

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	24 October 2008
Location	Liverpool
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Fiona McConnell
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Female
Born	Year Born: 1984 Home County: Cavan
Education	Primary: Milltown NS Secondary: Loreto College, Cavan Third Level: University of Liverpool
Family	Siblings: One brother (Darrell)
Club(s)	Drumlane [Cavan]; John Mitchel's [Liverpool]
Occupation	Occupational Therapist
Parents' Occupation	Secondary School teacher/proprietor of crystal business
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A

Date of Report	2 September 2009
Period Covered	1980s – 2000s
Counties/Countries Covered	Great Britain, Cavan
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Ladies involvement, Ladies Gaelic Football, Gaelic Football, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider's Perspectives, Alcohol
Interview Summary	<p>Fiona McConnell</p> <p>Born in the parish of Drumlane, Co. Cavan.</p> <p>.58 Moved to Liverpool to study</p> <p>1.10 Playing community games football for Ann-Dromlane. Played on under-age teams in teams in Drumlane. Erin Gaels was formed which combined Dromlane and Belturbett ladies, they separated again in 2007 into two clubs. Played in school, community games, féile and then played for Hope University in Liverpool.</p> <p>3.15 Brother Darrell played football for Cavan. Her father also played football and her earliest memory is going to matches when she was growing up. 'Every Sunday was a GAA day'</p> <p>4.00 Their rivals were different every year depending on what teams were competitive that year.</p> <p>5.20 Football was an integral part of family life, it was a way of life. Father was involved in training underage teams and so everyone played.</p> <p>6.25 Ladies don't always have as much attendance at the matches. 'You'd always find time to go to the lads game, the lads mightn't always find time to go to yours, that's still the case.</p> <p>7.35 TG4 coverage has been great for the sport, looking forward to it featuring on an equal basis on TV3 and</p>

	<p>RTÉ.</p> <p>8.50 Problem of coverage being that if teams are not doing well you don't hear about them. Cavan winning the Ulster Championship.</p> <p>10.20 Demands of the game fitness, time, work, family</p> <p>11.00 Her involvement in music and the GAA quite separate. Trained as a classical musician and she moved on to traditional Irish music, fleadh and marching bands. They're both important parts of her Irishness.</p> <p>12.19 Moved to Liverpool to study occupational therapy six and a half years ago. Enjoys living in Liverpool, friendly city, a city full of Irish people, has met lots of Irish and English friends.</p> <p>14.18 Why play Gaelic in Liverpool? Flew home every weekend or every second weekend to play with her club for a year or two. She started training with Hope University team and played with them all through college, the team eventually fell apart.</p> <p>16.00 Was a few years in Liverpool before she knew about the Irish Centre, but she lives near it now and her boyfriend plays for the John Mitchells men's team.</p> <p>16.50 Getting the ladies team together – Danny McDonagh had re-formed the men's team, went to him for advice. Advertised on their website, made posters and had a meeting in a local pub in November 2006, twenty people arrived. Tony McDevitt agreed to train them. Got little support from Croke Park but the Manchester ladies team helped them out with registration etc. Getting sponsorship from a local pub.</p> <p>22.00 Lots of the John Mitchells ladies got on to the Lancaster county team.</p> <p>23.06 Team comprises of a mixture of Irish and non-Irish players. Players from England, Australia, Scotland etc. it has built up a good social network. The difference between setting up and running a club in Ireland and in Liverpool. The importance of fostering the games in the underage local community. The need for support in the local community.</p> <p>26.40 Found players through Irish festivals, word of mouth, the Irish centre and people just entering 'sports' into a</p>
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	<p>google search.</p> <p>29.04 Mens team – similar situation but it was more established and they have been very successful recently. Relationship between the men’s team and the ladies team very good, very supportive of each other. Celebrate together, John Mitchells Ladies are currently All-Britain champions, the men are now in the All-Britain finals, that’s a good selling point to recruit people into the club.</p> <p>33.00 Men’s team re-formed a year before the ladies team was formed, their funding is completely separate.</p> <p>34.12 Motivated by the team, a great bunch of girls, great nights out. Celebrating after winning the All-Britain championship.</p> <p>35.00 The main aim is to make it sustainable; to get the under age and local teams involved, to get sponsorship. Not just about Irishness, its about the sport. Also sing Scottish and Australian songs when they win.</p> <p>37.32 Need to work harder to develop clubs in England, importance of involving the local community. Need to consider it a sport and not an Irish thing. Playing soccer in training sometimes, importance of not isolating yourself as a sport.</p> <p>41.30 Thirty ladies registered this year, only about half of those have played before.</p> <p>42.00 Financial challenges, costs of getting to far away fixtures – a bus to London/Birmingham costs £400-500 euro. All money is raised through fundraising – no grants. The Irish Centre help out when they can.</p> <p>45.47 No contact until the All-Ireland stages, no support, no funding, no responses to queries. Lack of understanding of their circumstances in Croke Park. They have very poor facilities, just got goalposts last year.</p> <p>54.37 Major achievement is that they still have a club, they get on very well as a team and they have won the All-Britain championship every year since they were founded. Try to be as fair as possible and give everyone a chance to play. It’s a very supportive team,</p>
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	<p>60.38 Conditions of their ground and facilities, getting grounds and goalposts.</p> <p>60.03 Cavan girls at home delighted about her achievements in Liverpool.</p> <p>67.00 Represented Liverpool in the Rose of Tralee 2008. Also teaches music at the Irish Centre.</p> <p>73.00 Music and GAA equally important in her life, all builds up social networks.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input 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>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played county and club, championship, university (Hope), All-Britain Junior Champions 2007 and 2008.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Chairperson 2007-2008; Irish language development officer on the British Council.</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>Length of Interview: 1:15:09</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>English</p>

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To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 2 September 2009