

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	04/11/08
Location	Interviewees home near Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Paddy Wickham
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1938 Home County: Wexford
Education	Primary: Bree National School, Enniscorthy
Family	Siblings: 1 brother and 5 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Peg, with 2 sons and 4 daughters
Club(s)	Bree Ballyhogue, Davidstown-Courtnacuddy
Occupation	Farmer
Parents' Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A

Date of Report	09/12/08
Period Covered	1940s – 2008
Counties/Countries Covered	Wexford, Kilkenny, Donegal, Cork, Kerry, Dublin
Key Themes Covered	Club History, Travel, Playing, Administration, Fundraising, Coaching, Volunteers, Role of women, Role of clergy, Role of teachers, Emigration, Grounds, Relationship, Challenges, Family involvement, Impact on Life
Interview Summary	<p>Paddy is a Wexford man who has been involved at every level within the GAA. He has been a supporter, player, selector, manager, committee member, county board chairman and member of the Leinster Council. Paddy comes from a family of one brother and five sisters, he is married to Peg and has two sons and 4 daughters. He has strong views on the role of volunteers, the overcrowding of GAA fixtures – particularly its impact on children, the opening of Croke Park and the reduced role played by the railway cup. He has had a lot of involvement in fundraising and finance and was chairman of the county board during the redevelopment of Wexford Park. He is also a member of the Sean Gael committee which provides outings and parties for older members of the GAA community.</p> <p>0.00 Introduction</p> <p>0.24 7 ways to spell Wickham</p> <p>0.58 Born in Co. Wexford</p> <p>1.05 His club when he was younger was Bree Ballyhogue. He went to school in Bree, left at fourteen and worked from then on.</p> <p>1.29 His club today is Davidstown Courtnacuddy</p> <p>1.35 He got married in 1960, they lived in Enniscorthy until 1999 when they bought a farm which their son now has. They have six of a family and they were ‘nearly a yearly event’ in the 1960s.</p> <p>2.13 The field where they used to kick and hurl was only 3 miles away, but it was a farmers field and when it was</p>

	<p>ploughed they moved 11 miles away so Paddy was out of the GAA for five or six years then.</p> <p>2.31 Local club asked him to go to AGM in 1969 and he's with them since.</p> <p>2.45 No bad feelings at all about him leaving other club. Davidstown and Bree were united under the name of Ballyhogue for years and years and then they went their own way.</p> <p>3.00 Best of friends and club pals in Bree. Won club junior football in 1961 and club senior football in 1962.</p> <p>3.43 Johnathan Moriarty a Kerry man who was the local schoolteacher was a great football man. 'I suppose your first love what you start at that's your first love'... 'Football was always the priority in the parish', though the junior team hurred too.</p> <p>4.18 Emmets of Enniscorthy were Wexford Senior Football Champions in 1944, but Ballyhogue beat them in 1945. Paddy remembers going to Wexford Park, 15 miles away in a pony and cart with his father and some others. 'I remember travelling to it with my father and some others in a pony and cart – 15 miles to Wexford'.</p> <p>5.00 Ballyhogue split between Davidstown and Bree in 1930s. They reformed and split again several times after that until underage schools competitions started.</p> <p>6.04 Bree was the parish, Ballyhogue was part of it.</p> <p>6.18 The amalgamation ended after Nicky Rackard League began in 1956. Every parish took part, but there were too many players left behind when it went back to juvenile competitions.</p> <p>7.00 Discusses family involvement – father brought them to games, but never played although he did have an uncle who played and was involved in administration at club level.</p> <p>7.33 Discusses his own involvement – Paddy was asked by club to represent them with another man – Willie Lesley at district meetings.</p> <p>7.44 Willie proposed him as a member of the county board c. 1974. At that time county board was just officers, members of senior clubs and three elected representatives from the districts' junior and intermediate clubs.</p> <p>8.15 He was also district chairman and secretary and then he</p>
--	---

	<p>was elected to the Leinster Council in 1984. He was there for ten years.</p> <p>8.55 He was elected chairman of the county board in 1994, but had to stand down after 7 years as a bye-law was passed stating that the term of a chairman be three years only. He went back to the Leinster Council then and is still there.</p> <p>9.25 Discusses his role on the Leinster Council including his role as a member of the hearings committee – where appeals for clubs not happy with county or provincial decisions bring their cases.</p> <p>10.05 Only six meetings a year, but with the AGM and Hearings Committees this could rise depending on what players are sent off etc.</p> <p>10.40 If Paddy is re-elected in December it will be his last time as his number of years will be up. He's not sure what he will do then.</p> <p>11.17 Paddy has no interest in any other sports although he'd attend horse racing or the dog track the odd time if his club are holding fundraisers.</p> <p>12.05 Views on re-opening of Croke Park. 'I would be in favour of it when they were redeveloping their own, but after that no back because there's an awful lot of players in the county who never step into Croke Park and it's the likes of them I'd love to see.'</p> <p>12.50 Playing in Croke Park wasn't such a novelty in Wexford, because Leinster minor and senior games would generally be played together so would've been in Croke Park.</p> <p>13.25 Cost of opening up Croke Park he thinks is about €30,000.</p> <p>13.45 Talks about his role as County Chairman which he held for 7 years. 'We had more bad years I suppose ... on the playing field than good ones, but 96 was a marvellous year.'</p> <p>14.25 He considers Offaly their bogey team 'We beat Offaly in 96 and sure it was the same as being in heaven'. 1968 was their best memory until 1996 not its 1996.</p> <p>15.20 A lot of 96 players are involved in coaching now which Paddy thinks is a good omen for the county as well.</p> <p>15.30 During his time as Chairman they developed Wexford Park. It was always wet and heavy. 'I remember playing club matches on it and the goal keeper wore wellingtons one day</p>
--	---

	<p>playing on it.'</p> <p>16.00 Now it's as good a pitch as any. It's a great bonus to the county to have a great pitch.</p> <p>16.30 Talks about his role on the development committee.</p> <p>16.50 Money was the biggest challenge to getting pitch done up. Chairman Fergie Duff ('a great gael') was the driving force behind it. The development draw was his idea, his club Kilmore were involved in it in Kilkenny with Pilltown club. They had great prizes like cars and each ticket cost €50.</p> <p>18.05 Each club had to sell 100 tickets, after that for each ticket they sold they kept half the money. 'It has been the backbone of club finance here in the county.'</p> <p>18.35 Some clubs went outside the county to sell tickets e.g. Bunclody which is bordered by Wexford and Carlow. Paddy's club can only sell in their own parish.</p> <p>19.05 Its bringing in €100,000 - €120,000 per annum and most clubs are getting between €8,000 and €9,000 out of it.</p> <p>19.30 They built a stand in Wexford Park for 5000 people. Underneath it there is a gym, tea-rooms, meeting rooms, and offices. The county has a permanent county secretary, 5 full-time coaches and a director of coaching. You can store stuff now in the offices, it's not the same as a hotel where you had to drag everything you needed with you and back again.</p> <p>20.50 When Paddy played with the school team they would have cycled 14/15 miles to play football and that went on for years after that.</p> <p>21.10 You'd go into the field 'strip off throw your clothes on a rock or hedge or whatever and then come back after the game and they maybe could be drowned, but nobody ever died or got pneumonia or anything.' They've great facilities today, they all have good pitches, with showers, handball alleys and hurling walls.</p> <p>21.55 Lotto is another great way for club to raise money</p> <p>22.25 If you had no hurl there'd be no hurling, you'd be lucky to have a tennis ball to play with. Now if the ball goes 20 yards behind the goals the players are looking for a new one.</p> <p>23.30 Discusses changes in Ireland. The last 20 or 30 years have been great for clubs. 'It was the aim of the GAA that every club would hold its own pitch by centenary in 1984'. Paddy believes that when people see you doing good with</p>
--	---

	<p>pitches and clubhouses and all you get better support from the general public.</p> <p>24.25 'Because there's no one doing anything for themselves its for their families and their families after them.'</p> <p>24.47 'You'd have an old woollen set of jerseys and they'd have to do U-9 hurlers, footballers the minor hurlers and minor footballers and maybe the adult team as well ... you'd have an old white knicks down to your knees, and a pair of stockings and a pair of boots.'</p> <p>25.13 Talks about tying laces of the boots together and throwing them round the handlebars of the bicycles 'in one boot your stockings would be in it and the other the knicks would be in it. The hurl would be down on the gear wheel of the bicycle resting against the handlebars'. Used to travel by pony and cart too and in last year at school the local shopkeeper took them to games on the back of a lorry.</p> <p>26.30 He cycled to Wexford Park and New Ross to games in 1950s. It would have taken the whole day to go to New Ross to a game and there'd be a dance in Glenroach that night on the way home. He'd leave home at 12 and it'd be 12 or 12.30 at night before he'd get home. The dances would finish about 11 or 11.30pm in those days.</p> <p>27.10 He's been going to All-Irelands since 1954. His first hurling All-Ireland was 1954, his first football All-Ireland was Louth vs Cork in 1957. The only one he's missed was the Cork vs Dublin match in 1973.</p> <p>27.53 Sometimes they'd go Saturday and stay over in Dublin, but mostly they went early on the Sunday and parked in O'Connell School. He meets the same people year after year there.</p> <p>28.30 If Wexford are playing the Stillorgan Park Hotel, owned by Pa Tiernan, is the Wexford base and everybody would return there and chat for couple of hours until the traffic was gone. They'd 'nearly catch up with people that left hours before you'</p> <p>29.00 He'd brings sandwiches with him because you would have to wait an hour for food in a hotel before the match. On the way back they stop in Doyle's on N11, sometimes they'd go as far as Gorey, but it would 'all depend on the way the belly would be'.</p> <p>30.00 Discusses changes in travel times. His first trip to Dublin was 'on back of aul 500 weight van', it took four hours,</p>
--	---

	<p>now you can make the journey in an hour and a half.</p> <p>30.40 Talks about changes in roads now and how 'its monotonous driving along now'. He lists the towns they used to pass through and says 'all them places completely forgotten now, you just slip by them now ... [with their] signposts pointing opposite to the direction'</p> <p>31.55 Talks about a match in Donegal it was the 'coldest day of my life'. He was with the team in Ballybofey and Donegal beat them for promotion to Division 3. There was a 'gale force wind and at half time the manager, Tony Dempsey, said to me go down behind the goal and fire back the balls and we were playing with the wind in the second half, well I nearly died of the cold.'</p> <p>32.50 There was a great atmosphere on the hill at Clones and he used to go to Killarney to his cousin for matches, but now Cork and Kerry football matches are nearly always on the same day as Wexford are hurling.</p> <p>34.00 The club plays a big part in the local community. It's a place for youngsters to go and it's great to see parents getting involved. It's easier now 'the girls are nearly as important as the boys.' There's a ladies football team and a camogie team in nearly every parish.</p> <p>35.00 Talks about the pressures on young people. With so much sport being played, a lot of them will be gone at 20 years of age. 'Any family with 4 or 5 now they'd be nearly full-time on the road nearly every evening going here and there.' Paddy is afraid of youngsters getting burnout.</p> <p>36.05 GAA is trying hard to attract youngsters but they want to try everything, even singing and dancing. Central and provincial councils are putting a lot into the promotion of the games.</p> <p>37.00 Paddy feels there is too much competition. There's 'so many matches now there's very little time left to practice on your own pitch and that's where the skills come from'. Talks about Ins and Outs they used to play for kicking and blocking skills and the importance of the local field.</p> <p>39.00 'I'd say the greatest organisation in the world for an amateur organisation'</p> <p>39.20 Discusses role of women and how Camogie has always been played and the fact that Ladies Football is the biggest growing organisation in the country. 'They're great in club activities as regards promotion and selling tickets and</p>
--	--

	<p>making a cup of tea in the club house.'</p> <p>40.40 Clergy and schoolteachers aren't involved as much as they were in his time, there's no such thing as staying back after class for training, but in his day every teacher lived in the parish. Some still do training, but it's a 'very big loss to the association'.</p> <p>42.20 Clergy were involved in every club in some capacity and most represented the clubs at the county conventions and even at the All-Ireland Congress. He has a photo of the Ballyhogue team who won the Senior Football Championship in 1962, the parish priest was the president of the club 'an awful man after the GAA' and 'Father Dan Nolan was trainer, manager, selector and all at the time'.</p> <p>43.30 1962 was 46 years ago and all the team are still alive and only two no longer live in the county – Mick Castle and Eddie Walsh.</p> <p>44.50 Paddy is on the sean gael committee, which looks after old people in the parish, gives them a Christmas party and takes them on golf outings. 60 or 70 teams play in the golf outings.</p> <p>45.30 Emigration hasn't been a big issue in the club for the past 20 years, but two gone to Australia a fortnight ago. 'It's like sheep going out in a gap, when one goes...'</p> <p>46.00 A lot of players in the club are involved in the building industry. If they're not bricklayers, they're carpenters, electricians, putting in windows or doing landscaping.</p> <p>46.48 There are no foreigners involved in the club yet as they are all too young, but they will be and the club has players from the Church of Ireland, one of whom is very active in the club.</p> <p>47.15 A lot of younger people in the club go to school in Enniscorthy and play there, these are lost to the parish.</p> <p>48.15 A lot of emigration in the 1950s, over half on the minor team emigrated to London and United States.</p> <p>48.40 Social side of GAA life doesn't play a large role in Paddy's life.</p> <p>49.00 The club runs a lotto and has the draw in the pub in Davidstown.</p> <p>49.40 Paddy says the club don't have too many victories (they're playing for relegation this weekend) to celebrate but</p>
--	--

	<p>when they do they'd have a local dinner dance.</p> <p>50.30 Irish language plays no role in Paddy's roles with the GAA though he admires anyone who speaks it.</p> <p>51.00 The county does run a Scór competition and the club takes part. 'It was a great go twenty years ago and it's died out seemingly.' The 'clubs done themselves harm in it because they got greedy and they wanted to bring in too professional people ... and the ordinary gave up supporting and it wasn't worth competing in.'</p> <p>52.00 Paddy doesn't think being in the GAA has affected his identity.</p> <p>52.25 He lost two great friends this year Seamus Stephens and John Cullen 'They would ring me and they'd never ring you before 11 or 12 o'clock in the night – that could be an hour. I miss them a lot like they were great ambassadors for the game.'</p> <p>53.30 Paddy believes that when the voluntary people leave the GAA the association will suffer. There are too many professionals now, some of the ordinary people feel that they are not wanted.</p> <p>54.40 Paddy feels that there is too much physical stuff for youngsters but 'mention that and you're living in the past.'</p> <p>55.25 Paddy and his friends went to the field every Sunday. There was only one championship in a year as it was a knockout at that time, but win or lose they were back in the field on a Sunday.</p> <p>56.00 'Hadn't money to go anywhere. If you'd half a crown or 5 shillings that time you were a millionaire you know.'</p> <p>56.15 So much competition now they don't have time to go to the field.</p> <p>57.00 Handball is not that popular in the area although some clubs have their own alley and Paddy's club do.</p> <p>57.45 Biggest changes 'you'll never replace voluntary help'. Professional secretaries can cause problems if they have no real interest in the GAA, but they are needed for emails etc that the ordinary GAA person is not into.</p> <p>59.00 Cost of running a club is enormous now.</p> <p>59.40 Biggest challenge to the GAA that Paddy sees is the overcrowding of fixtures – there's too much competition.</p>
--	---

	<p>Managers of teams are playing a big role now. 'Club players will have to get regular games along the summer months no use throwing it all into October, November.'</p> <p>1.01.15 Discusses reduced importance of Railway Cup. Paddy used to attend the Railway Cup Final in Croke Park on St. Patrick's Day, there would be 40,000 – 50,000 there. Paddy feels that they are trying to get rid of them especially as the games are now played when the cream of the country are in Australia at the International Rules and when you see players that did not make it onto their own county teams representing their province. Four or five Kilkenny subs were on the Leinster team this year. Paddy feels this is a shame as some of the greatest players, who never won provincial medals, were able to represent their county in Croke Park. Paddy recalls Bobby and Nicky Rackard being picked to play, it was like the team of the millennium. He believes that provincial championships should be started earlier in the year to give clubs more of a chance.</p> <p>1.03.55 No place for politics in his GAA experience</p> <p>1.04.20 As chairman of the county board his biggest problem was nearly always finances. It's 'going to be a big problem I'd say from now on, because sponsorship is not going to be as easy got.'</p> <p>1.05.05 Paddy thinks sponsorship boards began appearing in late 1970s.</p> <p>1.05.40 Discusses how Club Wexford have fundraising day at Punchestown Racecourse.</p> <p>1.06.15 Paddy discusses his happiest memories – 'there were so many', but his best are winning the All-Ireland and beating Tyrone in the National Football League Semi-Final in Portlaoise in 2005. It was great to get to a league final even though Armagh destroyed them and then he had marvellous football memories from this year beating Meath and Laois, getting hammered by Dublin but then beating Down and Armagh and running Tyrone close.</p> <p>1.07.29 Paddy's biggest hurling disappointment was Johnny Dooleys goal from the second last puck of the game in 1998 to defeat Wexford in a Leinster Final. 'It was a heartbreaker', especially after winning Leinster in 1996 and 1997.</p> <p>1.08.26 Paddy's favourite role was as a selector. He was a selector for the minor, junior and senior county football teams. He enjoyed it a lot, especially the chats and cups of tea after</p>
--	--

	<p>the matches. Paddy was in Croke Park several times as a selector in 1971 with Junior Football, in 1984 when they won the provincial, beat Cavan in the semi-finals and were beaten by Cork in the All-Ireland. He was there on three different occasions with Senior Football in 90s.</p> <p>1.10.10 It's a 'long journey mind you from Donegal to here when you're getting defeated.'</p> <p>1.10.25 Paddy lists great players that he worked with.</p> <p>1.11.40 Qualities of an excellent footballers are commitment, practice and ball-work. 'You can't beat ball-work'.</p> <p>1.12.30 'They'd be great club players who were tried and all for county but weren't able to perform the same for county as they would for club'.</p> <p>1.12.45 'It was always there even in the Wexford 50 team I could tell you there was people in the county here that any of our county players hadn't a hope of playing but they were not just able to make it with the county, they weren't able to perform the same and I don't know why.'</p> <p>1.13.30 Paddy's heroes were 'Christy Ring in hurling and Mick O'Connell in football. He was a delight to watch you'd think it was a plane taking off when he'd take off the ground to catch balls.'</p> <p>1.14.15 Paddy talks about his sacrifices for the GAA 'I've made a lot, sometimes Peg'd say to me are you married to me or the GAA.'</p> <p>1.14.40 He doesn't regret his involvement and would do same again. His family gave him great support though the girls were more interested in it than the boys.</p> <p>1.15.26 In reply to the question what does the GAA mean to you Paddy replied: 'I suppose it's my life'.</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 type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" 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): <u>_Leinster Council Representative_</u></p>
<p>Record as a Player</p>	<p>Club Junior Football 1961, Club Senior Football 1962,</p>

