

GAA Oral History Project
Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	19 th Feb 2012
Location	Interviewee's home, near Ballinascarthy, Co. Cork
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Denis Keohane
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1948 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: Knocksceagh NS
Family	Siblings: 2 sisters and 1 brother [deceased] Current Family if Different: Wife (Hettie), 2 daughters & 1 son
Club(s)	St Oliver Plunketts GAA, Ahiohill [Cork]
Occupation	Farmer
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	National Ploughing Association, Clonakilty Ploughing Association, Macra na Feirme, Parish Church Committee

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Date of Report	22 nd May 2012
Period Covered	1884-2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Emigration, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>00:15 Born in 1948 in Ballinascorthy, a rural area with many GAA clubs.</p> <p>00:45 There are three GAA clubs in his parish and four underage clubs. The underage side of Ballinascorthy is St Oliver Plunkett's.</p> <p>01:10 There is no major town but a village nearby is Enniskeen.</p> <p>01:35 His father had a GAA interest but they didn't have a car to go to games and listened to games on the radio instead, especially to Micheál O hÉither.</p> <p>02:10 The first game he attended was between Cork and Kerry in 1962.</p> <p>02:20 He listened to the 1960 All-Ireland football final that Down won in a neighbour's house. The woman who owned the house was upset that Sam Maguire was going over the border.</p> <p>03:15 He has only missed two Munster football finals and two hurling finals since 1962. He had a broken leg in 1975 and couldn't go.</p> <p>03:50 He went to his first Munster final with his brother and they took the bus to Cork. A schoolmate and his father was there too and the game was on in the Athletic Grounds. He was about 14 at the time.</p> <p>04:40 His neighbour took him in the car to the next eight to ten Munster finals in Killarney. Mick O'Connell was playing for Kerry.</p> <p>05:34 Cork had a good team in the 1970s with players like</p>

	<p>Declan Barron and Dinny Long playing. Billy Morgan was with them too and they won the 1973 All-Ireland.</p> <p>05:45 His first trip to Croke Park was the 1966 All-Ireland football semi-final between Cork and Galway, organised by the Pioneers of west Cork. Galway won and were on their way to a three-in-a-row.</p> <p>06:30 He was in Croke Park in 1967 when Cork lost to Meath.</p> <p>06:35 His first hurling All-Ireland was in 1970 against Wexford.</p> <p>06:55 1966 was also his first visit to Dublin and it was awesome. Croke Park was a long walk to him.</p> <p>08:00 A friend of his was big into the GAA and has shaped Denis' thinking about it.</p> <p>08:45 Denis doesn't drink alcohol but he still goes to the pub to meet people.</p> <p>09:35 His friend does not like soccer or rugby and would have seen Christy Ring play in his heyday.</p> <p>11:10 Most of his travelling outside of his parish was only for GAA matches.</p> <p>11:20 His wife is also interested in GAA, but doesn't always let on. The GAA plays a huge role in their lives.</p> <p>14:00 His parish, Enniskeen, is about 12 miles long. They used to call south of the river Dysart Surges, Ahiohill is the southern end of the parish now. It is narrow in the middle of the parish and Newcestown and Dunmanway are close to that.</p> <p>15:05 In the 1940s there was a club in Ahiohill which lasted a few years. Before that there had been one in Enniskeen but it broke up. Some players joined Ahiohill because they had fallen out with their own clubs.</p> <p>15:55 Newcestown club had not been formed at the time and there was a Ger Kiely there who played for Ahiohill.</p> <p>16:00 Ahiohill petered out after a few years as Enniskeen was reformed and some people played with Ballinascarthy.</p> <p>16:30 Many of them played underage with St Mary's.</p> <p>16:40 Mathunas of Castletown were first to break away and have been successful.</p>
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	<p>17:45 Pedlar's underage is in Enniskeen parish.</p> <p>18:20 Denis' club is the smallest. They have won Cork minor titles in the 1990s with players with Billy Hennigan and Brian Mc Carthy on the team. They played with the Cork minors.</p> <p>19:00 in 2006/2007 they had Kevin Coffey on the Cork minor football team and Conor Driscoll on the minor hurling team. Brian Welsh played minor football in goal the following year and went on to play for the Under-21s.</p> <p>19:45 Denis' daughter Margaret played ladies football with the Clonakilty team and won an All-Ireland.</p> <p>20:00 It has a major impact if a local player is on an inter-county team. It means trips to Croke Park and places like Kilmallock in Limerick and Walsh Park in Waterford to follow the player.</p> <p>20:40 Brian McCarthy was on the Cork team in 1991 and Denis went to Croke Park to see him play with Cork against Down.</p> <p>21:05 He went to Cork with a Carbery selection once and young players wanted to know who the Cork selectors were because their aim was to catch their eye.</p> <p>21:55 It is a proud moment for the inter-county player's family and friends and it boosts the profile of their club.</p> <p>24:10 Recalls being in Croke Park to watch Brian McCarthy play an All-Ireland quarter-final and the game was at 11:30 but it was the main match of the day for them and what games followed it were not very important because Cork lost.</p> <p>25:20 The GAA in small communities is getting more important by the day. It keeps people together socially. Mass times have changed and you don't know the people that you see there anymore.</p> <p>28:00 New people have come into small communities and the GAA is the only way to get to know them.</p> <p>29:05 Some people stay in the community because they want to represent the local team.</p> <p>31:00 Ahiohill were drawn against Ballinascorthy and a meeting was held a week later about it because the match was so important to the people of the community.</p> <p>32:00 Ahiohill lost a west Cork junior football final to their neighbours in 2010, and it was played on the pitch of the third</p>
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	<p>local team.</p> <p>32:40 The rivalry between the local teams is healthy in 2010, although it has been bitter in the past.</p> <p>34:00 There was 'The Battle of Clonakilty' at an Under-21 game but Denis was not there.</p> <p>35:00 His son and daughter are both planning on staying in the area and Denis feels that the GAA is a major reason for this.</p> <p>36:20 The economy has affected the area but in the past many were farmers so they did not have to leave; they just lived on less. In boom times people bought more land.</p> <p>40:00 Denis' club is hopeful that they won't lose many people due to recession and that perhaps some will have more time to give to the club.</p> <p>41:55 GAA grounds will always be full for the big games regardless of the economy.</p> <p>42:15 Getting your own pitch is like having your own home. It is something permanent.</p> <p>45:00 They are planning to build a sports hall so that people can play indoors.</p> <p>46:20 Con McCarthy, a local teacher, was instrumental in setting up the club. He was a friend of Denis' brother and the two used to play soccer in Clonakilty.</p> <p>47:20 Denis' brother was a priest and was ordained in 1974, and by that time Con had got enough people together to start a club.</p> <p>48:30 Their first game was against a combination of Skull and Ballydehob - in a rented field.</p> <p>49:30 Denis wasn't playing at the time but soon got involved in administration. He was GPC of the underage board in Carbery and was chairman of the underage division. He also did some coaching.</p> <p>50:40 The forming of the club changed his life.</p> <p>52:05 He is a coaching officer on the Cork County Board.</p> <p>53:10 He was vice chairman of the junior board for a few years and development officer of the underage part.</p> <p>54:10 There were five or six people nominated for the</p>
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	<p>coaching officer role but everyone withdrew and Denis got the post.</p> <p>55:25 He enjoys going to meetings and talking to people. Getting to know the young people is also enjoyable.</p> <p>56:20 He got involved with Carbery in 2000 and became a Cork underage selector in 2004.</p> <p>58:15 West Cork was Michael Collins' territory and there were a lot of Black and Tans around. In clubs politics can mould the boards.</p> <p>59:15 Joe Welsh, former Minister for Agriculture, was from the local area.</p> <p>01:00:00 Some people say that the GAA in west Cork is very Fianna Fáil.</p> <p>01:00:25 He doesn't think the politics has done much harm to the GAA in west Cork.</p> <p>01:00:55 Recalls a story of a selector in the 1970s inquiring if a player was of the right political persuasion.</p> <p>01:01:25 There was a time in the 1960s and 1970s and you had to be Fianna Fáil to get on the Cork minors in the 1960s and 1970s.</p> <p>01:04:05 Recalls a story in Bandon when somebody jumped off a balcony in a meeting and said that he wasn't getting in because he wasn't a Fianna Fáil person.</p> <p>01:04:35 The Civil War is fresh in the minds of west Cork people. A lot happened at the time in the area. Brothers were accused of shooting brothers.</p> <p>01:05:55 Recalls a man who was supposed to have hid in a churn every night out of fear but gave the impression that he was out fighting all the time.</p> <p>01:06:25 They have had two Fine Gael TDs for a period and then two Fianna Fáil the next time, so some voters fluctuate in who they vote for.</p> <p>01:07:40 There are many GAA officials and people don't know what side of the divide they would be on.</p> <p>01:08:20 When the club started some selectors took into account where the players stood politically.</p> <p>01:09:40 Sometimes the internal politics of the GAA can</p>
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	<p>affect the selection of players and not Civil War politics.</p> <p>01:11:25 Recalls an officer who said that the people who wanted to open Croke Park to foreign sports only did so in order that they could get soccer in without having to travel to England to watch soccer over there. Denis felt compelled to respond to this because he goes to Old Trafford to watch Manchester United play.</p> <p>01:13:20 He stayed away from the Cork senior hurlers' strike in 2009.</p> <p>01:13:45 He has no problem with soccer and rugby being played in Croke Park.</p> <p>01:15:55 They had a GPC meeting to decide what way to vote on the opening of Croke Park. A direction was needed to give to the county board. Denis had the casting vote. He declined to vote at the time but told the delegates that if they did have to give the county board direction, to ask him for his vote then. He didn't want any more division than was necessary.</p> <p>01:17:30 Many felt that the GAA formed Ireland and broke away from England before the country did, so they opposed the opening of Croke Park.</p> <p>01:19:20 1916 may not have happened without the GAA. The country was divided after the Famine but the GAA organised people into clubs, which must have shown people what could be achieved when they organised themselves.</p> <p>01:21:15 Denis grew up in a house where people voted different ways so he has tried to keep a balanced view on Civil War politics.</p> <p>01:23:50 The GAA forms a major part of his identity and his sense of Irishness. It makes him proud of where he comes from.</p> <p>01:25:05 The 2009 hurling strike was not pleasant. It happened during his first year as an officer to the county board and meetings were dominated by the strike. Denis kept hoping the strike would end.</p> <p>01:26:30 The strike was about power. It grew from what happened in 2003. The chairman had a dilemma as he had family who were players on the team.</p> <p>01:27:40 The effects of the strike still linger on. Junior clubs feel that they have no voice.</p>
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	<p>01:28:55 Junior clubs now have two representatives on the county board and Denis feels this is too much - there can be meetings with 200 people present and it is difficult.</p> <p>01:31:10 The county team is evolving in 2010 with the strike over and new blood will eventually come into the county board.</p> <p>01:31:50 He is comfortable with the GPA. Mentions an article by Brian Corcoran before an All-Ireland. It highlighted the amount of work teams put in when they are preparing for an All-Ireland.</p> <p>01:34:55 The players needed a body like the GPA, especially in certain counties.</p> <p>01:34:30 Many Kerry club players had no championship games in the summer of 2009 because they inter-county seniors' preparations for the All-Ireland campaign took precedence.</p> <p>01:35:25 He worries about the GAA going professional because he feels that the Association can't afford it and that there would be players switching counties.</p> <p>01:37:00 There aren't enough people in the country to generate enough money for professionalism. English soccer players probably get paid more in a year than what the Munster Council has to play around with.</p> <p>01:38:35 The biggest changes he has seen in the GAA are the facilities.</p> <p>01:40:20 He hopes that the GAA does not go professional and that in 50 years' time a person will be able to say the same things about the Association that he can - that the GAA was a big reason why he never emigrated.</p> <p>01:41:35 He hopes that his club stays in existence and doesn't get swallowed up by a bigger club.</p> <p>01:42:55 Being involved in the GAA has been life-changing. He is more comfortable with public speaking.</p> <p>01:45:20 He never went to the pub when he was younger because he was busy with the GAA.</p> <p>01:46:00 He has friends all over Ireland and the world because of the GAA.</p> <p>01:46:00 A man asked him to build his house because he</p>
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	<p>saw his picture in the newspaper.</p> <p>01:46:55 Small clubs are very important to people and to small communities.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	<p>Played Minor and U21 hurling and football with St Mary's GAA. Played Junior Football and Hurling with Oliver Plunketts after its foundation in 1975.</p>
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	<p>Manager of Ahiohill Hurling team (1 year)</p> <p>Chairperson of Oliver Plunketts, 1982-85 & 1987-91</p> <p>Refereed for 2 years</p> <p>Selector for Cork U14 Hurling</p> <p>Chairman of West Cork Bord na nÓg</p> <p>Vice-Chairman of West Cork Board.</p>
Format	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
Duration	<p>Length of Interview: 01:48:44</p>
Language	<p>English</p>

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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: 22nd May 2012.