

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Julian O'Donoghue
Date of Interview	20 th Oct 2011
Location	Interviewee's home, near Blarney, Co Cork
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Stephen O'Brien 'The Fan'
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1983 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: Blarney Boys NS Secondary: Scoil Mhuire Gan Smal, Blarney Third Level: CIT (degree), UCC (Masters)
Family	Siblings: Three siblings
Club(s)	Blarney Hurling and Football Club
Occupation	Engineer
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	20 th Oct 2011
Period Covered	1993 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Boston, Americas
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Education, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Politics, Professionalism, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Stephen O'Brien, a member of the Blarney GAA club, opens the interview by recalling his memories of attending a county final in Páirc Uí Chaoimh in the early 1990s, his family background in the GAA and his involvement in parish leagues. His engagement with Gaelic games at the Cork Institute of Technology is recalled, as is his experience of supporting Cork county teams since his teenage years, from 1999 onwards. O'Brien's interest in the fortunes of the Cork county hurlers and footballers is surpassed, perhaps, by his enthusiasm for the Cork club scene and he talks about attending games of rival clubs who are scheduled to meet Blarney in various competitions. He discusses the 'heartbreak' of the club's experiences in the early to mid 2000s and the excitement and pride that accompanied its Cork Intermediate hurling championship win 2008 and its subsequent All-Ireland Intermediate hurling victory in Croke Park in February 2009. Indeed, the events surrounding that final – together with the interviewee's role in them - are addressed in detail. The interview concludes with the interviewees responding to a series of questions covering such themes as the role of women and media in the GAA, the Irish language, future challenges, emigration, volunteerism and 'pay for play'. At the very end, he offers a rendition 'The Blarney Rose', the club anthem he has sung in Páirc Uí Chaoimh and Croke Park after memorable club victories.</p> <p>00:00:20 Introduction to Stephen O'Brien, born 28 December 1983.</p> <p>00:01:02 Earliest GAA memory: mentions strength of Blarney junior hurling team in early 1990s – and the titles won – and memory of attending county final in Páirc Uí Chaoimh.</p>

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	<p>00:01:50 Refers to impact of county championship win on attractiveness of hurling and playing parish leagues.</p> <p>00:02:00 Discusses parish leagues, the ages they were for, the participation of his estate and the opposition they faced.</p> <p>00:03:00 Talks about his family background – he is the son of singer Davey O'Brien, who played until his early 20s. Refers to his primary involvement in bowling and his continued connection to Blarney GAA club, as supporter and member of Grounds Committee.</p> <p>00:03:50 Involvement of two brothers up until their early to mid 20s. Mentions their involvement in football and club winning Junior B league and championship in 1993.</p> <p>00:04:30 Mentions Uncle who was a prominent hurler in Blarney in the 1970s – now based in Dublin, where his son is involved Dublin County Board.</p> <p>00:05:20 Father's first cousin, a hurler known as 'The Rocket' who won an All-Ireland Minor medal with Cork in 1970 and who played with Blarney.</p> <p>00:05:55 Impact of GAA on family life: refers to mother's limited role.</p> <p>00:06:25 Talks about attending Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) from 2001-2006, the team he played on and learning from training alongside inter-county players. Comments on the value and influence of colleges hurling to player development etc.</p> <p>00:08:00 Talks about the time commitment of GAA involvement – playing, administration and coaching underage teams.</p> <p>00:08:50 Talks about his interest in attending club games, including those of opposition clubs.</p> <p>00:10:12 Mentions that his nickname is 'Fan' and describes its origin.</p> <p>00:11:15 Discusses supporting county and club games. Reflects on starting to support Cork in hurling and football in 1999, travelling with his friends. Mentions being in Thurles for Munster final. Recalls travelling to 1999 Munster hurling final and All-Ireland football and hurling finals the same year. Refers to disappointment of Cork losing the football final and Seán Óg O hAilpín failing to win a double in the one year.</p> <p>00:13:05 Remarks on the attending games in Killarney, the</p>
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	<p>route taken, the ritual on arrival etc.</p> <p>00:13:50 Recalls Cork's hurling strike in 2002 and the impact of Donal O'Grady's arrival. Reflects on Cork's record in 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 and the subsequent decline.</p> <p>00:15:05 Talks about the record of the Blarney club, post 2003 – talks about specific games and the fact that the club 'a lot of heartbreak, lost a lot of county semi-finals, quarter finals...'</p> <p>00:17:50 Talks about 2008: 'We finally had our day...' Provides an account of the club's successful progress through county championship. Mentions singing club anthem in Pairc Ui Chaoimh in front of sea of Blarney people. Talks about the celebrations in the days after county title, including the 'craic in the local bar'. Talks about Joe Bradley who couldn't attend the game.</p> <p>00:22:00 Most memorable game: recalls the All-Ireland Intermediate club final, 15 February 2009. Mentions the changing perceptions of club, the impact of a coach from Midleton, Sean O'Brien; the Munster Intermediate championship run; playing the All-Ireland semi-final in Kinnegad against the Antrim champions and the crowds that travelled; travelling to Dublin on the eve of the All-Ireland final and the All-Ireland final day itinerary (Garda escort etc.); reference to Dripsey from Cork in All-Ireland junior final on the same day; talks about his role in carrying hurleys along sideline; the performance of Colm Murphy and various other players.</p> <p>00:31:05 Discusses Blarney making 'national news' after winning All-Ireland final.</p> <p>00:31:50 The role of the sport in general, and the GAA in particular, in the Blarney community. Refers to soccer and rugby clubs in the area and the strength of the GAA.</p> <p>00:32:50 Memories of School hurling: talks about the influence of teacher, John Kelly, in primary school; attending secondary school in Blarney and the school catchment encompassing players from other clubs.</p> <p>00:33:45 Involvement as a selector in Fitzgibbon team at CIT: refers to the qualities of John Meyler as coach and what he learned from him.</p> <p>00:34:33 Talks about his admiration for various individuals at club, college and county level – including mentor Fintan</p>
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	<p>Coleman, Jimmy Barry Murphy.</p> <p>00:37:24 Discusses the great changes in the GAA – the ‘boom’ in playing numbers during Celtic Tiger as the population increased and the club enjoyed success. Mentions impact of recession on club through loss of players to migration/emigration.</p> <p>00:38:55 Considers the changing role of women in the GAA: mentions being a ‘follower’ of women’s football and camogie, talks about the increased participation, the skills levels and helping out with Cork Senior ‘B’ camogie team.</p> <p>00:39:40 Refers to Blarney’s progressive underage camogie scene, expectations for the future and to the profile of camogie in neighbouring Inniscarra.</p> <p>00:40:15 Discusses Jack Lynch and the association between the GAA and politics.</p> <p>00:41:18 Comments on absence of a nationalist/republican dimension to GAA culture in his experience, save for the singing of rebel songs.</p> <p>00:42:05 Talks about his reputation as a singer and the songs that dominate his repertoire: the club anthem, ‘The Blarney Rose’; and Red Is the Rose.</p> <p>00:42:40 Disappointments: reflects on losing games; losing players to the GAA; players ‘not putting in the effort’.</p> <p>00:43:50 Considers the role of the Irish language in the GAA – its ceremonial use and TG 4 - and its wider popularity.</p> <p>00:44:40 Discusses Blarney’s major club rivalries, in particular Inniscarra, and recalls past meetings.</p> <p>00:46:26 Talks about the importance of volunteers to the GAA and comments on the contribution of people he works alongside in Blarney.</p> <p>00:47:00 Talks about his involvement in team management and club administration.</p> <p>00:48:05 Recalls personal experience/observation of the GAA in Boston when visiting with Blarney exile, Dave Coleman.</p> <p>00:49:37 Discusses changes in media coverage of the GAA and the role of the internet, connecting to emigrants etc.</p> <p>00:50:22 Mentions the importance of mobile phone texting in communicating players.</p>
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	<p>00:51:32 Challenges facing the GAA into the future: losing players to emigration; demographics and the sustainability of certain clubs.</p> <p>00:52:16 Discusses what the GAA mean to him: talks about his involvement with the Blarney club and the uniqueness of the experience he receives.</p> <p>00:53:25 Discusses professionalism and his objections to pay for play in the GAA – cites example of League of Ireland soccer.</p> <p>00:55:33 Sings ‘The Blarney Rose’.</p> <p>00:57:55 Conclusion of interview. O’Brien mentions the value of including young people in Oral history project.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input 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>U21 Mid Cork 200 and 2004</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Club Executive, PRO</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>Length of Interview: 1:00:00</p>
<p>Language</p>	<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: Julian O'Donoghue

Date: 20th Oct 2011