

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	22 nd Feb 2011
Location	St. Brigid's Clubhouse, Ballinacree, Co. Meath
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Michael Connaughton
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1942 Home County: Meath
Education	Primary: Ballinacree, Co. Meath Secondary: St. Finian's, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
Family	Siblings: 4 brothers & 3 sisters
Club(s)	St. Brigid's GFC, Ballinacree
Occupation	Railway
Parents' Occupation	Teachers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Swimming Club, Music Club

REFERENCE NO. MH/1/10

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Michael Timmins
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1942 Home County: Meath
Education	Primary: Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan and Oldcastle, Co. Meath Secondary: Oldcastle Secondary School, Co. Meath
Family	Siblings: 4 brothers & 4 sisters Current Family if Different: Married with 3 sons and 2 daughters
Club(s)	St. Brigid's GFC, Ballinacree; Oldcastle GFC
Occupation	Fitter
Parents' Occupation	Railway, Oil Truck [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Oldcastle Brass and Reed Band (45 years)

REFERENCE NO. MH/1/10

Date of Report	6 th August 2012
Period Covered	1954 – 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Meath, Cavan, Westmeath, Great Britain, England, Americas, USA, Australia, New Zealand
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Celebrations, Fundraising, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Impact on Life, Alcohol, Violence, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Economy/Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Michael Connaughton and Michael Timmins discuss the evolution of St. Brigid's GFC, Ballinacree, from its formation in 1962 to the present. They reflect on their involvement in the club and the key moments in the club's history. They explain how the location of Ballinacree near the border with Cavan and Westmeath affected the club and ponder the effects of emigration on the success of the club. In addition, they recount a range of stories from club lore. Finally, they mention various Meath and Cavan footballers they admire, and they consider the impact the GAA has had on their lives.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:37 Michael C recalls his earliest memory of the GAA: a Meath vs. Cavan football match in Croke Park in 1954. Tom Duff breaking his leg. Animosity between Meath and Cavan supporters.</p> <p>00:59 His Roscommon father going to football and hurling matches. His cousins Buddy Connaughton and John Connaughton playing hurling for Roscommon. Going to see his cousins play in Athleague and Trim.</p> <p>05:16 Michael T recalls his upbringing in Ballyjamesduff, Cavan, his mother from Lavey, his father from Oldcastle. Going to matches with his father. Recounts story involving Cavan footballer Tony Tighe. Moving to Oldcastle in 1950. Remembers Meath footballers Connie Kelly and Jim Kearney visiting his family home.</p> <p>07:13 Going to school in Oldcastle. School friend Leo Halpin, chairman of Oldcastle GAA Club. Mentions footballers who attended local secondary school: Sean Stack, Jimmy Halpin,</p>

	<p>Tom Lynch. Jimmy Halpin his top footballer.</p> <p>8:22 Michael T describes going to matches in Charlie Halpin's lorry to Kells. Millbrook GAA Club's strength then compared to Oldcastle. Oldcastle's decline. Supporting Millbrook. Moving to Ballinacree. His daughters playing football with St. Brigid's GFC, Ballinacree. His son winning the Junior Football Championship in 1994, currently living in the Isle of Man and captain of Ellan Vannin Gaels GAA Club. Travelling to matches around Meath when his sons were playing.</p> <p>10:02 Discussion of the lack of other distractions, apart from football, in the past. Michael T mentions Pat "Roof" Brown discussing violent games in the past. Mentions Gammell's Field.</p> <p>11:15 Michael T recounts story about Jimmy Daly playing for Oldcastle in the 1940s. Also Jim Kearney's record for a dropkick in Croke Park. Also Bobby Willis handballer.</p> <p>12:52 Michael C explains his parents are from different counties, so little knowledge of Meath football. Emphasis in his family on Roscommon GAA. Mentions travelling to Mountnugent, Cavan, where Mick Higgins played. Watching game through the hedge.</p> <p>14:15 Discussion of lack of pitch facilities. Games played in ordinary fields. Comparison with facilities nowadays. No dressing rooms. Matches played in Lynch's field. Cleaning cow dung off the field before the game. Going to games in Millbrook and Mountnugent. No team list.</p> <p>16:04 Description of Liam and Des Maguire playing for Cavan in the 1950s against their brother Brendan for Meath in the 1952 All-Ireland Senior Football Final. Also Seamus Maguire, Oldcastle's first chairman, refereeing games His involvement in the club.</p> <p>17:16 Explanation of how Seamus Maguire started the club. Several players coming from Millbrook: Benny Briody, Vincent Walsh, Tom Hennessy, Oliver Gilsenan, Liam Fanning, Michael Gammell. Lack of experience of most players. Ball of brown paper. Little understanding of rules. Seamus Maguire organising teams.</p> <p>18:52 Michael C explains the lack of football teams in area when they were growing up. Occasional school game against Mountnugent. Priest and schoolteacher organising games: travelling by pony and trap, vans, cars. Playing in Hones' field. Mentions those involved in the formation of St. Brigid's in</p>
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	<p>1962: Joe Blake and Seamus Maguire, Liam and Andy Fanning, Benny Briody, Mickie Gammell, Oliver Gilsean.</p> <p>21:41 Michael C describes an earlier Ballinacree club in the 1920s, 1930s. Losing their right to the name as a club. Mentions Father Toner. Name of St. Brigid's chosen.</p> <p>24:05 Discussion of colours chosen and reasons for choosing. Currently blue. Mentions Eamonn Moore involved in club in the 70s and 80s, probably responsible for colour choice.</p> <p>27:10 Michael C reflects on the starting of the club. Meeting in Brown's cottage, crowds turning up. No official meeting venue. Also meeting in Paddy Lord's forge. Pat Brown's cattle shed used as dressing room for games and meeting place for teams before club formed. Old school used. Word of mouth spreading news of new club.</p> <p>32:25 Mentions Mrs Kidman who rented her field for use as pitch. Silk Park. Seamus Maguire and Michael C's father, Patrick, asking for the field. Used it from 1962 to 1976. Condition of field – had a tendency to flood.</p> <p>37:08 Mentions starting work on pitch. Tony Coyle, Joe Blake, the Fannings and Benny Briody starting work on the pitch. Levelling ridges, putting up wire fence. Tony Coyle's role in organising the volunteers. Description of work involved. Mrs Kidman selling the pitch to the club at a fair price.</p> <p>42:01 Michael T recalls playing underage with Oldcastle at this time. Oldcastle winning 1966 junior championship, not playing due to broken nose. Injury ending his football career.</p> <p>43:00 Players transferring from Oldcastle to St. Brigid's in the early years: Kevin Tynan, Jimmy McEnroe, Billy Hammond, Joe Tynan. Michael T recounts story about Oldcastle involving selector Joe Tynan who played with Ballinacree. Stories of animosity between Ballinacree and Oldcastle. Getting a plot of ash to bring timber home from.</p> <p>45:18 Discussion of Joe Blake's significant role in setting up the club. His belief that Ballinacree should have its own football club.</p> <p>46:47 Michael C discusses various fundraising strategies, including raffles, card games, dinner dances, sponsored walks. Joe Blake organising selling of raffle tickets. Encouraging people to get involved, including players from Oldcastle.</p>
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	<p>50:01 Caffreys of Millbrook, Millbrook Eggs (now Millbrook Foods), employing people from different counties. Joe targeting them to play for Ballinacree.</p> <p>52:04 Michael T recalls Paddy Lord being Club President, his knowledge of club history. His own limited history in Ballinacree.</p> <p>52:43 Michael C recounts Paddy Lord's contribution to the club for almost 20 years. Providing ice cream and soft drinks free from his shop after games. Also providing facilities for meeting and as facilities for players. His support at matches.</p> <p>56:25 Players smoking before matches, cigarette setting fire to Paddy's hayshed.</p> <p>57:49 Getting dressing room around 1980.</p> <p>58:48 Michael T recalls the Clarke family, who emigrated to America and played GAA in New York. Recounts story of Joe Blake and Michael Clarke taking frees in match.</p> <p>59:46 Mentions Joe Blake's sons Martin (selector on minor), Tomás (playing for junior Meath), and Sean, who had knee injury. Their involvement in underage club football.</p> <p>01:00:28 Discussion of significance of club in locality. Socialising with friends.</p> <p>01:01:00 Location near border of Cavan and Westmeath. Clubs they support in Cavan: Mountnugent, Castlerahan, Munterconnaught, Ballymachugh, and Ballycomoye in Westmeath.</p> <p>01:01:54 Discussion of lack of families in the club.</p> <p>01:02:31 Explanation of how Ballinacree's location close to the Cavan border boosted their sense of identity. Meath, Cavan, Westmeath pupils in class in school. Inter-county banter about football.</p> <p>01:04:21 Michael T recalls in the 40s and 50s, great rivalry between Meath and Cavan, arguments in pitch and toss.</p> <p>01:05:04 Michael C discusses the improvement of relations between Meath and Cavan. Less violence. More respect.</p> <p>01:06:26 Michael T mentions Cavan footballers Mick Higgins or John Joe O'Reilly as favourite footballers in the parish.</p> <p>01:07:00 Discussion of footballers playing illegally for clubs, being a border parish. How easy it was for a player from a</p>
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	<p>different county to play under the name of local person. Mentions Joe Blake's lookout in 1960s for different players. Local athletic club catered for Meath, Westmeath, Cavan.</p> <p>01:11:24 Michael T describes people from other counties, such as Donegal, coming to work in forestry and big farms, for example, Kilroy's farm.</p> <p>01:11:54 Discussion about lack of hurling in parish. Nearby teams in Westmeath, Castlepollard and Ballycomoye, have hurling teams, along with Athboy.</p> <p>01:13:09 Description of St. Brigid's milestones: winning Under-21 in 1993, junior championship in 1994, Under-21 in 1989.</p> <p>01:13:49 Celebrations: cavalcade from Navan home in 1994, bringing cup to Paddy Connaughton.</p> <p>01:14:23 Ballinacree is a half-parish. Recollection of how the club was joined with Mountnugent in the 1980s because Mountnugent had no underage. Strength of amalgamated team. Mountnugent's successes compared to Ballinacree. Importance of participation. Discussion of reasons for club's limited success, namely, lack of players.</p> <p>01:18:03 Rivalries with Moynalty, An Gaeltacht, Clann na nGael, in Meath. Losing players to emigration to Australia and New Zealand. Cyclical strength of team depending on available players.</p> <p>01:19:33 Michael T mentions Benny Briody's Factory, a big employer in the area. Success in 1994 junior football championship due to players being employed locally. Michael C describes losing players who move to Cork to work. Lack of local employment now. Players working in Dublin still playing with local team.</p> <p>01:21:54 Michael C reflects on the thriving of underage football in the parish. High skill levels. Culture of football now – compares it to kicking pig's bladder. Blowing it up with straw.</p> <p>01:23:29 Discussion of their best memories: victory in the junior football championship in Navan in 1994. Cavalcade home, supporters on streets, support from rival clubs. North Meath's pride, usually feels inferior. United front when team from North Meath wins. Importance of success to boost morale of the team.</p> <p>01:27:18 Discussion of their GAA heroes. Michael T mentions</p>
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REFERENCE NO. MH/1/10

	<p>Sean Boylan's contribution to Meath football. His approach to the game. An ambassador to football. Michael C mentions Pat "The Red" Collier's personality and strength. Also Dermot Earley's dedication.</p> <p>01:29:59 Description of travelling to matches. A club trip to St Teresa's GAA Club in Birmingham, emigrants from the parish playing there. Michael C visiting Kesh. John Cryan from Kesh organising club visit to play game during carnival in 1960s. Socialising. Excitement of travelling by bus.</p> <p>01:32:41 Recollection of travelling in Charlie Halpin's turf lorry to games in Kells. Packed in. Recounts game in Finnea, Benny Briody's father, Tom Briody, driving players in tractor and trailer. Ballinacree Fife and Drum Band being driven in Tom Briody's lorry in 1950s. John Smith also driving them in lorry.</p> <p>01:37:24 Michael T recalls his grandad's memories of riding bicycles to Kingscourt for games, 35 miles each way.</p> <p>01:37:53 They reflect on the impact their involvement in the GAA has had on their lives. Michael C describes the GAA as a great pastime and topic of conversation in Ireland. Links across Ireland through clubs. Michael T mentions lifelong friends made, stories told. Importance to Irish heritage.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>Michael C: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" 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): _____</p> <p>Michael T: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" 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): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Michael C: Played for 10/12 years.</p> <p>Michael T:</p>

REFERENCE NO. MH/1/10

	Played for 10/12 years. Won an Oldcastle School's Medal.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Michael C: Has been involved in administration since 1962. Club: Founder, Treasurer, Delegate to County Board, President. Also built the dressingrooms and goalposts using BD Floods Cement facilities at night. Michael T: Has been involved in administration since 1976. Club: Underage Committee, Treasurer, Gates Committees, Park and Fundraising Committee.
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:40:41
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: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____06/08/12_____