

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	6 th May 2010
Location	Tom's home, near Curry , Co. Sligo
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Tom Brennan
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1918 Home County: Sligo
Education	Primary: Curry NS
Family	Siblings: 1 brother Current Family if Different: 1 son & 4 daughters
Club(s)	Curry GAA [Sligo]
Occupation	Farmer
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	18 th June 2012
Period Covered	1840s - 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Sligo
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Celebrations, Fundraising, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Professionalism, Socialising, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Thomas shares his memories of growing up in Curry in Sligo. Born in 1918, he was raised on a farm and played for his local club, Curry. They sometimes played in 7-a-side tournaments and travelled to games on a horse and cart. He recalls trying to raise funds for footballs, jerseys and for the running of the club. Thomas is a big fan of all sports and he was not in favour of the Ban on foreign sports. He remembers some of the great players he has seen and travelling to Croke Park for matches. Thomas grew up hearing stories of hardship during the Famine and witnessing strife all around him during the Civil War. He has seen many people forced to emigrate from Sligo in search of work. He also has witnessed major technological advancements which had a transformative effect on people's lives, with tractors coming into the farm, electricity into the locality and television into the living room.</p> <p>00:20 He is from Carrowilkeen and it is so called because there were elks on the land.</p> <p>01:00 He was born in 1918.</p> <p>01:35 He grew up on a farm.</p> <p>02:05 He went to Curry games as a child. They had good and bad teams.</p> <p>02:45 They played football in the playground at school but it was very small. Today there is a new school with better facilities.</p> <p>03:25 There was no transport in the war years but his father had a horse and cart with a side car. They would fit three people on each side and two in the middle and Thomas would</p>

	<p>bring players to games.</p> <p>04:40 They did not have a lot of money when they were young.</p> <p>04:55 He played football with Curry and it was quite physical. There was less hand-passing then. He admires the Tyrone team of Mickey Harte's mastery of the art of hand-passing.</p> <p>06:15 He has seen a lot of changes in football over the years. When he was playing catch and kick was more important.</p> <p>07:05 He started playing with Curry in his early teens. His friends played too but they didn't really train.</p> <p>07:40 Curry played most of the games in Thomas' father's fields. They played soccer there too. Thomas loves all sports.</p> <p>08:05 Too many people are living in the past and that's no good. Different sports should be able to co-exist in harmony.</p> <p>09:00 A lot of people didn't like him for playing soccer but he didn't get in trouble for playing it. He never believed in the Ban on foreign sports.</p> <p>10:25 They played all year round.</p> <p>10:45 They had good footballers like the Collerans. They won a few county titles and in later years the minors have won three county finals in-a-row. Thomas won some medals in his time.</p> <p>11:55 They played in tournaments - sometimes 7-a-side.</p> <p>12:15 Their rivals were Tubbercurry, Ballisodare, Tourlestrane, Eastern Harps. Some great footballers came out of Ballisodare, like Mickey O'Rourke. Good Sligo players included Neasa O'Dowd, Nick Kilcoyne, John Sexton, Jim and Matt Mallon of Tourlestrane.</p> <p>14:00 Thomas played as a forward and sometimes in goals, which he didn't like as it was dangerous.</p> <p>14:25 Recalls playing in goal for Curry and the ball was coming in as were numerous players. Thomas got out with the ball and the others were still looking for it.</p> <p>15:40 He loved playing for the parish; football was everything.</p>
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15:55 They also liked to play cards - 25. They played in a local hall or in people's houses.

16:25 There were country dances too in the halls.

17:05 The GAA would sometimes get the loan of a hall for a night to hold a dance and raise funds.

17:55 They sometimes went around to houses collecting money so that they could buy a football or some jerseys.

18:30 Curry's colours were green and white. Sligo's colours are black and white and the Mayo fans would often say 'The magpies is landed'.

19:30 Thomas played for 12-14 years but wasn't good enough to make the county team.

21:30 He enjoyed seeing soccer and rugby in Croke Park.

22:00 The GAA was quite nationalist when Thomas was playing but he feels people were living in the past too much.

23:10 There was not much hurling but there was some in Tubbercurry. Mick Burke came along from Clare and revived hurling a little bit.

23:45 Camogie was quite popular. They won many competitions. They had great players like Mary Maher, Malachy Gallagher, Margaret Leonard and Eileen Brennan. Thomas went to camogie games and he still goes to watch ladies football games in Curry.

25:25 The Curry club was big when he joined it and they had some good players - the Collerans, the Welshs, the Hartes.

26:00 There was a lot of emigration to places like England.

26:50 His school was beside the railway station and in the 1920s they would see queues of people at the station and mothers crying.

27:45 Emigration hit the football team and they lost players.

28:40 They used to play in a local field. There were deer there and a fort. The deer hibernated there.

29:45 His farm goes back three generations. His

	<p>grandparents lived through the Famine. They had 80 acres of land which gave them a chance of surviving. His parents never talked about the Famine.</p> <p>31:40 During the Civil War the Free State Army used to parade around the area and there was a lot of shooting and innocent people killed. Shots were fired through his window and he witnessed it. The IRA fired the shots.</p> <p>35:15 Sometimes they cycled to football matches. The furthest he went to a game was 15 miles to Knockalasa The Eastern Harps club cover that area now.</p> <p>36:25 He went to see the Sligo team play in Tubbercurry, Sligo, Ballina.</p> <p>36:40 He often went to Croke Park. Recalls going to see Mayo playing in the 1940s - Peadar Kearney was playing for them, as was Paddy Regan of Charlestown who was a good player.</p> <p>37:55 They took the train from Curry to Croke Park and it took about three hours. He loved Croke Park.</p> <p>38:45 Sligo won a junior All-Ireland in the 1940s and he went to that. There were a few Curry players on that team in Croke Park. There were big bonfires afterwards but no dance.</p> <p>39:50 Changes he has noticed in the GAA include the hand-passing, which he feels is overdone.</p> <p>40:30 His grandchildren play football and he goes to watch them.</p> <p>41:05 Things wouldn't be the same without football.</p> <p>41:35 He listened to all sports on the radio. They had a radio in the house and the house would be full of people listening to Michael O Heiher. There would be a lot of shouting during games.</p> <p>43:20 He liked to read The Sligo Champion and The Mayo Western.</p> <p>43:40 Watching football on television for the first time was great.</p> <p>43:55 He used to plough fields with his neighbour Luke Welsh</p>
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	<p>when they were young. Luke told him that television was coming and that people would go to the moon.</p> <p>45:45 When electricity came it made a big difference. It made work on the farm easier, especially at night when going out to the cows.</p> <p>47:10 In farming, tractors made a big difference; they didn't have to use horses as much.</p> <p>50:10 Volunteerism is important to the GAA but he can see professionalism coming in.</p> <p>51:50 There used to be a lot of fighting at games. Recalls a game when Curry were beating Tubbercurry so much that Tubbercurry went home at half-time.</p> <p>53:30 They had good coaches in Curry down the years, but not when Thomas was playing.</p> <p>53:55 Fr McManus of Bonniclonlon got things moving in Curry in the early 1940s and they won county championships under him. He was very strict and once told Thomas off for being late.</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 checked="" 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>14-15 years playing with Curry GAA</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: 00:56:17
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 18th June 2012