

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	19 th Aug 2010
Location	Joe's home, near Borris-in-Ossory, Co. Laois
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Joe Phelan
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1931 Home County: Laois
Education	Primary: Ballaghmore BS, Co. Laois Secondary: Roscrea Vocational School
Family	Siblings: 4 brothers & 1 sister Current Family if Different: Wife, 4 daughters & 1 son
Club(s)	Kyle GAA [Laois]; Borris-in-Ossory GAA [Laois]; Ballaghmore GAA [Laois]
Occupation	Farmer
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Irish Farmers Association; Pioneers Total Abstinence Association

REFERENCE NO. LS/1/7

Date of Report	13 th June 2012
Period Covered	1931 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Laois, Kilkenny
Key Themes Covered	Facilities, Playing, Training, Commiserations, Role of the Club in the Community, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Violence, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Socialising
Interview Summary	<p>Joe recalls his involvement at various levels with hurling teams in Kyle and Borris-in-Ossory in his youth. He discusses the contributions of his father, brothers, and currently his son, to hurling. He describes his trips to Croke Park and his disappointment when Laois lost the 1949 All-Ireland Senior Hurling title to Tipperary. He compares the sport today to that of his youth and considers the future of hurling in the county.</p> <p>01:02 Describes how in 1944, Ballaghmore won the final. Recalls his brothers hurled in Laois. Describes one brother Jack playing in Laois until he went to Kilkenny and played with Lisdowney and Tullaroan.</p> <p>01:40 Explains that he came back to live and farm in Borris-in-Ossory in 1963 and played a few matches with the club in Borris-in-Ossory, including the minor final, which they lost.</p> <p>02:16 Says his son hurls now with Borris.</p> <p>02:28 Mentions that he hurled with his brothers when he was young and that his father, John Phelan, hurled with an old team called The Munderheads near Ballaghmore and that rules were not too strict then about parish boundaries.</p> <p>03:09 Says hurling was the only pastime then. Discusses the recent historical tensions still in local memory and explains that the GAA was not allowed to get involved in foreign games. Mentions his relief that this situation has changed now.</p> <p>03:52 Discusses his childhood hero, Lowry Meagher in Kilkenny, and other players in Kilkenny, but not many in Laois.</p> <p>04:13 Played with Borris because small team in Ballaghmore. Explains that Kieran Carey hurled with Kyle. Mentions Kieran Carey hurling with Laois before going to play with Tipperary</p>

	<p>and winning five All-Ireland Senior Hurling titles.</p> <p>04:46 Recalls hurling with Carey and his brothers who hurled with Kyle at the time. Discusses Kieran's prowess, and that of Kieran's brothers Tommy, Mick, and Martin and their impact on the Kyle team. Explains that Kyle had players from Knock and Ballaghmore. Mentions Kyle winning a senior final when Phelan wasn't playing.</p> <p>06:06 Recalls training in different parts of the parish. Compares training then unfavourably with training nowadays. Says it's faster nowadays. Mentions Bob O'Keefe's comment about the strength of the Kyle team at the time.</p> <p>06:46 Mentions strong history of hurling in the area. Recalls his father re-establishing a team in Kyle with Joe's cousin. Discusses the strong team that Kyle has today with a new pitch and dressing rooms.</p> <p>07:30 Discusses Kyle's rivals: Clonad, Cullohill, Borris-in-Ossory.</p> <p>07:56 Describes cars transporting the teams to matches and travelling by bicycle to practice matches.</p> <p>08:28 Recalls the impact of the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak on the All-Ireland hurling championship in the 1940s. Says hurling was the main topic of conversation back then.</p> <p>08:58 Discusses the decline of hurling in Laois now.</p> <p>09:24 Describes playing minor with Borris and being beaten by Abbeyleix. Mentions Bags Bergin who scored lots of goals. Explains that the minor team progressed into a strong senior team but that he wasn't involved because he lived in Ballaghmore and that he only played a couple of junior matches with Borris-in-Ossory.</p> <p>10:11 Says he could get away from the farm to hurl because he had brothers but that it is harder now with larger farms.</p> <p>10:34 Describes the changes in the sport: less violence now, improvements in skill.</p> <p>11:00 Recalls playing with a hurl from the club, buying proper hurling boots. Discusses choice of hurling boots today and improved training today.</p> <p>11:41 Recalls going to All-Ireland hurling finals in Croke Park regularly when he was young. Describes his first trip to Croke Park in 1949, when Laois was beaten by Tipperary in the All-</p>
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	<p>Ireland Senior Hurling Final. Discusses travelling by train from Ballybrophy alongside crowds of Laois supporters, the disappointment when Laois lost. Mentions Lar Brady, chairman of the club at the time.</p> <p>13:01 Recalls his first impressions of Croke Park and the difference between Croke Park today. Says he didn't buy ticket in advance.</p> <p>13:51 Describes going to dances after the match. Recalls going to dances in general and a specific incidence of attending a dance in Templemore by bicycle.</p> <p>14:42 Names Christy O'Brien as his top Laois player, followed by the late Harry Gray.</p> <p>14:58 Discusses his pride at seeing his son Eoin Phelan play hurling for Borris, treasurer of club.</p> <p>15:31 Describes the benefits of fitness from hurling in farm work.</p> <p>16:01 Mentions the national pride in hurling in the past compared to now.</p> <p>16:16 Discusses his pessimism about Laois winning an All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final.</p> <p>16:32 Recalls listening to a match on the radio when he was a child, with Michael O'Hehir commentating.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input 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 hurling with Kyle for 16 years and with Borris-in-Ossory for 2 years</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Member of Kyle GAA committee for many years, was Chairman of the club for 2 years.</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 0:16:58
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 13th June 2012