

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Ann-Marie Smith
Date of Interview	10 th Aug 2009
Location	Blanchardstown, Dublin
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Muiris Prenderville
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1918 Home County: Cork
Education	Primary: Castlemartyr National School, Cork Secondary: North Monastery & Youghal CBS
Family	Siblings: 2 brothers Current Family if Different: Widow, 2 sons and 1 daughter
Club(s)	Youghal GAA [Cork]; Civil Service Hurling Club [Dublin]; St. Oliver Plunketts Dublin [Dublin]
Occupation	Civil servant- went on to work for GAA
Parents' Occupation	Housewife [Mother]; British Navy [Father]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Active Retirement Group

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Date of Report	6 th Nov 2010
Period Covered	1918 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork, Dublin, Kilkenny, Tipperary, Westmeath
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers Identity, Rivalries Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, Irish, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Muiris talks about a lifetime spent involved with the GAA at all levels. He recalls playing hurling and football in his native Cork before moving to Dublin, where he worked in the civil service and played for the county hurling team, encountering people like Christy Ring and former Taoiseach Jack Lynch along the way. Muiris helped set up the Oliver Plunketts club in Dublin and he brought his civil service experience to bear on everything he did in an administrative capacity. He then discusses his work on the McNamee report and, later, inside Croke Park itself. He was determined to shake up the association in terms of its organisation, which he felt was not up to standard. This interview is a revealing account of the motivations behind the actions of man who had a lasting impact on the GAA in the 20th century.</p> <p>00:55 Born in Castlemartyr in Cork in 1918. Ireland was under British rule</p> <p>01:25 Describes family background. His mother used to go to feiseanna and quote Douglas Hyde in Irish</p> <p>03:00 Father drove a lorry and had been in the Royal Navy</p> <p>03:50 Muiris went to secondary school in the North Mon is Cork City. The family moved to Youghal</p> <p>04:15 Muiris moved to Dublin in 1936 to join the Civil Service</p>

	<p>04:50 GAA was not very prominent in Muiris' early life, though there was a hurling team in the village where he grew up.</p> <p>05:10 Recalls his mother giving a man a flask of whisky and tea in a flask at half-time during games. He sometimes slept at their house</p> <p>06:05 His mother knitted jerseys for him</p> <p>06:40 His aunt owned a nearby pub and there was a lot of GAA activity in there. His aunt was a big GAA fan</p> <p>07:05 His cousins played hurling but there were no organised games for juvenilles</p> <p>07:30 Muiris started playing hurling when he was in primary school. Ball was rubber and they did not have proper hurleys</p> <p>08:10 They would play games amongst themselves but first there was a pre-game ritual to be gone through</p> <p>09:35 No hurling at school</p> <p>09:45 There was a river near his house and a walled demesne</p> <p>10:05 He had a long way to travel to secondary school in Cork city and it was a lonely experience</p> <p>11:35 He went to the Christian Brothers' school in Youghal but does not remember playing games there</p> <p>12:00 He was involved in a protest in Youghal - he arrived at the Copperalley GAA grounds to play a final and the British Legion band were there. Muiris objected to this.</p> <p>13:55 There was a GAA paper at the time called An Camán edited by Eamonn De Barra and Muiris read that.</p> <p>14:55 Dave Sliney was a big GAA man in Youghal and had a big effect on the teenage Muiris</p> <p>15:35 Muiris was captain of the Youghal junior team at 17.</p>
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	<p>Recalls playing Waterford side Adrmore and a teammate getting violent</p> <p>17:10 He was on the Youghal minor football team at 17 and they won the East Cork Jubilee Championship</p> <p>17:25 Played with a divisional team based in Midleton called St Enda's, travelled from Youghal by train for practice</p> <p>17:50 Christy Ring was on that team, and in later years Muiris would meet Christy in Dublin in Barry's hotel or the Gresham when Cork were in town for an All-Ireland final.</p> <p>18:40 Compares Christy Ring to former Irish soccer captain Roy Keane</p> <p>19:00 Muiris remembers cycling from Dublin to Thurles for Munster finals. Mentions a film made by Louis Marcus about Christy Ring</p> <p>19:35 Muiris played against Ring in a National League final in Cork. Muiris was playing for Dublin and was marking Jim Young, a former flatmate of his. Jack Lynch's brother Finbarr was in the flat too.</p> <p>20:45 Heroes of Muiris' included Lory Meagher and Eudie Coughlan</p> <p>21:40 Recalls 'the thundering and lightning final' in 1939 when war was declared and Muiris was a steward. A dramatic day all round. Jack Lynch really impressed Muiris that day. Cork lost to Kilkenny</p> <p>23:35 Played in the All-Ireland minor final of 1936 and lost by a point to Kilkenny. Jim Langton scored a last-minute point for Kilkenny.</p> <p>23:50 When cycling to Thurles he brought his own food. Muiris liked to cycle.</p> <p>25:00 Recalls cycling to Thurles one day and meeting Taoiseach Jack Lynch in a car on the way</p>
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	<p>25:45 He was cycling back to Rathmines in Dublin from Kerry one year and called into his aunt in Castlemartyr. He visited Walsh the hurley maker while he was there too. Then he carried on and had some more adventures.</p> <p>28:20 Recalls his mountain climbing exploits</p> <p>30:05 He had intended to go to university in Cork but he passed the exam for the civil service and took that instead. it was 1936.</p> <p>31:00 He met President of the Gaelic League, in Dublin</p> <p>31:25 Was signed up for the civil service hurling team on his first day in the job and played his first game for them in Ringsend Park soon after</p> <p>32:15 The civil service team were good but not as cohesive as a club team. Jack Lynch and Jim Young played for the civil service for a while. Muiris captained the senior team and was on the committee</p> <p>32:45 He played junior and senior with Dublin in the early 1940s. Ned Wade and Harry Gray were on that team.</p> <p>33:30 There was no coaching then but Muiris coached himself and worked on his own game</p> <p>35:05 He often played in the Phoenix Park</p> <p>35:30 Many club games were played in Croke Park. Teams like Fall and Young Irelands played there.</p> <p>35:45 Recalls going to Portlaoise for a game with Mick McDonald, Ned Wade, and Harry Gray and a local youngster laughing at Muiris</p> <p>36:25 Seán Ó Ceallacháin was a mentor of theirs and liked to bless players with holy water</p> <p>36:50 Charlie McMahon had a steel plate in his head, he was a character</p> <p>37:15 There was no coaching or tactics. They sometimes</p>
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	<p>played in the army grounds in the Phoenix Park.</p> <p>38:10 They played teams like Westmeath, but also Tipperary. The tempo was much faster against Tipperary.</p> <p>39:20 Muiris and his Dublin teammates played in the Athletic Grounds in Cork in a National League final. Great names like Paddy O'Donovan were on the Cork team. It was a strange experience for Muiris</p> <p>40:40 He stopped playing in 1941/19/42 and Muiris went on to start a hurling team when he moved out the Navan Road. He names the team St Fintan's.</p> <p>41:20 They played in the Phoenix Park and used bamboo canes for goalposts</p> <p>42:00 St Fintan's players were young and lost often</p> <p>43:00 A curate named Fr Cullen came to the parish in 1960 and encouraged Muiris and a few others to start a team. They named it after Oliver Plunett, having considered naming it after local Republican hero Martin Savage.</p> <p>44:10 Muiris was vice-chairman before becoming chairman for three years. After that he was on the committee until he got the job of secretary of the commission of the GAA.</p> <p>44:55 At first Plunketts had street leagues. There was interest in football but not in hurling so they forced the boys to play hurling.</p> <p>45:45 They won an Under-15 hurling competition eventually. It is now a senior club.</p> <p>46:10 They couldn't find a place to play and Muiris had been director of Clann na hÉireann in Gibbstown, they got a clubhouse through them</p> <p>48:05 Muiris is proud of the club. Last year chairman John Kielty invited him to their annual dinner at the Westmanstown hotel and had secretly invited Muiris' family as well. A big surprise.</p>
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	<p>49:15 There was competition from the local soccer club which was intense</p> <p>49:50 they got the convent field on the Navan Road as their pitch and the soccer club wanted a piece of that</p> <p>51:15 Muiris enjoys meeting people he trained as teenagers still involved with the club, such as the Brogans who were on the Dublin football team</p> <p>52:00 The club is very important for a sense of identity in the community - they often held events that brought people together</p> <p>52:45 A lot of women got involved in events</p> <p>53:20 Tells a story about a man who had a stall at an event and used to give goldfish as prizes</p> <p>54:45 Muiris was involved with the McNamee Commission Report in 1969. Seán Ó Síocháin rang him one day and asked him to write the report. He had been secretary of the Keating branch for 12 years and Seán knew this.</p> <p>55:35 He had worked on the National Savings Committee and had been a youth leader under the Catholic Youth Council so he had a lot of experience for this huge task</p> <p>56:50 He had been working in a registry job in the Department of Finance and had a good understanding of how things worked there</p> <p>57:40 He has a big fans of Sir Ernest Gowers, who promoted using simple English in the civil service</p> <p>58:30 Writing the report was difficult</p> <p>50:25 They met in Dame St in Dublin in the offices of the Irish Investment Bank; one of their members, Martin Rafferty, was a director there</p> <p>1:00:25 He had to drive to Raheny with typing work to give to a lady</p>
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	<p>1:00:45 The committee were very helpful and prepared to change their minds.</p> <p>1:01:15 There were non-GAA people involved and that was a good thing</p> <p>1:01:50 Muiris sometimes felt things weren't discussed enough and he tried to address this</p> <p>1:02:50 They interviewed some PR agencies about launching the report but were turned down and Muiris had to do it himself</p> <p>1:03:20 Every chapter of the report had to be translated and then edited which was problematic at times</p> <p>1:04:20 They were tiring towards the end of the whole process and this worried Muiris. He rang Pádraig McNamee about certain issues</p> <p>1:06:00 Muiris was proud of the fact that nothing was leaked about the report until it was launched in the Gresham Hotel in 1971</p> <p>1:06:40 Copies of the report were given to the Secretary and President the night before the launch on December 1</p> <p>1:07:05 They sent out hundreds of copies to people</p> <p>1:07:35 The recommendations of changes at the top were important</p> <p>1:07:55 They wrote a confidential report to be given to the President</p> <p>1:08:20 Not everything in the report was implemented; the GAA failed to recognise the importance of public relations and communications</p> <p>1:09:10 It wasn't easy trying to get things through</p> <p>1:09:30 The report improved the public image of the GAA, Muiris believed</p>
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	<p>1:10:00 There was major media coverage of the report</p> <p>1:10:15 They held seminars in every province and went to England</p> <p>1:10:45 Most of the recommendations were accepted</p> <p>1:11:00 Muiris was then appointed chairman of the Central Development Committee</p> <p>1:12:15 Muiris had also been appointed to the National Science Council</p> <p>1:12:55 Muiris moved to Croke Park to work there and got on with most, but not all, of the staff</p> <p>1:13:40 He had a big workload</p> <p>1:14:20 Muiris was not impressed by the work standards at Croke Park</p> <p>1:15:45 He got on well with Director General Seán Ó Síocháin and had a big budget</p> <p>1:17:10 He also got on well with President Con Murphy</p> <p>1:17:30 He managed to improve things for the people working at Croke Park by reforming certain work practices</p> <p>1:19:25 He wanted to improve committee procedure and set up a 'Fás Development Programme'</p> <p>1:20:05 He brought in Paddy Moriarty from the ESB to give lectures on development and planning</p> <p>1:21:00 He published a lot of supplementary leaflets and started a GAA souvenir shop</p> <p>1:21:40 He was always putting publications together</p> <p>1:22:10 They set up coaching courses</p> <p>1:22:20 Jim McIver had been a member of the Commission and was very helpful for a coaching course in Gormanstown</p>
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	<p>1:23:15 When he arrived at Croke Park there was no literature on coaching</p> <p>1:23:45 He looked at what was being done in soccer and rugby regarding coaching and took some ideas from that</p> <p>1:24:10 Schools and courses for female teachers were important</p> <p>1:24:50 They set up youth officers in every county</p> <p>1:25:15 Liam Mulvihill chaired a survey into post-primary schools and Muiris wrote the report on that</p> <p>1:25:50 They opened up a park at Croke Park under the Hogan Stand which opened the day of an All-Ireland final. Muiris recalls that day and hearing an explosion whilst preparing the night before</p> <p>1:28:10 He brought items from the shop to other events -the Munster final, the Rose of Tralee</p> <p>1:28:35 Muiris started tours of Croke Park for schools</p> <p>1:29:10 He resigned from the GAA at 60 years of age and retired completely from it at 64 as he was tired from all the work</p> <p>1:30:25 When he first went to Croke Park he did a survey of everything that went on on a match day and wrote a report</p> <p>1:31:00 One day he followed an Offaly team at Croke Park on a match day so that he could experience things as they did. He learned a lot from that.</p> <p>1:33:40 He is a big fan of the revamped Croke Park</p> <p>1:34:30 Muiris admires all the people who make up the GAA and sees it as a progressive organisation that is not afraid to examine itself</p> <p>1:36:20 Muiris started the idea of the AIB GAA Club of the Year and worked closely with various presidents on this. He</p>
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	<p>had great admiration for them</p> <p>1:37:40 Muiris was not a supporter of opening up Croke Park and felt that Seán Kelly was out of kilter with traditions in his actions on that particular issue</p> <p>1:39:20 In the end Muiris accepted that opening up the stadium was inevitable</p> <p>1:40:35 He does not recall a public expression of gratitude from the official IRFU and that did not surprise him</p> <p>1:41:55 Muiris always felt strongly about the GAA's lack of appreciation of public relations</p> <p>1:42:40 He is concerned about 'player power' and everything that goes with it</p> <p>1:43:00 The Cork hurling dispute that was underway in 2008 bothered him</p> <p>1:44:25 Mentions Con Murphy and Seamus O Riain and getting Christmas cards from them every year. One such card was from Seamus O Riain shortly before his death.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach ✓ Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson ✓ 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>Leinster Senior Hurling title with Dublin. Played for 20 years.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Chairman St. Oliver Plunketts, 3 years</p>

REFERENCE NO. CK/1/3

Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 00:01:45
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: 6th Nov 2010