

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Tommy McCann
Date of Interview	3 rd Nov 2010
Location	O'Connell's Clubhouse, Castlebellingham, Co. Louth
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Jim Byrne
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1955 Home County: Louth
Education	Primary: Yes Secondary: Yes
Family	Siblings: Four brothers and sisters
Club(s)	O'Connell's GFC
Occupation	N/A
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

REFERENCE NO. LH/1/26

Date of Report	22 nd May 2012
Period Covered	1912 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Louth, Dublin, Tyrone, Kerry
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Emigration, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Socialising Purchase of Grounds
Interview Summary	<p>Jim Byrne's family have deep roots in Louth GAA and O'Connell's GFC. His grandfather on his mother's side was an All-Ireland medal winner in 1912 and his grandfather on his father's side was a founder of the O'Connell's club. Jim charts his own involvement with the club as a player and now as an administrator in charge of club development. He observes the changes in the GAA over his lifetime and comments on the effect of wider economic development on both himself and the wider area. In addition, he makes observations on the role of women and the Irish language in the GAA and the many players he has admired over the years.</p> <p>00:00:05 Jim Byrne introduces himself as a member of O'Connells GFC in Castlebellingham.</p> <p>00:00:30 Earliest memories: the building of the club dressing rooms in 1963 and sitting in the Nally stand in Croke Park when Kerry played Offaly (thinks it's the mid 1960s). Sitting beside a lot of priests.</p> <p>00:01:10 Family involvement in the GAA: the family ran a pub which was synonymous with the GAA in the area. Grandfather, a farmer, publican and founder member of club, leased the field to the club which it now owns. Had field leased in the 1920s and club acquired in 1961, by which time he was dead. Father won a Division 2 medal with O'Connell's in 1949. Jim played in same position as his father when club next won a championship in 1976.</p> <p>00:02:20 O'Connell's was 'the lifeblood' of the family. His grandfather on his mother's side won an All-Ireland with Louth in 1912.</p> <p>00:02:56 Mentions that he became secretary of the club in 1976 and remained for 24 years. Returned to help out with</p>

	<p>new development in the club.</p> <p>00:03:13 Recalls starting to play at for club at underage and alludes to a local controversy over playing a rival code. Recalls making adult debut for club at 15 against the Dreadnoughts.</p> <p>00:03:48 Discusses the differences between the GAA of past and present. Mentions the increasingly professional approach and points to the hall in which the interview was being conduct as indicative of that.</p> <p>00:04:20 Discusses his playing days in school.</p> <p>00:04:50 Recalls attending games with his father, in particular Louth V Dublin in Navan in 1973. Remarks on his abiding like of Dublin football teams. Name-checks some of the players on the 1970s team.</p> <p>00:06:15 Name-checks players who he considers the heroes of the moment – Louth’s Paddy Keenan, Tyrone players like Canavan and Cavanagh, Dublin’s Bernard Brogan, the O’Sé’s in Kerry.</p> <p>00:07:00 Revisits some of the major changes in the GAA: refers to Croke Park redevelopment and approach to structures etc. Says it’s for the betterment of the GAA.</p> <p>00:07:50 Refers to local rivals, those situated nearest to club: Stabannon Parnells, Finbarr’s and St. Joseph’s.</p> <p>00:08:16 Mentions the importance of rivalries to the GAA.</p> <p>00:08:40 Refers to his own role in the club at the time – he was head of development and explains that they were trying to get a project ‘over the winning line’.</p> <p>00:09:07 Mentions that work on development was mostly voluntary, but some specialist, paid input was required.</p> <p>00:09:40 Discusses the influence of GAA on the community – refers to O’Connell’s as the biggest organisation in its part of the parish.</p> <p>00:10:00 Mentions that he no longer lives in the parish. Contrasts the lack of competition to the club with what might be found in the big towns.</p> <p>00:10:35 Comments on the economic recession on the club – observes fall-off in local lottery revenues. Refers also to previous fund-raising initiatives. Mentions how National Lottery mid-week lottery killed off local bingo nights as money</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. LH/1/26

	<p>was diverted elsewhere.</p> <p>00:12:00 Refers to players from club having emigrated and mentions the locations where some of them settled.</p> <p>00:12:17 Discusses the role of women in the club – refers to a 'ladies committee' which was called upon 'when necessary'.</p> <p>00:12:50 Explains the advantages of being involved in the GAA – meeting people.</p> <p>00:13:50 Mentions that he has suffered as a result of the recession – had worked in Carroll's in Dundalk and then Coke, but was made redundant. Alludes to the difficulties of balancing club duties with work and family commitments.</p> <p>00:14:20 Discusses the changes in transports. Mentions the move from cars to a mini-bus and, because of the costs, back to car-pooling.</p> <p>00:14:54 Alludes to post-match rituals: good results would be followed by celebrations.</p> <p>00:15:10 Comments on the short-term future for Louth football and takes encouragement for the county team's performance of the previous year.</p> <p>00:15:40 Mentions some of the other influential players on the Louth panel.</p> <p>00:16:30 Remarks on the 'archaic' attitudes of the GAA to Irish language.</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 checked="" 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>20 years playing with club, won two county championship medals.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Committee member for 3 years; Club secretary for 24 years; Chairman of Club Development Committee for 4 years.</p>

REFERENCE NO. LH/1/26

Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 00:17:15
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: _____Tommy McCann_____

Date: _____22/05/12_____