

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Mary Nevin
<b>Date of Interview</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> May 2010
<b>Location</b>	Ballincloghan, Kilcormac, Co. Offaly
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Seán Nevin
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1955 <b>Home County:</b> Offaly
<b>Education</b>	N/A
<b>Family</b>	N/A
<b>Club(s)</b>	Kilcormac – Killoughey GAA [Offaly]
<b>Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

<b>Date of Report</b>	25 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1955 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Offaly
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Officials, Administration, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, All-Ireland, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life
<b>Interview Summary</b>	Seán talks about his experiences of the GAA throughout his life. See script below.
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Won some underage championships in hurling; played in 1960s and 1970s
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Chairperson of the Minor club
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 00:21:34
<b>Language</b>	English

Q1: Describe your earliest GAA memory and how you became involved in the GAA?

Galway playing Tipperary in BIRR in the All-Ireland semi-final in the late 1960s. Both were good teams and Tipperary actually won that game. One of the highlights of this game was the display of John Connolly of Galway, who was marking Mick Roche of Tipperary. I recall the pride of my dad when we travelled to Croke park in the mid 1960s to see Galway winning the football All-Ireland. (they won three in a row) the colour and excitement and eating in Barry's hotel were special for a young person at that stage.

Q2: Did your family have a tradition or history of GAA involvement?

yes, involvement on both my father's and my mother's side. Especially on my Dad's side. my father was a hurler and played for Belmont, Kilcormac / Kiltoughney and offaly. so he was quite a strong player (frank Nevin)

Q3: Did your relatives discuss their GAA experiences with you? What were they?

GAA was discussed frequently in our house. my dad loved GAA and was especially passionate about the game of hurling

Q4: Tell me how GAA affected your family life?

family life at that stage Revolved around the GAA. There wasn't much else to discuss or attend. Games and talking about games was all pervasive. In many respects, family life Revolved around GAA rather than the other way around.

Q5: Tell me what it was like to support your club/county when you were young and down through the years (travelling to games, prices of tickets, food, grounds visited, clothes worn, match-day traditions, local celebrations and traditions).

Supporting Offaly in the 1970s was marvellous. Offaly made the breakthrough from a strong team to a successful one, especially in the National leagues and made the Breakthrough at All-Ireland level in 1981. In the 70s ~~Ireland~~ Offaly were a brilliant team and very difficult to beat. The strong counties came to BIRR and found Offaly very difficult to emerge victorious.

The other special memories, and they still are, Revolve around the county finals. They still are magical events. I recall the St. Rynaghs of Banagher teams during the 1960s. They were essential to Offaly's success afterwards.

I also remember travelling to Crokepark by train when I was younger and this wasn't common

back then, so it was always a treat.



Q6: If you had to choose just one game from all you've experienced, which would you choose? Why?

for an offaly person, that will always be the hurling final of 1981. If your an offaly football fan, it will always be the football final of 1971. They were both great affairs. many people will especially remember the football final of 1971 especially because back then people wore paper hats. It was an extremely wet day and the green, white and gold dye which were on the hats ran onto peoples clothes. Everybody who came out of crokepark that day were wet and coloured! That would be a special memory for a lot of people.

Q7: What impact has the GAA had on your life?

It's had a major impact on my life. It imparts a sense of community, of belonging and of being involved in something that's uniquely Irish.

Q8: What place and role does your club have in your community?

The club defines the community in many respects. It also defines you as a person also. It's that sense of belonging. For many years, the club was the sole focus of community. So community revolved around the GAA, that's what community life was.

Q9: What role did the GAA play as part of your school and/or college life?

The GAA played a significant role to our school years. In the 1970s, at secondary level, we won the west-midland league. (which was a football competition)

In primary school, we had a good team at that point. (In the early 70s) we won the U. 14 hurling and football titles.

Q10: Who do you admire most in the GAA and why?

~~are~~ The voluntary workers and trainers who work on a voluntary basis. They give freely of their time and they do it purely to promote the games.

Q11: In your experience what have been the biggest changes in the GAA?

In the last 20 years it has been the media focus on the games and the intense public scrutiny on county teams and personnel on county teams. It's intrusive in many respects but it's part of feeding media frenzy.

The increasing media focus on the GAA has been both good and bad.

Q12: Have changes in your community affected your club and how?

Certainly, the decline in the birth rate has impacted on the ability to field the underage teams in the club and this has a corresponding effect on county level.

less volunteers, where people are less able to give up their personal time.

In the main they have been negative impacts unfortunately that have affected the ability of teams to prosper and grow.



Q13: Do you think the role of women in the GAA has changed over the years and how?

absolutely. But unfortunately, it is still mainly administration roles. you have to recognise that up to a few years ago, the GAA was a male dominated organisation. At that time very few women were involved. Women have to start becoming involved at trainer level. I look forward to the day in which women become trainers of underage teams and progress upwards to more adult levels.

Q14: Describe the role of the churches and clergy in your club and how it has changed over the years?

The catholic church was especially prominent in GAA affairs. people were of the view that GAA was the catholic church at play. The parish priest was either the chairperson or president of many GAA clubs over the years. The catholic church was seen to be a strong influencer on the GAA and the GAA in turn was seen to be ~~the~~ deferential to the catholic church. The relationship shared was beneficial to both parties. The person acknowledged locally was the catholic priest and in turn, the GAA promoted the church as an organisation. That has changed dramatically over the years and is less so now.



Q15: Was there a connection between politics and the GAA for you, if so what?

not for me personally. But there was always a believed to be a strong connection between Fianna Fáil and the GAA. This was largely true. Most GAA people would have associated Fianna Fáil with nationalism. So people would have naturally voted for what was believed to be a nationalist/Republican organisation.

Q16: What have been the main disappointments you have had with the GAA?

At local level it has to be the failure of Kircormac/Killoughey to win a senior hurling final. and the failure to translate under-age success to senior level. In many years in the 80s we had a large number of victories and none of this success translated to senior level.

Q17: Did the GAA shape your own identity in any way?

yes, it defines you, and your identity, it defines you locally and nationally. ~~■~~

**Q18: What role has Irish language and culture had in your club and on your personal involvement with the GAA?**

The aims of the GAA are to promote cultural identity and Gaelic culture in particular. you have to appreciate the the GAA is more than a sporting organisation. In terms of its every day roles and work it tries to involve and foster Irish culture and language. you are exposed to it by virtue of your involvement in GAA and this is a positive thing as the GAA would always like to retain that part of its ethos.

**Q19: How important are rivalries within the GAA and what are yours?**

Rivalries and especially local rivalries are the life blood of the GAA. In many respects you have to be successful to generate rivalries and retain these rivalries. Unfortunately K/K has never been a "strong" club as such and has not generated these rivalries at senior level. At county level Offaly's biggest rival was Kilkenny during the 1980s as they contested Leinster honours. This mirrors the fact that if you are successful you generate strong rivalries.

**Q20: Comment on the role of volunteers within the GAA?**

For GAA clubs to operate successfully, they need a significant level of input from voluntary workers. At local level the GAA clubs would not exist were it not for the voluntary efforts of so many people. Unfortunately those volunteers are not truly appreciated for all the work that they do. If people were better appreciated, that would be a help.



Q21: Describe your experience with teams as a player, manager, committee member or supporter.

played with the under-age teams in the club for a number of years and played up to minor level. played junior football for a number of years as well. This was the senior football team in the club at that stage. I also served as a mentor for a number of years with a number of the under age teams and I also served as minor club chairman for a number of years and we won "minor club of the year" which was a great achievement

Q22: Describe your experiences, if any, with the GAA outside Ireland.



Q23: Describe how media coverage of GAA in your lifetime has changed.

There are two elements of this is the intrusiveness of the media into players lives. The focus is really intense and for amateur players to be subjected to this is not really appropriate. The other one is the point now, where a huge number of our games are televised. All of this is driven by commercial interests. The GAA is benefitting as the games are reaching a wider audience and there are ~~monies~~ moneys flowing into the organisation. I would have major reservations in how the media are driving the agenda in relation to the coverage of the GAA.

Q24: What in your opinion are the biggest challenges facing the GAA in the future?

The debate about professionalism and payment for players will undoubtedly become an issue again in the future. From that, I believe that treatment of players will continue to be a big issue. I think the GAA will have to come to a better acceptance of the demands that are made upon players. The other issue will be meeting the challenges of other sports for the hearts and minds of the young people.

Q25: What does the GAA mean to you?

For me personally, the GAA stands for community, it stands for a way of life, it is a concept of pride in one's place, it is about a particular culture and a pride in the uniqueness of the organisation. Those are the things that the GAA represents for me.



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Q26: Do you have any pictures, documents, video etc. that you could share with us? Please provide a brief description.

Do you know any songs or poems about the GAA in your local area that you can send us or write in here?

Can you think of anyone else in your locality or in your family circle who we should contact for this project? Who are they and why?

Q27: Is there anything else you would like to say about the GAA?

Q28: How did you hear about this project?

I first became aware of the overall project through the book "an oral history of the GAA" (Paul Rowes: editor) and from daughter Mary (interviewer)

I hereby assign the copyright of the answers 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 questionnaire.

Signed: Don Verin Date: 11/5/2010

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