

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	25 th Jan 2011
Location	Bellaghy Wolfe Tones Clubhouse, Bellaghy, Co. Derry
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Seán Toner
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1955 Home County: Derry
Education	Primary: Ballynease PS Secondary: St. Pat's, Maghera, Co. Derry Third Level: Kings College, Cambridge
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 1 sister Current Family if Different: Separated with one daughter
Club(s)	Bellaghy Wolfe Tones
Occupation	Computer Programmer
Parents' Occupation	Labourer [Father]; Factory Worker, Housewife [Mother]
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Claudy Irish Language Club

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Date of Report	1 st August 2012
Period Covered	1939 – 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Derry
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider’s Perspectives, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Seán recounts the history of the Bellaghy club, which was founded in 1939. He recalls playing with his friends as a child, when resources were scarce and all aspects of the club were underdeveloped. Although he wasn’t a player himself, Seán has maintained a lifelong passion for the GAA and was never far away from the action, whether it was at tournaments or carnivals. The poet Seamus Heaney sometimes took part in local events and has since immortalised his experiences in verse. Things were not always carefree, though, and Seán discusses the impact of the Troubles in the area. Some locals were killed while others died as a result of the hunger strikes. In later years the club enjoyed much success, and claimed an All-Ireland club final in 1972. For Seán the GAA represents the glue that holds a community together.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:25 Earliest memory is going to his uncle’s house. The Bellaghy club were renting their pitch from his uncle James. His aunt Cassie was a character. Drinking from a bucket of water at half-time during games. Other uses for the bucket of water.</p> <p>02:40 What the field was like. Big matches held there with significant crowds. People arriving on bicycles. In an area called the Cavan. Tricolour flown there. Legalities of flying one.</p> <p>04:40 Reason he never played football competitively. Playing casually with friends. Neighbourhood teams. Ballymacombs</p>

	<p>area he was from.</p> <p>05:35 Bellaghy playing at a carnival in Scotstown. Filling in as a goalkeeper. What he was wearing. How it went.</p> <p>06:35 Travelling by bicycle to watch Bellaghy games. Going to other games by car.</p> <p>07:40 Family involvement in GAA. Father treasurer of club. Mother and brother Kevin's interest. Brother's administrative involvement. Differences between himself and his brother.</p> <p>09:35 Father buying Irish Press. Reason for that. Contents of paper read aloud to others.</p> <p>11:00 Community centre used by club. Dubliners, Wolfe Tones, Luke Kelly playing. Lack of pitch.</p> <p>12:40 Certain houses picking up RTÉ television signal in south Derry. Going to wealthy neighbours' house to watch a game. How they had to behave. James and Maggie McGuckian had a television and the best reception. Going to their house to watch games. Number of people at the house.</p> <p>15:55 Social function of GAA.</p> <p>17:10 Football and camogie played in the area when he was growing up. Sports days. Ice-cream van a novelty presence. Funfair. What that had. Where sports day took place.</p> <p>19:20 Seamus Heaney writing a poem about sports day. Reads poem aloud. Heaney taking part in local events.</p> <p>21:30 Lawrence Diamond, Chris Brown and himself making a video in 1989 on 50-year history of club. Club founded in 1939. More than one team in the area at the time. Decision to register club with county board. Players from clubs like Lavey deciding to join new club. Edward Scullion was the first chairman.</p> <p>24:25 His uncle, Brian, getting jerseys for the club. No manager at the time. What jerseys were like. Brian later seeing a man cutting turf with one of the jerseys on. Becoming angry and taking action.</p> <p>27:00 Patsy Brennan secretary of club for 35 years. Many other people giving of their time.</p> <p>27:40 Protestants in the area winning medals with the club. How they became involved with the club.</p> <p>28:45 What matches were like when he was young.</p>
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	<p>Spectators getting involved at half-time.</p> <p>30:30 Bellaghy always on the lookout for talented midfielders. Trying out a player who had looked good. How he fared. Haphazard nature of games and half-time activities.</p> <p>32:45 Strength of Protestant people's involvement in local GAA. Some members of the Protestant community not interested in the GAA. Local Protestant put under pressure after being seen at GAA games. Same man trying to go to a game in Glendale undetected. How that panned out.</p> <p>35:55 Camogie club founded by Ms Heaney - Seamus Heaney's aunt - around 1941. Successes they have had.</p> <p>36:45 Ladies football at the club.</p> <p>37:15 No hurling at the club. Reason for that.</p> <p>38:40 Playing games during lunch break at school. Scarcity of footballs. Children saving up to buy a plastic football. Going to Ballynease school. Setting up goalposts at 'the pipe' nearby.</p> <p>41:15 Facilities at the club. No pitch until 1971. Hall burned down in early 1970s during the Troubles. Reason for that. Meeting held afterwards. Anger. Resolve to build anew. Result of that. New development at Drumane. What that has. What is needed for future and how much money will be required.</p> <p>46:05 Lack of government assistance for initiatives.</p> <p>46:50 Fundraisers held to pay for development. 'Boxed tea' initiative and what that was.</p> <p>49:15 Impact of Troubles on the club. All people in the community affected. Chairman Sean Browne shot on May 12 1997. Colm McCartney shot returning from game in Croke Park. Willie Strathearn killed in Ahoghill. Why they may have been targeted. Meeting Sean Browne on night he died. What was said to Willie Strathearn before he was killed.</p> <p>53:15 People labelled as 'Republican'.</p> <p>54:00 Thomas McElwee and Francis Hughes locals who died on hunger strike. Club's position on that. Sadness of what happened. Irrelevance of club at such a time. Funerals.</p> <p>56:55 Club members' attitudes to hunger strikers. Banners. Black flags. Strong feelings.</p> <p>59:30 How GAA experience in Northern Ireland differs to that</p>
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	<p>in the south. Military forces 'scared' of the GAA. Why that was. Police presence at GAA events diminishing over the years.</p> <p>01:02:00 Bellaghy success on the field since 1939. 21 county titles. Famous victory in 1972. Rivalry with other clubs as a result of their success. Half-pleased for Coleraine when they enjoyed success in 2010. Reaching final of Under 14 Féile at Celtic Park. What that was like.</p> <p>01:06:20 Underage structures at the club.</p> <p>01:06:45 All-Ireland club victory in 1972. Playing Portlaoise en route to the final. Disputed goal. Man who used to cycle to Croke Park, John Mulholland, reacting when they won the All-Ireland. Fr TP Donnelly punishing them for taking a day off school. Significance of the All-Ireland win. East Kerry won it in first year.</p> <p>01:10:20 Celebrations and homecoming. Team parading on a lorry. Modesty of celebrations.</p> <p>01:12:10 His role in the club. Friendship with players. Fergal Doherty a star player and what he is like. Michael McGoldrick receiving an Ulster All-Star along with Doherty. Organising a function in their honour.</p> <p>01:14:50 1993 his best memory. Derry winning an All-Ireland final. Henry Downey lifting Sam Maguire. Why that was special. Homecoming in Glen club, Maghera. Colm McCusker man he knew celebrating wildly. Derry player Brian McGilligan standing on the back of a lorry.</p> <p>01:18:30 GAA people as givers. Players humble. With a friend of his from Dungiven and meeting Brian McGilligan. How that went and why it was special.</p> <p>01:21:55 Disappointments. Losses getting under his skin. Bellaghy losing an Ulster final to St Gall's of Antrim.</p> <p>01:24:00 What his GAA involvement has meant to him. Eamonn Mulholland a very serious Bellaghy supporter. Eamonn going to a game against Magherafelt when they were young. People standing on concrete stools. Eamonn's brother Austin playing. Eamonn's enthusiasm irking other spectators.</p> <p>01:28:10 Fun and friendship in the GAA.</p> <p>01:29:15 Kerry people as 'special'. Why that is. Being surprised at the size of Kerry players when he saw them in</p>
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	<p>Croke Park.</p> <p>01:30:10 Story he heard at a wake about Jimmy Lefton. Jimmy being asked if he ever played against legendary player Jim McKeever. His response.</p> <p>01:33:00 Losing as an integral part of the GAA.</p> <p>01:34:25 Local referee who became an inter-county referee. Carnival match in Donegal and referee invited. Crossbar broken in game and dispute over score. Novel solution to problem.</p> <p>01:38:10 Midfielder they once had who caught the ball well. Player jumping to catch a ball. Father watching and smoking a pipe. Turning to light a pipe and asking man near him a question.</p> <p>01:39:40 Grateful for people who came before him and shaped Bellaghy club.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input 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 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>Played until he was about 18 informally. Played only one official match.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Has been involved as a committee member since 1975.</p>
<p>Format</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p>Duration</p>	<p>Length of Interview: 01:40:24</p>
<p>Language</p>	<p>English</p>

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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: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____01/08/12_____