

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie	
Date of Interview	15 th Feb 2010	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photograph of Interviewee
Location	Interviewee's home, near Kinlough, Co. Leitrim	
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Michael McGowan	
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>		
Gender	Male	
Born	Year Born: 1936 Home County: Leitrim	
Education	Primary: Rossinver NS Secondary: De La Salle College, Mallow, Co. Cork / Castletown, Co. Laois Third Level: De La Salle, Waterford (Primary Teaching); UCC	
Family	Siblings: 6 brothers and 1 sister Current Family if Different: Married to Mai	
Club(s)	Melvin Gaels GFC	
Occupation	Retired Teacher	
Parents' Occupation	Farmer [Father]; Farmer and Housewife [Mother]	
Religion	Roman Catholic	
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A	
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A	

REFERENCE NO. LM/1/2

Date of Report	13 th August 2012
Period Covered	1954 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Leitrim, Donegal, Wexford, Great Britain, England, Galway, Cork, Waterford
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Politics, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Michael talks about a lifetime's involvement with the GAA at all levels. A Leitrim native, there was not a lot of organised club activity as he was growing up., but when the Melvin Gaels club was formed he quickly became involved, and was soon playing with his county as well as with his university in Cork. As a teacher he lived in different parts of the country - and in England for a time - and wherever he went he involved himself in local GAA activities. He managed various school, club and county teams before trying his hand at administration. During this time he worked to improve the GAA structures in Leitrim, which included working to improve the prevalence of Scór and of the Irish language. Michael also spent some time as a referees tutor. His enthusiasm earned him many accolades as he worked relentlessly to ensure that the Association - which to him was much more than a sporting body - continued to thrive and explore new possibilities.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:35 Earliest memory is of a match in Rossinver between Ballaghameehan and Blacklion. No underage structures at the time. Young people playing amongst themselves.</p> <p>01:40 Football they made for themselves. Pig's bladder used at certain times.</p> <p>02:25 Micheál O'Hehir commentating on games on the wet</p>

	<p>battery radio. Listening to games. Locals calling to the house to listen to games.</p> <p>03:25 No club in the area at the time.</p> <p>03:55 Melvin Gaels club formed in 1954. Winning s senior final after five years. Different members of his family playing. Seven members of another McGowan family – the Martin Bernards on the team. Foleys, Gallaghers, O'Malleys, Rooneys and Connollys also playing. Style of play they adopted.</p> <p>05:45 1962 championship disputed. 'Illegalities'. Ballinamore club suspended. Beating Aughavas in final.</p> <p>06:50 How and why club was set up. Martin Bernard McGowan chairman. His son, Aiden McGowan, later GAA Vice-President and chairman of Connacht Council.</p> <p>08:00 Excitement when club was formed. Team on wane after 1965. Later teams less well organised. Resurgence in 1980s as his brother, Seamus, set up the minor board. Underage success that followed.</p> <p>09:45 Origin of name. Lough Melvin a lake in the area, named after a queen.</p> <p>10:35 Travelling to games in cars. People travelling home from around the country to play club games. Emigration a problem in the late 1950s. How they managed to get through that.</p> <p>12:20 His brother going to a 7-a-side game and taking the whole team in his car.</p> <p>13:10 Family's GAA involvement. Going to games with his brother. Sister a non-playing supporter.</p> <p>14:15 Role of women in local club. How that has changed over the years.</p> <p>15:25 Playing games with Melvin Gaels for the first time in 1957. Making it on to the county senior team. Playing senior with the club until 1965. Playing for University College Cork. Winning four Leitrim titles in-a-row.</p> <p>16:55 Going to England and playing for St Mary's Wolverhampton (Warwickshire). Also chairman of the club. Returning in 1968. Final game for Leitrim in 1972.</p> <p>17:45 League game against Aughavas in 1997. Being asked</p>
--	---

	<p>to play due to a player injury.</p> <p>18:35 Involvement in hurling. How he got interested. Playing hurling for Leitrim and titles he won.</p> <p>19:30 Doing a football coaching course in Gormanston in 1975. Managing Leitrim underage teams. Training in Ballyshannon, where he was teaching at the time. Winning an Ulster Colleges title.</p> <p>20:35 Winning Fr Manning Cup with Leitrim Under-16s. Later managing minors and Under-21s. Becoming principal of school in Ballyshannon and Leitrim Person of the Year in the late 1970s. Too much on his plate. Much travelling involved in fulfilling his duties.</p> <p>23:10 GAA as an integral part of Irish identity.</p> <p>24:25 Doing a coaching course for hurling with Paudie Butler. Teaching in schools.</p> <p>25:50 Going to college in 1949. Tipperary team who had just beaten Laois in All-Ireland final on the train he was on. Stakelum and the Kennys on the Tipperary team. Seeing the Rackard brothers play for Wexford in later years. His own passion for hurling. What made it so special to him. Hurling legend Christy Ring playing for Glen Rovers when he was at UCC. Seeing Seán Clohessy of Kilkenny and Joe Salmon of Galway playing.</p> <p>29:45 Tommy Riordan a county secretary originally from Limerick. His passion for hurling. Hurling generally not so popular in Leitrim. Trying to counteract that. Value of hurling skills.</p> <p>33:45 Expense of hurls and helmets. People thinking it is a rough game. Need for GAA to promote game at schools level.</p> <p>34:55 Hurling popular in Carrick-On-Shannon, Ballinamore, Mohill, Gortletteragh, Manorhamilton. Micheál Dolan doing a lot of work in Manorhamilton.</p> <p>36:50 Role of schools in development of GAA. Prominence at school in Ballyshannon. Winning an All-Ireland B title. Playing St Malachy's of Belfast. Volunteerism not as strong among teachers as it was. Some saying that it is because of increased numbers of female teachers. Need for government to play a leading role.</p> <p>40:50 GAA was an integral part of his college experience.</p> <p>43:00 GAA work in schools. Teaching at a primary school in</p>
--	---

	<p>Loughrea in the 1960s. Lake frozen over. Being asked to referee a game between pupils on the ice. How that went. Ciarán Fitzgerald on one of the team. He later became a famous rugby player for Ireland. Football not popular in east Galway.</p> <p>46:15 Training a team at De La Salle Waterford that played in Harty Cup. Future Wexford manager Liam Griffin on the team.</p> <p>46:55 Move to England for two years. Winning a medal with St Mary's Wolverhampton. Playing football with Warwickshire. How game in England compared with that in Ireland. Facilities in England.</p> <p>50:05 Success with Melvin Gaels. Celebrations when the team won. Many of the players not drinking alcohol.</p> <p>52:25 Dances and fundraising events.</p> <p>52:55 Proximity to Donegal border and players crossing over. Playing for St Gall's in Belfast and St Patrick's in Wicklow. Enjoying hurling with Loughrea.</p> <p>55:40 St Mary's and Ballinamore, Aughavas, Bornacoola rivals of Melvin Gaels. Aughavas has Fergus O'Rourke, brother of legendary Meath footballer Colm O'Rourke.</p> <p>58:25 Connacht final in 1958 against Galway. The twins, Seán Purcell and Frank Stockwell Galway's star players. Marking Mick Greally. How the game went.</p> <p>59:35 Connacht final in Sligo. Galway's Mattie McDonagh and Frank Ivers opposite him. Máirtín Newell a talented Galway player.</p> <p>01:00:45 Playing a more central role with his club than with Leitrim.</p> <p>01:02:10 Team outings with Leitrim. Few collective training sessions.</p> <p>01:03:30 Administrative involvement. Managing Under-16 side. Winning the Fr Manning Cup. Reunion 25 years later. Coaching school team in Ballyshannon. Stepping back from management. Returning in 1980s and 1990s. Demanding nature of work. Rewarding nature of work.</p> <p>01:09:30 Keeping club accounts in order. Less challenge games as a result. Leitrim full-forward scoring four goals against Kerry goalkeeper Charlie Nelligan.</p> <p>01:11:25 Barriers to Leitrim's success. Sitting next to Offaly</p>
--	--

	<p>star Brian Whelan at an All Star dinner. What they spoke about. Mentality of football teams like Kerry.</p> <p>01:14:45 Being vice-chairman and later chairman of the county board. Bringing in Declan Rowley as manager.</p> <p>01:15:50 Trying to encourage more supporters to attend games. Working on improving the facilities in Carrick-On-Shannon. Stephen McGarvey working on that.</p> <p>01:17:10 Lack of a training ground in Leitrim. Getting training ground in Annaduff. Facilities there. Mentions Gerry McGovern.</p> <p>01:18:30 Being made honorary president.</p> <p>01:19:00 Role of vice-chairman and what that involved. Attending training sessions which took place in Mullingar and Longford. Reason they were held there. Training sometimes held in Kells and at one stage in Longford Rugby Grounds.</p> <p>01:22:00 Leitrim clubs not wanting to share grounds with county team. Páirc Seán in Carrick-On-Shannon and Fr Tierney Park in Ballyshannon 'sacred grounds'. Arranging a senior challenge match with Donegal boss Brian McEniff. What happened when they arrived at Ballyshannon ground. John Kane in charge there. George O'Toole in charge in Carrick-On-Shannon.</p> <p>01:24:00 Trying to find a place in Drumkeerin and Drumshanbo.</p> <p>01:24:35 Major role as chairman. Declan Rowley's work as county boss. Work on stand and playing pitches.</p> <p>01:26:20 Role of president and what that entails.</p> <p>01:26:50 Role of clergy. Canon Dolan involved in the founding of club.</p> <p>01:28:30 Role of Irish language and his work on that. Importance of preserving Irish language.</p> <p>01:32:50 Degree to which GAA is promoting Irish language. TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta. How media outlets could improve. Micheál Ó Muircheartaigh and the manner in which he speaks.</p> <p>01:34:55 Scór in Leitrim. Seán Ó Heslins Ballinamore putting in a lot of work. His own ambitions for Melvin Gaels. His role in organising Scór events. Seán Ó Suilleabháin organising</p>
--	---

REFERENCE NO. LM/1/2

	<p>adjudication.</p> <p>01:37:50 Volunteerism and professionalism. Payments to managers. Asking Noel Moran to return to Leitrim team. What he was told. Car allowance players get.</p> <p>01:42:55 Relationship between clubs, the county board and the GAA hierarchy in Croke Park.</p> <p>01:45:30 GAA and his sense of identity. Being made Leitrim Person of the Year in 1977 and GAA connection. Also made Rehab Person of the Year.</p> <p>01:46:50 Best GAA memory. Playing Ballinamore in a county final. Leitrim winning Under-21 Connacht title. Mental breakthrough for the county as they beat Mayo and Galway along the way.</p> <p>01:49:30 Disappointments in Connacht finals. Not being able to field a junior team in the early 1980s.</p> <p>01:50:40 Sacrifices he has made over the years.</p> <p>01:52:30 Admiration for former GAA President Aiden McGowan and Secretary of Leitrim County Board Tommy O' Riordan. Work of his brother Seamus, Wexford's Liam Griffin and Brian McEniff.</p> <p>01:54:20 What the GAA has meant to him.</p> <p>01:56:00 Work as a referees tutor and how he found that. Future of the GAA.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach ✓ Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member ✓ Grounds-person</p> <p>✓ Caterer ✓ Jersey Washer ✓ Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): ____Scór and County President____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Won 5 Leitrim Senior Championships, 6 Leitrim Leagues, 1 Leitrim Intermediate and 1 Leitrim Junior. Won 2 Cork Senior Championships.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Has been involved in administration since 1966.</p> <p>Club: Melvin Gaels Chairman (10 years); St. Mary's Wolverhampton Chairman (2 years)</p> <p>County: Vice-chairman (4 years), Chairman (4 years), Scór</p>

REFERENCE NO. LM/1/2

	Committee, County President, Hurling Board.
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:59:26
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: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____13/08/12_____