

Pseudonym	Dialect Zone	Provenance	Sex	Age	Educational Level	Religion	Ch.7 Text No.
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KPC We were talking about rope making, and you were going to give me a quickie demo.

EMcD Yeah, em, those materials were all used for making ropes, and they were all twisted together.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD Eh, twisting anything together gives it added strength.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD Em, individually, the threads are easily broken.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD And it's the same as making wool to knit with.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD The, the, em, the, the spinners spun the wool into a thread...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... into a yarn, and hence you get the saying, 'He spins a good yarn'.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD That's the origin of it.

KPC Mm.

EMcD And that's also the origin of, eh, most of the spinning was done with... by unmarried ladies.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD And that's why unmarried ladies are called spinsters.

KPC Of course.

EMcD I feel stupid telling you this.

KPC *[laughs]*. Not at all. I'm loving it. I think it's great. I'm getting an education finally. *[laughs]*.

EMcD Em...

KPC So rope making, you were...

EMcD Yeah, but you get the same thing, as I say, with wool. Wool might be easier...

KPC So you...

EMcD ... for you to understand in that, eh, you, they put it through the spinning wheel. You've seen...

KPC And twist.

EMcD ... the spinning wheel.

KPC Exactly.

EMcD And it's all twisted together. It's all short fibres to start with.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD Eh, it comes off the sheep. Eh, I can spend half an hour talking about wool if you want the whole background of wool, and, eh, it becomes quite strong, and then if you wanted to go a step further,

you can knit it. You could knit st... em, the Irish people sold it quite often at this stage, after spinning, just a ball of wool...

KPC Right.

EMcD ... or a sheen. And, eh, eh, you could, em... oh my goodness, strange people arriving. The... there's the retired librarian that used to run the show here, and she's up for today for this lecture of yours.

KPC Oh God.

EMcD Hm?

KPC Oh God. *[laughs]*

EMcD Yeah.

KPC Better mind my p's and q's.

EMcD Chris just called. She's, she's, she's retired there about six months ago, and it's just strange to see her. But the, to get back to the wool, eh...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... as I say, it's an easier to understand concept I think.

KPC Aye.

EMcD And, eh, you could sell it after you've spun it into a threa... into a, the yarn. Eh, you co... you could sell it to knitters.

KPC Right.

EMcD You could sell it to people who had looms, and they would weave it into tweed, or , eh, cloth, or material which they, in turn, would sell to the tailors...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... and the tailors would make the suits from it.

KPC Mm.

EMcD Or if you were a bit more ambitious, you could knit a pair of socks and sell the socks. You could knit a cap. You could knit a cardigan, and sell those in the marketplace.

KPC Mm.

EMcD And that generated cash...

KPC Mm.

EMcD ... which was hard to come by.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD This was the thing. To get away from the maintenance culture, things that keep you alive, and things that you're going to consume...

KPC Mm.

EMcD ...but no money from.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD To get away from that, something that produces hard cash. That was the big thing, or the effort they had, or wanted to do...

KPC Mm.

EMcD ...and knitting the socks, and knitting the caps, and knitting the hoods, and whatever, gave them cash.

KPC Mm.

EMcD And they had to have cash, of course, in the old days to pay the landlord them rent, the six monthly rent that had to go to the

landlord, and if you failed to do that, you ran the risk of being outted, or put out of the...your, your house...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... and, em, that's another chapter of history. You could go down that lane...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ...em, for an hour. But, em, the, the, the wool, eh, scenario, it took about six spinners to keep a loom going, and as you probably know, eh, the spinning and weaving of the flax and the wool were two very prominent Irish cottage industries.

KPC True.

EMcD During the seventeen and eighteen hundreds.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD And, em, eh, practically every other small cottage was involved in this, and they brought in...they augmented the income...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... to those people. Those people were probably small farmers...

KPC Mm.

EMcD ... with 15 or 20 acres, and that wasn't all that viable on its own.

KPC No.

EMcD And it needed that just for their own personal maintenance...

KPC Mm.

EMcD ... 'til they grew, eh, oats and, eh, they maybe grazed a cow to get the milk, or something like that.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD A very simple life. Eh, but, eh, at night, eh, he would... well, after he come in from the far... the farm and get his tea, he maybe would go and spend a couple of hours on the loom, weaving, and his wife and children. And that's why it was called a cottage industry, because the children were involved as well.

KPC Mm.

EMcD The whole family was involved.

KPC Mm.

EMcD And you, coming in as a visitor, would be given a wee job to do, and you'd be sitting gossiping about all the news of the day, but you'd be working for them.

KPC Mm.

EMcD Because of the processes that the wool had to go through.

KPC Mm.

EMcD Eh, it had to be teased by hand, and that was a simple thing to do...

KPC Mm, mm-mm.

EMcD ... and you could talk at the same time.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD And children could do it.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD And then the mother usually carded it. Carding is combing, straightening out the fibres.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD And, em, it was carded, and maybe a girl of 10 or 11 or 12 would do the carding [*coughs*], and then the mother would put it on the, the spinning wheel and spin it into the yarn.

KPC Mm.

EMcD And, em, go through the other processes either selling it as a yarn, or knitting and selling the knitted product, or selling it to... eh, maybe they didn't have a loom.

KPC Uh-huh.

EMcD Sell it to somebody who had a loom.

KPC Right.

EMcD It usually took about six spinners to keep a loom going, and, em, there was a bit of cash maybe for that, or on many occasions, maybe a swap.

KPC Oh, right.

EMcD For, you know, if you're running out of potatoes...

KPC Exactly.

EMcD ... or you've maybe a rabbit, good bit of meat.

KPC So bartering, really, for it.

EMcD Bit of bartering.

KPC Yeah.

EMcD Or, em, turf, or something, you know, that if you didn't, that you did... you needed.

KPC Uh-huh.

EMcD And you would use this to, to get that.

KPC Uh-huh.

EMcD And, em, but cheap cotton started to come in.

KPC From America?

EMcD From South America.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD It was produced by the slave labour...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... and consequently, its production costs were very s..low...

KPC Nothing.

EMcD ... and then they were able to undercut the price that these, eh, Irish people were getting in the marketplace...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... for their finished products...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... whatever they had knit, or were they, they were selling the wool, or se... selling a knitted garment, or whatever, or selling the tweed...

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD ... cloth, or the cloth, or the... to, to the tailors in which to make the, the clothes from. And it no longer became enviable, and that gave rise to l... mass emmigration by the Irish people.

KPC Mm.

EMcD Many of those people... eh, it was no longer viable, and you started to think, 'What am I going to do?'

KPC Mm.

EMcD 'I haven't enough to keep my family,' and, of course, the answer was always, 'To America'.

KPC Mm-mm.

EMcD Give rise to lots of it.

KPC Mm-mm.