

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Ann-Marie Smith
Date of Interview	11 th Nov. 2008
Location	Marcus's home, near Clontarf
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Marcus de Búrca
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1927 Home County: Dublin
Education	Primary: St. Patrick's School, Dublin Secondary: Belvedere College, Dublin Third Level: UCD
Family	Siblings: 1 brother and 2 sisters (1 now deceased) Current Family if Different: Widowed with children
Club(s)	N/A
Occupation	Retired barrister
Parents' Occupation	Lawyer [Father]
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A

REFERENCE NO. DB/1/3

Date of Report	28 th April 2009
Period Covered	1930s-2008
Counties/Countries Covered	Dublin, Tipperary
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Officials, Administration, Education, Religion, GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Volunteers, Identity, Culture, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Politics, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism
Interview Summary	<p>In this interview Marcus de Búrca talks about his childhood and growing up very close to Croke Park. He talks about his family especially his father. His father was in Croke Park on the 21st November 1920, Bloody Sunday. He talks about playing for St. Patrick's school, Crokes Club and UCD. He played both hurling and football but never played a senior game. He reported on GAA matches for the Irish Independent. In 1967, he published "The Life of John O'Leary. The book looked at the links between the GAA and the Fenians. He talks about writing the book, "The GAA: A History" and the impact his involvement had on his family life. He talks about the role of volunteers in the organisation and also the important role women play in the GAA. He talks about the various presidents of the association down through the years and voices his opinion on whether they did a good job or not. He also discusses some of the future challenges facing the GAA.</p> <p>Start: Introduction to interview. Name of interviewee.</p> <p>0.40: Marcus says that he was born in Dublin.</p> <p>0.49: He says that he has 1 brother and 2 sisters, 1 of his sisters is now deceased.</p> <p>1.15: His father was from Tipperary and trained to be a teacher. He then went on to be a journalist and later a lawyer. He died in 1975 at the age of 82.</p> <p>1.34: Marcus's mother was from Cork and from a farming background.</p>

	<p>2.08: Marcus grew up on the north side of Dublin city.</p> <p>2.40: His father was a life long friend of Pádraig O’Caoimh, the General Secretary of the GAA from 1929-1964 and his father spent a lot in Croke Park.</p> <p>3.10: One of Marcus’s earliest memories is cycling to Croke Park to deliver messages to Pádraig.</p> <p>3.46: The first All Ireland Marcus attended was the 1934 All Ireland Hurling Final between Dublin and Limerick. The Dublin goalkeeper on the day was the man who delivered bread to Marcus’s family; Christy Downes.</p> <p>4.00: Marcus talks about his childhood spent in Croke Park.</p> <p>6.03: “I drove the horse around and cut the grass and things like that.”</p> <p>6.50: Marcus describes Croke Park as it was when he was a young boy; “The ground was just a bare ground, no Cusack Stand, there was a Hogan Stand from 1926 and we all had our allotted places in the Hogan Stand on a Sunday. The few stewards would keep my place for me, my mother, my father, my two sisters and brother and we all had our places and no-one would dare touch them.”</p> <p>8.57: Marcus tells the story of buying ice-cream from the two women who owned the shop near Croke Park and they would send the bill for the ice-cream to Pádraig O’Caoimh.</p> <p>9.05: “I knew every inch of that place. Croke Park was just the bare field, no Cusack Stand, just gravel where the Cusack Stand is, Hill 16 was the rubble from 1916. The corner stand was there from an early stage and then you came around a corner into the Hogan Stand and then there was the Long Stand.”</p> <p>10:07: Marcus played football for St. Pat’s in Drumcondra in Dublin but the only thing he can recall about it is that the team’s colours were blue and gold.</p> <p>11.09: The GAA was always part of his childhood. They would talk about it in the house.</p> <p>11.19: Marcus says that his grandfather, Jack Burke was the first County Secretary in Tipperary.</p>
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REFERENCE NO. DB/1/3

	<p>11.50: "Dan Breen used to visit my house and Tommy Ryan, Colonel Tommy Ryan who was on the Tipperary team on Bloody Sunday; he used to visit the house."</p> <p>12.26: Marcus's father was County Secretary and County Chairman of the Meath GAA Board. He played both hurling and football with Meath and he later became a referee for Leinster Council.</p> <p>13:02: Marcus's father was in Croke Park on 21st November 1920; Bloody Sunday. He says "He (Marcus's father) was in the Volunteers in Meath, he was OC of the North Meath Brigade. On the Wednesday or the Thursday before Bloody Sunday, he got a message from someone to go down to Vaughan's Hotel which was Collins's headquarters in Parnell Square. He went in and said, "Someone wants me" and the porter told him to go into the back. He was given a revolver in a piece of cloth and he was asked was he going to the match on Sunday and he said "of course I am." They said "hand that over to one of the Meath fellows that you can trust." He went to Croke Park with the revolver in his pocket and he escaped. He escaped down Hill 16 when the trouble started. He escaped down into the lane and he was walking along the lane when he heard footsteps coming against him. They had to be soldiers. He came to a place where there were three doors. He tried to open the first door and he couldn't he tried to open the second door and he couldn't and the third door opened out and up at the top of the garden there was a party playing cards and a man beckoned him to come in and so he came in. After an hour or so they finished the game, he went out and there was no-one around."</p> <p>16.30: Marcus says that his father gave the gun back to Vaughan's Hotel the following Wednesday.</p> <p>16:45: Marcus says that 34 guns were found on Hill 16.</p> <p>17.19: Marcus says that his father never talked about the</p>
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	<p>events of Bloody Sunday.</p> <p>17:40: Marcus's father was asked to join the committee of the St. Vincent's Club on the north side of Dublin, shortly after the club was set up but his father didn't have the time.</p> <p>17:57: The family did become St. Vincent's supporters.</p> <p>18.03: Marcus was sent to Belvedere School after he finished in St. Patrick's school. He recalls that he didn't really want to go there as he knew he would have to play rugby. He says that the Jesuits tried to make him play rugby but he refused. A few of the lads got together and played hurling but they were denied access to the pitch. Marcus then went and joined the Crokes Club. He says that Pádraig O'Caomh and Chicky Curran, who was the grounds man in Croke Park, would wash the jerseys.</p> <p>19.20: Marcus played minor and junior hurling with Crokes Club from the age of 15 to 18 years of age. He then went to UCD and played hurling with them.</p> <p>19:35: The Crokes team trained in the nine acres and the fifteen acres in the Phoenix Park.</p> <p>20.05: Marcus recalls that it was very amateur training that they did and they generally spent their time "pucking" around.</p> <p>20.55: Marcus says that he never played a senior match in his life.</p> <p>23.32: Marcus says that the Crokes Club collapsed in 1916 due to the fact that so many of its members went off to the Easter Rising. Another club called the Crokes was set up in the 1920s and it also collapsed. A third club by the same name was set up in the 1940s; it was taken over and later became Kilmacud Crokes.</p> <p>24.00: Marcus recalls that he travelled to all the grounds in Dublin, including Crumlin, the Phoenix Park and Kimmage.</p>
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	<p>25.01: He says that all travel was done by bicycle.</p> <p>28:55: Marcus tells a story about his father's first match in Meath where he was sent to teach in one of the schools. "He (Marcus's father) went into a dressing room and there was a crowd of men there, 6 or 8 or 10. He was introduced to them all. They held about six meetings one after the other. The first meeting was about the local GAA. They wound that up and another man took over the chair and he was chairman of the local Gaelic League. They went through five or six clubs like that. The last club was the IRB and someone said, "We take it that you brought this fellow up because he is an IRB man, did you not come from an IRB family. No. Well take that Bible into your hand," and he was sworn into the IRB. He was in the GAA, Gaelic League, IRB and IRA. They were the same personnel, the chairman was different but all the members of the committee were the same."</p> <p>33.54: Marcus says that his father was a member of Sinn Féin and that when the truce was declared in 1921 he left politics.</p> <p>34.03: Marcus completed a Bachelor of Arts in UCD and then started work in the Irish Independent in 1949. He was also practicing as a barrister in the mornings.</p> <p>35:06: Marcus reported on the GAA for the newspaper.</p> <p>35:12: Marcus recalls that he was sent around the country reporting on matches.</p> <p>36:33: He tells a story of having to go into a post office in Limerick after a Tipperary and Limerick game and wire his material to Dublin.</p> <p>37:57: In 1967, he published "The Life of John O'Leary. The book looked at the links between the GAA and the Fenians.</p> <p>38:20: Marcus talks about been given the task to write a history of the GAA. Redacted.</p>
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	<p>39:15: Marcus recalls that it was a very tough interview.</p> <p>39:36: He recalls that after he wrote each chapter he would bring it to Seán O'Síocháin.</p> <p>40:46: 10,000 copies of the book; The GAA: A History was published. It was released just in time for the Christmas market in 1980.</p> <p>41:46: After the book was published, Marcus was put on various committees by the GAA.</p> <p>42:44: Marcus recalls that the GAA had an impact on his family life and says "it didn't help matters."</p> <p>44:12: "I was brought up in a pro-ban house. I was pro-ban whether I liked it or not. But in his last few years, my father changed his mind on the ban and agreed that it should be got rid of. I remember the morning that they had the vital vote; I was driving him to work. I said to him "what was the decision." He said you know what it was. I think I accused him of letting down the GAA. Probably we didn't talk for a couple of weeks, I can't remember."</p> <p>45:20: "I was against the opening up of Croke Park, but I guess it was inevitable."</p> <p>46:40: Marcus believes that Séamus O Riain was one of the best presidents of the GAA. He says that Seamus had good vision. He also says that Con Murphy was a very good president. He says that he does not know very much about the presidents who have held office in recent years.</p> <p>49:20: Marcus says that he has had no bad experience with the GAA.</p> <p>50:04: Marcus says that his favourite GAA game was the Dublin and Kerry game in 1975. He says that it was really a good game of football and that it was the beginning of the Dublin revival. He also says that in his opinion Kevin</p>
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REFERENCE NO. DB/1/3

	<p>Heffernan is a vital figure in the GAA.</p> <p>50:50: Marcus has a lot of respect for Pádraig O Caoimh and says that he was the architect of the modern GAA.</p> <p>54:00 Marcus says that the GAA plays a vital role in both the social and cultural life of the GAA and says that he still is a supporter of the association.</p> <p>54:57 He says that Volunteers are vital to the survival of the association.</p> <p>55:53: He believes that the GAA has been affected by the decrease in number of male teachers.</p> <p>56:03: Marcus says that women are very important to the GAA and that the association don't do enough for women.</p> <p>56:28: Marcus can't make up his mind on pay for play.</p> <p>57:20: He believes that one of the challenges facing the GAA is increasing the number of people playing the games in Dublin and he refers to Dublin as a weak spot.</p> <p>58:25: He says that he would be in favour of reducing the amount of political involvement in GAA matches.</p> <p>59:55: He concludes by saying that he is proud of the way that his family have been involved with the association and also how the GAA can adapt to change and new circumstances and he says that this is to their credit.</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 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>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Marcus played with St. Patrick's School, Dublin, minor and junior hurling with Crokes Club from the age of 15 to 18 years of age. He then went to UCD and played hurling with them</p>

REFERENCE NO. DB/1/3

Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 1.01.16
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: Ann-Marie Smith

Date: 30th April 2009