

Pseudonym	Dialect Zone	Provenance	Sex	Age	Educational Level	Religion	Ch.7 Text No.
Frank Hackett (FH)	MUE	Ballyvarley, Co. Down	M	63	Secondary school qualification	C	7.2.7

FH Now, it was my chore every morning to go for fresh bread, fresh eggs, or whatever it was for this big, sort of, massive big breakfast every morning. So I went down to the shop, duly got the stuff, was on my way back, and when I was on my way back, there was a fellow on a horse. Now, it wouldn't have been a racehorse; it would more have been like a hunter horse, or a hunter chaser. And he was coming walking along the footpath just at the Sands Hotel, *[coughs]*, and he was coming facing me. There were two or three young children walking sort of towards him, on the footpath, and as they came forward to the horse, they had this little dog and they lifted it up, as children would do, to protect the dog. And the next thing that I saw was the horse bucked, up on its hind legs, and I immediately slammed on the brakes, and it actually came down on top of my... I had a little Mini, Mini Minor car, as it was then, it actually come down on it. Now, it, it bent the left hand, eh, pillar of the windscreen. It actually didn't break – it didn't break the windscreen, but it was amazing how much the windscreen bent and didn't break. And it broke the wing mirror, and things like that there. And I was absolutely terrified, and really, really frightened. I was really frightened after it, whenever, you know, I sort of thought of the potential consequences. But the funny thing was, of course, all the, eh, hungry hippos were at home, sort of waiting on me coming back and saying, 'What the hell's keeping him?' And, of course, as soon as I got out of the car, I was met with this barrage of, 'Where the hell were you? What kept you?' this, that and the other thing. And there I am, standing shaking, as white as a sheet, wasn't even given an opportunity to explain what had happened.

And then, of course, eventually, and after some considerable time, whenever all this had died down, I was able to tell them what happened. But it was a frightening experience and, you know, I always sort of thought that if the horse just had have put his hoof through the window, if it had caught me in the chest, and used that as sort of leverage to sort of get itself back out again...

KPC Mm.

FH ... you know. You know, it was a scary experience, you know...

KPC Mm.

FH ... but I think it was sort of... it was sort of, eh, almost sy... symptomatic of what sort of happened on that holiday...

KPC *[laughs]*

FH ... because there were, as you know...

KPC Could you really call it a holiday? *[laughs]*

FH Well, you know, em, there's been television programmes done with less material in them, you know.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KPC *[coughs]*. Were you ever in any other situations like that, where you thought you were going to die?

FH Yes.

KPC When?

FH *[coughs]*. In 1970...

KPC Mm.

FH ... I went to a football match in Glasgow.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH It was actually the Scottish Cup Final. And I went with a friend of mine called Patrick McGinley, and, eh, we went on Saturday morning and we got the boat... the train from Belfast to Larne, the boat from Larne to Stranraer, the train from Stranraer to Glasgow, and then the, em, suburb..., or the City Service from Glasgow Central to a railway station called Mount Florida, which is the railway station that services Hampden Park.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH Now, the match was over, and as it so happened, it was a draw, but whenever the match was over, the grim reality struck us that we had no way of getting home.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH We hadn't sort of provided...

KPC Oops.

FH ... for getting home. But what we did know was, eh, there was a, a boat went from, eh, eh, Heysham to Belfast. It was always known as the 'Heysham boat'.

KPC Mm.

FH So we thought we could get it. So we bowled along to Glasgow Central station...

KPC Mm-mm.

FH ... and, to get the train to Heysham, to get the boat from Heysham, and the overnight sailing back to Belfast. So, eh, when we got... we were at the wrong railway station.

KPC Oh, God.

FH And by the time we got to Glasgow Queen Street, the train had left for Heysham, or it might well be the other way around, I can't remember.

KPC Mm, doesn't matter.

FH So we spoke to the guy anyhow at the Ticket Office, and we said to him about... what we needed was this boat that left from the Mull of Kintyre, a place called Campbeltown in the Mull of Kintyre.

KPC I know exactly where that is, yeah.

FH And it went across to Red Bay in County Antrim...

KPC Mm.

FH ... and we knew that there was another sort of group of fellows on a minibus who had booked on til it.

KPC Mm.

FH So we said to the guy, anyhow, em, 'Oh,' he said, 'aye, yeah.' Well, he said, 'You can get a train a good part of the way.' So we said, 'How far?' 'Well,' he says, 'you'll get a train to a place called Gaerlochhead.'

KPC Mm-mm.

FH So we said, 'Fair enough.' So we got two tickets to Gaerlochhead, and, eh, we got out in Gaerlochhead, now I, I, I sort of... I mean, this was 1970, which is 38 years ago. I always sort of remember, we seemed to be almost on the side of a hill, on the side of a mountain.

KPC Mm.

FH But I said to the porter on the station, I said, 'Where's the town? How do you get into the town from here?' He says, 'There isn't a

town here.’ So we made our way down this sort of very narrow, winding path down on to the road, and we came to like a crossroads...

KPC Mm.

FH ... and I went into this shop, because we hadn’t ate from maybe 12 o’clock. And we went in, and I remember we got cold meat pies and milk.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH It was about all we could get, which wasn’t a very tasty mix. And I said to the woman, ‘What time would we get a bus to Campbeltown is, on?’ She says, ‘There’s only a bus goes to Campbeltown on a Tuesday and a Thursday.’

KPC *[laughs]*

FH And I said, ‘How far is it?’ ‘Oh,’ she says, ‘it’s 120, it’s 130 miles.’ Now, we’re stuck away out in the middle of Scotland, maybe 70 miles from Scotland, eh, and we had to make a decision. Did w... Not only that, we didn’t have a lot of money.

KPC Mm.

FH We had to make a decision – were we going to go back, or were we going to try and make it to Campbeltown?

KPC Mm.

FH Because the only thing that we did know was that there was a boat left Campbeltown on Sunday morning at 11 o’clock.

KPC Mm.

FH So we just said, ‘Well, we’ve plenty of time, we’ll hitch a lift.’ So we hadn’t walked very far anyhow, and this car c... came along, and this guy stopped, and he said, ‘You want a lift?’ We said, ‘Yeah.’

So we went into the car anyhow, you know. 'Where are you going?' 'Campbeltown.' 'Oh, God,' he says, 'you've a long journey in front of you.'

KPC Mm.

FH So I said to him, 'How far are you going?' and he says, 'I'm only going three or four mile down the road here.' So anyhow, we got out, we got out of the car. There was like a Scotch mist, and as they would call it in Scotland, a 'dreich'...

KPC Mm-mm.

FH ... sort of an evening.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH And it couldn't have been any more bleak. And we were sort of getting on was farther... further away from civilisation. We went then and we walked another bit. Now, there was this fellow came along, and I'll always remember, he was an English guy, a real sort of flashy guy, but... and he'd got this Scottish girl with him.

KPC Mm.

FH And we got into the back of the car, and he said, 'Where are you going?' and we said, 'Campbeltown.' Em, we said to him, 'Have you ever been there?' And he says, 'No, I haven't.' 'Oh,' we said, 'God, it's a beautiful place. You really want to see it, you know. When you're this far, you need to go on and see it. I sa... like it's the gateway to the Highlands.'

KPC *[laughs]*

FH It's not within 100, 200 miles of even the road to the Highlands.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH I mean, you know where it is.

KPC I do. *[laughs]*

FH. But, anyhow, we went through this town, we went through the town of Arrochar, and we then got til a town called Inverarary, I think it was.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH And the guy said, ‘This is as far as I am going.’ And we were really getting quite desperate at this stage.

KPC Mm.

FH So the next place we landed was to the Police Station to get some advice...

KPC Mm.

FH ... or some counsel as to what we should do. So the guy said til us, ‘Well,’ he said, ‘it’s a long way,’ he said, and he said ‘you won’t get a lift,’ he says. ‘There’s very little traffic on that road, particularly on a Saturday night.’

KPC Mm.

FH And now the fact that it was getting dark.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH But he said, like, ‘Really, you’re only solution is,’ he says, ‘is to get a taxi.’

KPC Oh, my God.

FH So he, he act... this policeman actually negotiated with a local taxi man, and he drove us to Campbeltown. Now I always remember, it cost us £14, which was, in 1970 – I think it was ‘70 or ‘71; it might have been ‘71. So this guy drove us, and I was so tired and so exhausted, and I was in the back, but I always remember getting him

to stop the car, and I was sick. And this sort of virtually, unmasticated, cold pie...

KPC Oh, God. *[laughs]*

FH ... and milk sort of lying on the side of the road. *[laughs]*. But, anyhow, we eventually arrived, and fair play to the, the, the taxi man, he sort of knew somebody who had a, a small hotel, and he booked us in.

KPC Mm.

FH But like I remember we arrived in Campbeltown, I suppose about 11 o'clock at night, into this beautiful little room, double room...

KPC Mm.

FH ... lovely and warm, and I said, 'Oh God, thank God we're here.'

KPC Mm.

FH Couldn't have cared less, you know.

KPC Mm.

FH So everything was straightforward then.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH We got up the next morning. Beautiful, a beautiful breakfast, started off... traditional Scottish breakfast, started off with porridge...

KPC Mm-mm.

FH ... lovely fry, everything else. So we then decided it was time to head down to get the ferry.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH Now, the ferry was someth... wasn't exactly what we had ant... expected.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH It looked to me like a fishing boat that somebody had put a back door on.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH And I always remember, there was, eh... and funny, this other minibus of guys were there waiting to get on...

KPC Mm.

FH ... who we, who we knew.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH Always remember, there were a crowd of guys from Royal Belfast Golf Club in a lovely big Volvo car, and their blazers, and you know the way those people would dress on a Sunday morning?

KPC Oh, aye, absolutely.

FH But there was this lorry on the back of it, or a trailer actually, on the back of the boat...

KPC Mm.

FH ... and there was this sort of brief consultation bet... between the guy who was driving the boat, now I suppose you would call him the Captain or something.

KPC Mm.

FH So they decided they would take it off...

KPC Mm-mm.

FH ... and there were another couple of cars came on. So, anyhow, we started off, and we got... we, we were sort of making our way across, I think what's known as the Firth of Clyde...

KPC Right.

FH ... and we come past the, eh, Ailsa Craig Rock.

KPC Mm-mm.

FH Well, you asked me did anything else ever frightening, ever happen me?

KPC Mm.

FH Well, there was one minute you could have put your hand in the water, and the next minute you were up with the seagulls, the boat was tossing that much. And I always remember it cost us twelve shillings, like, to get across, so it must have been 1970, because decimalisation was the 1st of February 1971.

KPC True.

FH So it must have been before then. But anyhow, the gi... whenever you got on they give you a bag. Now the bag wasn't if you were sick; it's when you were sick.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH Well, I had literally been so sick, and I, I was almost in a situation where if somebody had said to me, 'She's going down,' you would have said, 'Well, you know, thanks be to God for that,' you know.

KPC *[laughs]*

FH If you get out of this, you know. But I eventually fell asleep, and I remember then I woke up just as we were reversing into this Red Bay, which is down bet... near Waterfoot, down at Waterfoot, down

the Antrim coast. Of course, we're in Red Bay, and we've no way to get to Belfast...

KPC Mm-mm.

FH ... which is about 60 miles away. This is really...

KPC And work on Monday morning.

FH Work on Monday morning. Now this is really strategic planning ahead. So we eventually got...

KPC You need to listen to this.

FH ... a couple of lifts to Belfast. Well, Patrick McGinley's wife is called Noelle, and we walked in and... ne... I mean, Noelle will tell you to this day, the colour of our faces...

KPC *[laughs]*

FH ... was unbelievable. And I'm not joking you, my ribs and ribcage were sore for two weeks from retching and nothing on my stomach. And I remember when we were walking along the road, Patrick McGinley said to me, 'Frank,' he says, 'you'll tell this story to your grandchildren.' Well, I have told that story so many times...

KPC *[laughs]*

FH ... because like, you know, you talk about following a football team, and talk about bad organisation and everything else. But that, like, just was the pits of everything, you know.