

GAA Oral History Project

**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Arlene Crampsie
<b>Date of Interview</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
<b>Location</b>	Interviewee's home, near Longford Town, Co. Longford
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Sean Donnelly
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1940 <b>Home County:</b> Longford
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Drumlish NS, Co. Longford; Melview NS, Co. Longford <b>Secondary:</b> St Mel's, Co. Longford <b>Third Level:</b> UCG
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 sisters <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married to Ann with 3 daughters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Longford Slashers [Longford]; UCG [Galway]; St Vincent's [London]
<b>Occupation</b>	Teacher
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Garda [Father]; Teacher [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

REFERENCE NO. LD/1/7

<b>Date of Report</b>	5 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1954 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Longford, Galway Roscommon, Leitrim, Westmeath, Limerick, Monaghan, Laois, Great Britain, England
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Earliest Memories, Education, Playing, All-Ireland, Facilities, Grounds, Food and Drink, Rivalries, Role of the Clergy, Role of the Teachers, Supporting, Socialising, Celebrations, Transport, Training, Administration, Commiserations, Relationships, Fundraising, Emigration, Sponsorship, Professionalism, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of the Club in the Community, GAA Abroad, Scór, Club History, County History, Administration, Socialising, Facilities
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Sean begins by talking about football at St. Mel's, the school he attended and taught at, and playing with his local club, the Longford Slashers. He talks about training at St. Mel's and how football has changed in the school since his time as a pupil. He also talks about the history of the Longford Slashers and the facilities at the club. Sean then goes on to discuss his involvement with the GAA while at university in NUIG. In particular he talks about the Sigerson Cup and he notes some of the differences found from past and present in the Championship. Sean also recalls events such as his first county match, playing in the Leinster and All-Ireland Leagues. He also touches on topics such as the GAA abroad as he discusses his involvement with the association in England.</p> <p>00:27 Earliest GAA Memory. Recalls the football nursery in St. Mel's College. Recalls what it was like to play football at St. Mel's.</p> <p>01:23 Recalls the success the college had with football. Won several All-Ireland Colleges and Leinster Titles but none were won while he attended St. Mel's.</p> <p>02:30 Mentions his local Longford Club – the Longford Slashers. Mentions Tommy O'Brien, a Longford legend and Áras Ó Briain.</p> <p>03:26 Talks about the facilities in St. Mel's. Had 3 football fields during his time. Mentions he was a teacher in the school for around 40 years.</p> <p>04:28 Talks about how players were treated in school. Notes on the morning of a match, players got a boiled egg with their</p>

	<p>breakfast.</p> <p>05:08 Discusses football practice and training. Notes it was played all year. Notes football was part of life in the school and everybody got a chance to play. School leagues went on throughout the year.</p> <p>06:21 Discusses what it was like to go back as a teacher and see things in a different perspective. Notes football was still part of school life but nowadays it is a day school so it would be more difficult to organise. Notes as a boarding school it had a catchment of students. Now the school teams are made up of local students.</p> <p>07:20 Notes the school recently won the Under-16 Leinster Final and in the past a Leinster Senior.</p> <p>07:36 Notes the school won the All-Ireland Finals when he was in university. Mentions St. Jarlath's of Tuam as big rivals. Recalls these two rivals as the kings of football in Connacht</p> <p>08:25 Recalls the main trainers of the football team. Mentions one of the priests would usually take charge. Mentions Father McKeown had the most success.</p> <p>09:06 Notes a football tournament being named after a Father Manning. Also mentions that in Longford a Manning Cup is played for. Notes Father Manning was successful as a trainer while at St. Mel's.</p> <p>09:34 Mentions Father Jimmy McKeown having huge success. Notes that with lower student numbers the school is less likely to have success and that the big rivals nowadays are St. Pat's from Navan.</p> <p>10:18 Notes that in his time all football matches were played on Wednesday and parents would bring students to matches in places such as Mullingar or Tullamore. Notes as a teacher he would have got the students to go along to support.</p> <p>12:24 Mentions that only on big occasions would a bus be hired to transport players and supporters.</p> <p>12:35 Discusses being involved with the GAA while at university in Galway. Mentions being at NUI Galway at a great time as some of the famous Galway three in a row team such as Enda Colleran and Martin Newell were there.</p> <p>13:03 Recalls winning the Sigerson Cup 3 times in 4 years as well as getting to know 2 of his childhood idols, Seán Purcell and Frank Stockwell.</p>
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	<p>14:39 Talks about the difference in playing level between St. Mel's and Galway. Notes there were many St. Jarlath's players at UCG, they did not lose a match for nearly 3 years and the team was able to play on par with both college and county teams.</p> <p>15:29 Recalls what it was like playing with the cup team in Galway. Notes winning 3 Sigersons which was unusual as they did not have big numbers to make teams like UCD.</p> <p>16:20 Discusses where the college played matches and who they were playing. Mentions there was only Queen's University Belfast, UCD, Cork and Galway during his time. Notes the Sigerson was played over a weekend but now there are so many colleges involved it has become a lot bigger. Comments on lack of support for Sigerson Teams nowadays.</p> <p>17:38 Recalls UCG winning the first Sigerson in Belfast against Queen's and when the team returned there were bonfires and a civic reception at the college. Doubts that would happen now.</p> <p>18:10 Talks about the fixtures for the Sigerson weekend and mentions many county players would have been on the college teams. For example, many famous players were on the UCD team.</p> <p>19:12 Talks about the social side of the Sigerson weekend. Recalls after leaving Belfast they stopped in nearly every town to celebrate on their way home. Recalls many did not drink or gave it up.</p> <p>20:34 Recalls some of the famous players he would have come up against in the Sigerson matches. Mentions Felix McKnight of UCD, Paddy O'Donoghue of UCD / Kerry and Paul Kelly of Donegal. Mentions that UCD had the pick of inter-provincial players.</p> <p>22:51 Notes the formation of the combined university Sigerson team formed and around St. Patrick's Day they would play an Ireland team / All-Star team. Notes beating them one year and the trophies having been inscribed with the oppositions name as they were not expected to win. Mentions Sean O'Neill of Down and Kevin O'Neill.</p> <p>24:35 Talks about who trained the team in NUIG. Mentions Jack Kissane, Paddy McDermott and his brother Bosco who played with Galway. Notes how Sigerson teams were selected. Mention Enda Collieran, Pat Donnellan, Martin</p>
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	<p>Newell, Bosco McDermott, Brian Geraghty and Christy Tyrell.</p> <p>27:11 Notes he played league football with the college but that you could not take part in the championship. Recalls having game every week.</p> <p>27:50 Recalls particularly on Church holiday weekends clubs would put together 7-A-Side tournaments which would be mentioned in the Connacht Tribune. Recalls all that had to be done was to turn up with a team of 8 players and pay around half a crown to register. Mentions they mostly took place after Easter and would go on into June. Galway had specialist teams which took part.</p> <p>30:14 Talks about being home in Longford one weekend and being asked by the Chairman of the County Board, Liam Hastings, to play in a challenge match. Says it was his first experience with county football. Talks a small bit about Liam Hastings.</p> <p>31:52 Notes that in the 1960s the only success Longford had was winning a Leinster Championship. Main Division and Division 2.</p> <p>32:25 Discuss how he got involved playing football with the club (Longford Slashers). Says Tommy O'Brien got them involved. Notes there was a tennis club next to O'Brien's house and he would recruit them.</p> <p>33:15 Talks about what it was like to play for the county for the first time.</p> <p>34:14 Talks about his first county match. Played it in Monaghan. Recalls how he travelled up to the match in team cars, sometimes a taxi, was very low key.</p> <p>35:00 Discusses training with the club. Mentions he would have trained more in Galway. Says it was difficult in Longford and the young did not have cars. Notes in the early years there was no training for county matches. Mentions in the mid-1960s the first effort was made to organise training by Father McGee who was on the Central Council of the GAA and the Officer Board in Longford. Mentions Mick Higgins.</p> <p>37:21 Notes all the players were asked to take the Easter Week off and during it they trained from the early morning. Recalls having a challenge match at the end of the week against Down or Tyrone in Longford and winning. Sean was living in Cavan at this stage.</p> <p>39:18 Says that Mick's first year as their coach was 1965 and</p>
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	<p>they were beaten by Dublin in the Leinster Final but from then on they played over 20 games and did not lose one of them including the National League in 1966. Notes being knocked out of the 1966 Leinster Championship by Louth in Navan.</p> <p>40:25 Won their first and only Leinster Championship in 1968. Narrowly beaten by Kerry in the All-Ireland Semi-Final. Mentions Mick O'Dwyer.</p> <p>41:14 After the All-Ireland took part in a completion which swapped the pairings in the All-Ireland. Met Down and beat them. Notes also winning a Division 2.</p> <p>42:25 Talks about the celebrations in 1966 and 1968. Notes crowds in the town and civic reception.</p> <p>43:49 Discusses getting involved with administration. Mentions he was involved since 1967. Was the secretary and captain during one year. Notes he was pushed into going for secretary.</p> <p>45:19 Mentions that he was elected County Board Secretary at his first meeting for the County Board.</p> <p>45:57 Talks about what his job as secretary was like. Mentions Father McGee and other members of the Board helped take the weight of the role off his shoulders. Notes one of his responsibilities was to have a list of players which were going out to play.</p> <p>47:51 Talks about the responsibilities of the secretary. Mentions correspondence with clubs, club fixtures and post. Mentions working with Tommy O'Brien the minor secretary. Mentions being provided with a phone.</p> <p>50:34 Discusses whether the role of the secretary changed over the years. Notes he tried to modernise it by, for example, printing out set lists of games with a typewriter.</p> <p>51:32 Recalls some of the people he met as secretary. Mentions Bertie Allen who ran Newtownforbes GAA Club, Pat Barden and Johnny Creegan. Mentions Johnny made up a song/poem about the 1966 or 1968 team. Mentions Joe G Sheridan.</p> <p>54:35 Talks about what other roles he was involved in after his time ended as secretary. Mentions a little bit of training with the club.</p> <p>55:22 Says a lot of players give up football far too early and when he put together a Junior Team. Became the selector</p>
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	<p>and made a rule that the first 15 players to arrive would play the match.</p> <p>57:30 Notes that the Longford Slashers had a good pick of players so there was not as much dedication to playing as other smaller clubs.</p> <p>59:00 Talks about the history of the Longford Slashers GAA Club. Founded in 1954. There was a country club called Shroid Slashers that amalgamated with Longford Wanders and became Longford Slashers.</p> <p>01:01:22 Mentions football enabled him to get to know people throughout the country.</p> <p>01:01:42 Talks about where the Slashers originally played their matches in the county grounds. Now they have a complex near the train station with three pitches, squash courts, club house and theatre. Talks about running carnivals to raise money to buy grounds. Now there are, for example, national grants to help.</p> <p>01:03:21 Talks about buying the land off a farmer who was interested in football.</p> <p>01:03:57 Talks about the size of the club in relation to others in Longford. Says many young people come and go. Thinks they should be more involved nowadays.</p> <p>01:05:14 Talks about how in the past there were always supporters there for the team whereas now talking to players before a match will break their concentration. Notes also you used to shake hands with your opponent before and after the match.</p> <p>01:06:07 Talks about the hurling club attached to the Longford Slashers. They are Division 4. Says they are very dedicated players. Only 3 or 4 hurling clubs in the county.</p> <p>01:07:08 Notes that even in college when football was over only around a dozen or so would play hurling.</p> <p>01:07:42 Mentions at St. Mel's a teacher Catherine Smith got hurling going. Not sure if it's still going.</p> <p>01:08:24 Notes that there are ladies clubs attached to the Longford Slashers. The ladies team is also successful as a county team.</p> <p>01:08:45 Says the club would have a bigger impact in rural areas. Facilities and grounds are a lot better in comparison to</p>
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	<p>the past.</p> <p>01:09:50 Discusses his opinions on some of the rule changes that have happened in the GAA. Says there is too much messing with the rules and football has become very monotonous. Mentions the rule of the ball having to go out of play for the match to end and gives a match between Longford and Limerick as an example.</p> <p>01:13:18 Talks about Scór in Longford. Mentions when he was secretary he organised Scór and on the evening of a competition he had to type up a quiz which was to take place in around 6 areas.</p> <p>01:15:53 Talks about the first Scór he went to which was in Newtowncashel. Notes when the competition finished they had tea and a Céilí. Mentions the effect dancing schools had on Scór.</p> <p>01:17:04 Recalls adjudicating the Munster Final of Scór in Thurles with Father McGee and Father McCauley.</p> <p>01:20:32 Recalls a young boy being up against Chris Droney in the instrumental music category and Celine Hession wanting Droney to win.</p> <p>01:22:13 Recalls being at the All-Ireland Scór Final and the young boy winning the instrumental music category. Notes Scór no longer gets as much attention.</p> <p>01:23:13 Talks about the impact emigration had on the GAA in Longford. Recalls spending his own summers in London as a construction worker and playing football. Played with St. Vincent's, Cricklewood. Notes the main GAA clubs was situated in New Eltham.</p> <p>01:24:40 Remembers after mass on a Sunday there would be a double-decker bus to bring supporters over to New Eltham for the day. Everybody including players paid in which in turn funded the club. Recalls having sandwiches and tea as well as having sing-songs on the bus with an accordion player.</p> <p>01:26:24 Mentions in the 1960s America was more open to immigration than now. Also recalls the last time he was in London and was looking for a place in Kilburn.</p> <p>01:27:10 Sean had played illegally in England and recalls he played under the name of a Roscommon man, Owensie Hoare, the first year. Notes there was no fuss about playing illegally.</p>
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	<p>01:28:15 Notes he won 3 Championship in the won year. Won in London, Longford and Galway. Also notes while in London the Irish mainly mixed only with Irish and the football clubs had brought them together.</p> <p>01:29:11 Talks about his GAA hero. In college they were Frankie Stockwell and Sean Purcell. Notes they both played with Tuam Stars.</p> <p>01:30:07 Recalls as preparation for the Sigerson in college they would play the Galway Team in a challenge game. Recalls filling in for a Galway player one year during a challenge match and played with Sean Purcell.</p> <p>01:31:24 Discusses Leinster Final of 1968 against Laois. Notes he ran into a player in the early part of the match and caused him injury. Notes Longford has only won a National League and Leinster Championship. He missed the presentation of the Championship because of the incident.</p> <p>01:34:15 Notes the Junior Team made up of older players winning a competition as one of his best memories. Also mentions the National League played against New York.</p> <p>01:35:43 Discusses his biggest disappointment-losing the All-Ireland Semi-Final against Kerry. Mentions winning the National League against Galway and playing against Laois in the National League again.</p> <p>01:38:06 Discusses what the GAA meant to him.</p> <p>01:39:20 States he knows most of his friends through the GAA. Talks about the small bit of professionalism which has crept in and in his opinion has spoiled the association. Mentions the figures paid to clubs trainers.</p> <p>01:41:21 Talks about finding his expenses account from his first year as Treasurer. £167 total which included getting jerseys washed, club correspondence and travel expenses.</p> <p>01:43:53 Notes the income for the GAA in the year of before interview was reported as €70 million.</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>

**REFERENCE NO. LD/1/7**

<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played from the age of 12 to 42. At Minor level with Longford Slashers they won everything from Juvenile up. He won 4 / 5 Longford Championships; 1 London Championship and League; 3 Sigerson Cup Medals; National Leagues Division 1, 1966 and Division 2, 1972. He stopped playing in 1982.
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Club Trainer with Longford Slashers; County Secretary, 1967 – 1977
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 01:44:29
<b>Language</b>	English

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed:      \_\_\_Arlene Crampsie\_\_\_\_\_

Date:        \_\_\_5/06/12\_\_\_\_\_