# **GAA Oral History Project**

# **Interview Report Form**

Name of	Jimmy Smyth
Interviewer	
Date of Interview	3 <sup>rd</sup> Jan 2012
Location	Quinn's Corner, Balleygawley
Name of	Art McRory
Interviewee (Maiden	
name / Nickname)	
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1940
	Homo County, Tyrono
	Home County: Tyrone
Education	N/A
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Thomas Clarkes GAA [Tyrone]
	. , .
Occupation	N/A
Parents'	N/A
Occupation	IVA
Religion	NIA
Keligion	N/A
Political Affiliation /	N/A
Membership	
Other Club/Society	N/A
Membership(s)	19/7

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	P.J. McGee
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1950
	Home County: Down
Education	Primary: Dechomet Primary School
	Secondary: St. Colman's College, Newry
	Third Level: St. Joseph's College of Education, Belfast
Family	Siblings: 1 Brother
Club(s)	Liatroim Fontenoys G.A.C. [Down]
Occupation	Retired Teacher
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Dermot Lunny
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1943
	Home County: Fermanagh
Education	Primary: St. Michael's Primary School Enniskillen
	Secondary: St. Michael's College
	Third Level: De La Salle Manchester
Family	Siblings: 4 Brothers
Club(s)	Enniskillen Gaels G.F.C [Fermanagh]
Occupation	Retired Teacher
Parents' Occupation	Admin Officer
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	SDLP
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Harry Hoy
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1936
	Home County: Armagh
Education	Primary: St. Peter's Primary School, Lurgan
	Secondary: St. Colman's College, Newry
	Third Level: St. Mary's T.C. Belfast
Family	Siblings: 1 Brother, 3 Sisters
Club(s)	Clan na Gael GAA [Armagh], Clann Éireann GAA [Armagh]
Occupation	Retired Headmaster
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Lurgan Golf Club

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Hugo Clerkin
<u> </u>	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1954
	Home County: Monaghan
Education	Primary: Scotshouse
	Secondary: St. MacCartan's College
	Third Level: Thomand College, Limerick
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Currin G.F.C [Monaghan]
Occupation	Teacher
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Pat King
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1947
	Home County: Tyrone
Education	Primary: Grannan Primary School (Trillick)
	Secondary: St. Michael's Grammar School, Enniskillen
	Third Level: St. Joseph's College of Education
Family	Siblings: 3 Brothers, 2 Sisters
Club(s)	Trillick GAA [Tyrone]; St. Macartan's/Lisnaskea Emmetts [Tyrone]
Occupation	Retired Teacher
Parents' Occupation	Farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

## REFERENCE NO. (OFFICE USE ONLY): NL/1/1

Name of	Tony McCaffrey
Interviewee	
(Maiden name /	
Nickname)	
Biographical Summary of Interviewee	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born:1941
	Home County: Fermanagh
Education	Primary: St. Tierney's, Roslea
	Secondary: St. Colman's Newry
	Third Level: St. Joseph's T.C.
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Roslea Shamrock's GAA [Fermanagh]; St. Patrick's GAA, Donagh [Fermanagh]
Occupation	Retired teacher
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Date of Report	23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2012
Period Covered	1950s - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Antrim, Armagh, Cavan, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Derry Monaghan, Tyrone
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Volunteers, Rivalries, All-Ireland, County History, Challenges, Outsider's Perspectives, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	All the contributors to this group interview have played a prominent role in the development of Gaelic games within Ulster Vocational Schools. Many have enjoyed a high profile careers as inter-county players and mentors, but the focus here remains on the work of the schools and their association with it. Together, they chart the expansion of the Vocational schools system in Northern Ireland and the impact this had not only on extending educational opportunities for pupils, but on the potential use of the system for the development of hurling and gaelic football. A key development was the amalgamation of the two bodies which governed Vocational schools GAA in Northern Ireland and the remaining three Ulster counties. Another was the emergence of an intercounty Vocational schools competition, in particular the success of counties such as Fermanagh and Tyrone in 1966 and 1967 and later, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Derry.  The Vocational school system expanded significantly over time and the role they played in counties such as Antrim, Donegal, Monaghan and Down is discussed. Alongside the impact that Gaelic games school had on individual lives and school status, the interviewees consider the influence of Vocational schools on the fortunes of McCrory Cup Colleges teams (which a number of ex Vocational school pupils visited), as well as those of various county minor and senior teams. The focus of much of the interview is on Gaelic football, although hurling receive a mention, in particular the geographical characteristics of the game in Ulster.  The interview does not limit itself to maters historical; contemporary developments are also addressed. There is a discussion around various issues, including the future of the

Vocational school system; competition from other sports; the attitudes of younger teachers; lack of comprehension or appreciation on the part of Croke park administration for the work of the Vocational schools; divergences in approach to Gaelic games between Vocational school north and south; the impact of Ulster bank sponsorship and other development on raising the profile of the Vocational schools game in Ulster.

00:00:05 Jimmy Smyth introduces the group, all members of the Ulster Vocational Schools since its foundation in the 1960s. Smyth report s on a talk he had with Sean Higgins, a founder member of the Ulster Vocational Schools, who started in Our Lady of Lourdes, Ballymoney in 1959. Mentions also other Vocational schools across Northern Ireland at the time.

00:02:34 Provides an account of the origins of the Ulster Vocational Schools and the reasons for its emergence. Mentions colleges receiving tickets for All-Ireland finals after Sean Higgins raised the matter with Croke Park.

00:03:45 Mentions that original body only encompassed the six counties of the north and that competitions were organised on an inter-county basis. Tells story of Harry Haughey taking a team to a game by train as an illustration of the 'sacrifices' that teachers were willing to make.

00:04:27 (Art McCrory) Refers to schools being new and that 'hurdles' had to be overcome. Discusses also the role of schools in extending education beyond primary level and the age of 14-15. Says first Vocational school opened in the early 1960s and, over time, extended across the north.

00:05:25 (Tony McCaffrey) Suggests the last school to open in Ulster was St. Aidan's Derrylin, in 1972.

00:05:46 (Jimmy Smyth) Refers to early schools in Armagh and the introduction of the 'techs'. Refers also to the extension, in the mid 1960s, of the Vocational School to all Ulster counties.

00:06:30 (Art McCrory) Discusses the amalgamation of the two bodies representing Vocational school in six counties and the rest of the country. Comments on the reluctance of Ulster Colleges to embrace the Vocational schools. Mention is made of Jack Mahon's role as secretary.

00:07:30 (XXXX) Role of Michael Markey, instrumental for running games in Co Monaghan, in contacting bodies in Northern Ireland.

00:08:07 (Jimmy Smyth) Reads from history book outlining the decision to amalgamate Vocational schools north and south and the key individuals involved.

00:08:53 (Jimmy Smyth) Discusses the inter-county schools competition and the spread of success among Ulster counties.

00:09:35 (Art McCrory) Says Tyrone did not take part until 1966 or 1967. Refers also to the push to get techs involved in football and the reasons for the lack of representation of Vocational schools on county minor teams.

00:11:00 (General) Mention is made of Fermagh's victory in 1966 and the involvement of players from Enniskillen Tech, including the team captain. Reference is also made other Enniskillen Tech members of that team - Seán Reilly, later a Sigerson winner with Queens, and Vincent Martin, subsequently Fermanagh GAA Treasurer.

00:11:44 (Art McCrory) Talks about plans for a reunion for the Vocational Schools winning Tyrone Vocational schools squad of 1967.

00:12:16 (XXXX) Mention is made of players from St. Patrick's Omagh on that squad. Reference is made to Gerry Taggart as the captain of the team, who later went on to play for Tyrone and Ulster.

00:13:13 (Jimmy Smyth) Smyth provides more details on the interviewees and their involvement with Vocational Schools Gaelic games.

00:14:18 (P J McGee and others) Refers to reading about Down schools teams in Ulster and All-Ireland competitions prior to the 1960s in Síle McNulty history of the Down GAA. Suggests it must have been the Techs involved. Leads to a discussion around participation of Down schools in GAA competitions before the Vocational Schools competitions were established. Discussion includes reference to ages and procedures for moving from primary to Vocational schools.

00:16:49 (Jimmy Smyth) Refers to the initial success of Ulster counties in Vocational schools inter-county competitions and to the three in a row success of Derry in 1979, 1980 and 1981. Considers the reasons for Derry's emergence in Vocational Schools competitions at this time.

00:17.13 (General) Discussion on the number of schools involved in the late 1960s and early 1970s. From 43 schools

involved in 1966, the number rose to approximately 96.

00:18:00 (XXXX) Reference to the strength of the Vocational schools in Antrim – it is stated that the county was alone in winning Vocational schools titles in both football and hurling, the former coming in 1968, the latter in 1971.

00:18:55 (Jimmy Smyth) Talks about an 'Our Games' annual which included photographs of three Antrim schools teams: the Ranch, St. Mary's and Antrim Vocational schools.

00:19:01 (Art McCrory) Comments on the outbreak of the Troubles and the 'disintegration' of extracurricular activities.

00:19:26 (General) Belfast-focus of Antrim schools and the strength of these teams, in particular St. Thomas's on White Rock road, Belfast. Reference is also made to the prominence of St. Malachy's.

00:20:18 (Jimmy Smyth) Comments on the dominance of Tyrone in inter-county schools, the number of Ulster and All-Ireland titles won; similar figures are given for Donegal and Monaghan.

00:20:35 (Hugo Clerkin) Comments on Monaghan winning of three Vocational All-Irelands since 2001 and considers reasons for the improvement in fortunes.

00:21:27 (Jimmy Smyth and Hugo Clerkin) Talks about the impact on county minor team of having a success county Vocational schools team. Mentions also the availability of greater choice in the southern education system. Refers to significant developments in the Monaghan schools system and its influence on the development of Gaelic football within the county.

00:23:15 (Art McCrory) Explains the differences between the colleges – which tend to be large schools with upwards on 2,000 pupils – and the vocational schools – which tend to have a smaller number of pupils, in the region of 200-300. Refers to complaints about large colleges not catering for many good club footballers and to the comparative benefits of the Vocational system.

00:25:05 (PJ McGee) Discusses the quality of coaching received in a school in Down Vocational school.

00:26:10 (XXXX) Example of Paddy Kerr's Ballybay with approx 16 pupils in the senior cycle but got to Ulster final.

00:26:50 (Hugo Clerkin) Talks about the sporting

achievements of Ballybay school and the contribution made by Paddy Kerr. Refers to his success in getting locals to attend local school.

00:27:50 (Jimmy Smyth) Talks about the status playing Vocational schools sport gives individual pupils and the status that sport gives a school. Refers to the Markey cup for Under 14 and Under 16 competitions and the range of schools who have enjoyed success in each.

00:28:35 (Tony McCaffrey) Mentions attending a meeting in August 2011 and decision to axe a number of All-Ireland competitions, including the inter-county football and the Under 16 competition. Describes it as a 'major blow to Ulster' and the anger it has caused. Mentions that a new trophy, the Corn Paul McGirr, had been presented in 2007 for inter-county Vocational schools.

00:30:40 (Art McCrory) Repeats a quote: 'All our pitches are state of the art, our administration is state of the ark'

00:31:00 (P J McGee) Talks about his school, St Malachy's Castlewellan. Describes as 'a big school'; talks about putting in B teams to give pupils football and the effect that success has on a school.

00:32:50 (PJ McGee) Comments on the quantity and quality of work that has gone into Vocational schools football in Ulster; contrasts it with the situation in south

00:33:28 (XXXX) Belief that national GAA administration would, following soccer and rugby, prefer a single colleges competition at All-Ireland level.

00:34:03 (Art McCrory) Discusses the educational system in south and the lack of encouragement for teachers involved in football.

00:34:23 (Hugo Clerkin) Discusses the change in curriculum in southern schools and the increased difficulty in coordinating training among different schools who contribute to county team – highlights costs in transport, facilities, as well as principals with alternative interests.

00:36:20 (Hugo Clerkin) Talks of envy of Vocational schools structure in Tyrone.

00:37:00 (Jimmy Smyth) Reflects on the value of Jim McKeever to the schools system in Ulster.

00:37:30 (Art McCrory) Mentions that McKeever 'churned' the

teachers out from St. Mary's.

00:37:50 (Jimmy Smyth) Discusses the spread of St. Mary's teachers across Ulster.

00:38:30 (XXXX) Comments on the contribution of the Vocational schools to certain colleges in their McCrory Cup, including in Fermanagh who added players to St. Michael's college.

00:39:10 (Jimmy Smyth and Tony McCaffrey) Discussion about hurling in Ulster Vocational schools. Reference to its geographic spread: emphasis on Antrim, Down, Derry and Buncrana in Donegal. Says that amalgamation of schools in Antrim and the opting out of Belfast schools has damaged hurling in Antrim. Mentions the current dominance of Derry in Ulster Vocational schools hurling.

00:40:10 (General) Mention made that St Malachy's won first Ulster title in 1963 at Under 13 level. Reference also to the number of schools who competed. Reference also to Portaferry's (St. Columba's) participation in an All-Ireland final at Under 16 level, led by Sean McGourty.

00:41:13 (Jimmy Smyth) Comments on the different role taken by Ulster Vocational Schools in recent times and the part played by Art McCrory.

00:41:44 (Art McCrory) Talks about decision to make Ulster Vocational finals 'an occasion', moving to a bigger venue (Clones, casement or Enniskillen, Armagh) and support from Ulster Bank.

00:43:07(Jimmy Smyth and Tony McCaffrey) Sponsorship from Ulster Bank in 1997 and influence of Danny Murphy, Fonzy Corr from Cavan. Talks about initial meeting with Ulster bank and the apparent overlap between Ulster Bank branches and Vocational schools in the north.

00:44:21 Discuss the value of the sponsorship to Vocational Schools and how money has been used – bags, jackets, programmes etc.

00:46:10 (PJ McGee) Talks about his work as PRO in promoting Ulster Vocational Schools and, previously, publishing a fixtures booklet for colleges and schools in Down in the 1970s. Talks also about Ulster promotional initiatives in the late 1990s – posters in schools and bank branches; calendars.

00:47:45 (PJ Mc Gee and others) Tell story to illustrate

changes in communications since 1996/97 – when he had the only mobile phone.

00:48:48 (Jimmy Smyth) Reference to seeing young players on the road with Vocational schools bags.

00:49:00 (Jimmy Smyth) Talks about the various venues where games were played.

00:49:22 (General) Discusses aims to identify suitable grounds – with stands – to host venues.

00:50:07 (Art McCrory) Explains the naming of the Markey cup – Michael Markey was 'prime over' behind pushing 6 county schools and 3 southern counties together. Markey died after two years in office.

00:51:13 McDevitt Cup – named after Eddie McDevitt, a teacher in Donegal, secretary of Donegal Vocational Schools Board. Different interviewees attest to his voluntary and financial assistance to Vocational schools football.

00:52:12 Arthur's Cup for Under 16s – named after Gerry Arthur's who transformed finances of Ulster Council. Stories are told of his influence on the Ulster Council, which it is claimed he put on a 'viable' footing.

00:53:15 (XXXX) Contribution of Jim McGuigan from Derry is discussed. Mention is made of his work in ensuring Derry teams were properly kitted out, to his contacts with O'Neill's, to ensuring money from Ulster Council was forthcoming.

00:53:45 (Jimmy Smyth) Comments on changes in the Vocational Sector.

00:54:08 (General) Discussion around the future of Vocational Schools GAA and its link with the future of Vocational education in general. Mention is made that role in the 6 counties is changing, emphasis on more comprehensive education and local schools.

00:54:45 Concerns are expressed about school on the periphery – the threat of closure that hangs over two Fermanagh schools.

00:55:10 Jimmy Smyth mentions the demise of St. Thomas's in Belfast, St. Peter's, Gortnamona, Randallstown, Cushendall and other schools.

00:55:50 Reflections on both the waning of commitment among younger teachers and the quality of football being

played by young players. 00:57:00 Increased use by schools of county coaches and of clubs, recognition of the need for outside help. 00:57:35 Presence of other sports – soccer, rugby etc – in most schools and lack of understanding among GAA hierarchy of what is happening in schools. 00:58:40 Recalls words of Jimmy Grey: 'We never realised so much work was being done in the schools.' 00:59:10 Reflections on the way Croke Park does business and the way that schools work. 00:59:54 (P J McGee) refers to the support from Down county board for colleges and Vocational schools and the recognition they give. 01:00:30 (Art McCrory) Talks of the recognition for teachers and Vocational schools in Tyrone from county board – says they 'foot the bill' for the Vocational schools county team, but that they have been well rewarded. 01:01:20 (Tony McCaffrey) Exempts Ulster counties and county boards from criticism of their attitudes towards Vocational schools – directs it instead towards Croke Park and a number of GAA Presidents. Example of the contribution of Vocational schools to minor and senior county teams. 01:02:35 (General) Discussion of the and colleges losing out to English universities. Mentions is made of the impact of this on club teams, who become increasingly reliant on Vocational schools past-pupils. 01:03:40 (Jimmy Smyth) Concludes with assessment of the contribution of Ulster Vocational Schools to 01:04:00 (Tony McCaffrey) Stresses contribution of various individuals including his fellow interviewees - PJ McGee, Art McCrory, Jimmy Smyth, Hugo Clerkin and Dermot Lunny and Pat King. Involvement in Art McRory GAA ✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach ✓ Steward √ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person □ Caterer □ Jersey Washer □ Referee □ None □ Other (please specify):

PJ McGee
✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach ✓ Steward
✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer ✓ Referee □ None
□ Other (please specify):
Dermot Lunny
✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager ✓ Coach □ Steward
□ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer ✓ Referee □ None
□ Other (please specify):
Harry Hoy
✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach □ Steward
□ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer □ Referee □ None
□ Other (please specify):
Hugo Clerkin
✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach □ Steward
✓ Chairperson □ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer □ Referee □ None
□ Other (please specify):
Pat King
✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach ✓ Steward
□ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer □ Referee □ None
□ Other (please specify):
Tony McCaffrey
✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach ✓ Steward
□ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer ✓ Referee □ None
□ Other (please specify):

### Record as a Player Art McRory: N/A (Titles won; Length PJ McGee: Played with clubs until 1977 when he sustained a of time played) serious knee injury. Dermot Lunny: 1960-1976 Minor Championship. Intermediate Championship. Juvenile Championship Harry Hoy: Corn-na-nÓg, 2 Ulster Minors, Lagan Cup, Armagh Senior Championship Hugo Clerkin: 2 Ulster Senior Championships playing for Monaghan; 1 NFL; 18 years playing senior Pat King: 25 years-played club inter-county and interprovincial. Ulster Championship (1973). 5 Tyrone Senior Championships (1974-1986) Tony McCaffrey: County senior championships, minor county championship; School's Ulster-Corn na nÓg, Ranafast and McRory Record as an Art McRory: N/A **Administrator** PJ McGee: (Positions held: how long for) - Chairman/Secretary of Down Vocational School for over 30 years. -On Ulster Vocational School Committee since 1973 -Pro on Ulster Schools in 90s **Dermot Lunny:** Ulster vocational schools treasurer from 1968-2011 Harry Hoy: Manager of Armagh Minor Team. Ulster Champions 1969 Hugo Clerkin: N/A Pat King: 25 years-played club inter-county and interprovincial. Ulster Championship (1973). 5 Tyrone Senior Championships (1974-1986)

school's GAA, 1997-2011

Tony McCaffrey: Club secretary; Sec. Ulster vocational

Format	✓ Audio ☐ Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:05:19
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: Jimmy Smyth

Date: 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2012