

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Aoife Doherty
Date of Interview	6 th Aug 2010
Location	Cardinal O'Fiaich Library, Armagh
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Joe Canning
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1931 Home County: Armagh
Education	N/A
Family	Siblings: 1 brother; 1 sister
Club(s)	Whitecross GAA Club [Armagh]
Occupation	Retired Librarian
Parents' Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Cumann Seanchais Ard Mhacha

Date of Report	13 th July 2012
Period Covered	1904 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Armagh
Key Themes Covered	Supporting, Grounds, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Education, Religion, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Professionalism, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Joe Canning did not come from a strong GAA family and the interview charts the progression of his relationship with the GAA – from occasional spectator to club administrator – and the impact this has had on his identity and his sense of Irishness. Canning talks about the great GAA players who made an impression on him in his youth, telling of attending games at the Armagh Athletic Grounds and listening to match commentaries on the radio. Canning discusses the origins and historical development of the St. Killian's club in Whitecross, as well as his involvement with the Armagh county board. He occupied a number of officer positions, including that of Treasurer and he refers to the difficulties in raising sufficient finance to meet the GAA's expenditures. Canning's deepening commitments at county board level corresponded with a reduction of his involvement at club level. He discusses the importance of volunteerism to the GAA, the impact of the Association on his sense of identity. Issues such as the Irish language, Scór, the work of the Cardinal O Fiaich library are raised. So too are such highlights and low-points in the modern Armagh GAA story as the 1977 All-Ireland final appearance and the assassination of the Reavey brothers from Whitecross – both members of his GAA club - in their own homes. Finally, Canning talks about his outlook for the GAA into the future and his preference for a revamped inter-county championship system.</p> <p>00:00:36 Discusses his early involvement with the GAA and his transition from an occasional spectator of club and county matches to a club administrative role.</p> <p>00:00:52 Mentions lack of family background in the GAA, though an Uncle had been a President of St. Patrick's Armagh and had been involved in training McCrory Cup</p>

	<p>teams.</p> <p>00:01:05 Mentions the differences in the GAA facilities of the past and present.</p> <p>00:01:41 Speaks about the GAA heroes of his youth: Hughie O'Hanlon, who played in the 1950s, and his brother Pat. Other names mentioned are Benny Feehan and Arthur O'Hanlon.</p> <p>00:02:38 Mentions attending games in the Armagh Athletic grounds while a student at St. Pat's Grammar School in Armagh. Refers some of the great players of that time, including Alf Murray, Gerry Fagan and Bill McCrory.</p> <p>00:03:06 Recalls listening to a radio commentary of an Ulster final between Armagh and Cavan that was replayed in Croke Park. Recalls hearing about Mick Mackey through the radio and how this stimulated an interest in Limerick hurling.</p> <p>00:03:57 Discusses the origins and historical development of his club, St. Killian's of Whitecross, Armagh, which was founded in 1904.</p> <p>00:05:25 Discusses the beginning of his involvement with the Armagh County Board.</p> <p>00:05:54 Talks about the various administrative positions he occupied on the Armagh County Board. Mentions the Armagh team that won the 1968 Ulster Minor championship.</p> <p>00:06:50 Discusses his record of service with the county board – as a member of the Minor board, as Treasurer of the County Board.</p> <p>00:07:28 Discusses the challenges associated with the roles he filled with the Minor Board and as Treasurer of the Armagh County Board. Refers to the fact that neither the income streams and nor expenditures were as great as they subsequently became. Nevertheless, it was, he says, a 'struggle' to keep ahead of the expenditure.</p> <p>00:08:30 Discusses the value of volunteerism to the GAA and cautions against its erosion – as appeared to be happening.</p> <p>00:09:22 Reflects on his involvement in the GAA has deepened over the years and how this has made greater demands on his time. Mentions that pressures of his roles at county level led to him to reduce his engagement with his club.</p> <p>00:10:14 Discusses the impact of the GAA on his identity and</p>
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	<p>his consciousness of a distinctive Irish traditional culture. Mentions that where he grew up was unionist dominated and had a particular 'atmosphere.'</p> <p>00:11:14 Agrees that the GAA shaped his idea of Irishness.</p> <p>00:11:29 Mentions the lack of influence of the Irish language on his club, while supporting the GAA's role in the promotion of the language. Points up some of the contradictions in the GAA's stance on the language.</p> <p>00:12:45 Mentions his lack of involvement in Scór and the fact that some clubs in Armagh were more enthusiastic about it than others.</p> <p>00:13:14 Discusses his conflicting reactions to retirement from his volunteer roles in the GAA. Refers to the tedium of many of the tasks and the relief of being shed of them, but refers also to missing the GAA and the friendships that went with it.</p> <p>00:13:51 Discusses the work of the Cardinal O Fiaich library.</p> <p>00:14:53 Selects his best memories from his years of involvement with the GAA in Armagh. Mentions the 1977 All-Ireland final and refers to the contribution of Jimmy Smyth.</p> <p>00:15:42 Selects as the low-point of his GAA involvement the assassination of the Reavey brothers from Whitecross – both members of his GAA club - in their own homes.</p> <p>00:16:18 Reflects on some of the greatest teams he has seen, including the Crossmaglen club team and the Antrim team of the 1940s, the Armagh team of the late 1970s and 2002.</p> <p>00:17:05 Discusses what it is about the GAA that makes him proud – mentions Croke Park, the all-Ireland nature of the Association, and the work being done for young people.</p> <p>00:18:02 Expresses a hope that the GAA in the future will preserve the same outlook as it currently has and that the trend towards rewarding players for playing the game doesn't gather momentum.</p> <p>00:18:25 Outlines preference for a revamped inter-county championship system and explains his reasons for it.</p>
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REFERENCE NO. AR/1/20

Involvement in GAA	<input type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	N/A
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 00:19:35
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Aoife Doherty

Date: 6th Aug 2010