

GAA Oral History Project

**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Arlene Crampsie
<b>Date of Interview</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> Sept 2009
<b>Location</b>	Interviewee's home, near Bonniconlon, Co. Mayo
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Patrick (Paddy) Weir
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1923 <b>Home County:</b> Mayo
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Bonniconlon NS, Co. Mayo
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 sisters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Bonniconlon GAA
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Farmers
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Used to be Clann na Talmhan, cynical now!

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<b>Date of Report</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2009
<b>Period Covered</b>	1839 – 2009
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Mayo, Roscommon, Galway, Sligo
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Earliest Memories, Childhood, Emigration, Media, Travel, Material Culture, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Refereeing, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Impact on Life, Challenges, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Professionalism, Retirement
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>At 86, Paddy Weir is President of the Bonniconlon Club. Although he no longer attends meeting he does still travel to matches in his tractor. Paddy was involved in his club as a player, referee, secretary and club delegate. Paddy talks about the setting up of the local club by Fr O’Hara and the early facilities the club had. He remembers the trouble the club had finding a field to play in and how they had to take wood from a local forestry for posts. He describes how pigs bladders were used for balls until he and his friends collected enough money to buy a proper ball. Paddy talks about the impact of emigration on the area and on the club, travelling to matches and the problem caused by the Second World War. He describes listening to matches on one of the two radios in the village, the changes in the GAA, the development of club facilities and his opinion on the rule changes which have occurred.</p> <p>0.00 Introduction</p> <p>0.30 Paddy is 86 now. He remembers in the 1920s, around 1927, people playing football in his family’s field along the river. He was afraid to go down to see all the people and all the noise.</p> <p>1.15 There were matches between the two villages. ‘There’d be no goal posts, just two jackets one either side for goal posts and sometimes you couldn’t so well leave your jacket because the owner of the land might come and you had to be quick whoever’s jacket was there for the goal posts to have it gone and run. People didn’t like to see their bit of land tramped, I don’t know was it any harm.’</p> <p>2.00 Mayo was playing Kerry in an All-Ireland semi-final. There was no radio, but they’d get a phone call at the local</p>

	<p>barracks so they had to send some young fella down to find out.</p> <p>2.45 He went to school and started playing football in a field by the village. 'Nobody had football boots hardly'.</p> <p>3.20 'They used to kill pigs, and there would be a big pig market in Bonniconlon and they killed the pigs and the refuse would be thrown ... back in the fields and the local lads would go out getting the pigs bladders and blow them up and it might last them, it would surprise you how tough they were.'</p> <p>3.53 Fr. O'Hara arrived in 1921 / 1922 and he was very interested in football, politics and local happenings. He organised a team. The GAA wasn't organised in the area before that.</p> <p>4.40 'At that time then was a lot of migration, and round this area they'd go to England on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June what they'd call the hay farmers, they go into Lancashire ... and once that would come you'd hardly have a team left. Most of the young men would go and even before that I remember some of them were afraid to play football in case they'd get hurt.'</p> <p>5.35 Hardly anybody at that time had boots. The club had nothing. The boots were thrown in the house of the local tailor in the village and when you went back you might only get one boot.</p> <p>6.00 At times they were sent to a small shop to buy 'whangs' – leather laces.</p> <p>6.30 It became better organised and they started travelling in cars to outside matches. 'Or else sometimes there'd be a local man who'd have a truck, you know a businessman and they might get him to drive them ... oh all in there might be forty at the end of that and it was deadly dangerous.'</p> <p>7.05 It began to improve all the time with the prosperity in the country, but 'it was almost washed out during the war. There was no petrol and teams started coming in horses and traps or side cars as they would have called them. 'I think there was a year or two there was no matches at all during the war, cos there was no bicycles even to be got.'</p> <p>7.55 He cycled down to Moygownagh almost 30 miles away with no tube on the tires in the front. It was what they had to do.</p> <p>8.35 Around the late 30s they got jerseys, but not everybody had togs, some of them played in their trousers. Boots were</p>
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always the problem. 'I never bought a pair of boots, I dunno, I got a nice pair of boots some man that brought them from England, but they were right good ones. They were stamped genuine junior McGregors, they were better than anything that was made in Ireland, I might as well tell you now, I think there's one of them knocking around someplace here yet. I got them and I held on to them.'

9.40 The first club colours he remembers were the Kerry colours Green and Gold, but they changed later. Later they got women to knit them – purple and red. Now the colours are more like the Dublin colours, a pale blue.

10.25 Fr O'Hara was one of the founders. They had been playing football before, but Fr O'Hara was a prime mover, John Neary, Anthony Kerrigan and John Loftus, a teacher in the local school.

11.10 They had a meeting in someone's house down in the village. Fr O'Hara was also chairman of the Mayo County Board for thirty years.

11.40 The teacher had played football in Dublin, but there wasn't much in Bonnicolton when he came back.

12.05 'Well, there was only one ball in the parish, yes, and the ball was in the back of Fr O'Hara's. Sometimes you might get it out playtime at school; if he wasn't there you wouldn't and even on Sundays if there was no match and he'd gone away, that was it. So then, they did, the local ones then around this area, this side of the village we joined up and we joined in a football, and they done the same I think at the other end of the parish.'

12.50 Not everyone had money. One group of lads sold turf to get the money for the ball, one of them added a bag of potatoes to the load of turf, but he got caught.

13.35 They'd be ran out of the field, because no one wanted to give them a field to play in.

13.45 The club used to play in a field in a big estate – the Downey Estate, where the great O'Dowd's were. They left the estate at the time of the famine. They didn't force the tenants to pay and they went bankrupt themselves. Then the Downey's came in, but it was very near the village so it was suitable for football.

14.30 'Around 1934 the farm and the estate was divided and I suppose Fr O'Hara had enough influence to get a field there, just beside the village. It wasn't perfect maybe a bit of a hump

	<p>in it but in the last number of years they have straightened it and levelled it.'</p> <p>15.10 There was a lot of fundraising done like the 'Mayor of the Parish'. They've built a complex there, but they can get good grants now.</p> <p>15.45 'That time there was no such thing as going into training, you mightn't meet from one match to another. There might be a month or couple of weeks you wouldn't see anybody. There'd be maybe a few in the evenings unless they'd be in the village, they'd be kicking a ball round about, but now it's training every evening from U-4s up to U-20s. I don't know how we could play football or how we could win any match at all at that time, but it was the same in every parish I suppose'.</p> <p>16.35 They held dances, and ran dramas / plays to raise a few pounds, but they were lucky to raise the price of the ball.</p> <p>17.10 He remembers another time when they had no goal posts, they were rotten. 'There was a chap working here with me, he was a young lad, he was awful interested ... I said you know there's a bit of forestry out the hills there and it's lovely posts, sitka spruce poles in it growing. Ah he said we wouldn't get them, I said we'll go out some night and get a couple. So myself and himself went one fine harvest night and went out and cut two of them and carried them in a good five miles.' They went out again the next year for another two.</p> <p>18.00 Years before that, they went out to a forestry in Attymass and got some where the twigs had gone dead. They had to bring them home in an ass and cart through rough ground. 'I brought them over in my ass and cart and there were good job there was no traffic on the road because when you'd be coming round a turn the pole would be going round the turn before you, because it was out over the ass's head.'</p> <p>18.20 There was no handball played in the area really, just a few playing against the gable wall. Hurling was never really played either. The odd time a guard would come into the area they'd try to start it up, but as soon as somebody got injured that would be the end of it.</p> <p>19.40 There was not much hurling in Mayo, except South Mayo on the border with Galway.</p> <p>19.55 In a book published in the parish somebody talked about a hurling match held in a field in the area on the day of the night of the big wind 1839. It would have been a rough</p>
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	<p>kind of hurling. Paddy supposes that 'when they had no football, they might have been belting a ball round with sticks more or less.'</p> <p>20.35 Paddy's family were never really interested in football. There was no pity for him when he came home if he was hurt and he got giving out to if his clothes were dirty.</p> <p>21.15 Paddy always played corner forward. He'd be like a soccer striker now. If a ball came lose he'd be on it.</p> <p>21.55 Paddy thinks the biggest difference between matches then and now is the attendance. Visiting teams did not bring many supporters with them. 'But, there'd be more local people, because I remember well, them passing down that road, the day of a match, they'd be all be walking down now, they'd be lines of them coming, bunches of three one after another going down to see the match ... and you might have to give sixpence, if you could you'd get in for nothing.'</p> <p>22.45 There was nowhere to stand so they just sat along the sideline. People were always coming in on the pitch, the field would be getting very narrow. There were a few incidences when the match wasn't finished. Paddy refereed for a little while.</p> <p>24.20 Paddy was involved in marking the field and sowing and fixing the football.</p> <p>24.35 'If there was a puncture in it you had to bring it up from the village and fix the puncture, and well, then round the neck of it it would rip you know and you had to go and get your wax thread and sow it and leave it back again.'</p> <p>25.00 He also put up notices for the matches – one outside the church gates and a couple round the village.</p> <p>25.20 He used lime / white-wash to line the field. He'd be going round the field with his bucket. 'Once you, you mightn't understand this, once they were marked straight once or twice, the grass on the certain parts it'd grow there and you could see without a mark at all. The lime brought on a good, different type of grass and they used to come a white daisy ... it was very easy to follow then, nature took over then.'</p> <p>26.25 If matches were in the village they'd walk or cycle. Nobody had a car at the start, now everybody has one. You'd have to employ hackney cars or get lorries 'on the quiet', but he think the authorities overlooked that. In the 1950s they started to get buses.</p>
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	<p>27.30 Paddy heard them talking about using big side cars that would have brought a good few, but that might only have been for one match in the year.</p> <p>28.00 There was a lot of rivalry in the parish – there were three divisions. There was Cara, Bonniconlon and Bowfield.</p> <p>28.30 ‘Sometimes it wouldn’t be so sociable either.’</p> <p>28.50 Paddy got a good name as a referee. He would have been fair enough to them, he had to remember not to give advantage to his own team.</p> <p>29.30 Knockmore were playing down in the village. Fr Durkan insisted that Paddy referee both matches.</p> <p>30.05 Paddy put off a priest and even if he meets Fr Durkan today he still says to him ‘ca bhfuil the man that’s ever put a priest of the field ... I did not know, I suppose if I did I wouldn’t do it ... ah indeed it wasn’t the first time he caused trouble.’</p> <p>30.55 Paddy never got any training to become a referee – it was just experience.</p> <p>31.10 Paddy thinks the priests were very important to keeping the teams going. He talks about the role of Fr Durkan in Knockmore and Fr Davies in Crossmolina. ‘Then you have priests that wouldn’t bother you at all.’</p> <p>32.25 Paddy describes his role as secretary: writing down what happened at the meeting, notifying outside players that there was a match on. Edward Moriarty, was a guard in the area, he got picked for the Ireland team, he got moved and Paddy had to let him know when a match was happening.</p> <p>33.30 Paddy doesn’t remember many illegal players, but he does remember one or two. There was one chap whose sister was married and living in the village, but he got caught.</p> <p>34.25 Paddy never went to the county board meetings, but he went to the North Mayo meetings. They were mainly about fixtures, sometimes there’d be arguments. He talks about Ardnaree deciding to found a separate club from Ballina Stephenites. They became Bonniconlon’s big rivals.</p> <p>36.05 Paddy remembers the field being officially opened in 1935. There was a match between Ballina Stephenites and Ballycastle, they were two senior teams in the county.</p> <p>36.55 ‘Different kind of football now, it was catch it and put down your head and kick it wherever it went. You weren’t looking round to place a man with it or anything ... not very</p>
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	<p>scientific I'll admit, sometimes I'd be trying to play a bit of cute football and I used to get a lot of criticism about 'what is he looking at'.</p> <p>37.25 Paddy recalls a chap who wasn't so good, but he thought it was great to kick the highest ball of the day.</p> <p>37.55 Paddy doesn't think games were any more violent then. As a referee you'd get plenty of criticism from your own crowd and playing you'd get it from your own team about what you should have done.</p> <p>38.35 Paddy won the North Mayo Junior Championship while he played. At that time there was no intermediate, so junior was a higher standard. There'd be senior teams that went down that were trying to get back up again.</p> <p>39.20 'Emigration took them, took them, took them up until now. Oh the 20<sup>th</sup> June made an awful difference round here, and then later on when there was you know work in England in construction and everything else, they wouldn't even come back, when the farm work would be over in England. They'd go to what they call 'the Hay', it was the hiring sale and then they'd go on from that to the Harvest. The Hay was in Lancashire and the harvest and Beet and Potatoes were in Linconshire. They'd finish up around Christmas, they'd be all coming and fine new suits on them.'</p> <p>40.20 Paddy was never tempted he had enough to keep him going with a middling farm. They had a horse and cart and an ass and cart and he was kept going cutting hay and saving turf. He couldn't leave the field of hay for the football.</p> <p>41.05 There was no such thing as ladies' football or underage football at that time. Paddy remembers a match between two schools once or twice.</p> <p>41.40 There was a lot of celebration when Bonniconlon won the North Mayo, they didn't win much, but then recently they have won a junior and an intermediate. There was a good bunch of players together Judges, Egans etc. now it's gone back again and they are struggling to stay at intermediate level.</p> <p>42.30 It's well organised now, they have even got a second field to use for training to save the good field.</p> <p>42.50 When Bonniconlon won the North Mayo they came home on the bus and there was a lot of shouting and roaring coming through Ardnaree and there was a bonfire when they</p>
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	<p>got home.</p> <p>43.25 There weren't really any dances or céill's organised by the club at that time.</p> <p>43.40 Paddy didn't go to Croke Park to watch matches. In 1936 when he was going to school, there wasn't half a dozen people who went to Croke Park.</p> <p>44.20 Later on they started running trains. The first time Paddy was ever on a train he went to Roscommon to see Mayo playing Galway. It was a big experience. Then later on people started travelling by bus.</p> <p>45.20 Paddy remembers that there were big celebrations in Ballina when Mayo won the All-Irelands, because two of the team were from there.</p> <p>45.30 There were two radios, one in each pub in the village so the whole parish gathered in round the radios. They thought it was a great thing to be able to hear it. It was something new for them, but 'the commentary that time was very plain, you know the commentator wasn't adding a lot to it ... and they weren't so good at naming players you know, for the first time, not until Michael O'Hehir came along and he put a bit of colour on it alright and then after that everyone kind of mimicking him and how he used to do it.'</p> <p>47.17 The first time Paddy watched a match on TV was down in the village in black and white. He can't remember what year it was, because it was late enough by the time they got a television in the village.</p> <p>48.00 Paddy went to Roscommon, Tuam, Sligo, and Castlebar. 'I remember alright before that when Mayo were playing, in the 1930s team that Mayo had, I didn't cycle, but all round here all the older ones did cycle to Castlebar. They set off here just after mass after first mass, oh there'd be a great lot might be twenty or thirty cycled all the way to Castlebar to the match.' They'd have cycled back that night again and thought nothing of it.</p> <p>49.00 They cycled to places to play matches. 'Then during war time it was nearly impossible to get a bicycle or keep her going on the road, you couldn't get tyres.'</p> <p>49.35 Paddy thinks the ban on foreign games was 'ridiculous', 'a lot of nonsense' and a bit bigoted.</p> <p>50.20 There was very little soccer or rugby played in Mayo, there was a few people in Ballina that played rugby, but that</p>
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	<p>was it. Even now when they are played they don't affect Gaelic.</p> <p>51.15 Paddy remembers a guard that played with Mayo who went to a soccer match in Sligo and there were big objections to him, but he said he had to go as a guard, so he got away with it. Sligo always had a soccer team.</p> <p>52.00 The Irish language and culture never played a part in the club. Irish dancing and céilí dancing never caught on. It would be organised, but it fell away.</p> <p>53.15 Even after being secretary Paddy helped out, but he was involved in other things. He was involved with dramas that they took round to different places to raise funds for the club. They did two plays one in Lent and one in Advent (when there was no dancing) and that lasted for about four or five years. Paddy enjoyed that, because he was away rehearsing maybe two nights a week, it was something to do.</p> <p>54.45 He didn't get involved in other roles in the clubs.</p> <p>55.10 'It's all volunteers'. You wonder how it could ever manage without some people. But when somebody stops somebody else takes over.</p> <p>56.00 The GAA kept the young people from 'doing devilment'. When they're not involved in football they try to show themselves off in other ways.</p> <p>56.40 Paddy thinks the club was very important to the community. It brought people together and allowed people to build up friendships with people they would never have met otherwise.</p> <p>57.15 Paddy is President of the club now, but says: 'they have to name someone'. Paddy doesn't attend meetings anymore, but he does go to the matches. 'I go to the matches alright I go down in my tractor and sit in the tractor there and I can watch it in comfort.' He contributes to their funds too, they're running a lotto and the county board also have a draw, where so much of the funds raised come back to the club.</p> <p>58.50 Biggest Changes: Everybody has a car now and their own boots and togs. 'They have showers now when matches are over. We had to gone down there and there was a big pile of whins on one side of the field and that's where you togged out you know and if it was a wet day how were you going to keep your clothes dry when you were away?'</p> <p>59.45 Paddy is not in favour of the International Rules, with</p>
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	<p>their tackles – half rugby tackles.</p> <p>1.00.45 Paddy is in favour of the opening of Croke Park so long as they can keep the ground good enough.</p> <p>1.01.15 Paddy is against the idea of pay for play. It will finish it. It will be too hard to manage it. He believes you should play for the sake of playing the game. The funds for club development would run dry.</p> <p>1.02.45 Best Match: The Dublin Kerry matches at that time. There was great football in them altogether. It was more like Gaelic football at that time, they're afraid to kick it now and there's too much hand passing.</p> <p>1.03.40 Paddy recalls Galway playing Mayo in a Connacht Final. Galway got the ball and they kept it until they got near enough to the post to take the point, it was a great bit of brainy football.</p> <p>1.04.30 Hero: 'It's hard to pick out anyone.' In the 1936 team Henry Kenny played. He was the father of Enda Kenny and he was only 19. He played for eleven years afterwards in the Connacht final. He was a mighty footballer. Mickie Kearns of Sligo, Martie McDonagh and Sean Purcell of Galway were great footballers. There are clever footballers now like Pádraic Joyce, the Gooch, Kelly.</p> <p>1.06.45 Bonniclon did not have a club song and Paddy doesn't think there's a special Mayo song.</p> <p>1.07.25 Favourite Memory: When Mayo won their second All-Ireland in 1951. It proved that they were a good team when they won it the following year.</p> <p>1.08.15 His worst memory was when Kerry got beat for the five in a row. 'It was a great Kerry team and they deserved it.'</p> <p>1.09.05 Another great memory was the day Dawn Run a mare won the Cheltenham Gold Cup having won the Champion Hurdle the year before. Paddy was watching the television with his two dogs and he was shouting and roaring at the set and the two dogs were barking.</p> <p>1.10.0 Paddy thinks the role of women in the GAA is great. The local club won the All-Ireland in Butlins a few years ago. There was more celebration for that than for the team that won the junior. There were banners and everything out in the village for that.</p> <p>1.11.10 The GAA meant a lot to Paddy. He wonders what life</p>
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	would be like without it. At times it was a struggle, like the night he cut the poles in the wood and took them home in the middle of the night. 'Sure what else would we be talking about half the time.' He was down with a Kerry woman in the area today and that's all they talked about. 'It's the life of the parish in a way, is the football.'
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played from the ages of 20 – 33. He won a North Mayo Divisional Board Championship and a Junior B Title (sometime during World War II).
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Paddy was club secretary for 2 years and is currently club President.
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 1hr 13min 01sec
<b>Language</b>	English

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed: \_\_\_Arlene Crampsie\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_30/11/09\_\_\_\_\_

