## GAA Oral History Project

# **Interview Report Form**

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	16 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2010
Location	Tommy's house, near Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Tommy Moran
E	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1941
	Home County: Leitrim
Education	Primary: Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim
	<b>Secondary:</b> St. Macartan's College, Monaghan Town, Co. Monaghan
	Third Level: St. Pat's, Drumcondra, Dublin
Family	Siblings: 4 sisters & 3 brothers
	<b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with 2 sons and 2 daughters
Club(s)	Seán O'Heslin's, Ballinamore
Occupation	Retired Teacher
Parents' Occupation	Carpenter [Father]; Lodging House and Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Chairman Ballinamore Drama Festival, PRO Annual Festival Committee, Editor of Leitrim Guardian Magazine, PRO of Golf Club, Chairman of Badminton Club, Pioneers, MC of Everything for last 40 years

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Gerry Mahon	
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee	
Gender	Male	
Born	Year Born: 1939	
	Home County: Leitrim	
Education	Primary: Pottore NS, Aughnasheelin, Co. Leitrim	
	<b>Secondary:</b> Presentation Brothers, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co. Leitrim	
	Third Level: St. Pat's, Drumcondra, Dublin	
Family	Siblings: N/A	
	<b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with 3 sons and 2 daughters	
Club(s)	Aughnasheelin [Leitrim]; Corlough [Cavan]; St. Mary's, Carrick-on-Shannon [Leitrim]; Seán O'Heslins, Ballinamore [Leitrim]	
Occupation	Retired Teacher	
Parents' Occupation	Small Farmers	
Religion	Roman Catholic	
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil	
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Secretary Credit Union (12 years), Secretary Agricultural Show (12 years), Golf Club (last 3 years)	

Date of Report	13 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
Period Covered	1889 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Leitrim, Dublin, Galway, Mayo, Roscommon, Great Britain, England, Americas, USA, Cavan, Tyrone, Antrim, Down, Sligo, Australasia, New Zealand, Asia, Singapore
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Facilities, Playing, Refereeing, Administration, Celebrations, Education, Religion, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, Earliest Memories, Ban on Foreign Games, and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Professionalism
Interview Summary	Tommy and Gerry discuss first playing football and how rare it was to have access to a football. They talk about playing and refereeing in school games and of some of the famous Leitrim players they have known. Tommy speaks of studying for the priesthood and his involvement in the GAA in college. He goes on to talk about his time refereeing. He then talks of his involvement in Scór and the county board. Gerry then talks of his first football and playing as a child. He also talks of his time at county board. He talks of the positions he has held within the GAA. They then talk of the local rivalry and of teachers being the backbone of the GAA. They next discuss knowing all the players on Leitrim and the great work of the supporters before talking about the loyalty of the players. Next to be discussed is the role of women in the GAA before turning their attention to history of the club and the part it plays in the community. They discuss the involvement of Leitrim people in the GAA around the world. They then talk of their time on Central Council and decisions made there. Hurling in Leitrim is then discussed followed by the importance of volunteerism. Heroes and disappointments are discussed before finally talking about what the GAA has meant to them over the years. 00:00 Introduction 00:27 Tommy talks of his earliest memory being playing in a couple of local fields near the Garda station and in a field called the Rock, which was quite sloped. Mentions Aughaleague and the park in Ballinamore opening in 1952. Also mentions hanging about the wall with older players

discussing the games.
01:50 Talks of the scarcity of footballs and how Paddy Dolan would let them play with his football once he could pick the teams.
02:05 Talks of 1952 when Leitrim won the Connacht Junior Final and two locals were on the team, Columba Cryan and Brian Sweeney. Mentions watching the team practising and joining in.
02:24 Speaks of Tom Gannon captain of the 1927 Leitrim team who was their teacher and playing football with him from a young age with yew trees for goalposts. Mentions another teacher who was not a great footballer but who tried, Sean Moriarty.
03:15 Tells of Paddy Dolan's father who took them to play in Arvagh for challenge matches, which was like the All-Ireland to them.
03:33 Going to school in St. Macartan's in Monaghan and being involved in the football leagues including refereeing.
04:03 Recalls St. Macartan's winning the MacRory cup in 1957 and making flags and crepe paper hats. Mentions many of the team going on to play for Monaghan including Tony McKenna, chairman of Tyrone. Tommy and John McArdle.
05:01 Tells of helping out with the team and eventually being brought to the matches by Fr. Enda McCormack who trained the team.
05:29 Tells of studying for the priesthood in Cootehill and playing football there. Mentions going to America for six months and trying to keep in touch with the Leitrim team. Mentions keeping scrapbooks and Packie McGarty and Cathal Flynn.
06:15 Speaks of going to St. Pat's in Drumcondra and Erin's Hope winning the Dublin Championship in 1956. Mentions refereeing and becoming the secretary of the club. Also mentions Mick O'Brien, Declan Lovett and Michael Kelly.
07:20 Talks of teaching in Drumeela in Carrigallen parish and in 1967 becoming chairman of the local club Sean O'Heslins and winning three championships in a row. Mentions playing in tournaments in Dromore, Tyrone, Enniskillen, Cavan against top teams at the time.
08:11 Recalls being a selector and chairman of the club and

playing on the junior team if they were stuck.
08:28 Speaks of becoming a referee. Mentions Eamon O'Grady. Also mentions becoming an inter-county referee before becoming secretary of the county board in 1982 for eighteen years, after Stanley Cox.
09:57 Talks of the standard of playing in the eighties and how it improved in the nineties when PJ Carroll took over as team manager. Mentions winning the Connacht championship and John O'Mahony.
10:38 Tells of there being six club players on that winning team. Mentions Seamus Gallagher, Leo Kenny, Joe McDonagh. Also mentions becoming President of Connacht Council and being involved in the Coiste Bainisti in Croke Park (Management Committee).
12:20 Speaks of being involved in Scór over the years. Mentions the Leitrim GAA year books.
13:02 Speaks of Centenary of Connacht Council and being involved in compiling the history.
13:44 Also speaks of updating the history of the GAA through his involvement in the county board.
14:08 Speaks of developments within the club and his part as chairman of finance committee.
14:38 Talks of the club facilities and how he has taken a more hands off approach in recent times.
14:47 Gerry tells of coming from the other half of the parish Aughnasheelin.
15:12 Talks of the first football his father ever gave him, two Leitrim Observers wrapped in twine and they used hay stacks as goalposts. Mentions Pat Cull, whose father owned the coalmines, who had a real football.
16:27 Speaks of being fourteen and Packie Mulvey asking him to play in Fenagh.
17:23 Talks of going to school in Carrick and playing with the school and minor teams.
17:47 Speaks of 1968 and being made secretary of the club and attending the county board as he had a car and could drive to meetings.
18:22 Talks of being principal of the school and training the

school teams and of their success. Mentions the players from the school being on the team that won the Fr. Manning Cup in 1975.
18:44 Speaks of not having a local pitch in Aughnasheelin and playing in Ballinamore. Mentions the Ballinamore dressing room being an old railway carriage. Also mentions an incident with his clothes being covered in lime.
20:02 Talks of the various positions he held within the GAA all through his life.
20:58 Talks of teachers being the backbone of the GAA at local level and encouraging players.
21:20 Tells of his time on the Leitrim Hurling Board and getting to an All-Ireland Junior Final against Meath in Athlone. Mentions being beaten by Antrim in Casement Park in 1971 after the Divis street flats had been burned and being brought there before the match.
22:14 Speaks briefly of the history of Aughnasheelin club which came in and out of existence due to emigration in the fifties.
23:11 Talks of the struggle the club had over the years and no expenses being paid to those who travelled back for games. Mentions some of those who were involved in writing and rehearsing a play and putting it on to raise funds to buy jerseys.
24:23 Talks of the rivalry between Ballinamore and Aughnasheelin. Mentions the intense rivalry between all local clubs.
26:00 Speaks of Leitrim never winning an All-Ireland, but recounts some of their success and what it has meant to those involved in the GAA in Leitrim. Mentions the junior Home Final and being beaten by London. Also mentions Tom Gannon and Declan Darcy.
27:03 Talks of knowing every player in the county and all those involved in the clubs due to Leitrim being a small place.
27:20 Praises the supporters club and the fundraising they do.
27:59 Speaks about the officers of the club changing every five years. Mentions Joe Flynn, and Diarmuid Sweeney.
28:19 Talks of those being involved in administration not

necessarily being players.
29:00 Talks of switching from Aughnasheelin to Ballinamore and playing one senior match before retiring.
29:40 Tommy speaks of playing two senior matches for Ballinamore. Mentions the family involvement and how important it is. Also mentions his work on the county board and with the supporters club.
31:21 Talks of a trip to New York for the team that won the Connacht Championship in 1984.
32:02 Talks of the dedication and loyalty of the Leitrim players, mentions Packie McGarty, Cathal Flynn, Noel Blessing.
33:50 Gerry talks of the loyalty starting with their club and going from this to the county as both are small.
35:10 Tommy talks of the supporters being not as demanding as other counties and praising every success. Mentions the cohesive attitude of the county. Also mentions Michael McGowan and the work he did training teams over the years for nothing.
36:57 Gerry speaks of the travelling the players and others have had to do over the years simply to train, with some spending two hours travelling to training. Mentions John O'Mahony, Declan Darcy and Jason Ward and training on the sand dunes in Strandhill. Also mentions the declaration rule, Kieran McGovern, Brendan Gallagher and Keith Moran.
39:20 Speaks of Jason Ward and his loyalty to Leitrim. Talks of those who move away still retaining their Leitrim roots.
40:44 Talks of the structure in the county and how well things are going. Mentions the generosity of the communities with their time and money.
41:20 Tommy speaks about the role being played by parents and the benefit to the community.
41:58 Gerry talks of the Scór competition and the work they do. Mentions Ladies football and the role it plays.
43:30 Recalls the Féile in Leitrim and the role the clubs played in supporting this.
44:12 Talks of the role of women in the GAA changing from washing jerseys to becoming secretaries of clubs.

45:02 Talks of Colette Fox who is the PRO and Attracta Reilly. Mentions the very important played by women in the club. Also mentions Ann Shanley, Brid Sullivan and Marge McLoughlin.
46:30 Speaks of the clubs rallying around in times of tragedy.
46:43 Tommy talks of the history of the Ballinamore club from the founding in 1889 to the opening of the new club house last year. Speaks of the various successes of the club over the years. Mentions the place held by the club within the local community.
48:10 Talks of a teacher Sean O'Heslin and how his name is associated with the club and park.
49:08 Speaks of the club catering for football, hurling and ladies football.
50:17 Talks of the club being part and parcel of the town for over one hundred years. Mentions the same names being involved with the club over the years through different families.
51:00 Gerry talks of moving from Aughnasheelin to Ballinamore and how the pitch was better while facilities were about the same. Mentions togging out in a loft and marching down the town with a band to the match to create interest. Mentions how media reports of the day would focus not just on the match but on the carnival atmosphere of the entire day and all of those involved.
53:51 Talks of the good will of several clubs that allowed them to use their fields.
54:33 Tommy speaks of the advance in facilities in the clubs in the county.
55:30 Talks about developing the pitch and facilities in Ballinamore and the decision for clubs regarding selling their land to developers and moving out of towns. Mentions Joe Flynn.
57:18 Gerry talks about the drainage system put into the pitch. Mentions Tom Burns, Ciaran Smith, Conor Harte and PJ McLoughlin.
58:40 Gerry talks about his father and uncles playing for Aughnasheelin. Speaks of their being two teams a junior team from the low lying areas and a senior team from higher up the mountain. Mentions them meeting in challenge

matches and the juniors occasionally winning. Also mentions how emigration affected the teams.
01:00:10 Talks of Aughnasheelin playing in his grandfather's field and his mother holding him as he watched the game.
01:00:44 Tommy tells of his family not having any great involvement in the GAA but one of their lodgers was Willie Martin from the 1927 Leitrim team. Mentions his uncle Jim Sweeney who in 1947 was President of the Leitrim club in New York and the team coming back to Ireland and calling into his house. Also mentions Christy Creamer.
01:02:28 Speaks of how training has changed with organised sessions rather than simply cycling miles to play a match.
01:03:15 Talks of the local interest in the Ulster final and people cycling to attend it. Mentions it being the same time as the Croagh Patrick climb and people travelling by hackney car to Croagh Patrick, climbing it then coming home and cycling to the match in Clones.
01:03:53 Speaks of an anniversary cycle for it being fifty years since the railway closed, forty years of Scór and 125 years of the GAA that raised funds for the club. Mentions Breda O'Sullivan and her vision for cycling to different games and ultimately in five years time cycling to Croke Park for the All-Ireland.
01:05:24 Speaks of cycling to matches and players travelling by hackney car. Talks of 1952 and every car in the town travelling to the All-Ireland when Leitrim were playing. Mentions travelling by train before the railway closed.
01:06:54 Speaks of playing in New York and London. Mentions the Leitrim people and their involvement in clubs outside Ireland. Also mentions Proinsias Redigan involved with Tara's in London, St. Barnabas club, Frank Brady, Frank Dwyer, Mike Carthy, Brendan Wisely (Singapore), Paddy Gormley (New York), Columba Cryan (New Zealand) and Maureen Moran (New York), the Ryans.
01:09:12 Gerry talks of the trip to New York and Gaelic Park. Mentions it being the largest crowd to ever watch a championship game. Also mentions the function in New York after the game with 900 in attendance.
01:10:30 Talks of playing in London in the championship and the crowds that attend.
01:10:59 Speaks of the New York trip and how the team and

supporters approached the trip differently. Mentions local clubs there organising fundraising functions. Also mentions 1994 and an exhibition game after winning the Connacht championship.
01:13:51 Talks of the importance of the social aspect of the GAA. Mentions the development of Gaelic Park in New York.
01:15:00 Speaks of how those who are away are interested in the games back home. Mentions Pat Murray, Gerry and Pious Flanagan and phoning home to listen to the game over the phone on Shannonside.
01:15:37 Speaks of there being three Leitrim men on the Management Committee of the GAA at one time. Mentions George O'Toole and Fr. Dan Gallogly.
01:17:04 Talks of the interest in administration in the county and how the roles were filled.
01:18:44 Tommy talks about being on Central Council and what was involved in his time there.
01:19:54 Gerry speaks about his time on Central Council. Mentions the time involved in taking part and how the Management Committee were making most of the decisions as they were smaller and easier to work with.
01:21:20 Speaks of the negotiations for the opening of Croke Park with the IRFU and FAI. Mentions Sean Kelly.
01:25:25 Talks of how cordial the negotiations were. Mentions Philip Brown and John Delaney and their knowledge of the GAA. Also mentions the vast amount of work involved.
01:27:56 Speaks of the IRFU being tempted to continue to play in the larger Croke Park stadium as it can accommodate a large number of additional spectators.
01:29:01 Speaks of one man on the committee who was anti the opening of Croke Park.
01:29:33 They talk of their own support for the opening of Croke Park and how it was a great generator of funds and a positive PR exercise.
01:31:32 Gerry speaks of how other sports are not threat to the GAA but people's social life may be. Mentions some players and officials being involved in the local soccer and GAA clubs and that this is not a problem.
01:33:34 Tommy talks of the ending of the Celtic Tiger

curtailing the social life and causing emigration which also threatens the GAA. Mentions the impact on the county team.
01:34:53 Speaks of a number of years ago when a team made up of those that had chosen to go away would have been better than the actual senior team at the time.
01:35:34 Gerry talks of the ban on foreign games being lifted at Congress in Belfast. Mentions Pat Fanning.
01:36:38 They both agreed with the lifting of the ban although they did not think there was going to be a large influx of RUC or British soldiers into the GAA.
01:38:13 Tells of young players also playing rugby and soccer but that the GAA is their first love and they would always return to it. Mentions the importance of listening to the grass roots membership.
01:39:05 Speaks of the decision to open up Croke Park being based on votes from individual clubs, through the county boards and on to the GAA centrally at congress. Mentions Cork not having individual club meetings but divisional ones.
01:41:37 Talks of rugby and soccer clubs not being able to use GAA club facilities as they are just not available.
01:42:24 They speak of their roles on Connacht council including fixtures and Scór. Mentions the reduced income due to the size of Connacht. Also mentions Leo Kenny, John Mulvey and John Prenty.
01:44:42 Talks of bringing London and New York into the Connacht Championship.
01:44:52 Gerry talks of his time as a delegate on the Connacht Council on the activities committee. Mentions making great friends on the council.
01:46:09 Tommy talks of the equal say for all counties on the Connacht Council. Mentions that there was a time when Galway and Mayo ran everything their own way. Also mentions the development of the Connacht Council office in Ballyhaunis.
01:47:23 Speaks of the development of a centre of excellence in Bekan near Knock in Connacht. Mentions Christy Cooney and the development plan to 2015.
01:48:55 Gerry talks about his involvement in Cumann na mBunscol and what it meant to the schools and their football competitions. Mentions the involvement of the lady school

teachers in it.
teachers in it.
01:50:16 Talks of the local school winning the three teacher school competition. Mentions Declan Darcy presenting the medals but one boy, who lived in Cavan, not wanting to accept the medal from a Leitrim player. Also mentions Cuthbert Donnelly and Mickey Harte presenting medals.
01:53:00 They talk about the history of hurling in Leitrim. Mentions Thomas O'Riordan.
01:53:39 Gerry speaks of his time as Chairman of the Hurling Board. Mentions a match against Sligo in the Connacht Championship and most of the team arrived late as they were not from Leitrim. Talks of eventually fielding a full Leitrim team and the progress they made. Mentions a Tipperary hurler Donie Nealon training the team. Also mention St. Mary's of Carrick supply most of the team, Martin Conniffe, Mick Doorigan, Pat Phelan, Kevin Clancy, Seán Ó Suilleabháin, Sean Hart and Paddy O'Connor.
01:57:19 Talks of Alan O'Shea who is a natural hurler whereas most are footballers who play hurling.
01:59:04 They talk of their own sons going to a match and picking up their hurleys at the game without practicing first.
02:00:00 Tommy talks of his time refereeing and of the dirtiest game he refereed being a friendly in All Hallows between clerical students. Mentions enjoying refereeing most out of all the involvement he has had in the GAA. Also mentions the various levels he has refereed throughout the years including a minor All-Ireland and All-Ireland semi-final.
02:03:55 Recalls refereeing Dublin playing Down in the All- Ireland semi-final and sending off Cathal Digney and being abused when coming off at half time.
02:05:07 Speaks of refereeing with the All Stars in the United States.
02:07:09 Talks of having to make hard decisions on the field and how referees can miss things.
02:08:12 Speaks of refereeing the Club final in Croke Park when it snowed very heavily.
02:08:59 Tells of there being no pressure put on him to influence his refereeing. Mentions how a referee very rarely influences a game. Also mentions one referee who played an extra ten minutes until Ballinamore scored and drew a game

that he felt was too rough for either team to lose.
02:12:05 Tommy tells how the thing he misses most about the GAA is refereeing. Mentions not missing his work in administration as the technology available today was not available to him and the time spent telephoning players if a training session was changed kept him busy.
02:13:33 Talks of a match between Leitrim and Mayo when the referee was convinced by one of the Leitrim players to make up for giving Mayo a penalty by giving Leitrim a penalty in the second half. Mentions another game when a call to a Mayo player from a Leitrim player led to a score against Mayo.
02:15:14 Talks about referees reports submitted in one case a referee saying he knew how Christ felt when the crowds shouted crucify him. Mentions the work referees do and the training they get and the fact that they don't get as much abuse as people think.
02:17:55 Talks of having to clear people out of the goal line when there were open pitches. Mentions the enclosed pitches and sometimes only having a rope to keep spectators back from the playing field and how intimidating it could be for referees and umpires.
02:19:49 Speaks of the GAA having a very professional approach now to all games.
02:21:00 Talks about the expectations of players when it comes to the support team around them and compares it to a time the sideline team was a man with a bottle of cold tea. Mentions how some of it might be psychological.
02:22:18 They discuss the importance of volunteers to the GAA. Talks of the volunteers committing for less time but in some cases bringing specific skills.
02:25:32 Talks of their GAA heroes including Packie McGarty who played for Leitrim over four decades.
02:27:21 Talk about their best GAA memory being the end of a sixty seven year wait for Leitrim to win the Connacht Final in 1994.
02:27:58 Speaks of the celebrations afterwards lasting for days and there being almost 500 in the square in Ballinamore when they arrived at 4:30am. Tells of the atmosphere before they arrived.

02:29:18 Speaks of the evening of the game when he was
called into the dugout by the team doctor who thought he was going to have a heart attack. Mentions the opened top bus in Carrick on Shannon and the children's band in Drumreilly meeting them at 3:30am.
02:32:16 Tells of their biggest disappointment being losing to Galway the following year. Mentions Mickey Quinn and Niall Finnegan scoring the winning point.
02:32:27 Gerry tells of being disappointed at losing a game and at not getting promotion from division four and the journey home in the old bus in the early hours of the morning.
02:33:50 Talks of playing so many matches but losing many. Recalls a match against Roscommon in the semi-final of a Connacht Championship. Mentions John Newton, Tony McManus, Tony McGowan, PJ Carroll, Liam Conlan and Barney Breen. Also mentions playing golf afterward to release the tension.
02:35:37 They discuss what the GAA has meant to them over the years, friendship and the people you meet.
Tommy:
✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager □ Coach □ Steward
✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
🗆 Caterer 🗆 Jersey Washer 🗸 Referee 🗆 None
Other (please specify):
Gerry:
✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager □ Coach □ Steward
✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
Caterer I Jersey Washer Referee None
Other (please specify):
Tommu
<b>Tommy:</b> Played for 5 years. Won an Under 12 juvenile championship medal.

	championship and 4 junior leagues.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	<b>Tommy:</b> Has been involved in administration since 1963. Club: Chairman (4 years), Finance Committee Chairman (10
	years), Assistant Secretary County: Secretary (1982 – 2000),
	Connacht: Vice-President (2000 – 2002), President (2002 – 2005), Central Council Delegate (7 years), Referees Committee, Scór
	Central: Chairman of PR and Presentation Taskforce, Chairman of National Safety Committee, Member of Croke Park Stadium Committee, Chairman of Hearings Committee, MC of Scór and Scór na nÓg All-Ireland finals.
	<b>Gerry:</b> Has been involved in administration since the 1960s.
	Club: Secretary, Leitrim County Board Delegate, Cavan County Board Delegate
	County: Chairman (1981 – 1984), Irish Officer (1979 – 1980), Connacht Council Delegate (1969 – 1975), Central Council Delegate (1985 – 2008)
	Central: Policy and Planning Committee, National Safety Committee, GAC, Management Committee,
Format	✓ Audio □ Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 02:38:19
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: \_\_\_\_\_13/08/12\_\_\_\_\_

