

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	4 th April 2011
Location	Donal's home, near Clontarf, Dublin 3
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Donal Cooney
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1928 Home County: Wicklow
Education	Primary: Newbawn NS, Co. Wicklow
Family	Siblings: 6 brothers & 5 sisters Current Family if Different: Wife (Patti), 5 daughters & 1 son
Club(s)	Barndarrig GAA [Wicklow]; Crokes Hurling Club [Dublin]
Occupation	Farming & Fuel Importers Ltd employee
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Malahide Golf Club

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Date of Report	4th April 2011
Period Covered	1899 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Wicklow, Dublin, Armagh, Offaly, Westmeath, Antrim, Wexford, Cork, Kilkenny, Americas
Key Themes Covered	Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Refereeing, Celebrations, Role of the Club in the Community, Rivalries, Culture, All-Ireland, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Northern Ireland, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances
Interview Summary	<p>Donal discusses his father's involvement in the Armagh GAA and then in Wicklow. He goes on to tell of his career and how it influenced his involvement in the GAA. He speaks about playing hurling for Wicklow and his siblings and their various achievements. He talks about the great players he admired over the years and of his enjoyment at watching his grandchildren carrying on the family interest in Gaelic games. Finally he discusses how important the GAA has been in his life.</p> <p>00:32 Talks of his childhood in Barndarrig, Ballygannon (Deputies Pass), Co Wicklow and the battle there in 1599.</p> <p>01:15 Describes the parish and school and his father from Armagh and his mother from Liverpool.</p> <p>02:26 Talks of his siblings being born in Armagh, Dublin and Wicklow. Hugh, Donal, Josephine and Patricia were born in Wicklow.</p> <p>03:05 Discusses his father's involvement in the GAA and other Republican activities in Co. Armagh and his subsequent move to Wicklow.</p> <p>03:35 Talks of his father, Hugh Cooney, born in Knockavannon, Ballymoyer, Armagh, playing football and captaining the Armagh team. A poem of his was published in the programme for the opening of the Whitecross GAA Grounds.</p> <p>04:30 Speaks of his father bringing Fr. Montague around to his calls.</p> <p>05:12 Talks of his father refereeing a county final between Rathnew and Annacurra and the consequences of his decisions during the game.</p>

	<p>06:18 Talks of his father and brother playing violin and their trio "The Round Tower" broadcasting on Raidio Éireann in the 1930's.</p> <p>06:54 Speaks of his father growing flax in Wicklow as he had in Armagh.</p> <p>07:30 Discusses growing up in Wicklow and playing hurling over football on the farmyard. Mentions book <i>No Hurling against the Dairy Door</i> by Billy Rackard the Wexford hurler.</p> <p>09:10 Speaks of Alice Taylor's book <i>To School through the Fields</i>.</p> <p>10:20 Speaks of his earliest memories of Gaelic games, making birch goalposts, marking out a pitch in the field and flying the tricolour. Mentions the stationmaster Mr Fell and the neighbours from Kilnamanagh the Douglas family including Rob Douglas who played for Wicklow after. Also mentions Kathleen and Sadie Douglas great camogie players with Glenealy.</p> <p>13:16 Attributes some of the success of Glenealy at camogie around that time to those games in Cooney's 'hairy' field. Mentions his own sisters winning club, provincial and All-Ireland medals.</p> <p>14:05 Talks of Barndarrig playing hurling against Avondale, Saint Kilians and Ashford and how it was good for the community.</p> <p>15:17 Speaks about getting sliotars from Paddy Smith in Wicklow town and making their own ash hurleys. Mentions getting hurleys for competitions from Kilkenny, Limerick or Cork.</p> <p>16:45 Talks of Wicklow winning many ploughing championships but few in the GAA. Mentions football being more popular in west Wicklow.</p> <p>17:20 Speaks of playing hurling in Newbawn National School in the 1930's. Mentions a teacher Gregory Doyle joining them for hurling at lunchtime. Rounders and marbles were also played.</p> <p>19:54 Talks of being injured playing and not even realising it.</p> <p>20:35 Tells how football is now more popular in Barndarrig than in his day.</p> <p>21:07 Talks of the cultural background in his house during his</p>
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	<p>childhood. Mentions ghost stories told around the fire.</p> <p>22:12 Recalls listening spellbound to Michael O’Heir on a dry battery and wet battery Cossor Radio.</p> <p>23:08 Talks of cycling thirty five miles each way to All-Ireland finals in Croke Park. Donal to the hurling finals and his brother Hugh to the football finals.</p> <p>23:26 Recalls a story of cycling from a match in Dublin with Paddy Barrett.</p> <p>24:59 Talks of his heroes Mick Boucher locally in Barndarrig who played hurling for Wicklow. Mentions his solo runs against Wexford. Also mentions Tom McDonald, Seán O’Farrell and Patsy Boggan.</p> <p>27:00 Speaks of Christy Ring and his focus on hurling. Mentions Mick Mackey and footballers Ger Reilly and Jim Rogers of Donard.</p> <p>28:25 Talks of the local rivalry between Barndarrig and Avondale. Mentions Mick Boucher and Sean Farrell.</p> <p>29:15 Talks of Saint Kilian’s near Greystones and Kilcoole. Mentions Avondale, the estate of Charles Stewart Parnell and the Forestry school</p> <p>29:50 Speaks of his own time playing in Wicklow and in Dublin. Chosen to play for Wicklow team, lack of notification that he was picked Talks of playing for Croke’s in Dublin against a Civil Service team In Lusk, being taken to a doctor after being injured during the match and returning to the match and playing with stitches.</p> <p>32:17 Tells of being selected for the Dublin Junior team and being asked to declare for Wicklow by the Wicklow County Secretary Billy Lawless and Chairman Seán O’Farrell.</p> <p>33:40 Talks of the great times playing for Wicklow. Tells of a bus trip collecting the team and travelling to play in Birr against Offaly and returning home, twenty four hours after setting out, via a pub in Coolkenno in Wicklow.</p> <p>35:02 Talks of his first medal win in 1946 Wicklow County Minor with Glenealy and a 1943 Wicklow County Senior medal with Barndarrig. Tells of the Wicklow team at the time being composed of players from Barndarrig, Avondale and Kilcoole. Mentions Rob Douglas from Kilnamanagh.</p> <p>36:21 Speaks of the lack of training at county level at the</p>
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	<p>time.</p> <p>37:02 Tells of the enjoyment travelling around to matches and the local support for local clubs as opposed to the impersonal feeling of a bigger Dublin team.</p> <p>38:02 Talks of his first match between Glenealy and De La Salle in Wicklow in the Murrough.</p> <p>38:54 Recalls playing in a match for Wicklow on a Sunday and being given a job as a Health Inspector in Wicklow on Monday. Mentions Pat and Jim Doherty of Crokes both Health Inspectors also Matt Byrne, handball player whose widow Donal stayed with in Baltinglass.</p> <p>43:48 Talks of his working life as a Health Inspector from 1949 to 1993.</p> <p>44:52 Speaks of his sisters, Mary and Patricia, playing camogie for Austin Stacks in Dublin and also with Dublin along with Doreen Rogers Kathleen Cawley and Kathleen Mills. How Donal started playing for Croke's. Mentions Fran Whelan, Martin White and Matty Power.</p> <p>46:08 Talks of his sister Kathleen who played with Slieve Bloom and Josephine who played with Austin Stacks. Mentions going to the camogie matches.</p> <p>46:58 Tells of playing for Wicklow when his sisters were playing for Dublin.</p> <p>47:33 Speaks of the hurling win in 1954 when they beat Dublin in Aughrim, went on to beat Wexford and Offaly and Westmeath in the Leinster Junior final. Mentions the author Christy Nolan's parents Bernadette Nolan and Joe Nolan who was a substitute for Westmeath.</p> <p>49:45 Talks of missing the great celebrations after the win as he was back in Dublin.</p> <p>50:00 Talks of being drawn against Antrim in the All-Ireland Junior semi-final. Antrim put the Junior team against Wexford in the Senior Final and the Senior team against the Wicklow Junior team. Mentions holidaying with Con Healy and playing handball to keep fit.</p> <p>51:54 Speaks of Mick Keogh objecting about Antrim playing their Senior team but did not follow it through because of the trouble in Northern Ireland at the time. Antrim went on to lose the final to Limerick in 1954.</p> <p>52:40 Talks of playing until 1955 when pleurisy and asthma</p>
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	<p>ended his career early. Unsuccessful attempts at a comeback. Missing the game when he finished playing.</p> <p>54:27 Talks about the administration of Croke's in Croke Park and mentions Pádraig O'Keefe vice president of the club and Dickie Curran.</p> <p>55:21 Talks of going on to play Golf winning the captains prize in 1975 in the Royal Dublin Club.</p> <p>55:41 Speaks of playing handball with Con Healy in Dublin Corporation. Mentions John Clarke, Austin Clarke and Jim Clarke, all All-Ireland handball winners with Austin also playing softball. Also mentions Robert Briscoe T.D., first Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin and John Hayes.</p> <p>57:56 Talks of his article about the handball tournament in this year's Wicklow Year Book and an historic photo of Councillor Briscoe with the Clarke brothers and George Bowles nephew of John Joe Bowles, the multiple All-Ireland handball winner. Also, mentions a Mr Casey who had won medals in America.</p> <p>59:16 Speaks of his interest in the GAA games following on TV however, the last All-Ireland he attended was Cork and Kilkenny in 2000.</p> <p>59:57 Talks of the difference in training then and now and the facilities available.</p> <p>01:00:30 Discusses the changes over the years and how he is not in favour of the GPA. Mentions contemporary issue involving the GAA and Fermanagh County Board. Mentions Na Fianna and his views on Dessie Farrell and the GPA.</p> <p>01:02:20 Speaks of feeling only the top players will benefit from being paid for play.</p> <p>01:02:34 Talks of his grandchildren Eoin and Fiachra playing football and hurling with Na Fianna and what a progressive club they are. Mentions their handball alleys and hurling wall.</p> <p>01:03:40 Speaks of his disappointment that his son chose athletics instead of Gaelic games. Mentions his All-Ireland runner up medal with Raheny Shamrocks in Birr. Although he is making up for it now with his involvement with Na Fianna.</p> <p>01:04:18 Talks of his granddaughter Caitlín And her interest in Irish Step Dancing.</p> <p>01:04:36 Sums up what the GAA and hurling has meant to him and his life. Forms part of what he stands for. Hurling his</p>
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	love from first picking up a hurley on the farm as a young boy in the 1930s and 40s.
Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input 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): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played for Barndarrig GAA and for Crokes hurling club in Dublin. Also played on the Wicklow hurling team, 1930s – 1955; Won a Wicklow Junior Hurling League in 1954; won Wicklow Minor Hurling Championship playing with Glenealy; Won Wicklow Senior Hurling Championship playing with Barndarrig
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:06:34
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: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 28th June 2012