

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Ann-Marie Smith
<b>Date of Interview</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2008
<b>Location</b>	Croke Park, Dublin
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Lorcán Ó Ruairc
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1946 <b>Home County:</b> Kildare
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Dunlavin Primary School, Co. Wicklow <b>Secondary:</b> Salesian Secondary School in Limerick <b>Third Level:</b> St. Patrick's Training College, Dublin; All Hallows, Dublin, UCD and St. Patrick's College Dublin.
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 7 siblings <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with children
<b>Club(s)</b>	Moorefield, Co. Kildare
<b>Occupation</b>	Retired National Handball Administrator
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Father: Teacher
<b>Religion</b>	N/A
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A

<b>Date of Report</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> April 2009
<b>Period Covered</b>	1940s-2008
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Kildare, Wicklow, Dublin, Galway, Limerick, New York
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Childhood, Family involvement, Earliest memories, Media, Education, Politics, Travel, Training, All-Ireland, Croke Park
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>In this interview Lorcán Ó Ruairc talks about his childhood, his father's involvement and interest in the GAA. He talks about playing Gaelic Games in both primary and secondary schools. He also talks about joining the army and the important role of sport in the army and some of the games he took part in while serving. He speaks about the many clubs and third level institutions he played with and recalls putting on the Kildare jersey for the first time. He also talks about travelling to New York and playing in Gaelic Park as well as playing in the All Ireland Juvenile Hurling Final in Birmingham in 1966. He speaks about teaching some of the Kildare players who went on to do great things in the county jersey. He talks about his career in Croke Park and the many different roles he did there. He talks about the many frustrations he sometimes felt due to lack of resources and funding for handball. He recalls some of the greatest memories over the last 20 years as National Handball Administrator and also talks about the important role of sport and in particular GAA plays in people's lives. He discusses the impact of his involvement in the GAA and handball on his family life. He concludes with how important the GAA and the club are to people.</p> <p>Start: Introduction to interview. Name of interviewee.</p> <p>0.30: Lorcán states that he was born in Dunlavin in County</p>

	<p>Wicklow. He and his family lived in the area for less than 2 years.</p> <p>0.40: Lorcán's father was the school principal in the primary school in Dunlavin. He had set up and re-established the Gaelic Football club in the village.</p> <p>1.01: Lorcán's father had played with St. Patrick's Training College in Drumcondra, Dublin and also for the New Ireland's Hurling Club in Dublin.</p> <p>1.21: Lorcán's father was chairman of the organisations which would be similar to Cumann na mBunscol in the 1930s.</p> <p>1.57: Lorcán's mother was from West Cork.</p> <p>2.37: There wasn't a lot of interest or involvement in the GAA on his mother's side of the family. Lorcán's mother didn't attend matches as she was afraid that her children may be injured.</p> <p>3.33: Lorcán is the eldest of 8 children.</p> <p>4.10: Lorcán recalls listening to Michael O'hEithir commentating on matches in the early 1950s. Nickey Rackard was a particular hero of Lorcán's as he was growing up.</p> <p>4.54: Lorcán speaks about his GAA hero Nickey Rackard and "The Nickey Rackard Story" which featured in the Irish Press in the run up to the 1956 All Ireland Hurling Final. "When he (Nickey Rackard) and his brothers, Bobby and Billy were playing in some important hurling match, well on the night before the match, Bobby and Billy each took a bath, now I suppose a bath was a luxury at that time for many people, but Nickey didn't have any bath himself and the two lads were as stiff as pokers the next day. He said he took the lesson and he would never have a bath on the night before a hurling match. I took that into my own preparation for matches."</p> <p>5.46: Lorcán played U14 hurling with the Portlaoise club. He</p>
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	<p>recalls that during his first match for the club, he scored a couple of goals and points. After the game he was told that he played just like Nickey Rackard. He says that was such a wonderful compliment to a boy of 14 years of age.</p> <p>6.24: Lorcán recalls visiting Nickey Rackard in hospital not long before he died. Nickey didn't know Lorcán but Lorcán wanted to thank him for both influencing and inspiring him during his life both as a person and a Gaelic player. Lorcán is unable to recall anything that Nickey said to him, he was completely awestruck.</p> <p>8.05: Lorcán says that Nickey was a scoring machine and that the Wexford team revolved around him and his brothers. He also likes the way that they accepted defeat in a positive way.</p> <p>8.50: Lorcán recalls playing Gaelic games when he was a boy. His family home was beside the school and he and his brothers and friends would play before and after school and during their break time. He recalls that they used jackets or sticks which were put into the ground as goalposts.</p> <p>9.54: "We used to try and make hurly sticks from planks or from cuttings from hedgerows, even crook sticks; not much bigger than you'd see on a walking stick, so they were great. It reminded me a little of the shinty sticks at the time."</p> <p>10.22: As well as playing U14 hurling for Portlaoise, Lorcán also playing U14 football and U16 hurling and football.</p> <p>10.39: Lorcán says that the club was very important to the people in the community.</p> <p>12.38: Lorcán says that his family had no difficulties going to matches as his father had a car.</p> <p>13.35: Lorcán talks about training and recalls that he received very little formal training. He says there was no great emphasis on running or physical training when he was a</p>
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	<p>young boy; he says that this came later when he was in secondary school. He says that during his primary school days the entire emphasis was on fun and practicing the skills.</p> <p>14.28: Lorcán attended the Salesian Secondary School in Limerick. He talks about playing on all the teams. A Sports Day or Week was held every year, and during his time there, he won the Long Puck Competition every year.</p> <p>15.17: In 1962 around the time of his Inter Certificate exams, Lorcán and the school team played in 3 Munster Championships on 3 successive Sundays; consequently they won all 3 matches.</p> <p>16.44: "There was no pay for play but we had it in an indirect way. When we were playing matches away from the school, the priest in charge of the team would give us half a crown to go and get something for ourselves after the games. Instead of having a meal we could go to the chip shop or a restaurant or wherever we wanted to go and get what we wanted for the half crown. It was something very fondly remembered and treasured by people and it was acknowledgement that we were doing something for the school."</p> <p>17.42: Victories were celebrated in the school; Lorcán recalls that they usually got a half day on the Monday after winning the championship. In addition there would be bonfires and extra food for the next day or two and many teachers would talk about the games in the classroom.</p> <p>19.15: There were 2 handball alleys in Lorcán's secondary school.</p> <p>19.36: Lorcán played football, hurling and handball in secondary school.</p> <p>20.06: Lorcán joined the army in October 1964.</p> <p>20.48: He says that sport was very much encouraged in the army. Every Wednesday they would get a half day to take</p>
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	<p>part in sports.</p> <p>21.25: In 1966 the army cadets beat the Air Corps to win the Chaplin Cup. Lorcán says it was a great victory.</p> <p>22.42: Lorcán played with the Curragh Command team and the fourth Battalion in hurling and football in Cork and the Southern Command Hurling team.</p> <p>24.30: In 1967 Lorcán served for 6 months in Cyprus with the Peacekeeping Force. He really enjoyed his time there, however there wasn't much Gaelic there, it was mostly soccer and rugby.</p> <p>26.03: Lorcán left the army in 1968 and studied in All Hallows in Dublin. Lorcán's home was in Galway, the family had moved there in 1961. In 1961 he played on the U15 Hurling team and Fr. Lally's street league team and had a great success that year winning both the U15 County Championship and the street league.</p> <p>26.42: Lorcán recalls that Players cigarettes sponsored a juvenile hurling team to come to Croke Park for the All Ireland Hurling Final and in 1961 Lorcán's team made the trip to Croke Park.</p> <p>27.25: It was Lorcán's second time at an All Ireland Final. He recalls that they got the early morning train from Galway with the officials of the club. They were brought by bus to Players' Factory and had their lunch there and then made their way to Croke Park where they were seated in the front row of the upper Cusack Stand.</p> <p>30.50: Lorcán has a medal from his time playing with All Hallows.</p> <p>31.18: Lorcán was on the 1968 Liam Mellows team in Galway that won the Galway Senior Hurling Championship.</p> <p>32.16: Also in that same year, 1968, Lorcán went to New York with his hurl and boots. He was set up with a job and he</p>
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	<p>had free accommodation there. While there he played with Connemara Gaels. He says that it was very special to play in Gaelic Park because of what it meant to Irish people who emigrated to New York.</p> <p>34.30: The Connemara Gaels reached the New York Final that year and they were up against a Clare team. The Clare team won the final.</p> <p>35.24: The day after the New York Final, Lorcán received a call from home to say that his club, Liam Mellows was in the county final and he was asked to get a flight home to play in the final. He played in the final the following Sunday.</p> <p>36.05: Although he played both hurling and football, Lorcán has a preference for hurling. He says that it is the most skilful games of all the games played in Ireland. It is a unique feature of Ireland and it gives huge identity to Irish people.</p> <p>38.20: While he was in All Hallows, Lorcán completed a Social Science Degree in UCD, where he played for the Fresher Hurling team. After All Hallows, Lorcán went to St. Patrick's College where he completed a 1 year postgraduate degree and qualified as a national school teacher.</p> <p>38.38: "In fact I played with, between hurling and football; I played with 5 third level institutions."</p> <p>39.06: Lorcán's first teaching job was in Clane National School in Kildare. He thought pupils like Martin Lynch who played for Kildare in the All Ireland Final in 1998 and Dennis O'Connell. Lorcán says that you could always identify them as players with great skills even at the age of 7 or 8.</p> <p>41.03: Lorcán taught in Clane National School for 3 years.</p> <p>42.09: In October 1965, Lorcán played for Kildare for the first time during the National League campaign.</p> <p>44.08: He recalls that there was no huge emphasis on physical training for the All Ireland Junior Hurling Final in</p>
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	<p>1966.</p> <p>45.07: The final was played in Birmingham and the Kildare team faced Warwickshire. The average age of the Kildare team was 21. Lorcán says that Billy Quinn was the veteran of the team at the age of 35.</p> <p>45.41: The team travelled by plane and Lorcán believes it was his first time in a plane.</p> <p>46.25: The GAA issued a special medal for the final because it was played in the 50<sup>th</sup> year after the Easter Rising. Kildare won the game and received their medals at a presentational evening which was held later in the year.</p> <p>48.00: The final received great coverage in the local newspapers and there were many functions in a number of clubs in the county to celebrate the win.</p> <p>48.39: Lorcán took up a position in the Centre of Education in the Racing Apprentice School in Kildare. His main duties were teaching, administration and general duties. He remained there for 3 years.</p> <p>49.37: The last time Lorcán played for Kildare was the All Ireland Junior Hurling Final in 1966.</p> <p>50.22: However he continued to play the games and he played both hurling and football with Moorefield and in 1979; they won the Junior Hurling Championship.</p> <p>51.36: During the 1980s, Lorcán coached the juvenile hurling team in Moorefield.</p> <p>52.40: Lorcán started working in Croke Park in 1980. His brother telephoned him to tell him that he had just seen the advertisement for the job as GAA Development Officer in Croke Park. He was called for interview and succeeded in securing the position.</p> <p>54.20: In 1980 there were 18-20 people working in Croke</p>
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	<p>Park.</p> <p>55.51: He was appointed Secretary and Serving Officer of the GAA Centenary Committee. Lorcán says it was a very busy time but a great time.</p> <p>58.58: “I always think that the people who had the vision to establish the GAA at a time when Ireland was on its knees. We talk about depression and recession nowadays but after Post Famine Ireland and in the period leading up to the 1870s and 1880s, Ireland was never in a poorer state; economically or politically or in any other respect or culturally and there was a huge natural drive at the time and a great uprising of national spirit with many other organisations and people involved as well but I think the GAA captured the spirit of the people and people like Michael Cusack and others who had the inspiration and the vision to found the association did a great service for the people of Ireland of their time and not just then or that period but for generations to come and generations yet to come.”</p> <p>1.00.00: In 1982, Lorcán paid a visit to Michael Cusack’s cottage in Clare, it made a huge impact on him:</p> <p>“I went out on my own to see the Cusack cottage. I remember climbing over a gate at the end of the laneway leading up to it and when I got up to the stone building, being overawed by the fact that a man who lived in Carron in a stone cottage at that time where one can’t see any further than a couple of 100 yards, you can’t see anywhere really from where the cottage is other than the boundaries of the hillocks going up from it. I thought it was tremendous that a man who lived there had the vision to do what he did and to inspire people all over the country to develop the association from club level right up to national level.”</p> <p>1.01.35: He was appointed as Personnel Officer at the national level. This role included dealing with any issues</p>
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	<p>concerning the staff and conducting interviews.</p> <p>1.02.45: Lorcán says that the role of volunteers is so important to the GAA. He says that they do great work and that full time staff need to be able to accommodate volunteers outside of office hours.</p> <p>1.03.15: "Without the voluntary people there would be no organisation, no clubs, no organised games. Volunteers are the people that do the real work on the ground and at national and provincial levels. Policies can be set down alright but if you don't have the people to implement them and carry them out at county and club level, it is largely a waste of time and resources. You need the people at ground level to open the gates, open the dressing rooms, have jerseys ready, have footballs, hurleys and everything else ready for training sessions, meetings that have to be organised. They have to clean up dressing rooms after games ready for the next session. And the many, many things that have to be done. I mean the role of the voluntary person is invaluable, you can't put a value on it."</p> <p>1.04.37: Lorcán also acted as a supervising steward at matches. He says that the job contract stated that staff had to make themselves available to work in a voluntary role at matches.</p> <p>1.07.26: In 1989 Joe Lynch retired, consequently there was a vacancy in the role of National Administrator for Handball. On July 1<sup>st</sup> 1989, Lorcán took up the position as National Administrator for Handball.</p> <p>1.08.38: Lorcán says that the job hasn't always been smooth sailing but he has enjoyed it. He says that one challenge is the lack of resources to carry out the events that they would like to.</p> <p>1.09.48: Lorcán says that many hurlers like handball as it adds to their own hurling skills.</p>
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	<p>1.10.15: Lorcán says that the great thing about handball is that it can be played at a very young age and that the skills learnt can be adapted to other games and sports.</p> <p>1.10.56: There are handball championships in Ireland for people up to the age of 60. In the USA, there are championships for people over the age of 80.</p> <p>1.11.09: "It is a life long game."</p> <p>1.12.17: There has been a massive increase in the participation of third level students in handball in recent years.</p> <p>1.13.33: Lorcán says that it has been frustrating at times. He says that handball is equally important to the people who take part in it. Over the years he says that they have got some support but not the support they would have liked for the overall development of the game. He says that relations with the GAA have been very good in recent years.</p> <p>1.15.18: "Handball needs extra personnel and funding and general support from the association that does not only apply at national level it goes right down through the association to the grass root club levels."</p> <p>1.15.44: Lorcán discusses some of his proudest moments as National Administrator for Handball: "The 2003 event (Handball World Championship) was the biggest ever world Handball Championship held anywhere in the history of the game with 1,053 entrants. That was a mammoth task to organise. What I remember greatly about that was the voluntary input of so many people in the Kilkenny, Carlow, Laois areas. There were a huge number of games also in Cavan, in Kingscourt where the new facility was developed and then in the Dublin area as well. It was a great time and it gave a great lift to Irish Handball both in 1994 and 2003. The Championships are due to be held here in 2012."</p> <p>1.17.52: Lorcán talks about Joey Maher who went to Canada after being invited by the police force. They wanted extra</p>
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	<p>armoury to play against the US. He became a member of the police force there and he won a World's Open Singles title while there.</p> <p>1.18.30: Paul Brady is the only player to win 2 successive World Open Single Championships.</p> <p>1.18.38: Fiona McKenna is the only woman to win 2 Women's Open Single Championships.</p> <p>1.20.08: "In the 2003 World Open Singles Final, two Irish players reached the final for the first time, Paul Brady from Cavan and Tony Healy from Ballydesmond in Cork. Paul won the first game. During the second game he got severe cramp and had to take a timeout and injury timeouts. The total timeout for injury is 15 minutes. He wasn't able to resume after the 15 minute period. Tony Healy to his eternal credit offered him his own injury timeout and timeouts. When the game resumed, Paul was able to play though he wasn't fully fit. He went on to win the World Title. If Tony hadn't been as sporting as he was, Tony could have taken the title himself as Paul wouldn't have been able to continue. It was one of the highlights of the sporting year that year as recognised by Cliona Foley in <i>The Irish Independent</i>."</p> <p>1.21.40: "The tremendous fundraising Ducksy Walsh has done over the past few years; Ducksy himself would be the first to admit this, that he went through a pretty ad time for a couple of years after he amassed his 38 All Ireland Senior Championship medals, a huge record in itself. When Ducksy had his own treatment and came out very well out of it, he organised fundraising campaigns for the benefit of the Ashlinn treatment centre in two different years. He organised, when his doubles partner Eamon Law died while playing handball in 2007, a fundraising effort for the Law family and between the three events he raised something approaching €200,000. I think that showed the spirit of people involved in handball and that there's more to the sport than the game itself and I think it identifies the devotion of people to each other and how</p>
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	<p>people can care for each other and have concern for each other whether in the sporting arena or in the their own personal lives or through their family circumstances and I think those three things mentioned would show that spirit very much alive in handball and would be an example to many other people.”</p> <p>1.23.30: Lorcán says that he did sacrifice many aspects of family life because of his involvement in the games. He says that there were long lists of jobs that he didn't get around to for months even years due to his commitment to the games.</p> <p>“I have no hesitation in saying that I scarified aspects of family life and have neglected things from time to time at home. There would have been long lists of jobs that I should have done that I didn't get around to doing for many months even years. I remember one time in the 1980's when I heard two of my children; I have three children, Ciaran, Aoife and Enda and I heard two of them talking to one another and at that time I would have been going to work at 7.30 or 8.00 in the morning before they were up and going to school and I might be home late when they'd be gone to bed. I heard one saying to the other at that time; “does our dad live here anymore?” You can imagine how I felt when I heard that little conversation going on. But certainly it does take from opportunities that people would have in non voluntary situations where time is more relaxed and more available for family but at the same time I would hope that I have helped to contribute in someway to other families by the work I have been involved in and the work I have done.”</p> <p>1.25.02: Lorcán says that it is important to be involved in the community and that sports provide opportunity for people.</p> <p>1.28.16: “The identity people have with their local club, county, province and country when people represent their own area. It's like when Jimmy Duggan from Liam Mellows Club in Galway heard I was going to work in Croke Park, he said it's like having a priest from the parish in the Vatican. So</p>
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	<p>that sort of identification from club to national level and throughout the association in general, I think it is of tremendous importance to people in their daily lives not just in the sport themselves but in the spirit it gives to people and the encouragement it gives to them outside the sport itself and I think it has been a huge factor in the development of modern Ireland, not just in recent times but throughout history.”</p> <p>1.31.30: Lorcán concludes the interview by saying “Anyone that has played sport or been involved in Gaelic Games in Ireland or overseas, the GAA club is the open door and avenue that people make contacts, establish life long friends and become involved in communities where they move to. In my playing career I have played with clubs in Laois, 4 in Galway, 1 in Cork, 4 in Kildare and 1 illegally in Dublin; I was a student here when I was brought out to play in Croke Park with the New Ireland Hurling team. The GAA has certainly given me huge opportunities in life and it has brought me into contact with so many that I have admired over the years as player and as administrator.”</p>
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<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  <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson   <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Member   <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person  <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer   <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer   <input type="checkbox"/> Referee   <input type="checkbox"/> None  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify):          _____Administrator_____       </p>
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	<p>Lorcán played U14 and U16 hurling and football with the Portlaoise club. He won 3 Munster Championships on 3 successive Sundays during his time in the Salesian Secondary School in Limerick. In 1961 he won the U15 County Hurling Championship and the street league in Galway. Lorcán was on the team that won the Chaplin Cup in</p>

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	1966 while he was serving in the army. Also in 1966 he won an All Ireland Junior Hurling Final Medal with Kildare when they beat Warwickshire in Birmingham. During his army career, he played with the Curragh Command team, the 4 <sup>th</sup> Battalion team in both hurling and football and the Southern Command Hurling team. In 1968 he won a medal with Liam Mellows club when they won the Galway Senior Hurling Championship. He played with Connemara Gaels in New York and reached the New York Final but were beaten on the day by a Clare team. He played both hurling and football with Moorefield Club, Kildare and they won the Junior Hurling Championship in 1979.
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	GAA Development Officer, Secretary and Serving Officer of the GAA Centenary Committee, National Personnel Officer for the GAA and National Administrator for Handball for 20 years.
<b>Format</b>	✓ Audio      Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 1.33.44
<b>Language</b>	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.

**REFERENCE NO.** KE/1/2

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_Ann-Marie Smith\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_20<sup>th</sup> April 2009\_\_\_\_\_

The GAA logo, consisting of the letters 'GAA' in a stylized white font, is positioned on a black rectangular background with a diagonal cut on the left side.