

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Julian O'Donoghue
Date of Interview	26 th Nov 2011
Location	Blarney
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Bernard Lynch
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: N/A Home County: Cork
Education	N/A
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Blarney Hurling and Football Club [Cork]
Occupation	N/A
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	26 th Nov 2011
Period Covered	1945 - 2012
Counties/Countries Covered	Cork
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, 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, Rivalries, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Challenges, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Much of Bernard Lynch's recollections centre on the 1950s when Blarney GAA club, he alleges, suffered from poor organisation. Indeed, he considers the reasons why this may have been the case. Lynch also discusses his early involvement with Gaelic games at school and with the club; he compares and contrasts the Blarney GAA experience in the 1950s with that of the 1930s and with that of other mid-Cork towns and villages. In the course of these reflections, Lynch comments on such matters as transport and travel, club administration, club grounds, communications with players, newspapers, the role of women etc. Days out attending games in places like Thurles are recalled, as is the public disorder that often attended these occasion.</p> <p>In places, the interview strays far from the world of Gaelic games. Lynch broadens the discussion to examine the social and economic contribution of the Blarney Woollen Mills on the development of the village. This influence of this local industry, it appears, was all pervasive and it set Blarney apart from neighbouring villages and towns. It also shaped the GAA experience in Blarney, informing such issues as emigration, politics, finance and fundraising – all of which are explored. In addition, Lynch makes observations on players past and present and he comments on his admiration for GAA administrators such as his father in law, Tadhg Lynch, a former Secretary of the Muskerry Division. Finally, Lynch considers the existing state of the GAA in Bantry.</p> <p>00:00:20 Earliest memories: recalls playing in the national school in Blarney on a 'quarter size pitch', the influence of the headmaster.</p> <p>00:00:55 Recalls the organisation of a challenge game, 'The</p>

	<p>Glen' and the 'Barrs', on a local field and being told by teacher to attend, ca. 1952-53.</p> <p>00:02:45 Lack of organised games in school and the poor state of the GAA organisation in Blarney.</p> <p>00:03:12 Playing in Under 14 schools shield without practice.</p> <p>00:04:00 Talks about his awareness of the Blarney GAA club as a teenager and club as the centre of his young life.</p> <p>00:04:48 Mentions absence of training or coaching; lack of interest of 'older guys' and their focus on other pursuits such bowls, fishing, hunting, drinking.</p> <p>00:05:20 Comments that club was part of mid-Cork Muskerry division in the 1950s and the absence of underage structure.</p> <p>00:06:12 Says that 'nucleus of club was there...there were a couple of fellas carrying on their shoulders.'</p> <p>00:06:30 Mentions that club fielded junior football and hurling teams, Minor, Under 16 and Under 14 team.</p> <p>00:06:58 Talks about playing among themselves even without a team – playing in the 'Square' and the 'Level'. Mentions that cricket and other games were played.</p> <p>00:08:00 Comments on the paucity of practice games for either juniors or minors – 'you could go all summer long without a game'.</p> <p>00:08:15 First memory of organised games was at Minor level, ca. 1957-58.</p> <p>00:08:38 Refers to the influence of Christy Kelleher, who owned the Woollen Mills and a cinema. Describes as 'a dynamo', organising activities in the club and the village. Mentions that Kelleher would provide transport and premises for meetings and bingo (in the cinema).</p> <p>00:10:20 Refers to the club losing money in bingo sessions, which were meant to be fundraisers.</p> <p>00:11:23 Mentions being Treasurer of the club aged 18 or 19 and how his involvement in administration came about. Discusses others also involved in administration: Christy Kelleher, Denis Lyons (late Fianna Fáil TD), Paddy Cremin, the Gaffneys.</p> <p>00:13:03 Reflects on the workings of that club administration – emphasis on survival and the absence of any long-term</p>
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	<p>plan. Comments on the lack of 'expertise' and the change that later came when club went looking for games against city clubs.</p> <p>00:14:20 Compares and contrasts the Blarney GAA club to other clubs in Mid-Cork in the 1950s. Refers to reputation of the club from the 1930s.</p> <p>00:15:00 Names other clubs that were strong in the region in the 1950s.</p> <p>00:15:25 Playing Minor football for Blarney: refers to absence of club grounds and games in Ballinacollig, Coachford and Macroom. Mentions also 'brilliant pitches' in Buttevant, Kanturk and Fermoy – 'they were old army parade grounds'.</p> <p>00:16:40 Talks about some of the players he played alongside, including Tommy McCarthy, a cross country runner.</p> <p>00:17:25 Informing players about games – a notice would be posted at the entrance of the local Mills. Mentions that Seanie Mahony had a mini-bus who brought team to game.</p> <p>00:18:30 Mentions playing some challenge matches in north Cork.</p> <p>00:18:50 Mentions playing Junior club football in the early 1960s. Remarks on the absence of emigration, the availability of work and the names of players – and families - he played alongside.</p> <p>00:20:37 Discusses his lack of success as a player: 'I never saw a medal...'</p> <p>00:21:06 Talks (with his brother, Martin) about his father's involvement in the GAA and playing in the first Minor inter-county championship in 1928. Tells story of taxi failing to pick up him up for a game and cycling to match in the Mardyke instead. Humorous story about scoring three goals in first half and legs turning to 'jelly' in the second half.</p> <p>00:23:10 Mentions that father's brother played junior hurling for Cork, captaining the team.</p> <p>00:23:50 Remarks that relatives were all Blarney-based. Mentions that people from nearby Whitechurch, who were without a team, would play for Blarney.</p> <p>00:25:15 Martin Lynch reflects on the poor standing of the GAA club in the village in the 1950s and the reasons for it – says it was not a shortage of money or jobs nor the strength</p>
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	<p>of other sports. Refers to poor organisational ability in club. 'We didn't have any Tom Barry's to lead the column'.</p> <p>00:26:48 Considers why former players did become involved in underage as they did in the city clubs.</p> <p>00:27:41 Considers why other mid Cork clubs were so much stronger than Bantry in the 1950s: reference to their 'close-knit', small farmer communities, they were well organised, had their own hall.</p> <p>00:28:28 Contrasts the above characteristics with Bantry: suggests they were 'fed up of one another' because they were working together and that they didn't want to have a manager tell them what to do.</p> <p>00:29:10 Recollections of attending county games. Talks about mother and father debating about taking child to Killarney in 1946 to a Munster final game. Comments that Jack Lynch was playing and crowd broke onto pitch. (Another comment suggests the Killarney fixture was an All-Ireland final, the venue being used because the Cusack Stand in Croke Park was under construction).</p> <p>00:30:55 Recalls going to Croke Park with father, aged 13, and having a dispute at the train station over the fare. Talks about train network and the routes and services to and from Bantry. Discussion extends to encompass current transport services.</p> <p>00:33:30 Travelling by train to support Cork in the early 1950s: mentions the paucity of cars in the village, the absence of a car park at the Mill where 1,200-1,500 employed. Talks about employees travelling on foot and on bikes.</p> <p>00:34:37 Reflects on days out in Thurles and the 'meat tea'.</p> <p>00:35:36 Remarks on the reluctance of Tipperary to travel to Cork and his father's belief that it had to do with making money in Thurles.</p> <p>00:36:00 Talks about who travelled on the days out to matches in the early 1950s and what they did ('We watched the fighting'). Talks about the brutality of GAA occasions in Mid-Cork.</p> <p>00:37:39 Refers to referee Charlie Conway not getting a game after sending Christy Ring off. Comments on how injuries that were inflicted on opponents in games was</p>
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	<p>condoned.</p> <p>00:37:34 Discusses the fighting that went on in the square on Thurles and makes reference to the faction fighting of previous generations. Tells story from 1920s or 30s where windows on Blarney team bus were broken on returning from a game.</p> <p>00:39:30 Discusses club rivalries in the 1950s, but lack of 'bad feeling'. Says game was getting 'civilised'.</p> <p>00:40:36 Considers the intensity of the local rivalries between clubs. Names various clubs.</p> <p>00:41:00 Talks about the GAA clubs who would have had members employed at the Mills, including Blarney, Whitechurch, Grenagh, Inniscarra.</p> <p>00:41:20 Mentions that the need for an area to be 'walking or cycling distance' from Blarney for people to travel to the mill. Mentions that there weren't enough workers so one of the Mahony's – the directors - they recruited and bussed girls from Blackpool.</p> <p>00:42:40 Reference to the quality of the Mill jobs, the wages and the subsidised housing – names streets that were built by the Mahony's to attract and provide for staff. Comments on the differences between houses.</p> <p>00:45:40 Discusses what happened to houses when Mahony's 'went bust.' Tells story to illustrate how cheaply the houses were sold off in the late 1960s, early 1970s.</p> <p>00:47:15 Talks about his father's refusal to take a house and the reason for it.</p> <p>00:48:05 Refers to the 1911 census and what it shows about the movement of people between houses. Discussion about the control exercised by the Mahony family on housing in the Blarney area.</p> <p>00:50:18 Further information is provided on the Mahony family – where they came from and settled in Blarney in the 1700s, remaining until the 1970s. Mentions that they helped build a convent in Blarney, a church, and that they provided beds in hospital for Blarney people in the North Infirmary. Refers to fire in the mill in the 19th century, going to England during the Industrial revolution and bringing that machinery and those methods to Blarney.</p> <p>00:53:10 Talks about the background to the Mahony's going</p>
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	<p>bust – refers to competition from Far East and changing fashions.</p> <p>00:54:20 Mentions that wool suits and socks were manufactured in the mill.</p> <p>00:55:20 Martin Lynch compares Blarney with a north of England industrial town. Refers to father’s anticipation of decline in the industry in the 1960s due to failure to adapt and modernise.</p> <p>00:56:55 Bernard Lynch mentions that the mill was going ‘24 hours a day’ during the war.</p> <p>00:57:45 Recalls days out in Thurles and getting into the ground early.</p> <p>00:58:49 Vague recollection of the day Christy Ring scored three goals. Recalls it was a hot day and water from stream was being sold outside ground.</p> <p>01:00:14 Refers to absence of crowd control at games – ‘I don’t know how people weren’t killed.’ Contrasts the manners of spectators in the past and present. Believes modern crowds are ‘very civilised.’</p> <p>01:02:05 Discusses post-match rituals in Thurles. Mentions that they weren’t ‘drinking people’. Refers to walking around the town, watching the ‘three card trick’ merchants and the ‘knackers selling bits and bobs’.</p> <p>01:03:00 The train journey home and the unpredictability of its duration.</p> <p>01:03:45 Mentions that his father covered the cost of entry into games. He was the ‘provider’.</p> <p>01:04:12 Acknowledges that he has seen great games and great players, including Mick O’Connell.</p> <p>01:05:25 Discusses Christy Ring, describing him as a ‘super god’. Remembers as a child getting off school to see him deliver oil to the factory and watching him as he was pucking a ball against a wall.</p> <p>01:07:50 Commentary on the skill and physical attributes of Ring, as well as seeing him miss a 21 yard free.</p> <p>01:08:53 Talks about John Lyons from the Glen and Denis Riordan from Ballincollig.</p> <p>01:10:20 Discusses his involvement with underage teams in</p>
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	<p>Bantry in the early 1960s – mentions taking them on the buses, practice matches and the strain involved.</p> <p>01:12:33 Martin Lynch mentions that his team won the Under 14 double. Refers also to Blarney winning the Under 14 county title in 1960 against Carrigtwohill and that Blarney had recently defeated the same opposition, again in an Under 14 final.</p> <p>01:14:00 Bernard Lynch recalls the demands on being involved with the underage teams, the lack of support he received and the lack of structure he brought to it.</p> <p>01:15:03 Talks about Davey Brien who played on his Under 14 team in the early 1960s. Mentions that he later played Minor for Cork (in 1970) and that he would walk through streets with hurley and ball.</p> <p>01:16:21 Tell story of the provenance of Davey Brien’s nickname of ‘Rocket’.</p> <p>01:17:00 Talks of his admiration for his father-in-law, Tadhg Lynch, originally from Dripsey who served as Secretary of the Muskerry Division for ‘about a quarter of a century’. Describes him as a ‘fanatic’ with high standards.</p> <p>01:18:40 Mentions also his admiration from Frank Murphy and contrasts the existing financial health of Cork County Board with that of Mayo, then in the news.</p> <p>01:19:59 Talks about attending the mid-Cork board meetings in the early to mid 1960s, getting there and the problems of organising fixtures. Refers to cancelling games if someone died, to the absence of league fixtures, to the fact that there were only three pitches.</p> <p>01:23:25 Refers to sense of grievance in Bantry and to their sense of difference between their industrial base and the rural base of other clubs. Discussion around the desire to gain entry into city division.</p> <p>01:25:00 Discusses the role of the church/clergy in the GAA club and the nominal role played by the Canon in club affairs. Mentions the role he played in collecting funds for the pitch, publicly naming them. Provides information on the different occupations of people who made contributions and refers to a businessman who refused to support the fundraising efforts.</p> <p>01:28:00 Remarks on the lack of church influence on the GAA in Blarney or on the wider society.</p>
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	<p>01:28:55 Martin Lynch states that the mill, not the church, had the 'strongest influence' in the village.</p> <p>01:29:40 Reflects again on the lack of leadership in the local GAA when he was child growing up and failure of the older members to remain involved</p> <p>01:30:50 States that the GAA was 'dying' in Blarney in the 1940s.</p> <p>01:31:40 Comments on Blackrock and Douglas and the numbers involved from a young age. Likens the scene in Blackrock on a weekend to a 'carnival'.</p> <p>01:32:30 Points out some of the inadequacies in Blarney's existing facilities: only one pitch and the absence of lights.</p> <p>01:32:40 GAA and politics: talks about the involvement of people with different allegiances and the absence of political discussion. Mentions that his mother could say how everyone in village voted. Mentions also Michael Cremin's family republican background in 1920-21 and their subsequent Fine Gael affiliation.</p> <p>01:35:11 Martin Lynch comments on the use of political offices to assist the GAA club.</p> <p>01:35:40 Bernard Lynch refers to absence of efforts at political conversion.</p> <p>01:36:10 Discusses role of local and national newspapers: comments on the differences between the Southern Star, the Cork Examiner and The Irish Times.</p> <p>01:38:22 Concerns about demands on modern players and fears about 'burn out'.</p> <p>01:39:30 Talks about changes in the money available to clubs: refers to church-gate collections in the past, purchasing hurleys and equipment and the contrasts it with the current situation.</p> <p>01:42:48 Comments on absence of a membership fee.</p> <p>01:43:10 Reflects on the lack of interest of players in administration and estimates the numbers of players involved with teams in the 1950s.</p> <p>01:46:10 Recalls 'the smell of sweat' off jerseys and substitutes using other players' jerseys.</p> <p>01:46:53 Describes the 1950s as a 'time of utter depression</p>
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	<p>and poverty' and reflects again on why the club was so bad during this period.</p> <p>01:47:25 Discusses the condition of Blarney GAA club today, the better organisation and greater social activity. Voices concern about the availability of proper coaching.</p> <p>01:50:55 Mentions the example of Blackrock that Blarney should emulate. Refers also the involvement of women in Blackrock and their neglect in previous generations, especially in Blarney.</p> <p>01:51:36 Martin Lynch mentions that 80-90 children between the ages of 7 and 10 were currently involved in Bantry parish leagues.</p> <p>01:52:05 Discusses club finances with Martin Lynch, who mentions that club turnover is €200,000 a year and that club fields 36-38 teams across all grades. Martin Lynch states that club activity is not inhibited by lack of finance. Contrasts situation with the 1950s and remarks on the success of the club in opening itself up to new people who came to Blarney.</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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input 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>N/A</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: 00:1:57
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Julian O'Donoghue

Date: 26th Nov 2011