

GAA Oral History Project
Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Jimmy Smyth
Date of Interview	2 nd Nov 2011
Location	John's home, Lurgan, Co. Armagh
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	John Hanratty
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1933 Home County: Armagh
Education	Primary: N/A Secondary: St. Pat's Armagh
Family	Siblings: 2 Brothers, 3 Sisters
Club(s)	Armagh Harps GAA [Armagh]
Occupation	Wages Cashier
Parents' Occupation	Grocer
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Date of Report	29 th August 2012
Period Covered	1947-1969
Counties/Countries Covered	Armagh, Tyrone, Down, Cavan, Monaghan, Kerry, Roscommon, Meath, Tipperary
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Northern Ireland, Retirement, Relationships
Interview Summary	<p>The principal focus of John Hanratty's interview is the club, college and county scene in Armagh and Ulster in the 1950s. The interview begins with Hanratty's reflections on his college football days with St. Patrick's Armagh, with stories of playing in the Rannafast and MacRory Cups. Hanratty also discusses his underage career with Armagh - which included the winning of an All-Ireland minor title in 1949, aged just 16 years – and his progression in the senior ranks. The record of Armagh football in the 1950s is considered alongside the relative strengths of other Ulster counties and comment on the club scene in Armagh, especially that around Armagh city. In the course of these reflections, Hanratty sheds light on such themes as travel, transport, training and more. Finally, he contrasts Gaelic football past and present, refers to his son's GAA experiences and considers what the GAA has meant to him.</p> <p>00:00:30 John Hanratty is introduced as having a long and successful GAA career spanning his involvement with St. Pat's, Armagh, Armagh Harps and the county minor and senior team.</p> <p>00:00:50 Discusses attending St. Pat's Armagh, winning 3 Rannafast Cups alongside Patsy Breen (Derry), Kevin Beahan (Louth), John McKnight and Mickey McKnight, Frank Kernan, Brendan O'Neill, Jim Aiken (Later a music promoter), Denis Faul (later a well-known priest).</p> <p>00:01:50 Jimmy Smyth mentions that St. Pat's was the diocesan seminary.</p> <p>00:02:25 Talks about the senior classes attending the Hogan Cup final and the rest of the school listening to it on radio in the gym hall.</p>

	<p>00:03:23 Smyth and Hanratty discuss the influence of the trains in transporting teams and supporters.</p> <p>00:03:45 Reflects on the qualities of Eddie Devlin and Iggy Jones. Tells story of seeing Jones in college with a ball – possibly ‘testing himself’ - moving across the concrete.</p> <p>00:05:06 Jimmy Smyth draws a comparison between Iggy Jones and Peter Canavan.</p> <p>00:05:18 Hanratty talks more about Iggy Jones – recalls story of advice given to him in a college match and another story of him playing a game, and scoring two goals, with no boot on. Talks about the nature of the game when Jones was playing and absence of the double tackle.</p> <p>00:06:35 Hanratty talks about progressing to play MacRory Cup in 1950 and playing St. Colman’s.</p> <p>00:06:53 Smyth provides a brief summary of MacRory Cup winners in the 1940s.</p> <p>00:07:03 Hanratty mentions the (subsequently) well-known players on the St. Colman’s team in 1950, including Down’s Kevin Mussen. Talks also about some of the players on the St. Pat’s team in 1950 and reflects on how the game turned out.</p> <p>00:08:08 Discusses the profile of Colleges football in the late 1940s and early 1950s and influence it had on county minor team selection – mentions that he made the Armagh county minor team without playing any club football.</p> <p>00:08:44 Describes losing the 1950 MacRory Cup final as ‘devastating.’</p> <p>00:09:00 Conversation about the use of Lurgan for Colleges final.</p> <p>00:09:30 Talks about Kernan’s father and mother turning up for all games – recalls their appearance and dress.</p> <p>00:10:19 Talks about being a member of Armagh All-Ireland minor team in 1949. Discusses making the team, other players and the games played en route to that All-Ireland title.</p> <p>00:11:55 Reflects on All-Ireland minor semi-final versus Sligo in Davitt Park and subsequent decision of centre-back, Mick O’Hanlon, to enter the priesthood, necessitating a replacement for the final.</p> <p>00:12:43 Recalls All-Ireland final and the decisive goal scored</p>
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	<p>by Seán Blaney, a father of Greg Blaney.</p> <p>00:13:29 Talks about the minor management into the Armagh minor team, which included two priests. Tells story about the football knowledge of Harry McGarry.</p> <p>00:15:15 Jimmy Smyth mentions Hanratty's achievement in winning a Minor All-Ireland at 16 years of age.</p> <p>[00:15:35 Interview temporarily interrupted by 'Mrs Hanratty entering room']</p> <p>00:16:02 Discusses playing Minor for Armagh in 1950 – names some of the players he played alongside, the trials for the minor team and losing the Ulster final.</p> <p>00:17:43 Talks about winning 1951 Ulster Minor championship, referring again to the players on the team and to the teams they defeated on the way to playing Kerry – ending in a draw - in the All-Ireland semi-final in Armagh. Talks about beating Kerry in the replay in Croke Park and, following an objection, returning to replay an Ulster final against Cavan before playing – and losing - the All-Ireland final against Roscommon nine days to Christmas. Mentions that final was refereed by Peter McDermott of Meath.</p> <p>00:21:50 Tells story of a Roscommon player putting ball over his own bar in the All-Ireland final and the manner in which Peter McDermott refereed – interpreted the rules - in that game.</p> <p>00:23:10 Making the Armagh senior in 1953 – recalls first game against Louth in the Athletic Grounds and, given the absence of a net, scoring a controversial point. [Jimmy Smyth also comments on the rarity of nets on GAA goalposts]</p> <p>00:24:33 Mentions playing with the Armagh seniors until 1959, when he moved to Scotland to work.</p> <p>00:24:42 Reflects on Armagh's record from 1953 to 1959 – the winning of the three Lydon Cups and losing three National League semi-finals. Talks also of his championship experiences with Armagh, including losing to Tyrone with a last-minute score. Tells story of the abuse levelled at referee on that occasion and having the incident recalled to him many years later.</p> <p>00:27:38 Reflects on the strength of Tyrone football in the 1950s by listing some of their players.</p> <p>00:27:55 Recalls other games (and 'battles') with Tyrone -</p>
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	<p>beating them in the Lagan Cup in Casement Park; playing them in Dungannon when three Armagh players were 'floored' in the first minute etc.</p> <p>00:29:05 Travelling to games in Art O'Hagan's car along with other players, including Jack Bratton.</p> <p>00:30:18 Talks about the club scene in Armagh city: the 'Harps' as the only club until the emergence of Pearse Óg's in the early 1950s. Reference is made to Pat Campbell and to street leagues in the city.</p> <p>00:31:40 Considers the success of Armagh Harps, contesting six county finals, winning four in the 1950s.</p> <p>00:33:00 Refers to winning Casement Park competition – a forerunner of the Ulster Club – and various other Tournaments. Discussion around the prizes that were on offer in club tournaments - including suits, watches etc.- and what tournaments were used for.</p> <p>[00:34:50-00:35:40 Interview is interrupted as tea is served]</p> <p>00:35:55 Mentions a 'bus' bought by the 'Harps' in the 1950s and using it to travel 'everywhere' to compete in Tournaments – refers to the most prestigious of these Tournament in Omagh and Irvinestown. Mentions the difficulty in beating Clontibret from Monaghan.</p> <p>00:38:35 Talks about Seamus O'Hanlon from the Harps, who joined Guards and was sent to Tipperary and made county and Munster team. Talks also about other club players.</p> <p>00:40:43 Training in the 1950s – focus on laps and tactical instructions.</p> <p>00:41:50 Recalls collective training with Armagh minors and being taken to the colleges. Discusses the routine, the quality of the fields and the 'boy scout' atmosphere.</p> <p>00:43:00 Comments on the railways and the inter-connectedness of many parts of the county and province. Mentions the attractiveness of work on the railways.</p> <p>00:43:50 Refers to the arrival of Charlie Vernon in Armagh, who came to work on the railway. Mentions how they were moved around 'like bankmen'.</p> <p>00:45:20 Recalls some of the players from the 1950s, including Eddie Donnelly and Johnny Crossey. Describes Crossey as 'the best minor in Ireland' and notes that he was</p>
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	<p>conscripted in England.</p> <p>00:47:00 Remarks on his move to Lurgan in and beginning of his son's involvement on the county's minors and the Wolfe Tones club. Discusses his son's football career and the difficulty of combining with his medical work. Recalls his son playing Sigerson Cup – and the players he played alongside – and his leg break.</p> <p>00:50:40 What the GAA means to him – talks about the importance of friendships, the part it played in his life, comparing players from different generations.</p> <p>00:52:35 Contrasts the players of past and present: tells story of watching the Cork midfielder in the 2010 All-Ireland final and the quality of his fielding. Talks also about Bill McCorry and Art O'Hagan. [Laughter]</p> <p>00:56:51 Recalls attending the 1953 All-Ireland final – refers to Mal McEvoy, his qualities as a footballer and scoring a goal in the final.</p> <p>00:58:00 Tells story of meeting D. Skelton after 30 years and reminiscing about playing Kerry in Killarney. [Laughter]</p> <p>01:00:00 Mentions his memory of people rather than games or scores.</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 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>All Ireland Minor, 3 Lagan Cup Medals, Casement Park Medal.</p> <p>4 Armagh Senior Championships. 3 Ranafast College</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:00:15
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: _____Jimmy Smyth_____

Date: _____02/11/2011_____