

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> Aug 2011
<b>Location</b>	Damien's home, near Kilkenny City
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Damien O'Connell
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1948 <b>Home County:</b> Carlow
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> De la Salle, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow <b>Secondary:</b> De la Salle, Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 1 brother & 3 sisters <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Wife (Joan), 2 sons & 1 daughter
<b>Club(s)</b>	Erin's Own Hurling Club [Carlow]; St Andrews Football Club [Carlow]; O'Loughlin Gaels [Kilkenny]
<b>Occupation</b>	Member of the Defence Forces
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Truck Driver [Father]; Legal Clerk [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	None
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Kilkenny Greyhound Owners Association

REFERENCE NO. CW/1/14

<b>Date of Report</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1944 - 2011
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Carlow, Kilkenny Tipperary, Great Britain, England, Meath, Armagh, Waterford, Roscommon, Kerry, Wexford, Tipperary, Kildare, Dublin, Europe, Cyprus, The Middle East, The Lebanon, Asia, Waterford, Cork
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Childhood, Education, Facilities, Grounds, Food and Drink, Religion, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Family Involvement, Earliest Memories, Material Culture, Celebrations, Travel, All-Ireland, Commiserations, Violence, Rivalries, Role of the Clergy, Media, Supporting, Career, The Troubles, Refereeing, Training, Role of the Teachers, Impact on Life, Fundraising, Irish History, Role of Women, Club History
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Damien begins by talking about sport in his hometown, Bagenalstown, County Carlow, and the sporting facilities available during his youth. He recalls his earliest GAA memory, his family background, various matches he attended during his childhood and recalls both listening to and watching matches on the radio and television. Damien discusses various topics including Minor Championship Leagues, Street Leagues, the clergy who trained the De La Salle football and hurling teams as well as the feed of players to local clubs. He then goes on to talk about his involvement with the GAA after he had finished school, the Defence Forces and eventually joining the O'Loughlin Gaels GAA Club in County Kilkenny. Damien touches on the history of the club, talks about its success and mentions some of its notable players. He mentions the part he plays in club fundraising and Bord na nÓg. Damien also discusses the involvement of women and new Irish in the GAA before recalling his happiest/stand-out moments with the Association.</p> <p>00:28 Damien talks about his upbringing in Carlow and notes going to De La Salle for his primary and secondary education.</p> <p>00:56 Talks about employment in Bagenalstown. Notes Keenan Brothers, Shields family, Clearys and Connollys as employers.</p> <p>01:22 Discusses the sporting facilities in the town. Mentions McGrath Park for the GAA. Also notes having a cricket field, tennis court, pitch and putt course, and a hockey field.</p> <p>01:41 Mentions that there had always been cricket in</p>

	<p>Baginbally and how it was particularly played by the mill workers. Notes the Browne family ran the cricket.</p> <p>02:08 Recalls townspeople going to watch the cricket after the Sunday GAA match and being invited in for tea, sandwiches, tarts and homemade buns.</p> <p>03:00 Notes the majority running the cricket were Protestant/Church of Ireland but the mill workers were predominantly Catholic.</p> <p>04:24 Notes that the majority of who played cricket also played hockey.</p> <p>04:45 Discusses the GAA ban on foreign games and dances. Recalls that some chose to play hockey over hurling.</p> <p>05:28 Mentions that Tea Merchants bought McGrath GAA Hall. Notes that the family were related to the Dreas of which Seán Drea went on to represent Ireland in the Olympics in 1972.</p> <p>07:06 Discusses sports facilities again. Recalls soccer being played on the hockey pitch and the town having an open air swimming pool which was built around 1954.</p> <p>07:45 Says that he would attribute this to people such as Eddie Kinsella, Harry Taylor, Michael Summers and Tully Curry.</p> <p>08:17 Discusses family interest and background in sport. Talks about his father's background.</p> <p>08:45 Earliest GAA Memory-recalls going to a County Final in 1956 on a carrier of a bike with his sister. Recalls Erin's Own victory.</p> <p>09:14 Recalls going to Croke Park in 1957. Saw Louth play Cork. Mentions Dermot O'Brien.</p> <p>09:58 Recalls travelling to Croke Park and going with Brother Mark</p> <p>10:29 Mentions Jim McArdle, Kevin Behan, Cunningham and Stephen White.</p> <p>11:04 Talks about Dermot O'Brien and the story of how he got locked out of Croke Park.</p> <p>11:46 Notes 1956 was Cork's 3<sup>rd</sup> All-Ireland to lose in 2 years. 2 football, 1 hurling.</p>
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	<p>12:10 Talks about the radio.</p> <p>13:07 Recalls the first television coming to Bagenalstown. Recalls first watching Roscommon play Kerry in the football. In the hurling, Wexford played Tipperary. Mentions the Railway Cup being televised.</p> <p>14:54 Damien discusses where his interest in playing GAA came from.</p> <p>15:21 Notes that a history of Erin's Own was released in 1984.</p> <p>15:29 Mentions his brother played for the Bagenalstown Minor Team which won the 1955 and 1956 football and hurling.</p> <p>16:17 Notes Carlow winning the Junior in 1960 and an All-Ireland in 1962. Recalls Kildare winning the Junior All-Ireland.</p> <p>17:11 Recalls rowing/fighting.</p> <p>17:47 Notes St. Mullin's as Erin's Own's main rival in hurling. In the football, O'Hanrahan's. Mentions Éire Óg and how they eventually took over football in Carlow.</p> <p>18:20 Recalls travelling by train to Dr. Cullen Park for matches. Recalls going to the 1957 County Football Final, 1958 County Final as well as the 1956 Minor and Senior Final.</p> <p>19:34 Notes football as the predominant sport in Carlow. Leinster Final 1944.</p> <p>19:53 League Final 1954 vs. Mayo.</p> <p>20:40 Talks about his pre-existing interest in GAA when he began in De La Salle. Mentions Brother Dermot(hurling), Brother Cillian and Brother Jerome Cooper(football).</p> <p>22:30 Mentions Borris, another school, as a rival.</p> <p>22:36 Discusses the Minor Championship. Mentions St. Mullins, Kilcloney and Pearse Carlow Town(big rival for Erin's Own and St. Andrews).</p> <p>22:58 Discusses Street Leagues.</p> <p>23:13 Talks about Brother Mark and his love of hurling.</p> <p>24:00 Talks about the feed of players to the local clubs.</p> <p>25:30 Damien discusses his childhood heroes such as Ollie</p>
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	<p>Walsh, Jimmy Doyle, Mick O'Connell and Kevin Heffernan.</p> <p>25:52 Discusses the different papers he reads, used to read and GAA journalists. Mentions The Independent, The Press, John D Hickey, Pádraig Puirseál and Paddy Downey.</p> <p>27:12 Notes a 1960s headline entitled "Neither Rock nor Wall Will Prevent Tipperary from Winning"</p> <p>27:45 Mentions Jim English and the McCarthy Cup.</p> <p>28:40 Discusses keeping up support for the Carlow Team. Mentions key men for Carlow-Seán Óg Ó Ceallacháin, Aidan McGee, Joe Nolan, Billy Callaghan, Mark Molloy, Connelly, Dermody, Pat Brophy, Mick Donovan, Seán Nolan.</p> <p>29:36 Talks about 1962 League Semi-Final vs Down. Mentions Brendan Aiden.</p> <p>29:48 Mentions Lar Foley.</p> <p>30:13 Discusses selection of Carlow players for Leinster and the Railway Cup.</p> <p>30:45 Talks about Jim Fogarty.</p> <p>31:31 Discusses why he thinks Carlow has not been able to break through.</p> <p>32:15 Damien discusses what he did after school. Mentions joining the army in 1972 and becoming involved with O'Loughlins in 1986/87.</p> <p>32:50 Discusses joining the army and the defence force in the 1970s. Notes the army had many inter-county footballers such as John Joe O'Reilly.</p> <p>34:30 Mentions Kilkenny notable hurling players such as Kieran Brennan, Frank Houlihan, Paul Murphy and Finn Bastan. Talks about Finn Bastan's career mentioning the All-Ireland of 1945 and 1948.</p> <p>35:56 Mentions Kevin McSale, Tommy Carr, Declan Carr</p> <p>36:30 Discusses how hurling fit into his day to day routine, how he became involved with O'Loughlins GAA Club and helping out at his son's school. Mentions Martin Comerford.</p> <p>38:14 Mentions Seán Dowling, Brian Hogan, Brian Dowling, Alan Geoghegan. Mentions the 2002 National League Final and Colleges Medals. Mentions John Houlihan and Barry Power.</p>
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	<p>39:04 Mentions Bord na nÓg, 1995 Under 14s, 1993 Minor B League, Minor B Championship 1994, Inter-County Final 2001 and Inter-County Final of 2003.</p> <p>39:52 Notes that O'Loughlin's GAA Club helped St. John's train.</p> <p>40:07 Mentions Martin Comerford and Alan Geoghegan again. Recalls bringing players to Croke Park for the first time.</p> <p>40:42 Discusses the relationship with Ballyboden St. Endas GAA Club. Mentions Fintan Walsh-Leinster Colleges Hurling/Football in 1955. Mentions Fintan's uncle Luke Kelly-Leinster Medal for Carlow in 1944.</p> <p>42:03 Discusses the set-up of O'Loughlin Gaels and their success. Mentions John Skehan, Andy Comerford, Martin Comerford and Jimmy Comerford.</p> <p>43:17 Talks about the context in which O'Loughlin Gaels was set up. Makes note of clubs at the time.</p> <p>44:05 Talks about being the O'Loughlin's representative for Bord na nÓg. Mentions Tom Ryall</p> <p>45:50 Mentions Gerry O'Neill, Bord na nÓg/Caoga Bliain Óg book and Joe Dunphy.</p> <p>46:19 Discusses how the structure of under-aged teams has developed. Mentions Brian Cody, Tommy O'Brien, Richie Mulrooney and Niall Bergin.</p> <p>48:05 Talks about why hurling/GAA does not thrive in many urban areas. Notes a number of schools.</p> <p>49:50 Talks about the help/support O'Loughlin Gaels receives.</p> <p>51:55 Discusses the importance of GAA to youth. Mentions Niall Bergin, Mark Bergin and Maurice Nolan.</p> <p>53:34 Discusses the commitment of getting a team such as O'Loughlins up to high standard.</p> <p>54:44 Discusses the influence of the Senior O'Loughlin Team success. Notes going to schools with trophies and players.</p> <p>55:30 Mentions St. Kierans vs. CBS in the 2011 Leinster Juvenile Colleges Final. Notes in particular supporters carrying hurls.</p> <p>57:55 Damien discusses what keeps him motivated and</p>
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	<p>involved with the GAA.</p> <p>59:10 Produces a picture dated May 2003 and notes the various cups in it.</p> <p>01:00:19 Talks about Martin Comerford and the personality of the Kilkenny players. Mentions Brian Cody, Henry Martin, Noel Hickey, Tommy Walsh.</p> <p>01:03:25 Damien recalls fundraising and discusses fundraising. Mentions Eamonn Doyle and Seán Casey. Recalls selling tickets throughout the parish for Greyhound Racing.</p> <p>01:06:28 Talks about the rivalries between the city clubs in Kilkenny. Mentions Nickey Brennan and Dicksboro Draw.</p> <p>01:07:55 Damien notes the GAA played a part in uniting the country after the Civil War and the important part the organisation plays in peoples' lives.</p> <p>01:09:37 Mentions the new Irish becoming involved in GAA sport.</p> <p>01:10:18 Mentions Eddie Keher's background.</p> <p>01:11:13 Damien talks about women's involvement in Gaelic sport and O'Loughlin Gaels GAA Club. Talks about Camogie. Mentions Margaret Hanlon and Noel Richardson.</p> <p>01:13:03 Recalls his happiest/stand-out GAA moments. Mentions the 2001 County Final, 2011 Féile Final and 2002 All-Ireland.</p> <p>01:15:20 Talks about his role in making and producing the programmes for Nowlan Park. Mentions Tom Byrne, Jim Fogarty, Patrick O'Sullivan and Dermot Kavanagh.</p> <p>01:17:08 Mentions the O'Loughlin Camp being held in St. Kiernan's due to club development. Mentions Brick Walsh, Brian Hogan, Michael Rice and Brendan Cummins.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Programme Editor for Nowlan Park</p>

**REFERENCE NO. CW/1/14**

<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	N/A
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Helps out with school teams at St Johns in Kilkenny; member of O'Loughlin Gaels committee, 1986 – present; O'Loughlin Gaels Bord na nÓg representative
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 01:18:48
<b>Language</b>	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:      11<sup>th</sup> June 2012