

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	2 nd Sept 2010
Location	Ballyconnell First Ulster's Clubhouse, Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Tony Connolly
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1941 Home County: Cavan
Education	Primary: Ballyconnell NS, Co. Cavan Secondary: Bawnboy Technical School, Co. Cavan
Family	Siblings: 1 brother Current Family if Different: Married to Angela with 2 daughters
Club(s)	Ballyconnell 1 st Ulsters / Kildallan; Templeport
Occupation	Painter
Parents' Occupation	Tradesman [Father]; Dress Maker [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Fine Gael
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	County Chairman of Cavan Fine Gael Cumann

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Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Helena O'Grady
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Female
Born	Year Born: 1945 Home County: Cavan
Education	Primary: Ballyhaise NS, Co. Cavan Secondary: Cavan Vocational School, Co. Cavan
Family	Siblings: 6 brothers & 4 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Dermot with 5 sons and 2 daughters
Club(s)	Ballyconnell 1 st Ulsters / Kildallan; Crosserlough; Ballyhaise
Occupation	Office Clerk
Parents' Occupation	Farmer [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Community Games

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Date of Report	5 th July 2012
Period Covered	1950s – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Cavan, Dublin, Fermanagh, Wicklow, Monaghan
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider's Perspectives, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships
Interview Summary	<p>Tony and Helena discuss their experience of their involvement in the GAA. They give an account of their numerous experiences in the GAA from childhood to present. They discuss the formation of Ballyconnell 1st Ulster GAA Club and talk about its various successes and failures. They describe what the GAA has meant to them throughout their lives and discuss many of their earliest, best and worst memories to illustrate this.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:36 (Tony) Describes his earliest memory of the GAA as his father bringing him to a football match in Drumlane in the 1950s. Talks about how there was no team in Ballyconnell at the time and how people had to play with other parishes.</p> <p>01:06 (Tony) Talks about another earliest memory as playing in school street leagues. He talks about the medals that were on display in Magee's shop window and describes the prizes people could win. He mentions Carrowmore, Agharaskilly and Fr McManus.</p> <p>02:10 (Tony) Talks about how there was collective training in 1952 and how the Cavan team trained in the old football field in Ballyconnell and stayed in McCaffery's hotel. He mentions Mick Higgins, Tony Tighe, and Peter Donohoe.</p> <p>02:53 (Tony) Talks about a photograph taken by the Sunday</p>

	<p>Independent when Cavan won the All-Ireland in 1952.</p> <p>03:19 (Tony) Talks about Cavan's success in the 1950s and early 1960s. He mentions Tom Maguire, the Anglo Celt cup, the Railway Cup, Dr McKenna Cup and the Wembley cup.</p> <p>04:15 (Tony) Talks about in 1997 going onto the pitch in Clones when Cavan last won an Ulster title.</p> <p>04:36 (Tony) Talks about playing senior football in Ballyconnell and reaching the junior league final, the senior league final, and the senior championship final. He mentions Crosserlough.</p> <p>05:12 (Tony) Tells a story about himself and Fr Brian McElhinney, now the parish priest in Lavey, going to a tournament in Cornafean called the John Joe Reilly Tournament. He mentions the Gold Watch Tournament and St. Brigid's, a team that was a combination of Laragh and Stradone.</p> <p>06:02 (Tony) Talks about a match between Clonguish and Granard of Longford in the John Joe Reilly Tournament.</p> <p>06:36 (Helena) Describes her earliest memory of the GAA as going to the Flagging Meadow in Ballyhaise every Sunday to watch her six brothers play football. She mentions about the number of women who played at this time.</p> <p>07:07 (Helena) Talks about moving to Crosserlough and her brothers playing for the Crosserlough team that won seven in a row. Talks about going to club matches.</p> <p>07:45 (Helena) Talks about her father's involvement in the GAA and how he played hurling for Cavan in the 1920s.</p> <p>08:03 (Helena) Discusses when she moved to Ballyconnell in 1969 and her brothers rivalry between Crosserlough and Ballyconnell.</p> <p>08:26 (Helena) Tells how she got her children involved in the GAA. Talks about being juvenile secretary of Ballyconnell for five years and then becoming senior secretary.</p> <p>09:28 (Helena) Talks about seeing Tom Maguire and Charlie Gallagher at matches. Talks about her brothers emigrating to England in the 1970s and trips to Croke Park they took.</p> <p>10:17 (Helena) Talks about the facilities when she was young and talks about how there were no dressing rooms. Talks about training lights at the Crosserlough pitch when she was</p>
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	<p>growing up.</p> <p>11:38 (Helena) Tells how her brother emigrated to America in 1979 and got involved with a GAA team in New York and played with the Cavan team in New York. She tells how he then trained the Cavan team.</p> <p>12:15 (Tony) Describes the facilities when he was growing up and where they got changed. Tells a story about jerseys in the 1950s.</p> <p>12:47 (Tony) Discusses the effect of emigration on the GAA in West Cavan. Talks about going to Dublin in the early 1960s.</p> <p>13:25 (Tony) Talks about the role the GAA played in England and America and discusses its importance.</p> <p>14:18 (Tony) Talks about 'toggling out' outdoors for matches. Talks about getting dressing rooms and discusses the Park Committee he was involved with that bought the club grounds.</p> <p>15:53 (Tony) Tells how the club's field was sold in the 1920s and discusses the history of the club's field. He mentions Sean Quinn, the 'Old Field' and renting the field from Mr Blake of Slieve Russell house. Mentions the heritage group he is involved in.</p> <p>17:19 (Tony) Talks about Fr Dan Gallogly's history of the GAA and tells a story about a sports day. He mentions teams from Fermanagh and Belturbet, the Annesley Estate.</p> <p>18:33 (Helena) Talks about the role the GAA played in America and discusses her brother, Anthony Rehill and his experiences.</p> <p>19:27 (Tony) Talks about the history of the club. He mentions Thomas O'Reilly and John Clancy, the first chairman and secretary, and tells how the club was named after the local Home Rule MP, Joe Biggar.</p> <p>19:49 (Tony) Discusses Joe Biggar. Mentions the IRB, Michael Davitt and the Land League. Lavey adopting Biggar's name too. Discusses the controversy among clubs in Cavan (particularly themselves, Maghera Mac Finns and Bailieborough) over who were the first club and the formation of the Ballyconnell 1st Ulster GAA Club.</p> <p>21:14 (Tony) Discusses when football diminished in the area and its reorganisation in 1903/1904. Talks about why there</p>
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	<p>are no club records through that time.</p> <p>22:30 (Tony) Talks about a man named Standish O'Grady, who played with Monaghan for three years and played with Cavan in 1917. He tells a story about Dan Brady and Standish O'Grady travelling to Kerry by train to play a semi-final.</p> <p>23:44 (Tony) Talks about his father's involvement in the GAA in the 1920s and tells how he played for the Cavan minor team in 1928. Talks about a game he played against Monaghan.</p> <p>24:26 (Tony) Talks about playing against Templeport and Drumlane. Talks about Tom Maguire reorganising the Ballyconnell team around 1960.</p> <p>25:18 (Tony) Tells how Kildallan GAA Club, the parish club, was formed in 1968. Tells how the parish is named Kildallan Tomregan and discusses the parish boundaries.</p> <p>26:32 (Tony) Discusses the different parishes in the area and tells how there were players from other parishes.</p> <p>27:48 (Helena) Discusses things that used to go on in the past at matches. Tells how it was mainly men that attended matches when her father was growing up.</p> <p>28:33 (Helena) Tells a story about cycling from Crosserlough to Ballyhaise.</p> <p>28:57 (Helena) Discusses her mother's involvement in the GAA and tells how she is one of eleven children.</p> <p>29:45 (Tony) Discusses the role of women in the GAA. Tells a story about playing a match in Butlersbridge. He mentions Peter McCaffery.</p> <p>31:00 (Tony) Tells a story about a match between Teemore and Lisnaskea, both county Fermanagh.</p> <p>31:37 (Helena) Compares the number of women attending matches and their involvement in the GAA when she was growing up to the present. She mentions Butlersbridge and Corlough.</p> <p>32:34 (Helena) Talks about how the role of women has changed down through the years. Talks about being involved at the administration level.</p> <p>33:56 (Helena) Talks about how she used to wash jerseys.</p>
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	<p>34:15 (Helena) Talks about the reaction she got from men when she attended her first committee meetings.</p> <p>34:50 (Tony) Discusses where the first meetings he attended were held. He mentions working in Dublin and what was discussed at the meetings in comparison to today.</p> <p>35:35 (Tony) Describes how the meetings were held and where the annual meetings took place.</p> <p>36:10 (Tony) Talks about the number of people at the meeting when it was restructured into Kildallan.</p> <p>36:28 (Helena) Tells why annual meetings were held alternately in Ballyconnell and Kildallan. Talks about the varying numbers attending AGMs.</p> <p>37:35 (Tony) Talks about divisions between the urban and rural parts of the parish. Tells a story about contention at a match. He mentions Breffni Park.</p> <p>38:43 (Tony) Tells how he opposed Tom Maguire for club chairman and explains why and the impact this had.</p> <p>40:13 (Tony) Tells how people from the area went to Killeshandra to shop and socialise and explains why they began doing this in Ballyconnell.</p> <p>40:43 (Tony) Recalls an incident in Butlersbridge when he was a player selector. He talks about a man named Garret O'Reilly and mentions a man named James McDermott.</p> <p>42:27 (Tony) Discusses the split in the club in the 1920s and refers to the political upheavals in Ireland at that time. Talks about why there was a lack of numbers to keep the GAA in the area going.</p> <p>43:19 (Tony) Talks about a history book he read about a hurling team from Kilkenny. Discusses the historical information available on past Cavan GAA clubs. He mentions the Anglo-Celt.</p> <p>44:18 (Tony) Discusses how the Anglo-Celt recorded all the Ulster Council meetings.</p> <p>44:50 (Helena) Talks about her experience from moving from Crosserlough to Ballyconnell. Talks about a pitch in Kildallan and the sports day held in Ballyconnell on the 15th August and describes this.</p> <p>47:17 (Tony) Talks about the Tomregan Harriers and how they won several Ulster titles. Talks about the sports day on</p>
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	<p>the 15th of August and the impact it has on the community.</p> <p>48:43 (Tony) Discusses the level of handball played in the area in the 1920s. He talks about it being played at the Market House and the Fairgreen. Mentions Mickey McBarran, Francie Reilly, and James Reilly.</p> <p>49:43 (Tony) Talks about the handball alley in the community at present. He mentions Paul Brady.</p> <p>50:08 (Tony) Talks about a boy named Cathal Sheridan who plays for the club and his progress in Handball. He mentions St. Pat's College.</p> <p>51:05 (Helena) Talks about the role the GAA played when she was in school and the importance of being involved with a club.</p> <p>52:30 (Both) Talks about Camogie in Ballyconnell in the 1950s and they discuss why it has diminished in the area. Helena mentions Kathleen O'Neill and John O'Gara.</p> <p>54:22 (Helena) Talks about rounders being played in the club. Discusses a memorial rounders match played during the 125th anniversary celebrations. She mentions a man named Maurice Cassidy.</p> <p>55:23 (Tony) Talks about the role the clergy have played in the GAA in the area. Talks about a priest Fr Micheál Kelly from Kildallan and discusses his involvement with the GAA when he was growing up. Talks about Fr Tiernan and the vocational school in Bawnboy.</p> <p>56:40 (Tony) Discusses Fr Monsignor McCabe and his involvement in hurling.</p> <p>57:10 (Tony) Talks about Fr Phil Brady and his involvement in school football, and Fr Lynch from Mullahoran.</p> <p>57:23 (Tony) Talks about the involvement of teachers in the GAA when he was growing up and makes a comparison as to this involvement when there were more women teachers. Tells how he became involved with underage teams in the club. He mentions a man named Paddy Freehill.</p> <p>58:21 (Tony) Talks about different priest's involvement and mentions Fr Tiernan who was involved in Scór.</p> <p>59:07 (Helena) Talks about people from other religions and nationalities who are represented in the club.</p> <p>59:45 (Tony) Talks about a Church of Ireland man named</p>
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	<p>Raymond Duffins who played football for the club.</p> <p>01:00:30 (Tony) Talks about a man from Belturbet named Tommy White who played with Cavan.</p> <p>01:00:44 (Helena) Talks about the Johnstons who are in a mixed religion marriage and discusses their involvement in the club.</p> <p>01:01:40 (Helena) Talks about non-nationals getting involved in the GAA.</p> <p>01:01:56 (Tony) Talks about the involvement of non-nationals and people from other religions involvement with the GAA in Cavan.</p> <p>01:02:55 (Tony) Talks about how the troubles in the north impacted on the GAA in Ballyconnell.</p> <p>01:03:44 (Helena) Talks about how politics has effect the club.</p> <p>01:04:23 (Tony) Talks about how the GAA has escaped too much political influence.</p> <p>01:05:13 (Tony) Discusses the level of Scór in the club. Helena talks about the level of Scór in the club when Fr Tiernan was alive and mentions getting to All-Irelands.</p> <p>01:06:20 (Helena) Talks about the influence of having a parish priest involved in the GAA.</p> <p>01:07:05 (Tony) Discusses the different methods of fundraising the club had undertaken for the development of the club.</p> <p>01:09:25 (Tony) Discusses why the Ballyconnell 1st Ulsters became Ballyconnell United for a while during the 1940s.</p> <p>01:09:57 (Tony) Discusses the involvement in other sports in the area. Mentions soccer teams in Ballyjamesduff, Cootehill, and Bailieborough.</p> <p>01:11:16 (Tony) Talks about the cost of tickets in Croke Park.</p> <p>01:11:43 (Helena) Talks about people's opinions on the upper levels of the GAA and the support given to local clubs.</p> <p>01:11:55 (Helena) Describes people from West Cavan's perspective on how they are treated by the county board.</p> <p>01:12:39 (Tony) Tells a story about coaches being appointed</p>
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	<p>in clubs in West Cavan.</p> <p>01:13:55 (Tony) Defines what is regarded as West Cavan. Talks about how leagues were played on a divisional basis and the rivalries that emerged from this.</p> <p>01:15:06 (Helena) Talks about the relationship between the club and the county board. Mentions Liam McCabe, the secretary of the county board.</p> <p>01:15:41 (Helena) Tells how the president of the Ulster council came to see the unveiling of a plaque in Ballyconnell.</p> <p>01:16:16 (Helena) Talks about the support the central council gives to the club.</p> <p>01:16:56 (Tony) Talks about how the structure needs to be improved in West Cavan. Talks about the round robin group system in place at present. Talks about the quality of club football in Cavan.</p> <p>01:17:54 (Tony) Describes a game he attended between Belturbet and Mullahoran and the effect playing on the county team has on club players.</p> <p>01:18:24 (Tony) Discusses why he feels there should be no underage football competitions under the age of fourteen.</p> <p>01:19:25 (Tony) Talks about a boy who played football for a school team, club team and county team and the effect this can have on young people.</p> <p>01:20:25 (Helena) Talks about how the GAA claim that no managers are paid and discusses whether this is true or not.</p> <p>01:21:32 (Tony) Discusses his opinion on the paying of administration officers at county level and the effect this will have.</p> <p>01:22:34 (Helena) Talks about levies clubs have to pay to the county board. Gives her opinion on the voluntary ethos of the GAA and what will happen to the GAA if this stops.</p> <p>01:24:24 (Helena) Talks about travelling to matches when she was growing up. She mentions cycling, walking and travelling by bus.</p> <p>01:25:39 (Tony) Talks about how he travelled to matches when he was growing up.</p> <p>01:26:08 (Tony) Tells a story about playing a match in the 1960s against Drumalee and tells how 470 people attended.</p>
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	<p>01:26:58 (Tony) Tells how players and supporters travelled to matches by bus when he was growing up in the 1950s. He mentions Corlough, Killeshandra and Belturbet.</p> <p>01:27:39 (Helena) Talks about travelling to Croke Park and Clones when she was younger. She tells how tickets were bought at the door in comparison to today.</p> <p>01:28:24 (Tony) Talks about the 1997 All-Ireland semi-final and the level of support Cavan received.</p> <p>01:28:43 (Tony) Talks about his first time in Croke Park in 1958 for the semi-final between Derry and Kerry. He mentions Jim McKeever and Mick O'Connell.</p> <p>01:29:17 (Tony) Recalls travelling by bus with his father who was going to the 1948 final against Meath and recalls a story about a woman getting on the bus at Kells.</p> <p>01:30:10 (Tony) Tells how people got the train from Belturbet to travel to a match.</p> <p>01:31:06 (Tony) Talks about collective training and watching the Cavan players train. He mentions Sean Quinn's Quarries and O'Kanes, the Angler's Rest and Francis McGoldrick.</p> <p>01:32:44 (Tony) Talks about Tony Tighe and tells a story about a bet made in McGovern's pub.</p> <p>01:33:14 (Tony) Talks about the celebrations when the Cavan team returned to the town after winning the All-Ireland.</p> <p>01:33:44 (Tony) Discusses the chants Cavan county team used to sing while training.</p> <p>01:34:00 (Tony) Talks about other occasions the Cavan team trained in the area.</p> <p>01:35:00 (Tony) Talks about his best memories of his involvement in the GAA. Talks about managing underage teams and tells a story about bringing teams to matches in his car. Talks about playing with Tom Maguire, PJ McCaffery from Kilkenny, Frankie Kennedy, and Matt McHugh.</p> <p>01:36:22 (Tony) Talks about playing county football at junior level and talks about the response of the club when he was selected.</p> <p>01:37:24 (Tony) Talks about living in Dublin in the 1960s and playing illegally in Dublin for Ballymun Gaels, now Ballymun Kickhams. Talks about the style of football at that time. Mentions a man named Benny Murphy that played for</p>
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	<p>Ballymun Gaels and Fermanagh.</p> <p>01:39:10 (Tony) Tells a story about being in a photograph with his team in Dublin. He talks about T.P O'Reilly and James McCarron.</p> <p>01:40:00 (Tony) Talks about playing Soccer during the winter in Dublin. Talks about Míchéal Kerins being made part of the Vigilante committee and why.</p> <p>01:40:52 (Tony) Talks about an incident between Cavan Gaels and Crosserlough over a man named Gabriel Kelly.</p> <p>01:41:17 (Tony) Talks about playing under false names. Mentions a man named John McVitee who played for Ballymun Gaels.</p> <p>01:41:47 (Helena) Describes her best memories at moving to Ballyconnell and learning about the clubs history and how her involvement in the club has affected her. She mentions Eugene O'Reilly and T.P O'Reilly.</p> <p>01:43:00 (Helena) Talks about the development of the club which started in 2004.</p> <p>01:43:45 (Helena) Tells how her husband's grandfather and grand-uncle, Frank O'Grady and Brian O'Grady, were members of the first teams. Mentions her son Wayne. Talks about her husband's involvement in the GAA and mentions St. Pat's college.</p> <p>01:45:30 (Helena) Talks about her GAA heroes. She mentions Tom Maguire, Charlie Gallagher, Jim McDonald and her brothers.</p> <p>01:46:19 (Tony) Talks about his GAA heroes. He mentions Tom Maguire, Jim McKeever, Mick O'Connell, Raymond Duffins, Raymond Carolan, Paddy Doherty, and Packie McGarty.</p> <p>01:48:04 (Tony) Discusses his opinions on the major rule changes in the association.</p> <p>01:49:24 (Helena) Discusses her views on the major rule changes in the association.</p> <p>01:50:30 (Helena) Talks about going to the Flagging Meadow in Ballyhaise.</p> <p>01:51:06 (Tony) Tells a story about playing in Dublin and travelling to Wicklow to play a match.</p>
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	<p>01:52:20 (Tony) Describes his biggest disappointment in the GAA as a defeat in a county final. He mentions Ballyhaise, Crosserlough, Bailieborough and Cavan Gaels.</p> <p>01:53:24 (Helena) Describes her biggest disappointment as ladies football not getting the level of coverage it deserves. She also talks about the administration.</p> <p>01:54:41 (Tony) Tells what the GAA has meant to him throughout his life.</p> <p>01:56:07 (Helena) Tells what the GAA has meant to her throughout her life.</p> <p>01:56:49 (Tony) Tells a story about a 92 year old man named Peetie Lynch who lives in Ballyconnell.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>Tony: <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 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>Helena: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Tony: Played for 15 years and won a street league medal, c. 1951.</p> <p>Helena: N/A</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Tony: Was involved in administration from 1970 – 2007 during which period he was club secretary for 3 years and underage chairman for 2 terms.</p> <p>Helena: Has been involved in administration since 1985 during which time she was juvenile secretary and senior club secretary for</p>

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	two terms (2001 – 2005 and 2010+).
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:59:05
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: _____ 05/07/12 _____