

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	13 th Oct 2010
Location	Billy's home, near Kilmacthomas, Co. Waterford
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Billy Kirwin
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1930 Home County: Waterford
Education	Primary: Fews NS, Co. Waterford Secondary: CBS Dungarvan, Co. Waterford Third Level: UCC
Family	Siblings: 7 brothers & 7 sisters Current Family if Different: Wife (Mary), 3 daughters & 4 sons
Club(s)	Fews GAA [Waterford]; Kilrossanty GAA [Waterford]
Occupation	Farmer
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fine Gael
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Irish Farmers Association

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Date of Report	18 th July 2012
Period Covered	1930s – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Waterford, Cork, Limerick, Kerry, Tipperary, Dublin, USA, Americas, Great Britain
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Facilities, Playing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Media, Emigration, Role of the Club in the Community, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, Culture, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Northern Ireland, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationship with the Association, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising
Interview Summary	<p>Billy discusses his earliest memories of the GAA and his childhood memories of growing up in Kealfoun. Recalls family members who had to emigrate, and discusses roles of remaining family members in the GAA. Describes playing Gaelic games in his younger days. Also recalls travelling to matches on pony and trap. Describes calling to houses to listen to matches on the radio. Billy recalls his own playing career, including the highs and lows. He mentions training methods that were used at the time. He also describes working on the farm, and the social events that were held at the time. He mentions his time making films. Billy details his conflict with GAA officialdom, and, along with his daughter, explains the effect that it had on him. Billy recalls the celebrations that took place following big match victories. He discusses music and culture, as he plays some tunes on his accordion and sings a song. He reveals his highlights from his involvement in the GAA, and discusses his and his club's attitude to The Ban.</p> <p>00:20 Reveals that his real name is Patrick and explains how he got the nickname “Billy”. Mentions Willie Wade.</p> <p>01:07 Recalls childhood. Mentions Kilsaran. Recalls his siblings – Jack, Bridie, May and Alice. Describes growing up in Kealfoun and working on the farm.</p> <p>03:50 Discusses his parents' background. Mentions Kealfoun, Crough and Mahon Bridge. Mentions an aunt, Mary Flynn. Mentions United States of America. Mentions Agnes Flynn. Also mentions uncles, Jack, Mike, who emigrated to the United States. Mentions Buffalo. Also mentions an aunt, Maggie.</p> <p>06:05 Recalls family involvement in the GAA. Recalls</p>

	<p>travelling on pony and trap to matches as a child. Mentions Kilrossanty GAA club.</p> <p>07:08 Recalls earliest memories of Gaelic games. Mentions arranging matches between Kilrossanty and Mahon Bridge when in school in Fewes. Describes how teams were picked using hurleys. Recalls playing equipment of the time.</p> <p>09:08 Recalls the influence that playing Gaelic games had on his lifestyle.</p> <p>09:30 Discusses Gaelic games in Fewes when growing up. Mentions Erin's Hope from Kilcanavee. Recalls the popularity of Gaelic games in the area and the positive social influence that they had.</p> <p>11:00 Recalls his GAA heroes when growing up. Mentions Mick Mackey. Describes listening to matches on the radio, mentions Micheál Ó hÉithir. Mentions Christy Ring. Recalls going to houses to listen to matches on the radio. Mentions Pat Stakelum. Recalls attending 1948 Munster Hurling Championship match in Thurles between Waterford and Cork. Mentions Waterford's Phil Cusack, Johnny O'Connor.</p> <p>13:57 Describes travelling to matches. Mentions heading to Dungarvan on the pony and trap. Recalls incident at Cushcam. Also recalls coming home from a match on the handlebar of a bicycle.</p> <p>16:10 Recalls going to matches in Fraher Field, Dungarvan. Recalls going to matches, people walking and cycling. Mentions Carrigmoorna. Also mentions Johnny Cheasty from Kilrossanty.</p> <p>16:57 Discusses Kilrossanty's big rivals. Mentions Stradbally. Mentions Brickey Rangers and Patsy Donnelly. Explains why he was known as "The Killer". Mentions Dr Tom Barry.</p> <p>17:50 Describes where training and matches took place in Kilrossanty. Mentions Mahon Bridge. Recalls John Paul Quinn's hackney car taking players to matches. Mentions Limerick.</p> <p>19:15 Discusses playing career. Recalls playing for Waterford minor football team against Tipperary. Mentions Carrick-on-Suir. Recalls becoming well known around Waterford due to being picked for county teams.</p> <p>20:41 Discusses making films. Mentions "The Bachelors in Trouble". Mentions Perth, Australia.</p>
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	<p>22:37 Discusses the intricacies of matchmaking. Mentions John B Keane.</p> <p>26:16 Recalls his days thrashing. Mentions Dungarvan and Carrick-on-Suir. Mentions Jack Wilson and Larry Wilson.</p> <p>28:49 Describes the days of the thrashing dances. Mentions Tom Dea.</p> <p>30:47 Recalls the inspirations for the stories in “The Bachelors in Trouble”. Mentions the Higgins brothers, Dinny and Mikey Higgins.</p> <p>32:05 Recalls training in his younger days. Mentions Percy Kirwan from Kilmacthomas, Clonea hurling trainer and former Olympian. Also mentions Rody Kirwan and Dolores Kirwan. Recalls Percy's training methods.</p> <p>34:05 Discusses playing senior inter-county hurling and football for Waterford. Recalls hurling match against Dublin in the early fifties, mentions Norman Allen, Neddie Ducey.</p> <p>35:48 Recalls inter-county training with the Waterford teams. Mentions Jimmy Barry with Cork.</p> <p>37:18 Discusses Waterford County Board in 1950s.</p> <p>38:45 Daughter Helen describes stories she grew up with regarding matches. Billy discusses the altercations that took place on the pitch, refers to “The Killer” Donnelly, Patsy Donnelly.</p> <p>39:32 Recalls mode of transport to matches when playing for Waterford. Mentions John Paul Quinn, the hackney man. Mentions Clare, Limerick, Cork. Also mentions Michael Pender, Jimmy Power, Jimmy White. Recalls the way the players were treated by the county board. Mentions being suspended, along with Michael Pender. Mentions incident in Dungarvan, notice put in local newspaper. Helen recalls the effect it had on the family, how they would now be more disposed towards other sports, such as soccer. She mentions benefits of the GAA abroad, such as London, as opposed to the set-up back in Ireland.</p> <p>43:55 Billy recalls playing soccer while suspended from the GAA. Daughter recalls his playing style – nickname “The Comeragh Hurricane”. Mentions Bill Barry. Mentions missing Railway Cup due to suspension. Mentions Michael Pender, Clonea.</p> <p>45:55 Recalls playing inter-county after suspension was lifted.</p>
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	<p>Recalls crowds coming to see him and “The Killer” Donnelly play. Mentions Kerry's John Joe Sheehy and Cork's Jimmy Barry.</p> <p>47:30 Recalls Waterford County Board's differing approaches to hurling and Gaelic football.</p> <p>47:44 Discusses Waterford's Munster Football Championship clash with Kerry in 1957. Recalls marking Mick O'Dwyer in match. Mentions previous history with Kerry. Mentions Tom Cunningham winning the match for Waterford.</p> <p>51:09 Recalls players he played against down through the years. Mentions John Crowley from Kerry, John Joe Sheehy's son, Willie Goodison of Wexford, Paddy Driscoll and Toots Kelleher from Cork.</p> <p>52:17 Discusses training methods when playing inter-county. Recalls how selection for team was communicated. Describes pride felt at being picked.</p> <p>53:00 Recalls being selected for Munster Railway Cup team. Mentions match against Kerry in Tralee.</p> <p>53:52 Recalls playing for different clubs. Mentions playing football for Fewes. Mentions Kilrossanty, Clonea, John Mitchels in Fewes. Recalls that all his brothers played with John Mitchels.</p> <p>54:41 Recalls how the John Mitchels club was formed. Mentions Kilrossanty. Helen mentions effect of emigration on John Mitchels and Kilrossanty. They mention the rivalry that existed between the two clubs. Billy mentions match between the two clubs. Mentions Clonea also.</p> <p>56:40 They discuss effects off the field of play of the split between John Mitchels and Kilrossanty.</p> <p>57:35 Billy recalls celebrations after winning big matches. Mentions Cotty's Pub. Describes playing music after matches, weddings and wakes, mentions the Lyre Heritage Centre.</p> <p>58:53 Billy plays tunes on the accordion – polkas. .</p> <p>1:00:27 Plays some tunes of Jimmy Shand – waltzes.</p> <p>1:03:18 Discusses Jimmy Shand, a Scottish accordion player. Plays an example of his style of play. Plays “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling” and “The Hornpipe” on another accordion that he has.</p> <p>1:07:02 Discusses the popularity of set dancing in the area –</p>
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	<p>mentions the Lyre Heritage Centre. Explains where the name Lyre originates from.</p> <p>1:08:20 Recalls traditional music and singing in the GAA. Mentions scór. Mentions dances held in house. Mentions daughter Helen, Marie O'Shea and Murcy Griffin, as well as Billy himself, providing the entertainment.</p> <p>1:09:50 Plays and sings "An Irish Harvest Day".</p> <p>1:11:34 Discusses local songs.</p> <p>1:12:05 Recalls involvement in Ceoltas. Mentions playing in RTÉ. Mentions scór and also mentions Lyre.</p> <p>1:13:42 Recalls highlights from his GAA career. Recalls the enjoyment he gleaned from Gaelic games.</p> <p>1:14:23 Discusses his retirement from playing Gaelic games.</p> <p>1:15:07 Discusses The Ban. Mentions John Mitchels club attempts to have The Ban abolished. Comments on the effects of The Ban on the GAA. Mentions soccer. Refers to suspension of Tom Cheasty, Waterford hurler. Refers to the North of Ireland.</p> <p>1:17:41 Billy plays "The Siege of Ennis" on accordion.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played football with Fewes GAA and Kilrossanty; Played hurling with Clonea; Member of Waterford Senior Hurling team in the 1950s; Member of the Munster Football team in 1952; Member of the Waterford Senior Hurling team in the 1950s; Member of the Kilrossanty 4-in-a-row Waterford Senior Football Championship winning team; Won a Waterford County Hurling Championship with Clonea in 1952.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:18:54
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

I hereby assign the copyright of the content of the above to the GAA Oral History Project on the understanding that the content will not be used in a derogatory manner. I understand that I am giving the GAA Oral History Project the right to use and make available to the public the content of this interview.

Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18th July 2012