

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Julian O'Donoghue
Date of Interview	17 th Nov 2011
Location	Blarney, Co Cork
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	James Coakley
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1947 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: Donoughmore Secondary: North Monastery
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Donoughmore GAA [Cork] ; Blarney Hurling and Football Club [Cork]
Occupation	N/A
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

REFERENCE NO. CK/1/26

Date of Report	17 th Nov 2011
Period Covered	1950 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Limerick, London, Great Britain
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Violence, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>James Coakley enjoyed a remarkable playing career with Blarney, one which straddled four decades. Coakley opens the interview by talking about his primary school days and the absence of organised games. He also talks about his family's move from Donoughmore to Blarney and his underage career with the local club. His first adult game with the club came when he was 17 – in a game which saw a fierce row develop and which ended in the hospitalisation of seven players, the debutant among them.</p> <p>Coakley talks about the low standing of hurling in Blarney in the 1960s and the gradual improvements that were brought about through, for instance, the involvement of club players in high quality inter-firms competitions with the Blarney Mills. It was during this period, the 1960s, that Coakley recalled travelling as one of 16 in a van to watch Cork in a Munster hurling decider.</p> <p>Coakley charts the progress of his career – and the fortunes of Blarney hurling – through the 1970s, 80s and early 90s, commenting also on changes in the wider community over the course of these decades. He talks about the disappointment of certain defeats and the players he played alongside. Coakley moved being a player to a selector in 1993 and he reflects on the satisfaction he draws from Blarney's Junior championship success of that year. Developments in the club since are also discussed, in particular the county, Munster and All-Ireland success of 2008-9 and Coakley's own involvement with various underage teams. He also touches on his administrative role with the Muskerry divisional side. Coakley concludes the interview with reflections on the contribution of the Kelleher family to the local GAA, on the</p>

	<p>challenges facing the GAA into the future. There are also reflections on the impact of his GAA commitments on his children's social interests and his concerns over the threat of emigration to the Blarney club.</p> <p>00:00:20 Early experiences of Gaelic games: playing an under 14 competitions, aged 11, with Donoughmore prior to family's move to Blarney.</p> <p>00:00:45 Playing in parish leagues in 1959 and winning Under 14 county title with Blarney. Refers to some of the players he played alongside on that occasion.</p> <p>00:01:34 Mentions that four of them – himself, Denis Hurley, Barney McAuliffe and John Mitchel – ended up playing Cork Minor and Neil Creedon 'played a few senior games for Cork.'</p> <p>00:02:20 Mentions Cork winning All-Ireland minor title in 1964 and being beaten in Munster final in 1965 by Limerick. Talks about others who played on those Cork Minor teams.</p> <p>00:03:30 Playing under 14 in 'poor conditions' in Blarney. Beating Inniscarra in mid-Cork final in Coachford.</p> <p>00:04:25 Talks about the playing in different farmers' fields when living in Donoughmore. Remarks on absence of lines etc.</p> <p>00:05:20 Reference to attending primary school in Donoughmore and going straight to the 'Mon' for secondary school.</p> <p>00:05:28 Refers to playing Dr. O'Callaghan Cup with the 'Mon' when he was 15.</p> <p>00:05:45 The absence of organised games in primary school in the 1950s.</p> <p>00:06:00 Mentions that his sons didn't play Gaelic games, but his father played Cork junior. Mentions that he played with several teams in football and hurling.</p> <p>00:06:50 Moving to Blarney and the role of hurling in integrating to new community.</p> <p>00:07:18 Mentions that he 'went to the Mon for the hurling'.</p> <p>00:07:40 Talks about his underage career with Blarney, including Under 16, Minor and Under 21.</p> <p>00:08:30 Starting to play junior hurling aged 17 against Inniscarra– refers to row that broke out and 7 players being</p>
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	<p>hospitalised on night of game. 'I was out cold', he says.</p> <p>00:09:50 Comments on the low standing of hurling in Blarney in the 1960s and the improvement brought about by the Blarney Mills inter-firms team, which won Cork inter-firms championships. Mentions the use of 'guest' players on inter-firms teams and the coming together of players from different clubs.</p> <p>00:11:08 Mentions that contact with players from other clubs was often limited to match days.</p> <p>00:11:30 Discusses Blarney's hurling record in the 1960s and 1970s and talks about some of the players involved.</p> <p>00:12:40 Refers to the 'North Mon' connection – Harty Cup winning players - to the team of 1978.</p> <p>00:13:20 Discusses the influx of outside players into Blarney in the late 1970s.</p> <p>00:13:55 Childhood memories: recall travelling to Limerick on train and seeing Cork suffer heavy defeat.</p> <p>00:14:24 Tells story of 16 people travelling in van to drawn Munster final, Cork V Clare, in 1966.</p> <p>00:15:20 Refers to the drink and driving home from game.</p> <p>00:16:06 Selects Cork beating Limerick in Killarney in 1966 as the standout inter-county game he has witnessed.</p> <p>00:16:36 Recalls the importance of beating Inniscarra in 1969.</p> <p>00:17:08 Reflects as the highlight of the Blarney GAA story the winning of the All-Ireland in Croke Park in 2009 – 'it was a proud for all Blarney people'.</p> <p>00:17:40 Comments on the emotion of winning the county title in 2008.</p> <p>00:18:20 Reflects on the growing professionalism of the GAA at all levels. Talks about the lack of organisation when he was playing underage with Blarney.</p> <p>00:20:08 Talks about his admiration for Tommy Looney when he was a child. Mentions that he was boxer, a non-smoker or drinker.</p> <p>00:21:03 Interviewer, Julian O'Donoghue, refers to playing in London and seeing players smoking and drinking before</p>
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	<p>games.</p> <p>00:21:20 Refers to being a 'heavy smoker' and having a cigarette and a cup of tea on the sideline when taken off.</p> <p>00:21:30 Tells story about using a concoction of 'brandy and poitin' before a game.</p> <p>00:22:34 Recalls playing in mid Cork final in 1978 and supporters walking from Blarney to game.</p> <p>00:22:55 Refers to his admiration for Cork players Ray Cummins and Charlie McCarthy.</p> <p>00:23:18 Discusses the major changes in the GAA in relation to fitness and training.</p> <p>00:24:00 Says that he played hurling up until 2002, when he was aged 55 and that he played with first team in club until his mid 40s.</p> <p>00:25:15 Reflects on changes in the community in Blarney – prevalence of drugs and the importance of sport.</p> <p>00:25:50 Considers the influence and involvement of the clergy in the GAA in Donoughmore and Blarney.</p> <p>00:26:47 Comments on the role of (party political) politics in club affairs.</p> <p>00:27:27 Refers to the disappointment of not winning a Junior hurling championship and the success of the club following his retirement. Mentions that his first junior game was in 1963 and he retired in 1993.</p> <p>00:28:34 Mentions the satisfaction of being a selector with championship winning team in 1993.</p> <p>00:28:50 Remembers the disappointment of losing to Carrigtwohill in championship match in 1978.</p> <p>00:30:20 Recalls historic achievement of Blarney from early 20th century.</p> <p>00:31:10 Refers to some of the 'hardy boys' who played on the 1978 team. And stories are exchange about 'Connorsy' at centre-back who later played in Boston.</p> <p>00:32:18 Discusses his non-playing roles in the Blarney club – selector in 1993 and mentoring underage teams.</p> <p>00:33:04 Talks about the celebrations that followed the 1993 junior championship success – 'we probably got the winter</p>
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	<p>out of it.' Mentions that Beamish gave them 'a free day's drinking.'</p> <p>00:34:40 Returns to his involvement in the management of underage team, referring to the winning of an Under 14 county championship, c. 2002-3.</p> <p>00:35:50 Alludes to a disagreement among management team in 2007 and, out of it, 'club learned lessons'.</p> <p>00:36:53 Mentions administrative roles he has held, including being Assistant Secretary of Blarney as a teenager and later secretary of the Muskerry divisional team.</p> <p>00:37:25 Talks about his involvement as a player with Muskerry. Mentions Muskerry reaching county final in 1970 when he was London.</p> <p>00:38:35 Says that he was a trainee chef in London for 9 months in 1969-70. Comments on why he went to London and his social life there.</p> <p>00:40:27 Mentioned not travelling on a tour in the 1980s and an offer of funding from Christy Kelleher.</p> <p>00:41:10 Talks about Christy Kelleher and the help he provided to him and others in Blarney. Mentions his working background and the involvement of his family in Blarney GAA.</p> <p>00:42:50 Comments on Kelleher 's role in purchasing the club's pitch.</p> <p>00:43:00 Criticises the paucity of media coverage of the GAA.</p> <p>00:43:50 Discusses the amateurism, professionalism and the future of the GAA. Refers to the GAA looking after its own.</p> <p>00:44:40 Concerns about emigration and reference to members of the club All-Ireland team who have had to leave the country.</p> <p>00:45:20 Considers the impact of his GAA involvement on his family life.</p> <p>00:46:22 Mentions his continued engagement with the GAA and his interest in the underage games.</p>
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Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Mid-Cork Junior, U14, U21, U16, U 21 football
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Assistant Secretary
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 00:47:00
Language	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.

Signed: Julian O'Donoghue

Date: 17th Nov 2011