

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	12 th Aug 2011
Location	Gerry's home, near Kilkenny City.
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Gerry O'Neill
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1947 Home County: Kilkenny
Education	Primary: St Patrick's De la Salle, Kilkenny City. Secondary: Kilkenny CBS Third Level: St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin
Family	Siblings: 2 sisters Current Family if Different: Wife (Ann); 3 sons & 3 daughters
Club(s)	Dicksboro GAA [Kilkenny]; St Martin's GAA [Kilkenny]
Occupation	Retired Teacher
Parents' Occupation	Monster House Department Store Assistant [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fianna Fáil
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Unity Singers Choir, Kilkenny; St Mary's Parish Choir; Callan Golf Club.

Date of Report	21 st Aug 2012
Period Covered	1884 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Kilkenny
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, 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, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Gerry discusses his experiences with the GAA in Kilkenny and further afield over the years. He recalls attending club and county games as a boy and what the atmosphere was like in those days. He later played hurling at Kilkenny CBS before going to Dublin for teacher training and to Zambia after he had qualified. When he settled as a teacher in Muckalee he took a great interest in schools hurling and was involved in developing that. Over time he became more involved with the Dicksboro club, to the extent that he wrote a book on their history. Gerry also wrote 'The Kilkenny GAA Bible' and he offers insights on how yearbooks are compiled and on what happens at committee level in preparation for annual releases. He also sheds some light on the history of the Talbot's Inch area from where he is from, and the contribution of Lady Dysart to life in the community - a contribution that he feels has not been recognised as much as it should have been.</p> <p>00:20 Born in 1947 in Kilkenny. Living in Talbot's Inch. History of the area and association with Lady Desert. Mill and suspension bridge that used to be in the area. Where Lady Desert lived and what she built in the area during her time. Lady Desert marrying one of the Cuffes. Her involvement in the GAA and Gaelic League.</p> <p>05:30 Lady Desert's support for GAA. Patron of Gaelic League.</p> <p>06:20 Lady Desert growing tobacco during World War I. Reason for that.</p>

	<p>07:20 Growing up in the 1950s. What Kilkenny was like then. People poorer. People's link to agriculture. People herding livestock up High Street. Fair held once a month.</p> <p>10:05 Hurling on the Father Haydens Road as a boy.</p> <p>10:50 Going to the cinema in the Savoy, Kilkenny Theatre and the Regent. What was watched there. Woolworth's a popular shop at the time where people talked about what they saw at the cinema. Films that were typically on show.</p> <p>14:50 Going to Nowlan Park to watch Bennesbridge, Tullaroan, Carrickshock, Graigue, James Stephens. Thomastown another prominent venue at the time. Facilities much improved since then. Ballyragget opened in 1960s. Tournaments. held.</p> <p>16:30 Cricket popular in the past. His grandfather playing in Gowran area. Family involvement in GAA. Aunt, Nancy Walsh, playing camogie in Dublin. She was married to Kilkenny hurler Mattie Power. Dublin dominant in camogie at the time.</p> <p>17:50 What Nowlan Park was like when he was young. Former county secretary Paddy Grace improving facilities. Further refurbishments over the years. 1961 Leinster hurling final. Tipp and Dublin meeting in the final that year - the first to be televised. Being in the junior Order of Malta at the time. Wexford had beaten Kilkenny in Leinster semi-final, with Andy Doyle scoring four goals for Wexford. Noel Drumgoole of Dublin clashing with Doyle in the Leinster final. He and Mick Noonan attending to Doyle.</p> <p>21:55 What substitutes wore at the time. Rules on tactical substitutions and circumventing them. Talking to Pat Henderson about that. No helmet back then. Players' heads bandaged up. Father seeing a man anointed in Thurles at a Munster final after an incident. What happened to the man.</p> <p>23:50 Involvement with Order of Malta.</p> <p>24:20 Match-day atmosphere at Nowlan Park. Hawkers. People singing. Smell of cigarette smoke, orange peel and grass.</p> <p>26:20 Going to St Patrick's De La Salle school. Brother Christopher from Kerry and his passion for football. Buying a leather football. Under-14 team represented the school in competitions.</p> <p>28:35 Street leagues when he was young. Role of volunteers in their organisation. Book he wrote on history of Dicksboro</p>
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	<p>and researching street leagues when writing it. No formal coaching back then.</p> <p>31:25 Munster Under-21 final in 2011 between Limerick and Cork. How intensity of game compared to that in 1950s and 1960s. Watching recording of 1967 All-Ireland final and his impressions of that.</p> <p>32:45 Going to see Kilkenny play Dublin at Nowlan Park in the 1950s. 'Link' Walsh playing. Looking at him exhausted on the pitch at half-time. How he performed in the second half. Their style of play and preparations very different to</p> <p>34:55 Prevalence of smoking when he was young. Sight of a goalkeeper smoking during a game. Seeing footage of Kilkenny winning an All-Ireland. Pat Henderson and Ted Carroll smoking on the Hogan Stand in their jerseys when they went to collect the trophy.</p> <p>36:15 Tom Ryall a prominent Kilkenny hurling historian. Knowledge he had of all things hurling. 'The Kilkenny GAA Story: 1884-1984' that he wrote. Proof-reading the book for him. Using Tom's notebooks to compose 'The Kilkenny GAA Bible'. Proof-reading a Kilkenny GAA yearbook in 1991. Putting the yearbook together himself since 1997. Membership of yearbook committee and what that involves. Barry Henry editor and Pat Henderson chairman. Conor Deniffe, Jimmy Walsh, Ned Buggy, Tommy Lannigan involved. Need to record everything. Deciding on colour features. Importance of photographs. Consulting local photographer Eoin Hennessy. Ray McManus at Sportsfile, John McIlwynne in Belfast sending him photographs. Advertising revenue. Deadlines.</p> <p>45:15 Book he wrote on Dicksboro for their centenary and how that came about. Liaising with Tom Byrne.</p> <p>46:35 Updating the 'Bible' every year and making it available online. Pitfalls of the job. Usefulness of the Internet.</p> <p>49:00 What he enjoys about the work he does.</p> <p>50:15 Emergence of a manager culture. 1904-1939 Kilkenny All-Ireland winning teams trained by Danny O'Connell.</p> <p>53:15 Ollie Walsh a popular Kilkenny hurler when he was younger. Publicity he got. Irish Press doing a feature on him. Kids trying to copy his style.</p> <p>55:35 Hurling at Kilkenny CBS when he was there. Game also popular at St Kieran's College. Brother McGee from</p>
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	<p>Belfast involved in coaching players. Brothers Milliter and O'Brien involved in later years. Going in buses to watch school team in a final. Rivalry with St Kieran's, which was a boarding school and had players from different counties. Tipperary hurler Eoin Kelly a former pupil. James McGary a former CBS player. St Kieran's not as strong in 2011 as they were.</p> <p>01:01:00 Attending St Pat's teacher training college in Drumcondra, Dublin. Residing on campus. Women studying at Carysfort residing on their campus. Meeting Carysfort students at a dance on a Sunday afternoon.</p> <p>01:02:40 Going to see more GAA games whilst in Dublin. Erin's Hopes the St Pat's team. What they were like. Many of the students from traditional football strongholds.</p> <p>01:03:50 Preparatory colleges and how they worked. St Enda's in Galway a prominent one.</p> <p>01:04:55 First teaching post in Freshford. Going to the CBS in Kilkenny. Marriage and time spent in Zambia. Return to CBS. Move to Muckalee in 1976, where he was principal. Retirement in 2006.</p> <p>01:05:30 Teaching at a CBS in Mazabuka, Zambia. Why he went. Financial incentive. GAA experiences there. Playing inter-staff and inter-provincial games. Aer Lingus sponsoring a team to go back to Ireland and play in Croke Park. Writing letters home regularly. Difficulty in making phone calls. Reason for that.</p> <p>01:11:15 Involvement with GAA coaching at schools where he worked. First year in Muckalee. Asked to hurling club's AGM. Proposed for various positions. His response.</p> <p>01:14:15 Class leagues held at the school. School teams training. Playing against other schools. Parents helping out with training and transportation. Forming a Bord na nÓg in the parish and how that helped him with the school teams. Importance of volunteers.</p> <p>01:17:00 Learning how to splice hurls. Usefulness of that skill. What that work entailed.</p> <p>01:20:00 Getting to know people in the community through hurling.</p> <p>01:21:05 Working as a presiding officer during elections in the 1980s. Meeting people in the parish through that.</p>
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	<p>01:22:20 Teaching handball player Alfie Cullen.</p> <p>01:22:55 Knowing some of his pupils through his hurling connections. Need to keep things professional and reason for that.</p> <p>01:24:55 Feeling proud when a team has success on the field.</p> <p>01:25:25 Enjoying his time with teams that were not talented enough to win titles. Organising 'subs matches'. What they were about.</p> <p>01:26:20 Being a member of the schools hurling board. Bringing in a motion on substitutions at the AGM. Playing Mick Moran of Paulstown's team. Forming an agreement with him on substitutions. Importance of allowing all levels of players to enjoy playing.</p> <p>01:30:30 Changes in how schools hurling in Kilkenny has been run over the years. Increased number of teachers with little interest in hurling. Inter-county hurlers Cha Fitzpatrick, Richie Hogan, Paddy Hogan, Richie Power coming into teaching. Teacher at school in Coon, Margaret Brennan, not interested in hurling. Training their players. Conahy teachers not interested in hurling.</p> <p>01:32:50 Changes in equipment used by young hurlers. Underage hurling in Kilkenny remaining popular.</p> <p>01:34:00 Many families in Muckalee not having a hurling background. Reason for that.</p> <p>01:35:30 Department of Education's influence on sporting matters in schools.</p> <p>01:36:50 His children playing with Dicksboro. Son Dan going on to play for the county. Daughter Áine playing camogie. Son Barney playing junior. Son Tommy playing up to Under-21 level. What it was like when Dan played for Kilkenny. Success he enjoyed with them. What happened to Dan when Brian Cody took over as Kilkenny manager.</p> <p>01:39:45 Dicksboro a townland near Kilcreene hospital. Formed in 1909 and winning a junior championship in 1910. James Stephens a stronger club historically. Dicksboro going out of existence before reforming in 1970. Renting a pitch at James' Park. Buying land in Palmerstown in 1980s. Carroll, Henderson, O'Neill families all getting involved. Success they went on to enjoy. O'Loughlins club developing on other side of town. James Stephens spending big money on</p>
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	<p>development. Services all three clubs provide for local population.</p> <p>01:46:00 His own role within Dicksboro club.</p> <p>01:46:25 Importance of getting grounds of their own.</p> <p>01:47:30 Tullaroan road leading to Dicksboro. Lack of hinterland. Proposed developments that fell through.</p> <p>01:48:50 Ted Carroll and what he was like. Hurling ability. Lisdowney his club. Administrative abilities. Role in development of Nowlan Park. Work he did as an agricultural advisor. Took over from Paddy Grace.</p> <p>01:52:25 What the GAA has meant to him.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input 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): _____</p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played recreationally with friends
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Member of the executive committee of Dicksboro GAA club' Registrar of Dicksboro GAA for 10 years; involved in juvenile hurling in Muckalee for 30 years; member of Kilkenny County Board IT committee; member of the Kilkenny GAA Yearbook Committee every year; Committee member of Kilkenny Bord na nÓg.
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:55:23
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: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 21st August 2012