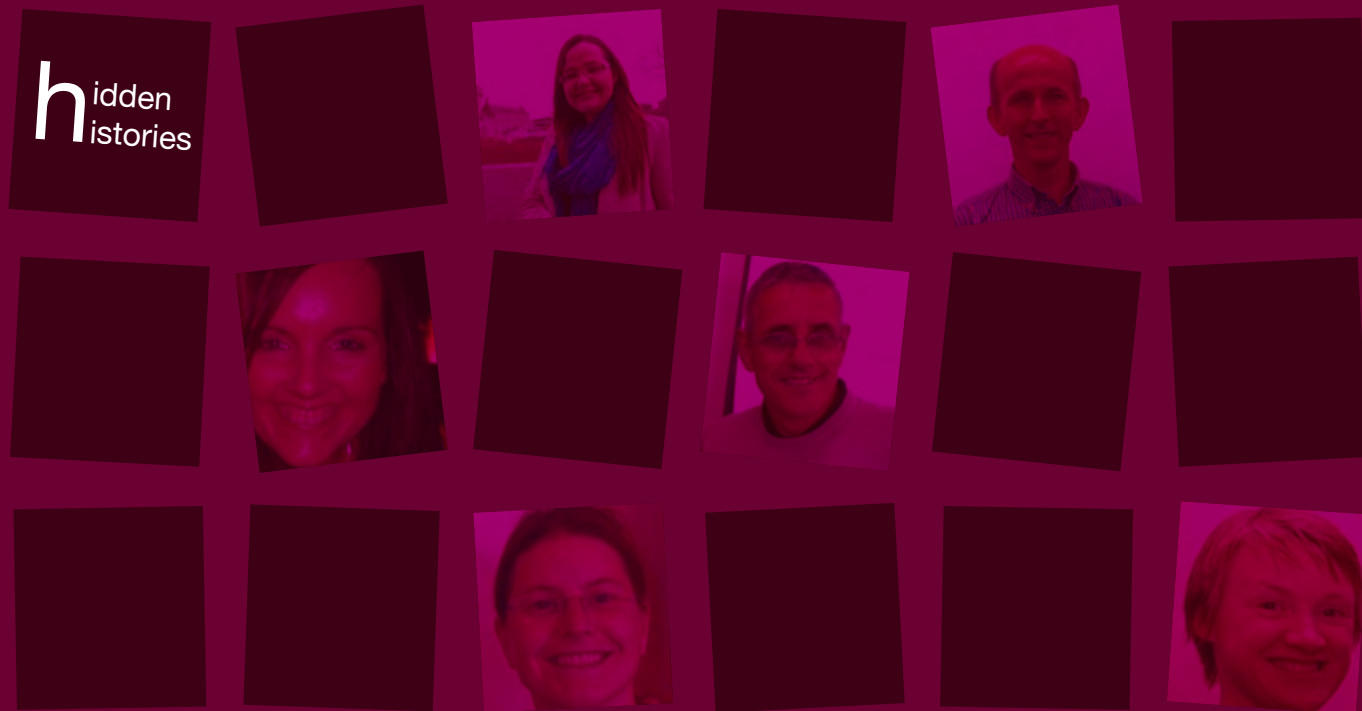


HIDDEN HISTORIES



DEAF LIVES IRELAND

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Dublin, Ireland, taken at dusk or dawn. The city is densely packed with buildings, and the River Liffey is visible on the left side. The sky is dark, and the city lights are beginning to glow. The text of the table of contents is overlaid on the left side of the image.

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preface

This important project represents the first structured opportunity to train Deaf community members as community archivists in the Republic of Ireland. It has successfully brought together a mixed group of Irish Deaf men and women from across the Republic and introduced them to the world of empirical data collection, the world of oral histories, research ethics, digital data collection, with all its associated challenges relating to editing, transcribing and storage of signed language footage.

Beyond the practical skills acquired, the project has facilitated the development of awareness of the particularities of the Deaf lived experience and the importance that this has for the community at large. Thus, this archive, while a first step into the development of Deaf community archives proper, has captured a set of data that adds to the cultural capital of the Irish Deaf Community. The data also now functions as an artefact of what it is to be a Deaf person in 20th century and early 21st century Ireland.

Twenty-first century Deaf communities are responding to external forces that genetic threaten to fragment their cultural and linguistic fabric. Genetic engineering, medical

interventions and educational policies all seem to work against a community that has long suffered oppression and only recently seen formal (if not legal) recognition of their language. Further, because of these societal pressures, the Deaf community demographic is shifting – fewer deaf children today meet other deaf children than at any other point in time since the introduction of deaf education in Ireland in the early 1800s. This makes the Hidden Histories archive an even more valuable cultural asset in the longer term.

I congratulate the Irish project lead, Dr. John Bosco Conama, for his enthusiastic commitment to this endeavour and to the Irish Deaf interviewers and interviewees who, together, have started what may yet become a cultural revolution of sorts: the digital signed language archive revolution.

The most critical output of this work lies in how it impacts the people from within and outside the Deaf community today, and in the days and years to come.

*Dr. Lorraine Leeson
Director, Centre for Deaf Studies
Trinity College Dublin*

The Deaf Community can refer to a group of people who share the same interests, experiences and language. You do not have to be physically deaf to be part of the Deaf Community. You can be a parent of a deaf child, be a hearing child of deaf parents or you can simply be involved with deaf people.

For someone to be accepted by the Deaf Community, they are usually able to use and understand Irish Sign Language (ISL) and go to Deaf events. The Deaf Community do not see being deaf as 'a problem' and demonstrate positive attitudes to being deaf. Members of the community also work for equal access across all aspects of life (Irish Deaf Society's A Guide for Parents of Deaf Children, 2011).

Though the most recent census states that there are 92,000 persons living in the Republic of Ireland who state that they are 'deaf or have a severe hearing impairment', it would be a mistake

to assume all of these are members of the Deaf community. The vast majority of these are 50 years of age or above. Less than a quarter are aged less than 50. On this basis, we can reasonably estimate that some 5,000 of these are ISL users who are members of the Irish Deaf community.

Irish Sign Language (ISL)

Irish Sign Language is the language which Deaf people use in the Republic of Ireland and, like all living languages, it's current form tells us a lot about it's influences. ISL has borrowed from the languages it has come in close contact with, including French Sign Language, British Sign Language, French and English. Gesture has also played a role, feeding into the extensive vocabulary system. (Leeson, Lorraine and John I Saeed, Irish Sign Language, 2012).

Is ISL a language?

Yes it is! ISL is a visual language which has its own grammar and syntax. Much of this grammar is

marked on the face of the signer. The eyebrows have an important function in marking for different kinds of questions, while the mouth has a role to play in modifying verbs. It is because of this that you cannot speak English when you are trying to sign in ISL as this will negatively influence the signed message. It would like trying to speak French while speaking English at the same time! Unfortunately, ISL is still not legally recognised as a language in the Republic of Ireland (Leeson, Lorraine and John I Saeed, Irish Sign Language, 2012; Irish Deaf Society's A Guide for Parents of Deaf Children, 2011).



Hidden Histories



A major challenge facing people in Europe is how we understand and experience life in communities that are both plural and diverse. In its Memorandum on Lifelong Learning of 2000, the European Commission cited the need to 'learn to live positively with cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity' as one of the two joint aims of lifelong learning across Europe. These issues percolate down to the community and individual level in important ways, and have a profound impact on the ways in which we all experience economic and social inclusion. This project has used a community and life history approach to work with socially excluded people to explore and capture their 'hidden histories' and to provide the opportunity, through exhibitions and websites, to share their stories with the wider communities of Europe. People are excluded or 'hidden' for a number of different reasons including their geographic isolation, their language, and their cultural and experiences.

Partners in this project are based in Austria, Finland, Ireland and the UK, and the communities we have worked with are Deaf communities, migrant communities and rural communities. Although this catalogue relates to the exhibition you are viewing, please visit our website at www.hiddenhistories.euproject.org to find out more about the project, but also to view material from the other exhibitions and ebooks, to view photos and to hear and see people's stories.

We hope that by viewing both the exhibition that accompanies this catalogue, and our website, that you will have a greater understanding of different people in all our communities.

Pam Coare, Project Principal Investigator

Hidden Histories: Deaf Lives Ireland

While there is a long and rich narrative history existing in the Irish Deaf community, there is little or no recorded repository of oral history concerning the Irish Deaf community. The community's history is dominated by physical artefacts (pictures, places and objects) and written records (books, log books and dissertations). There is a centre devoted to the history of one school and it has attempted to expand it's remit to cover several existing and former schools' history.

Over time, Deaf people have expressed concerns over the disappearance of such narrative information. In attempting to address the shortfall of narrative community history, a number of community activists have begun uploading video clips to the Internet, re-narrating previously unknown documents such as prison records and education records.

There is a crucial difference in collecting 'oral' history from the Deaf community as it cannot be recorded in audio format. As Irish Sign Language is a visual

language, it can be only recorded visually. Hence a camcorder is required to film the interviewers. While community activists are highly motivated and determined to collect such materials, there is a shortfall in the community at large with respect to how to

organise, collate and archive narrative records. This project thus responds to the Deaf community zeitgeist regarding digital archiving of narrative experiences and the Centre for Deaf Studies at Trinity College Dublin is extremely pleased to be involved in this initiative.

The Deaf Lives Ireland project is a part of the broader Hidden Histories project. This broader initiative involves a consortium led by the *Centre for Community Engagement* at the University of Sussex in the UK along with *Inspire* in Austria and *Noema* in Finland.

The Irish project's principal aim was to train a number of community members with a strong interest in the oral history of their community. The goal was to support them in learning how to document and preserve community history. Training involved workshops that introduced participants to (a) oral history, (b) interviewing techniques, (c) camera set-up, (d) filming and editing and (e) encoding and uploading media content.

We hope to expand on the work completed by the Deaf Lives Ireland project and include more video recordings of 'oral' histories by Deaf people over time.



caroline

Caroline McGrotty

Caroline is a native of a small town called Dungloe in North West Donegal but now resides in Dublin. Her background is mainly with the Deaf community and is involved in voluntary work with the Irish Deaf Youth Association and Deaf Village Ireland to name just a few. She also presents on Hands On, a TV programme aimed at Deaf and hard of hearing people. Caroline graduated from the Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin (TCD) with a Diploma in ISL Teaching in June 2010 and she is currently studying Equality Studies in University College Dublin. At present she works with AHEAD (Association for Higher Education Access & Disability) as a project officer of the Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) Programme.



fergus

Fergus Dunne

Fergus was born Deaf in a 3rd generational all-deaf family with two Deaf brothers and several Deaf uncles and aunts from both sides. He is married to Dee Byrne and has seven children, two of whom are Deaf. He was educated in St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys, Cabra, Dublin and he qualified as an architectural technician. Former roles include volunteer member of the board of the Irish Deaf Society for 14 years. Currently he is honorary secretary of the Deaf Heritage Centre (based in Deaf Village Ireland). He has a keen interest in preserving photographic/video collections of Irish Deaf people's lives and experiences; heritage of Irish Deaf Community dating back to its origins. He also has a keen interest in developing video interviewing skills with Deaf Individuals.



wendy

8

Wendy Murray Jnr

Wendy was born and raised in Dublin of Deaf parents. Wendy is currently studying at the Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin. She is a board member of the Irish Deaf Society and also involved within its associated organisations - ISL Academy and Deafhood. Her interest in Hidden Histories arose from her passion in Deaf history and the desire to gain an insight into "oral history". She has a keen interest in collecting Deaf people's experiences.



Michelle McLaughlin

Michelle hails from Tipperary but now lives in Duleek in County Meath. She is a home maker and has five children. Michelle's involvement in Deaf Histories Ireland arose from her interest in Deaf communities and the her personal view of collecting and archiving data on Deaf communities in Ireland.

michelle



Lorraine Creed

Lorraine was born and reared in Limerick which is situated in the mid west of Ireland. She went to a mainstream school until the age of 16 and then moved to a Deaf school. It was from those years that she started to learn Irish Sign Language (ISL) and also deepened her understanding of the Irish Deaf Community. After school she studied art and she now teaches art classes. She is fascinated with engaging other Deaf people telling their stories and is passionate about ensuring that such data is captured so that newer generations of younger Deaf people can enjoy the heritage of the older Irish Deaf generations.

lorraine



Liam Breen

Liam Breen was born in Sneem, Co. Kerry and he came to St. Joseph's School for the Deaf Boys in Cabra in 1964 and left in 1978. He was trained as a metal work operator and he was employed in Aer Lingus for a number of years. After leaving Aer Lingus he has devoted much of his time and energy to the development of the Deaf Heritage Centre. He hopes to see this Centre become a national museum for the Irish Deaf community, which he believes is a significant part of Irish life. He was involved in the collection of 'oral' testimonies from Deaf people since 1984. He is currently the chairperson of the Deaf Heritage Centre, which has its own museum and archives in Deaf Village Ireland based in Dublin.

liam



Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée - 1712 - 1789
a philanthropic educator of 18th-century France who
has become known as the "Father of the Deaf"



methodology & approach

The interviews in Hidden Histories: Deaf Lives Ireland were conducted in Irish Sign Language. This necessitated the use of camcorder for video recording purposes and a lengthy process of translating into English to share the with the non sign language users.

The data collected for this project covers two simple themes: (a) what it was like to be a Deaf person in Ireland in the past and (b) a Deaf person's account of summer holidays. These snippets give some insight into the changing life experiences of Deaf people as told by the participants in this project. Participants reflect on events in their lifetimes which spans from 1937 to the present day.

Although all video data is transcribed into English, as Robert Frost put it, "Poetry is what gets lost in translation".

In our case, it is the subtleties of shared experience

that strike a chord with other members of the Deaf community that get lost. The nuances of what it was to be a deaf child in a certain set of circumstances, as experienced and articulated through the language of that experience cannot be fully captured in translation. The depth of the experience cannot be captured, even if the sense is. The shared experience, the shared cultural context is the missing link.

Yet, despite this, and despite the fact that these snippets are short, they provide a window into a rich complex of experiences. Some interviewees discuss what it is like to be a Deaf person and this discourse brings many different perspectives to bear: they touch on the political, the social, educational, cultural, attitudinal and economic points of consideration.

The social perspective is exemplified by the Trojan work undertaken by John McGrotty to set up a Deaf club in Letterkenny once he had identified the need for a social gathering point for Deaf people in Donegal. Rarely is such an epistemological perspective understood or studied. Often these insider views are greatly under-appreciated. "Outsiders" would see his actions as a simple matter of community solidarity. Another interesting insight into the times that Mr. McGrotty discusses is the absence or lack of understanding of data protection laws: the names and addresses of Deaf people from across the county were freely given to him on request. Another example relates to the deep-seated desire, described by many participants as "the need" to use signed language in the company of other Deaf

people. This is best illustrated in contributions from Sean Holmes, Brendan Kidd and Yvonne Green.

Sean longed for his school friends during the summer holidays as he was a boarder at St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys and did not get to see his friends during the holidays. Brendan remembers the strong camaraderie he felt when signing with his Deaf friends in the Deaf club. Yvonne tells us about caravan holidays with several Deaf families. These stories collectively demonstrate the strong sense of community solidarity among Deaf people regardless of age, geography and time.

Politically, during the hunt for the kidnappers of the Irish dentist, John O'Grady, a manhunt for individuals who were regarded as a serious threat to national security, it is interesting to note that Mark and his peers seemed to live in a parallel world unconcerned by the serious security issue unfolding around them. Mark's story gives an example of how some teenage Deaf boys desired to prioritise personal convenience over a national issue.

Anne Hanlon gave her account of experiencing different educational regimes in Ireland and Scotland. The Irish regime was regarded as harsh and conservative with respect to attitudes towards the use of signed language. This firsthand account is much needed as personal narrative accounts of experiencing such regimes are rarely recorded. This data will prove a valuable asset for future generations of researchers.

Culturally, several interviewees gave accounts of their experiences interacting with the majority society. Geraldine

Fitzgerald describes her experience of growing up in Rathmines where a strong and vibrant Deaf community was based. This lends new meaning of the concept of 'integrated community' used by Woll and Ladd (2003) who refer to the cooperative nature of coexistence between Deaf and hearing communities.

Attitudes seem to have been changing as technological advances were being availed of to the benefit of Deaf people and their families. Hearing and Deaf families began to be able to communicate regularly with their Deaf children. Some respondents even mention how advanced technologies have impacted on mundane tasks like arranging to meet friends or enhancing routine communication with family members. These data provide excellent potential for further research which could in turn add more original insights to our understanding of the lived experiences of Deaf people in Ireland.

Economically, there are examples of how some Deaf people were destined for vocational employment. For example, Brendan Kidd discusses his apprenticeship in tailoring after he learnt the basics of this trade at school.

In addition to the reflections that provide an insider's view into being Deaf in Ireland, another key outcome from the Deaf Lives Ireland project is that six Deaf participants developed first hand experiences of developing a community archive in the community, with the community. The involvement of a university department in this project provides an excellent example of how closer collaboration between "town and gown" can occur, and the benefits that such engagement brings to all parties.



experiences of being
deaf in ireland

Brendan Kidd

interviewed by Fergus Dunne

Brendan discusses his experience of leaving school, which, as he recalls, was a very happy occasion for him. He then started training as an apprentice tailor and regularly visited a Deaf club to see his friends. Eventually, he emigrated to London to broaden his experience. He found huge differences between London and Dublin. Yet, London was very good to him and he made a lot of friends there. After five years in London, Brendan returned home.

In this narrative, Brendan also recalls his experiences of visiting the Deaf club on 15 Gardiner Street where he remembers the strong camaraderie that existed.



Larry Coogan

interviewed by Fergus Dunne

Larry tells of an embarrassing incident with his local parish priest. He went to confession one day and wondered how he would communicate with the priest who sat on the other side of a dark confession box. He decided that when he would go to confession, he would bring a written note with him informing this priest of his sins. When confession day came, Larry gave the priest his note and saw his puzzled face through the dim light in the confession box. The priest looked at his note for some time and Larry was puzzled thinking he must have committed grave sins to warrant this slow response.

Eventually, the priest gave Larry's note back to him. To Larry's horror, the note he had handed the priest was actually a shopping list!



John McGrotty

interviewed by Caroline McGrotty

John recalled his successful attempt to set up a Deaf club in County Donegal. He tells us how emigration had badly affected the county and many Deaf people had left the county for better opportunities abroad. For Deaf people remaining in the county, there was little to do. So, he resolved to bring together Deaf people in Donegal with a view of setting up a social club in Letterkenny.

He approached the schools for the Deaf in Dublin to obtain a list of former pupils living in the county. He got the list and visited each Deaf person individually and persuaded them to join with him and set up a club.

He tells us that around the same time, the nuns called at his house and offered him their assistance and this led to a room in Letterkenny being made available to him for his intended purpose. Goal accomplished.



Wendy Murray Snr

interviewed by Fergus Dunne

Wendy recalls incidents in the Deaf club in Dublin where she and her female friends were mocked for their use of 'female' signs. The female signs arose as the result of Catholic educational policy which educated males and females separately. Added to this is the fact that St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls and St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys adopted different approaches to signing. For example the female signs for 'milk' and 'soldiers' can be tacitly regarded as indecent by male signers. She also recalls the negative attitude toward female signing by Deaf men in general.



Mark McCaffrey

interviewed by Michelle McLaughlin

Mark McCaffrey tells a story about the hunt for the kidnappers of the dentist, John O'Grady. A manhunt was underway for individuals who were regarded as a threat to national security. Mark's story gives us an example of how some teenage Deaf boys wanted to put their personal convenience ahead of state security, seemingly oblivious to the seriousness of the events happening around them. For Mark and his friends, there was one incident that was particularly memorable. On a regular weekly bus journey, one of his friends complained about the delays caused by the checkpoints because he would miss the first half of a soccer match that was live on television on a particular evening.

On that occasion, after the bus was cleared to go, he decided to show his frustration at the police by gesturing at them. One of the policemen was furious and he chased after the bus and stopped it. On board, the policeman realised the person concerned was just a young Deaf schoolboy. For Mark, this was a terrifying incident but he notes that the arrival of the Garda did a wonderful job in silencing his friend who was complaining.



Ursula Redmond

interviewed by Liam Breen

Ursula tells of her experience of being transferred from a hearing school to the St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls in Cabra. The nuns at her former school could not communicate with her so her mother was persuaded to transfer her to the Cabra school. She also recalls how apprehensive her mother was at the prospect of transfer.

She also recalls how she was selected to attend a school in France to learn French. She remembers how she was asked to attend a meeting attended by the French nuns and eventually was asked to come to France. While in France, she also recalls there was no sign language used and everyone around her spoke French.



Lisa Duncan

interviewed by Lorraine Creed

Lisa recalls her experience of going to a St. Valentine's Disco in the Deaf club. She wonders about the extended preparations she and her friends undertook for these occasions. As teenagers, they were engaged in all kinds of antics like taking drinks from their parents' cabinets and kissing the boys.

She reflects on this and compares the disco at the Deaf club to the nightclubs in the city.



Anne Hanlon

interviewed by Wendy Murray Jnr

Anne recounts her experiences in two different schools in Ireland and Scotland back in 1950s. Anne tells how the school in Glasgow adopted an attitude of toleration towards the usage of signed language, but on her transfer to the school in Dublin, she found the attitude very different.

In Dublin, there was a strict regime in place which forbade the use of signed language. She was at loss as to why the regimes were so different and she talks about how she preferred the Glasgow regime.



Claire Power

interviewed by Wendy Murray Jnr

Claire explains how she witnessed advances in technology changing patterns of communication within her family in County Longford. When she moved to live in a small flat in Dublin back in the 1980s, she insisted that her mother buy a fax machine to facilitate regular communication. She noticed that communication became more regular and that she was now getting the “news” from home more than before. When her parents visited her Dublin flat, they noticed her television set could show subtitles. On their way back home, her parents resolved to get a teletext enabled television at home too. In this piece, Claire praises technological advances for improving communication between her and her parents.



Alan O'Connor

interviewed by Michelle McLaughlin

Alan explains how he and his friends arrange their social lives. He discusses how changes in technology have influenced how social events are planned and how friendships are developed. Deaf people use social events to enhance their friendships and friends meet in many social venues including pubs, cinemas, gyms and at parties. He tells us how he and friends value greatly the use of Irish Sign Language and talks about the strong desire they share for meeting other Deaf ISL using friends.



Caroline Hickey

interviewed by Michelle McLaughlin

Caroline describes the changes in pattern in arranging to meet friends over the years. She remembers how specific she had to be in arranging to meet her friends in the city centre in Dublin in the past. She describes how she would have had to get someone to ring her friends' family to prepare a date and a specific time and agree that they would meet at a well known Dublin landmark like standing below Clery's clock. After meeting there, they would decide what to do for the day. Nowadays, such a ritual is not necessary due to availability of instant text messages. She also mentions the importance of having the time and space for Deaf people to meet and have a chat. She refers to events such as the sports days organised by the Irish Deaf Society and Tallaght Deaf Club.



Timmy Doona

interviewed by Lorraine Creed

Timmy recalls an embarrassing incident one Christmas Eve when he was 16; he had a blackout due to excessive drinking. His family had brought him home but on the way, he vomited against the closed window in the car. The next morning, he realised the consequences of his excessive drinking and was painfully embarrassed. He could not eat his Christmas dinner because of his sickness. He resolved not to drink excessively on future Christmas eves because he wanted to enjoy his Christmas dinner.



Geraldine Fitzgerald

interviewed by Wendy Murray Jnr

Geraldine recalls the strong presence of the Deaf community in Rathmines, on the south side of Dublin, where she grew up. Everywhere she went with her parents, she was instantly recognised as a Deaf person because she wore hearing aids. She also remembers that there were many Deaf people in the local shops, at the swimming pool and in the local church. This was due to the fact that the Dublin Deaf Club was, at that time, based in Rathmines. However, despite the large number of Deaf people in her local area, she seldom socialised with them because she came in contact with very few Deaf people of her age and most of her friends were boarders in the St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls on the northside of the city.



Des O'Callaghan

interviewed by Liam Breen

Des tells us about himself, beginning in 1936 when he was born. He attended St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys in Cabra. After leaving the school, he became a tailor and worked with the Dublin landmark store, Arnotts, for 36 years. He regularly attended the Deaf club and participated in several sports, with chess being a favourite game. He recalls fierce competition around the chess leagues and notes that the Catholic priests were good at the game.

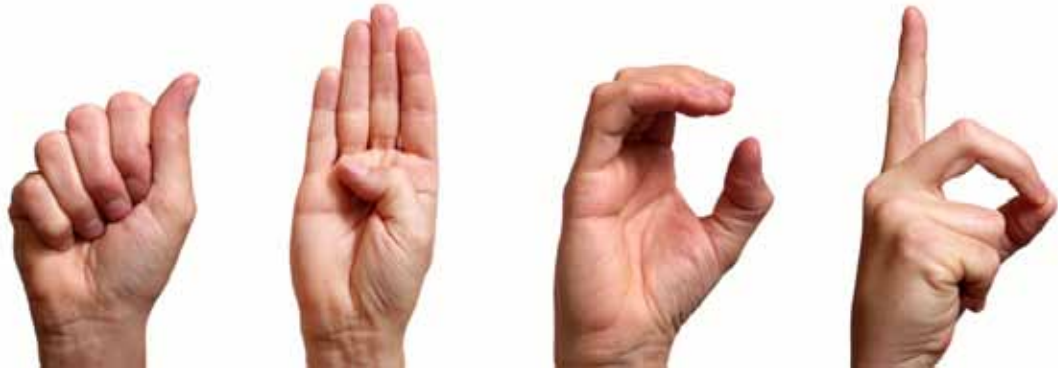


Anna Bury

interviewed by Lorraine Creed

Anna is originally from Poland and she recounts some of her childhood experiences in her homeland. Among her memories, she recalls how she once went missing and she tells how her mother was frantically searching for her. Neighbours were called in to assist in the search, but they could not find her. Eventually, she was found at a local railway station waiting for her father who was due to return home from work. Anna's mother was relieved to find her there but people in her community were mystified by her ability to locate the railway station that her father used to commute to and from work.





conversations in the
community

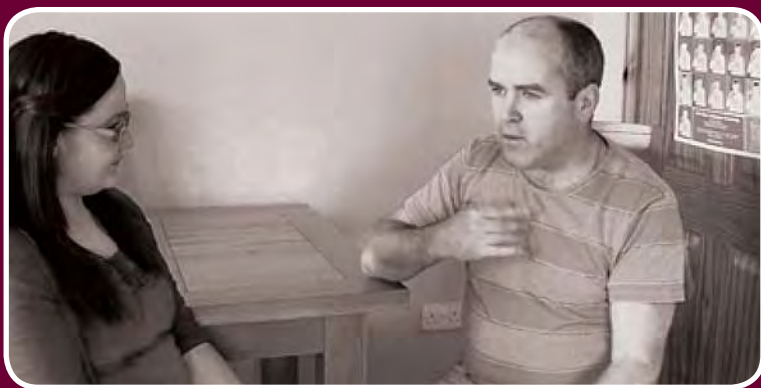


Rourke

“

summer holidays

”



Sean Holmes

interviewed by Caroline McGrotty

Sean – Before we left school, we always talked about what was going to happen. Where we going to go, thinking about getting upset, because every Summer, we wouldn't see each other as it was a long holiday. We had no friends back at home. We preferred to be with our Deaf friends.

Caroline – You say that that you missed your Deaf friends that you were disappointed to go home every summer? Why?

Sean – We'd have no one to talk to! I'd feel confused and mixed up in the hearing world. It was hard to understand what people were saying as they communicated too fast. But in saying that, my hearing isn't that bad! I got on ok and luckily enough I got a job working every summer for 6 to 8 weeks fishing with nets.

Caroline – You were a boarder right? And you went home every summer and you worked over the holidays. But did you ever meet other Deaf people back home?

Sean – No, never! The first summers were in 1973, 1974 and 1975 which was interesting because when I had to

leave home to go back to school I would run and hide because I really didn't want to go back to school. And at home, my mother and father were there, which was great. But you know when you're young, everything's so big so you are afraid.

The big boys, the bullies, the Christian Brothers... you know yourself what happened in the schools in terms of the abuse that happened there....so I didn't want to go back to school. But as you got older, you wanted to go back. You missed your friends. So starting around 1975, in 1976, 1977, 1978, you would be depressed to be going home for the summer.

Just depressed to be going back home... There was nothing to do there. You would just be sitting down all the time. Lucky my mother told my father to take me out, so I went to work with my father on tractors and diggers which was interesting but generally speaking, I just wandered around. I wanted to be with Deaf people, to be able to sign with my classmates. That was much more comfortable. I simply preferred being with my Deaf friends, it was more comfortable.



Maeve Dermody

interviewed by Caroline McGrotty

Caroline – You mentioned that when you were young, you didn't have a mobile phone until after you were about ten years old, so you couldn't text a friend to arrange to meet up. So what did you do when you wanted to meet a friend? How did you make plans?

Maeve – We would have sleepovers at each other's houses and our mothers would ring each other and arrange to meet at some location mid way between where we lived. So we drove halfway to a friend's house. We'd meet at a pub and usually stayed there for 2 or 3 hours, where our mothers chatted away while we were signing away. Then my friend would come stay with me in my house for 2 or 3 days. Then we would make the journey to the mid-point then again and this time I would go with my friend and her mother to her house for another 2 or 3 days and then return to the mid-point and go our separate ways!

Caroline – So was this like a week-long holiday for you?

Maeve – Yes. My mother always rang people for me when I was very young but I remember a time just before I started back to school and needed a new uniform from Grants' uniform shop.

Caroline – On Manor Street right?

Maeve – Yes. We were always told the date when we were allowed to pick uniforms up, and it was normally the same date for all my classmates. So I knew that my friend would be there too and thought that maybe we could meet up. On days like that, my mother would ring my friend's mother and we would arrange to meet. We would be meet and chat for ages – we'd have a long, long day! Then I got a mobile phone when I was about 12/13, my mother was still in touch with my friend's mother as they had become good friends. When I was 15/16, it started to change... I would be more independent in arranging meet ups myself without my mother and now I text all the time!

Yvonne Green

interviewed by Caroline McGrotty

Caroline – When you were young, where did you meet other Deaf people? In Deaf clubs or in other places?

Yvonne – My family are all Deaf and my parents were always involved with the Deaf Community. They'd bring us to Deaf clubs and every summer we all went to Kerry and stayed on a caravan site with other Deaf people where we all had our own caravans. We were with other families who had hearing children but they could sign because their parents were deaf. The frustrating thing was that it always rained... but we still had a good time!

Caroline – Typical Irish weather!

Yvonne - My mother was always complaining, saying, "It always rains in Kerry!!" But all I have are good memories of Kerry! We used to take turns to host BBQs.

Caroline – How long did you stay for? 1 week, 2 weeks?

Yvonne - Because we had our caravan, we sometimes would stay for up to 1 month, usually in July or August, depending on when school would finish for the summer break.

Caroline – Was everyone there Deaf?

Yvonne – Yes! But some of the caravans would be rented out. People from Dublin came down but we still talked with them. When I meet people who went caravanning with us now, we always remember the good times we had in Kerry. It's a shame that that tradition has died out now.

Caroline – It's gone now? When is the last time that you were there?

Yvonne - I think I was about 10 years old; my mother was a bit worried about money as we had to pay rent for the land that we used. And you have to factor in that she was a single mother - my father passed away when I was young. So my mother decided to get rid of the caravan and after that, other people started to follow suit. My mother went back to the caravan park at one point, but she said it was very quiet and that it wasn't anything like before. Before, the children would be so excited about it, but as they grew up, their tastes changed, and they got bored of it and sure everyone has their own lives now. When I was small, I kind of had my own business. You know wine bottles? Well I would collect them and then go to the beach collecting

bags full of shells that I found. I'd wash them and using clay, I stuck them onto the bottle. I would sell them to Deaf people for £2 - £5!! I still have one right here in my house! See – it's over there!

Caroline – Oh yeah that's right! Can we have a look at it?!

Yvonne - No problem! **gets shell bottle** ... I made big ones as well as this one and sold the big ones but I kept this for myself. See all the shells I put on them!

Caroline – What's this brown stuff?

Yvonne – Clay, I think! My mother helped to buy it for me.

I put the clay on, then stuck the shells onto it and then painted varnish over the top to make it shine because otherwise it looked a bit dull. My mother's friends still have theirs! I couldn't believe they'd kept them all these years!

Caroline – Maybe that's a good idea for a future business venture!

Yvonne – I thought it was best to keep it...

Caroline – Like a souvenir from your holidays in Kerry....

Yvonne – Yeah...





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Dr. John Bosco Conama
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