
**FULL TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH PAT FOLEY
DOCUMENTARY: A LIFETIME OF STORIES, 2019
IRISH SCREEN PROJECTS**

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PAT FOLEY

**Tell me your name and where you are from.
Tell us what year you were born and how old you
are now.**

My name is Pat Foley, I come from County Kerry in a village called Moyvane.

Yes, I will, my name is Pat Foley I come from County Kerry, near a little village called Moyvane. I was born on the 5th of July 1928. I am now 90, last July. So I'm ninety and four, five months at the moment. I feel well, I walk.

**Good Man, tell us about the first time you left
Ireland.**

The first time I left Ireland was in 1950. I met some friends, they were neighbours actually that would come back on a holiday. And they said, "Well why don't you come to England?" and I had finished high school at the time, so I went off with them. And I went to the same lodging as them and they said, "You have to look around for a job." So the first job I went looking for was a bus conductor. So, I didn't fancy that, I passed. You got to go and have an exam to be a bus conductor and know what change to give and all that. So, I passed that with flying colours, but I thought, Gee it's not much of a job.

And then, one of the guys, he was from the north of Ireland, and he was working with the Sydney Electricity ... the Henley Cable [was] the company he was working for. They built towers and all underground cables. And it was a factory in Gravesend in Kent. And they had a training school for apprentices.

So, I went, and he said go have a look. He gave me the address, so I went down to Gravesend from London, my first time on a London train. I went to Gravesend and I applied for the job. And the man in charge actually was a man from the north of Ireland. I explained my story and he said, "Yeah why not just start off." Anyhow, I had no idea what underground cables even looked like. Anyhow, I started doing that and then you would go with the

tradesmen out in field working joining cables and that sort of thing. You would go [into] power stations, you go to substations and then you would come back into the school again and you would do another three months in the school. Because in the school they had instructors there and they'd show you how to join the cable. Which in high voltage is very complicated. It would take a week to do one joint for two people. One tradesman and one assistant. It takes a full week to complete this job to have it sealed so the ground could be filled in. So a lot of work in it. So that's where I started.

Tell us about working in The Crown in Cricklewood. How did you get the job in The Crown?

The Crown in Cricklewood is a very large pub in north London. It's really favoured by the Irish and very much so. And on St Patrick's day the Black Marias come in there, three or four at a time and they load them up and take them away. And they keep coming, and taking them up, and oh Jeepers it was some fun that. And the fights that went on. Oh Boy, that was The Crown.

Then in The Crown I would tend the bar on a Sunday morning after mass. After mass you come down, and we used to go through the side door, and all the bartenders were in there you know, cos they were flat out because the Irish were in for the weekend from out the country; and you were there pulling Guinness for the next three hours. That was part of my pocket money.

Tell us about 1951, what happened you went to the states?

I went to America in '51 to work in America. The Korean War was on at the time and I went down to the, you had to go to the Enrolment Office. So I went down there and I enrolled and that sort of thing. And I said I would like to join the Navy because I didn't want to go in the Army; because my mate was killed about a week before that. I heard the news come through to me in England. My mate was killed there and I didn't want to join the Army I wanted to join the Navy. And they said no you can't join the Navy unless you're a citizen. Naturally I wasn't a citizen. So I went down, booked my fare back to Ireland. I stayed in Ireland about a week and I went off to England and that's when I started really to do my apprentice proper.

And then you went back again to the US again?

I went back to America again in '62. I was going through on my holiday from England... It was actually a Kerry man who owned this little factory. And he was doing similar work, but in low voltage stuff. And I worked there for five years with him. My wife didn't like it, and the weather was so cold. Six months I went there, and I didn't like that. But I earned pretty good money, so when I came back I was able to buy land and I had to borrow 5000 pounds to build my place. So, I built a place in Carlingford, and had three kids there.

Tell us about the Snowy, you worked in the Snowy scheme.

That was in '52. That was before I went to America.

Tell us the story about coming out in '52.

'52 was a very hard year, because I was everywhere in '52. I was in America twice, out to Australia, I went back. I came out to Australia for the company in '52 that was the English company for the Snowy. I came out in the scheme.

Tell us that story.

Well, the snowy mountains were a major electrical supply for the whole of NSW. That's the main and the cheapest way, rather than any other kind of fuel.

And how did you get out to Australia, do you want to tell us that story? You were in England.

Well I came out for the company to work in the Snowy, but I stayed there for two years in the Snowy.

It was hard work, but it was interesting because they built these tunnels. The snowy river, they put dams in. And the dams go into a tunnel, the tunnel come through to these pipes to these underground stations, the turbo-driven thing. The water was the power for the turbine to create electricity. So the cheapest production of electricity is water. But I feel they should do a lot more now, even do the same again but, that finished that.

Tell us about the job you had up in the 'Belson'.

Oh, that was when I was up in America.

Well, when I was working for the company in America, we worked on a lower voltage, not the higher voltage that I worked on the Snowy with, and they had to get power across to this part of an island up in Maine, Connecticut. And they wanted to get the power across. So what they done, they

built a high tower this side of this great gorge, about 800 ft down they reckon.

They built a tower, and they built another tower on the other side to get the cable across. To get the cable across, a helicopter took this steel rope across and they connected that onto the towers either side, I had nothing to do with that, that was the engineering part. They got the steel rope and connected that onto the tower. But to get the cable across, you had to fit these rings around that steel rope for the cable to go through. And my job was to put those rings, get on the 'Belson' chair and swing it up in the air, and these rings that were on the back of the 'Belson' chair. They were a bronze ring, a but springy kind of a thing, and you had to fit them on the wire and you moved yourself along each time and you put the rings on. As you put the rings on you had a nylon little spring and you put that through it as well.

So you had to go right across and it was 800ft down and you're swinging all over the place there. I enjoyed it really. The guys who were working there, he got the job on my behalf. Because I wasn't scared of heights. So they got the job on my behalf because I wasn't scared to do that.

How did you entertain yourself in America in the 50's? What did you do for entertainment?

I was married so I was mostly home, not much entertainment. I didn't find America at all interesting regarding entertainment because after leaving London, London was the home of having a good time for young fellas.

What did you get up to in London? How did you entertain yourself?

Oh dancing at the Galtymore three times a week. I used to do ballroom dancing out at the Hammersmith Palais on a Sunday afternoon with my bowtie on, and my black suit.

Where did you learn the dancing?

I learned the dancing in London, there were several schools. Burtons in London, a hall, there was another one in Cricklewood. They used to teach dancing there. So I went there, I used to go there with myself and a guy from Leitrim - Manorhamilton in County Leitrim, a great friend of mine for years. We keep in touch, Tom McGuinness

was his name. He had an uncle a priest in London, and we used to go and visit him as well.

Did you do Irish dancing?

No, only set dancing.

Tell us about this, where did you learn the set dancing?

You learn set dancing in Ireland when you're a kid. My father he was a set dancer. My father used to do set dancing, and you learned going to school in school fetes and all that.

Are you still dancing now?

Yeah, there's no place to go anymore. The last place I was dancing was up at the Labour Club up in Randwick. They used to do set dancing there on a Sunday night. But that's finished now. My wife loves dancing, she more of a jiver and I'm more of a ballroom dancer. So that's my life in dancing I never got any medal for it. I got a medal for soccer but not for dancing.

Tell us about the Rose of Tralee. You were involved with the Rose of Tralee?

Oh yeah, that's where an old great mate of mine and a lot of people knew him in Australia, Kerry Murphy, a fellow with a long beard. He wasn't well enough to do it, and he said "Pat you better take over," I said, "No I can't do it," and he said "Of course you can." So, I took over the Rose of Tralee for five years.

To someone who doesn't know, explain what the Rose of Tralee is.

The Rose of Tralee, is in each city in Australia, a competition. It's not just a beauty competition it's talent as well and, I suppose beauty comes into it, but it's not the main reason. So they hold these meetings and there's a big ball, there's usually a ball, in each city, and all these girls are dressed up in their beautiful frocks ... One girl is picked from each state and they're sent back to Ireland.

The Rose of Tralee is a worldwide thing, it's [in] America, it's [in] Canada, Europe, different countries in Europe. And they all go back to Tralee for the final. So, I think there was about 28 or 32 girls there last year. There's a two-night judging going on there and they judge the first night, and then there's a final the second night, and then the girl is picked for the Rose of Tralee.

So she holds that crown for 12 months, the girls going there that get picked here, get free passes back to Ireland, they get all their expenses paid,

they get their frocks donated, so it's a good thing for a girl. So by doing that the girls are interested in getting a nice frock and a month's holiday in Ireland, and that's why we never have any trouble getting any girls for the Rose of Tralee. They enter the Rose of Tralee. It's a big honour for a girl to get picked to go back.

Tell us about your time as St Patrick, how did you get the job as St Patrick?

Again, I was kind of picked again by Kerry Murphy, he was St. Patrick, this Kerry Murphy again, he was St. Patrick. I thought well the next St. Patrick's got to be Pat Foley. So I held that for, quiet a long time.

What's your role as St. Patrick?

You dress up in a Bishop's uniform, a Bishop's robe and Bishop's hat, and all the rest of it and you get on top of a float and you wave to the people and they'll ask you questions. They take a thousand pictures of you that day and you can't move anywhere but they're taking pictures, they want a picture with St. Patrick. It's a good day. Because you're on the main float - you went up George St and around the park and there were often 26 or 28 floats. But that's gone now because George St. is closed off, by light rail.

There's a great picture of you on the beach,

That was in America.

Were you a body builder?

Not really a body builder but I used to go to the gym for exercise, you know chin ups and push ups and leg stretches and all that kind of thing, and chest expanders and what have you.

And what got you interested?

Oh, I don't know. I just felt a bit athletic I suppose in some way or another. I did a bit of running in my younger days. A bit of high jump, it wasn't very high, it was under five feet!

What do you think when someone says what's your biggest achievement?

I think my biggest achievement was, really, and I'm very proud of it. I was picked from 35 tradesmen in England to come out to the Snowy, and I being a Kerry man, an Irish man. To be picked - that to me, was the greatest feeling. Because we all had to go through a test, there were several tests, what they found was that I could improvise better than lots the others, if things weren't exactly as they should be, I would think of another way out, because

that's true training, you've done all this true training.

So that I would say, was my best... my proudest moment. To be an Irishman to be picked amongst all the English.

And in terms of regret, would you have any regrets now looking back?

The only regrets I would have, is when I came back from America I didn't buy more land because I spent my money on my house rather than spending it on land and borrowing money, that would be my greatest regret.

And do you miss Ireland?

Yeah, I go back there every three of four years, I've been back to Ireland about 5 times I suppose. So I do, I still think about Ireland. I keep in contact with my brother and my sister, and my nephew and niece. So Christmas time is a very busy time for holidaying and telephone calls and what have you.

And what do you miss the most about Ireland?

Well I can't say I miss too much, I can't say I miss the weather! I suppose the camaraderie - but for me, now, all my mates are all dead and gone, and there's nothing much left for me in Ireland you know, so I can't say I miss anything at the moment, no.

ENDS
