying information removed]

KOD *So we're going to finish up now soon Mary. Is there any kind of...final things that you'd like to say?*

MC No, will all that now, what I said, will that be in the...?

KOD *Yeah, yeah unless you want to take it out.*

MC No.

KOD *I suppose the...the only kind of questions that I'd have remaining would be you know, in terms of having your...kind of...long-term relationships. Do you think that your time in...in Castlepollard, in the Magdalene hmm affected your relationships?*

MC Yeah, oh definitely, definitely.

KOD *How?*

MC I never wanted to be with white men.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I thought it was a curse. After that I...I just bothered with...not black men...obviously not *black* but, I've nothing against black people 'cause I had...I had Samuel for seven years...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and no one could have been as nice a person as him. But he was just our neighbour.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But as in a relationship for myself no never, never ever have a relationship on land.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC You know what I mean?

KOD *What do you mean?*

MC Never ever could settle for a long-term...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...on land.

KOD *Uh huh. Yeah, so you prefer your partners coming and going, is it?*

MC I...well I don't have...I don't really have partners. He's my friend [referring to third party who entered the room earlier]. He's waiting to get a...get a flat...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and he takes his medication, he comes down.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC He's waiting to get rehoused. No, I just wanted pe...I wasn't interested in people, I never bothered...I never trusted white men.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Never ever trusted white men after that, and I...any time I got pregnant...like my two girls...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...Leah's Dad dropped dead in Liverpool here. He was [identifying information removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Monica's Dad was a [identifying information removed]. She's never known her Dad.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Leah does...had never met her Dad 'cause he died when she was a baby obviously, but I...I have a s...I also had...the youngest one, Leah, Leah's father, I also had...he also has children in [location removed].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC All in [location removed]. I was told to say that Monica [was a] full [sibling to Leah] so now me step-son, he's got children, grandchildren. They all know my two girls...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...have been the one father.

KOD *Right.*

MC So as far as anyone is concerned even down to...it doesn't matter who they are...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...they are, because only I know who they are.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Although there might be a slight...one is lighter and the other one's darker it doesn't make a difference.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC One could have took after him and one could took after me.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC Because they've both got children, this is where the strange thing is, they've both got children that look alike.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because my daughter, the one that...the littlest one, she's got four children to Adam [pseudonym].

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Adam has a half-brother (*pause*) to Leah...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...two...two...he is the father of two of Leah's...Adam's half-brother.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But Adam's half-brother is also...his mother and father...see, Adam's Dad...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...was married to one woman, divorced and then she married...he married Adam's Mum.  
So...the first son, the older son's gone off...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...with his Mum.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And then my Monica, my daughter meets him and then she meets...a few years down the line she has a little thing and she has two children with him.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Didn't work out, whatever, but Adam's...he...I didn't...couldn't take to him, too cheeky anyways, too much problems with him. But Adam's family, me other daughter's family, beautiful family.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC To me, they've been very good to me, and [they've] been there for me daughter, not only me daughter, but me as well and for Leah.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And so them children are cousins.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC But they're cousins' cousins.

KOD *Right.*

MC Two sisters' descendants but all descended from the one man...

KOD *Uh huh, uh huh.*

MC ...and he died. He was a lovely man. He died...he's been dead now...2007 he died.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Now, he was born in 1917. [Identifying information removed]

KOD *Wow.*

MC He died [Identifying information removed]. He died...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...ninety...on his ninetieth birthday.

KOD *Nice.*

MC He was a very nice man, Julian [pseudonym]. And his p...his people was from...you know the McHugh's [nature of Irish family business removed]?

KOD *Hmm.*

MC They were McHugh's [nature of Irish family business removed] in Ireland...from Ireland.

KOD *Hmm.*

MC The McHugh's [nature of Irish family business removed]. His mother was one of the McHughs, she married a black man, Patricia [pseudonym], and that's the result, my grandchildren are belonging to the McHugh's [nature of Irish family business removed] from Ireland.

[Sound of dogs barking in background]

KOD *Huh! So they've got Irish and African blood on both sides?*

MC The McHughs...the...you know the...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...they disowned them...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...according to them they haven't got any black.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC But in reality they have got...these...these...my...my...the fella you seen here [interviewee's grandson] out...the tall fella...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...he's one. His grandf...his grandfather is McHugh...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...well, not grandfather, great-grandfather is McHugh...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...or great-great grandfather was McHugh. It's like...it's like my friend, Dr Ruth [who gave her the computer], she's...she's a Bennett [pseudonym] her mother is a Bennett [name of well-known person removed] they're all related.

KOD *Oh right.*

MC Yeah, isn't that funny? And my mother's, my mother's cousin...you know the astronaut [name removed]?

KOD *Yeah.*

MC He's my mother's first cousin...yeah, my mother's first cousin yeah.

KOD *Wow.*

MC The astronaut.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC [Identifying information removed]

KOD *And do you think that your...your time in...in the laundry and in...kind of...Castlepollard has affected your children?*

MC It hasn't affected Leah, 'cause Leah...it hasn't affected the youngest one, 'cause she turned round and said, 'it wouldn't be me...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...I'd just burn the fucking place down...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...simple as that...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...burn it and burn whatever is in it'. I said, 'what about the ch[apel]?' She said, 'the chapel, the whole lot, make sure the whole lot goes in one go, surround it and just...that's it, just let it go'.

The...the other one, it's affected her bad. But because...that's only because of the birthday business and the Christmas business.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Sh...she's going to see a counsellor now or whatever you call...I...I said, 'don't be even going to them places,' I said, 'just let it out of your head'. I wouldn't go sit down and tell them. Not like talking to you now, this is a different thing...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...but I wouldn't go in and talk to no doctor and tell them that...my...my doctor only found out that I was in the Magdalenes about four or five months ago...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...about...about...must be 10 months ago now. Only because I said...I...because I was...I started getting panic attacks bad.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Thinking it's all...it...it was like as if it was all fresh in me head. It wasn't fresh, but it was fresh because now it was out, everyone was at it.

KOD *Okay it's on the internet is it...*

MC Oh yeah...

KOD *...it's in the news?*

MC ...I didn't put it there you see...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...someone else was at it. So now *everything* is going to come out.

KOD *Uh huh, uh huh.*

MC Although that I've wanted it out but I didn't...I didn't want...do you understand what I mean? But then when I thought...I thought, 'no, let it out...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...it has to come out and that's it'.

KOD *So it was...did it feel like a trauma when it was in the news, did it f...did it bring up bad memories or...is that what you're saying?*

MC Yeah, yeah everything...it's brought...I mean...I said...they said...looking for an apology off the chu...the nuns and all that, personally I don't want an apology from the nuns, because a forced apology is no apology.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And that's what it is if you keep going on saying, 'I want an apology, I want an apology'. What is that? That's putting them into a corner. I don't want their apology.

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Unidentified background noise]

MC [Inaudible 55:45] their apology, I don't want it.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC They can all just disappear off the face of the earth and it wouldn't bother me. You know like what...what Hitler done to the Jews...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...well if there was someone come along like Hitler and said, 'right we want all you purged and all these nuns and done a purge like they done for the witches'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *I'd stand back and let that happen.*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *I would actually stand back and let it happen.* That's how I feel for them.

KOD *Uh huh.*

[Unidentified background noise]

MC They are not my mothers. They are not my sisters and...whatever.

KOD *And do you think that they could...that...what kind of redress would you like? What kind of justice would you like to see, or do you think it's even possible?*

MC Well they never paid us for working in the laundry.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC So they have to give us monetary...they'll have to pay us for our suffering.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Because what they done to us was inhumane. I have six...well I've...you've seen my dogs. I wouldn't do to an animal what was done to me. They were only one step down from the Nazis. The Nazis exterminated. They kept us alive to get the work done...out of us and fed us as little and as cheap a food...nothing was from outside, everything was from the farm, down...I think

even down to the...the beef or whatever it was. And their shepherd's pie, what they'd do today, it was all the leftovers.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC You know, shepherd's pie...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...it was yesterday's or the day before meat. You'd know by the taste it was not proper sh...I...I would not in my life eat sh...the name, shepherd's pie, and manys the time I've been hungry and someone said, 'would you like...' 'what have you?' 'oh, shepherd's pie'. 'Oh no, I'll have a few chips or whatever'. Leave shepherd's pie off the menu.

KOD *Uh huh, uh huh.*

MC Because that's what we were...that's...that shepherd's pie and soup.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC No flavour...nothing...and...and that frog's eye spots...frogs...frog spawn...

KOD *Tapioca?*

MC *Tapioca, oh, oh, I hated that! I hate that!*

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC *Ooh!* You...you know when you were hungry you'd have to eat it...go down your neck, it'd be coming back, it'd go down your neck, *oh*, can't...still don't like it.

KOD *And so I was asking you kind of...you know, what was your happiest time, you told me that, and kind of...what you were most proud of...*

MC I'm...I'm proud that I got out and that I got on in life. And I've reared my children, two of them here. I would have reared the rest but it wasn't to be and I helped rear my grandchildren.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And...and I s...I helped Brian and Simon, and I helped the little girl Marianne [pseudonym],<sup>10</sup> that was her name Marianne, the little girl that I had...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...for two-and-a-half, three months. And she's now a Mum herself. And the happiest time...the really, really happiest time was satisfaction getting on the...getting out for the weekend from the Friday being told to come back on the Mon...on the Sunday night and to know you were hitting Liverpool and saying (*claps hands*) *bye bye!*

KOD (*Laughs*)

MC And Dr O'Flynn, do...only sleep with one eye open<sup>11</sup> (*laughs*) with one eye closed...sleep with one eye...but fancy that, a gynaecologist...

KOD *Hmm.*

MC ...I mean a psychiatrist, acting...wanting to do...what was he up to? You...you're a clever person what would you think?

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC I said, 'have you got a wife? Are you going to tackle with your wife all night?' I said that to him, I came out with...that's why he locked me away.

KOD *Uh huh.*

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<sup>10</sup> See pages 91-95

<sup>11</sup> See page 12

MC But I think...I do believe that he is...that he was and still is a danger to women...

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC ...and I've always said that. But eventually all this is going to come out with the...with the mental hospitals.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC And that's going to be another interview with other people.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC Because I think they're...they're starting to look into it already

KOD *And...so just finally do you have anything else you'd like to say?*

MC No, that's it now. Just as long as they hurry up and give us what's due to us.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Give us what's due to us. We're not getting any...we're not getting any younger and there's a few people already dead since February [in 2013 when the State apology was made].

KOD *Yeah.*

MC How many more have got to go?

KOD *Hmm.*

MC Are they doing that just to hang on and hang on? Because An Taoiseach said...he apologised. I do believe that he meant it. I believe...genuinely believe Enda Kenny meant when he said, 'I'm sorry, I'm sorry for the nation'.

KOD *Uh huh.*

MC Said...he gave the proper...with pride. I don't think that...although I did...I have passed a joke and that, onion tears. Oh no that was from George Os...what's his name...that was from...

KOD *Bertie (Ahern)?*

MC ...no, that was from London. One of them down there was crying for Maggie Thatcher...onion eyes.

KOD *Heh, heh!*

MC George Osborne, onion eyes I nicknamed him. You know when it was Maggie Thatcher's funeral, do you know what I did with my friend? We got on our scooters, we dressed up, I had the brightest coat...the brightest coat you could see from here to across the road, and she got a little table, a little fold-up table...best china in the basket, buns, cream cakes...went outside St George's Hall, sat down, took them out, we were having tea and coffee and cream cakes.

KOD *Celebrating.*

MC And next thing there were cameras coming from all over, I don't know...there was zoom lenses, they were that length, they were in me face. And they were...said, 'hold your cup like this now,' [inaudible 01:01:05] photographs then came up. 'Twas me and my friend was sitting in them things... *(Whispers) Sorry!*

KOD *Mary, thanks a million. That was really, really wonderful.*

MC That was how we spent Maggie Thatcher's day...made up too that she was gone.

KOD *Yeah.*

MC This is Liverpool they wouldn't be bothered with her, dirty thing she was dirty.

KOD *Thanks Mary.*

[Interview ends]

[Audio File 2 Ends]