

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	6 <sup>th</sup> May 2010
<b>Location</b>	Mick's home, near Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Mick Burke
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1939 <b>Home County:</b> Tipperary
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Rathkeevin NS, Co. Tipperary <b>Secondary:</b> Clonmel High School; Vocational School Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. <b>Third Level:</b> Kinnity Castle and Shelton Abbey Forestry School.
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 sisters & 2 brothers <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Wife (Linda), 2 boys & 1 girl
<b>Club(s)</b>	Moyle Rovers GAA [Tipperary]; Tubbercurry GAA [Sligo]
<b>Occupation</b>	Coillte employee
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Farmers
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Fianna Fáil
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Pioneers Total Abstinence Association; Tubbercurry Hall Committee; Tubbercurry Community Games; Care for the Elderly; St Vincent de Paul.

REFERENCE NO. TP/1/8

<b>Date of Report</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1939 - 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Sligo, Tipperary
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Media, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Mick talks about his journey from growing up in Tipperary to becoming a central figure in Sligo hurling. Originally from Clonmel, he played football and hurling at school and with the local club Moyle Rovers, although when he was young there wasn't nearly as many games to be played as he would have liked. He later moved to Wicklow to learn his trade in forestry, and there he played for the county hurling team for two years. In 1965 he moved to Sligo and became involved with the Tubbercurry club. He promoted hurling and was chairman of the county board for 35 years. He trained teams, refereed games, maintained club facilities, sat on numerous committees and on the Connacht Council, and helped to organise the poc fada competition. Mick talks about his experiences over the years and describes the ups and downs involved in trying to promote hurling in an area where there is little appetite for it amongst the broad population.</p> <p>00:20 Born in 1939 in Clonmel. He lived between Clonmel and Cahir and went to school in Rathkeevin National School and then secondary school in Clonmel. His people were farmers.</p> <p>01:05 He worked in forestry for 32 years.</p> <p>01:15 There wasn't a history of Gaelic games in his family. His club was Moyle Rovers and they only had junior hurling and football - in 1960 they won a junior football championship.</p> <p>02:50 They had no minor hurling but he won a South Tipperary divisional championship with St Mary's Clonmel as</p>

REFERENCE NO. TP/1/8

	<p>a minor.</p> <p>01:15 Earliest memory is going to national school at 11 or 12 and playing hurling and football. It was hard to get a hurley as they were expensive and they often used a plastic ball.</p> <p>03:15 In the 1960s Moyle Rovers had no playing field. They trained in a farmer's field.</p> <p>03:30 Michael McCarthy was a huge influence on him. After a game he always brought the boys for a mineral or ice-cream. They played games in Fethard and Tony Newport, who played for Tipperary, brought them for a mineral.</p> <p>04:20 Since then Moyle Rovers did get a pitch and it is a huge club in 2010 with great facilities.</p> <p>04:40 He cycled over five miles to school every day and also did farm work. There were six children at home and they all had their chores. There wasn't a lot of spare time.</p> <p>05:50 There was no competition at national school.</p> <p>06:00 When he played as minor he felt that there weren't enough games.</p> <p>06:20 He played both hurling and football.</p> <p>06:35 St Mary's had a good hurling club but there wasn't a lot of training.</p> <p>07:05 Football was the dominant sport in South Tipperary. Theo English and Michael Roche were heroes. He knew Babs Keating and he was a fantastic player. John Doyle and Mick Maher and Liam Devaney were Tipperary players and they were gods to Mick and his friends.</p> <p>08:10 There was nothing better than getting the train to a Munster championship game in Limerick and walking through Limerick to the match. It was a full day out - not like today.</p> <p>09:10 He played once in Thurles in a minor semi-final. He wasn't as involved then as he is now.</p> <p>09:50 He never trained or coached. He went to Sligo in 1965 and refereed games having never done any courses.</p> <p>10:30 They cycled everywhere.</p>
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10:45 They were treated well as players but there was no such thing as coaching.

11:20 Playing hurling and football wasn't a problem as there was less games and most people played both sports.

11:55 At Shelton Abbey in Arklow, Wicklow in 1961-1962 he was training in forestry and played with the Wicklow hurlers. He won championships in junior football, intermediate football and senior hurling.

12:35 There were about 60 of them in the college from all over the country. Jack Napier and Jack Boatman are people in Wicklow that he played with.

13:40 In 1965 he moved to Tubbercurry in Sligo and got involved in the GAA in a big way. He played football and hurling with the county team. Now there are more games involved and the Rackard Cup too.

14:30 In Wicklow the college had its own team and they played sides like Bray, Avondale and Glenealy.

15:00 He played with the Wicklow county team for two years. His last game was a 1962 Leinster final. He was put up in Bally's Hotel by the Wicklow County Board the week before the game.

15:50 Wicklow won the 3B National League in hurling in 2010.

16:10 He went to Portumna but stayed affiliated with Moyle Rovers.

16:35 He played senior and junior football with Tubbercurry and later hurling. He played in the National Hurling League Division 4.

17:10 Joe Cauley, Michael SeEVERS and Jarlath McDonagh worked hard to promote hurling. Jarlath worked in the vocational school and a lot of the country lads attended there and they were good at hurling. Many came from Tourlestrane.

18:40 Hurling is up-and-down in Tubbercurry but it is still there. In 2010 they have six senior teams and up to nine underage teams.

## REFERENCE NO. TP/1/8

	<p>19:30 As a Tipperary man he was expected to be a hurler. The county hurling team was made up mostly of outsiders. Tony Flannery, Christy Lawlor were some of the players at the time.</p> <p>21:40 Tourlestrane and Craobh Rua were rivals of theirs.</p> <p>22:10 A coach called Pat Phelan once told him that if they saw a man with a hurley they would not ask him if he would play, they would ask where he would play.</p> <p>22:30 Football is easier as hurling is an expensive sport.</p> <p>23:00 He got involved with the youth club in Tubbercurry in 1967 or 1968 in St Brigid's Hall. They played basketball.</p> <p>23:40 Soon he was training football and hurling games and refereeing games. He also helped maintain the park.</p> <p>24:35 He made friends for life and would never be alone going to a match - the kids would all be with him and they weren't as noisy then as they are now.</p> <p>26:00 The proper stance and the right grip are essential for playing hurling.</p> <p>26:20 In the late 1960s there were big families - the Murphys, the McCarricks - so there were plenty of kids to recruit.</p> <p>27:20 There was Tool Engage in the town and a timber factory but not huge employment.</p> <p>27:50 In the late 1960s he became chairman. He ran bingo every Monday night to raise funds.</p> <p>28:40 He likes to get involved with the community where he lives. You have to try and better the community.</p> <p>29:40 The GAA is great for identity in Tubbercurry and the volunteerism aspect is very important.</p> <p>30:30 He was chairman for 35 years, from 1968 to 1983. There have been a lot of changes. People don't stay in administrative positions as long and that is a good thing.</p> <p>32:35 You really had to lead the way as chairman. It wasn't easy.</p>
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	<p>33:45 Deciding on managers for teams has become much more professional at club level.</p> <p>34:20 While he was chairman they put a new stand in the field and added dressing rooms. They now host county championship games and facilities are important.</p> <p>35:00 The standards have gone up in terms of pitch marking and maintenance. They now have a system in Connacht where they nominate the best ground in the province. That motivates clubs.</p> <p>36:50 There is less support at club games now.</p> <p>36:15 Mick maintains the pitch in Tubbercurry and he enjoys it. He mows the training field and Nigel O'Brien mows and fertilizes the main field, which can be very busy during the week with various teams. County teams use it too and Mick keeps a record of it.</p> <p>39:00 The relaxation of the Ban was great and now they have players who play soccer, football and rugby.</p> <p>39:45 There is no parish rule in soccer and many lads play for the fun of it - it is not as serious as the GAA.</p> <p>40:50 Mick tries not to get too worked up about winning and losing anymore.</p> <p>41:20 Real Tubber is the soccer club in Tubbercurry and they compete for players, but the relationship is good.</p> <p>42:20 Some clubs don't have a hurling team but they have players who would like to play it.</p> <p>43:30 In 1966 Tubbercurry, Easkey and Craobh Rua had hurling teams. In 2010 Western Gaels, Tourlestrane, Coolara Strand, Naomh Eoin and Calry St Joseph's have hurling teams.</p> <p>44:25 He was a delegate to the county board and was secretary of the hurling board. In 2010 they are playing in the Rackard Cup in London and that takes a lot of organising.</p> <p>46:10 In 2010 they have four or five hurling referees and that is an improvement for them.</p> <p>46:30 There is a coaching committee in Sligo and they visit</p>
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schools to promote the games. Cumann na mBunscol is strong and people are doing sport in the Regional College and emerge as officers who promote hurling. Coaching is huge in 2010.

48:10 Hurling is demanding so it's not easy for clubs to bring it in; you have to stick with it.

49:00 Sligo beat Louth in the Rackard Cup in 2008 and winning in Croke Park was special. Sligo won Division 3 football in Croke Park in 2010 and that was special too.

49:40 Croke Park is very impressive and every club likes to be there. There is now an 'Activities Day' in Croke Park and underage teams from Connacht get to go up and they love it.

50:35 Former GAA President Seán Kelly did a lot for the Laurie Meagher and Ring cups. Counties have to work hard to succeed in those competitions.

51:15 When he went to Sligo he ended up at Croke Park a lot.

52:00 The money made in Croke Park has filtered down to the counties.

52:15 Mick was in favour of the opening of Croke Park. It shows other people what the GAA is capable of.

53:20 He ended up on the Connacht Council 'by accident'.

53:40 He refereed games and enjoyed it but standards are higher now and more notice is taken of what referees are doing.

54:40 The player gets rid of the ball quicker in hurling than in football so you have to be fitter refereeing a hurling game.

55:30 The Connacht Council meets every month and there are about 20 people at the meeting. Everyone has to report on their section. They bring out a bi-monthly magazine called Into The West.

58:00 People can find out a lot about what various boards are doing through websites.

59:10 Sponsorship is huge now. There is a lot of money available to counties. Players are treated much better.

	<p>01:00:15 He is in favour of the GPA and his son, Mark, is involved with them.</p> <p>01:00:45 There is a lot more preparation for inter-county games now and players are fitter.</p> <p>01:01:25 Scór was very strong in Tubbercurry but it faded out a bit over the years. Dearbhala Walsh won a title in 1982.</p> <p>01:02:30 The GAA is more than a game. It's a trademark.</p> <p>01:03:00 Volunteers do an awful lot for clubs.</p> <p>01:04:00 His involvement helps him appreciate and respect other people.</p> <p>01:04:24 Many GAA people are members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association, like former GAA President Mick Loftus</p> <p>01:05:10 You never stop learning in life and over the years he has become better able to deal with various things.</p> <p>01:06:00 There are people that he loves to meet at games.</p> <p>01:06:30 He gets Christmas cards every year from GAA people.</p> <p>01:06:55 When Féile na Gael started in 1971 he got involved and did it for years. The first one was in Thurles.</p> <p>01:07:35 His son plays hurling and other sports. Mick enjoyed seeing him play in Croke Park.</p> <p>01:08:30 He thinks hurling is doing well at a national level. A lot of work is put in and standards are getting higher.</p> <p>01:09:25 He likes ladies football and the fact that they can pick the ball up off the ground.</p> <p>01:10:05 Women are far more involved in the GAA now and they have a lot to contribute.</p> <p>01:11:20 He has been involved in the poc fada competition in Connacht and they go to the Cooley Mountains or do it at half-time in an important match.</p>
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**REFERENCE NO. TP/1/8**

	<p>01:12:45 They have their own hurling board and a member of the county board.</p> <p>01:13:00 Camogie is not so big in Sligo.</p> <p>01:13:35 A big moment for Mick was winning the Rackard Cup in Croke Park. Winning county titles was also memorable. Tubbercurry went 17 years without winning a senior hurling title and when they finally won it in 1995 it was special.</p> <p>01:15:00 Being involved in Connacht has brought him great satisfaction.</p> <p>01:15:20 Without the GAA there would be a big void in his life.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Won Tipperary Junior Football Championship; Sligo Football Championship; played hurling for Wicklow, Sligo nad Connaught (1969)</p>
<p><b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Has held various positions in Tubbercurry GAA and Sligo divisional board. Member of Sligo County Board for 30 years. Member of Connaught Council for 30 years, currently holds the role of hurling secretary</p>
<p><b>Format</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p><b>Duration</b></p>	<p>Length of Interview: 01:16:01</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<p>English</p>

**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: 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012