

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	27 th Aug 2010
Location	Ballyconnell First Ulster's Clubhouse, Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	John O'Gara
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1959 Home County: Donegal
Education	Primary: Glencolmcille NS, Co. Donegal Secondary: Carrick Technical School, Co. Donegal Third Level: Templemore Training College
Family	Siblings: 5 sisters & 3 brothers Current Family if Different: Married to Margaret with 3 daughters and 1 son
Club(s)	Ballyconnell First Ulsters / Kildallan [Cavan]; Naomh Columba, Glencolmcille [Donegal]
Occupation	Garda
Parents' Occupation	Farmer; Sheep Dipping Inspector [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Golf

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Date of Report	28 th June 2012
Period Covered	1950s – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Donegal, Cork, Cavan, Tipperary, Dublin, Galway, Waterford, Meath, Mayo, Kerry
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Socialising, Food and Drink, Purchase of Grounds, Economy/Economics
Interview Summary	<p>John talks about his involvement in the GAA over the years from playing with Naomh Columba, Glencolmcille in Donegal to becoming chairman of Ballyconnell First Ulsters in Cavan. He discusses growing up in Donegal and what the GAA was like there before moving to Cork to build boats. He talks about joining the Gardaí Síochána in the early 1980s and relocating to Ballyconnell in Cavan. John discusses his involvement in the club there and his eventual transfer from Glencolmcille. He describes the role of GAA in Ballyconnell and how it was the first GAA club in Ulster. He talks about his work in the Gardaí and the relationship this had with the club. He talks about the impact of the Troubles on the club and the experience of the GAA in the North and South of Ireland. John discusses his various roles in the club over the years and describes his involvement in the Gaeltacht All-Ireland. John highlights the importance of the GAA in his life and the important role it has played since he was young.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:20 John recalls his earliest GAA memories, playing for Carrigart Vocational School. Listening to matches on the radio.</p> <p>00:54 Talks about his local club Naomh Columba, Glencolmcille. Close to Killybegs.</p> <p>01:18 Discusses the facilities of the club.</p> <p>02:10 Recalls playing with plastic balls and washing up liquid</p>

	<p>bottles when the balls burst. Playing in school.</p> <p>3:08 Talks about the lack of hurling in the area.</p> <p>3:40 Discusses his family's involvement in the GAA. Talks about his uncles and his brother becoming a referee</p> <p>04:38 Recalls the type of training they did when he was young. Mentions Michel Oliver.</p> <p>05:55 Talks about winning a minor title in 1975 against St Eunan's. Winning the Under 21 three years later.</p> <p>06:45 Describes the type of player he was and the type of drills they did in training. Training on the beach.</p> <p>08:11 Talks about the places they travelled to for matches like Letterkenny, Ballybofey, Kilcar and Ballyshannon.</p> <p>08:50 Discusses the rivalry between Glencolmcille and Kilcar. Mentions John Joe Doherty, Noel Hegarty and the McHughs and the year Donegal won the All-Ireland.</p> <p>09:34 Talks about the importance of rivalries in the GAA. Describes how it can sometimes get out of hand.</p> <p>10:56 Describes the type of role the club plays in the community. A boxing club in the area also.</p> <p>11:48 Talks about going to Skibbereen to be an apprentice boat builder. Training with the O'Donovan Rossa club.</p> <p>12:28 Discusses joining the Gardaí Síochána in 1980. Moving to Ballyconnell.</p> <p>12:40 Talks about the similarities in the GAA Cork and Donegal. Recalls breaking his ankle.</p> <p>13:50 Talks about his Gardaí training in Templemore. No Sigerson Cup at that stage. Playing on different teams in the college. Mentions Matt Connor of Offaly.</p> <p>14:54 Discusses getting involved with the Kildallan club in Ballyconnell known as Ballyconnell First Ulsters. Describes getting a transfer from his club in Donegal. Mentions Tom Maguire, Michael Oliver.</p> <p>16:54 Describes travelling home to Donegal to play matches before he joined Kildallan.</p> <p>17:59 Talks about the Kildallan club when he first joined. Recalls a semi-final they lost and the aftermath.</p>
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	<p>20:30 Recalls playing illegally in a match but is against people doing it.</p> <p>21:52 Discusses the different Gaelic games played in the club. Ladies football, hurling, rounders as well as football.</p> <p>23:40 Talks about how the hurling club is separate, called Woodford Gaels.</p> <p>24:14 Discusses the history of the Kildallan club. The first GAA club in Ulster. Talks about the 125th anniversary of the club and the celebrations organised. Parade through the town.</p> <p>27:18 Talks about training underage teams and the underage structure in the club. Problems with numbers.</p> <p>29:34 Talks about the involvement of foreign nationals in the club.</p> <p>30:50 Discusses the changes in the club and grounds since he was involved. Mentions Sean Quinn.</p> <p>32:40 Describes the type of fundraising done to improve the ground and to keep the club going. Mostly lotto.</p> <p>33:50 Talks about the impact of the recession on the community and how jobs provided by Sean Quinn helped the area. The expenses of the club.</p> <p>35:50 Describes how local businesses sponsor the club.</p> <p>37:16 Discusses becoming chairman of the club. Mentions the previous chairman John O'Hara.</p> <p>39:19 Talks about characters of the club. Mentions Tony Connelly, Cathal Reilly, Raymond Ovens, Jimmy Murray, Tom Maguire.</p> <p>41:08 Discusses being a member of the Gardaí and how this affects his role in the GAA. Talks about the role of the Gardaí in the GAA in general. Mentions</p> <p>43:49 Talks about the Gardaí competition and how it worked. Divided up around the country.</p> <p>45:49 Discusses the role of the clergy and teachers in the GAA. Mentions former teacher and chairman of Donegal county board Francie Cunningham. Gives his opinion on male and female teachers in modern times. Importance of the GAA in schools.</p> <p>48:00 Talks about players of different religions in the club and</p>
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	<p>issues surrounding this.</p> <p>49:48 Discusses the Troubles and the how this impacted on the club and his own travels to Donegal at weekends. Being stopped at checkpoints.</p> <p>51:31 Describes difference in experiences of the GAA from those in the North and in the South. Mentions Crossmaglen.</p> <p>52:50 Talks about changes in his old club in Glencolmcille.</p> <p>54:09 Discusses his hopes for the future of Ballyconnell First Ulsters. Talks about the issue of alcohol.</p> <p>57:31 Talks about his own ambitions within the GAA and his desire to manage a team.</p> <p>58:14 Talks about his sons' and daughters' involvement in the GAA.</p> <p>59:54 Describes the type of sacrifices he has made during his time in the GAA.</p> <p>01:02:14 Talks about his involvement in refereeing. Recalls a match that went wrong.</p> <p>01:04:33 Describes his favourite memory of his time involved with the GAA. Talks about the first year he won the Garda All-Ireland. Celebrating in town after the club won four trophies in 1978.</p> <p>01:07:20 Talks about his biggest disappointment in the GAA. Gives his opinion on the rules changing over the years for the worse.</p> <p>01:09:12 Chooses Michael Oliver as his GAA hero. Mentions Mick O'Dwyer, Kevin Heffernan, Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh.</p> <p>01:10:58 Talks about playing three matches in London. Played against Tir Chonaill Gaels. Playing in Dingle on Páidi Ó'Sé's pitch. Playing against his old club.</p> <p>01:12:58 Recalls playing a match the year Donegal won the All-Ireland. Mentions John Joe Doherty, Martin Shovlin.</p> <p>01:14:28 Talks about the Gaeltacht All-Ireland competition. Travelling to different places like Kerry, Mayo and Galway.</p> <p>01:14:46 Recalls reading a book about Kerry going to Gaoth Dobhair for a Gaeltacht match. Mentions the counties that compete in it, Cork, Galway, Kerry, Donegal, Mayo, Meath</p>
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	<p>and Waterford.</p> <p>01:16:35 Talks about the role of the Irish language in the GAA.</p> <p>01:18:29 Discusses what the GAA has meant to him over the years.</p> <p>01:19:50 Recalls seriously injuring himself in a match in the early 1980s. Talks about modern training.</p> <p>01:23:35 Talks about his love for football. Playing in a competitive match recently against Cornafean. Losing in next round to Bailieborough.</p> <p>01:25:13 General reflections on the GAA.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><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</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" 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>John played from the age of 17 to 39 and then played for the Cavan Over 40s for 2 years. In Donegal he won a Minor Title in 1975; Under 21 in 1978; Senior League; All-Ireland 7-A-Side at Kilmacud in 1980 and 2 Garda All-Ireland Championships. He also won a junior championship in Cork, but never got his medal for it.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>John has been involved in club administration since 1995. He has been underage secretary and chairman; senior committee member and chairman and he has also been a member of the ladies committee.</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>Length of Interview: 01:26:37</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>English</p>

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____28/06/12_____