

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Arlene Crampsie
<b>Date of Interview</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
<b>Location</b>	Interviewee's home, near Dromard, Co. Longford
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Johnny Creegan
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1933 <b>Home County:</b> Longford
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Pulladoey, Colmkille, Co. Longford <b>Secondary:</b> Moyne Latin School
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 15 – 9 sisters and 6 brothers <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married, no children
<b>Club(s)</b>	Dromard GFC
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer; Collected Accounts with Longford Leader
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Farmers
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Fianna Fáil
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Macra na Feirme – County Secretary and Longford Representative on National Council; Founder of Macra na Tuatha in Dromard; Founder of Community Games in Longford; Secretary of Latin School Restoration Committee; Member of Longford Historical Society

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<b>Date of Report</b>	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1897 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Longford
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, 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, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds, Economy / Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Johnny talks about the GAA in his native Dromard, County Longford. As a young boy he played football all the time with his brothers, and he once had trials with the Longford minor team. He remembers going to watch games as a youngster, sometimes on bicycles and sometimes in cars, although petrol was rationed after World War II. The ending of the war had an effect on the GAA teams, as many people emigrated and the club suffered because the population was so small in the locality. Johnny was also involved on the administrative side of things and recalls being on committees and making presentations to Government people in an attempt to get grants and land. He also went on trips to the United States with the club, and has fond memories of his experiences there. Johnny also liked to pen verses and rhymes for various teams when they had been successful. Although modest about his contribution to the GAA in his locality, it is clear that the Association means a great deal to Johnny.</p> <p>00:20 Recalls his neighbour coming back from a match in Longford in 1946 where there had been a row. Dromard won the championship that year.</p> <p>01:00 His parents had no interest in football but he got involved in national school.</p> <p>01:20 He earned some money on local farms in his late teens and bought a pair of football boots.</p> <p>01:40 He played with Dromard as did his brother.</p> <p>01:55 At 18 he went to Pearse Park for a minor trial, his first</p>

	<p>time ever in Longford.</p> <p>02:40 There was no minor team at the time in Dromard so his brothers played with nearby Colmcille.</p> <p>03:10 With the school he used to play neighbouring teams in Cavan and Colmcille.</p> <p>03:55 Dromard won in 1946 because after the war there was no emigration so they had lots of players.</p> <p>04:10 Pearse Daly and Fr Jimmy Reynolds trained the team; they started in 1944.</p> <p>04:30 After 1946 people emigrated and they had to amalgamate with Colmcille.</p> <p>05:00 In the 1990s they started winning again and have now claimed five championships.</p> <p>05:30 They have won five Under-21s in-a-row.</p> <p>05:45 There is a 'latin school' nearby and its roots go back to the penal days; in 1897 it got a permanent building.</p> <p>06:55 The school educated 600 priests down through the years.</p> <p>07:20 There was a community school and through that Johnny was able to play in competitions.</p> <p>07:55 Dromard used to play in a pitch in Kiltycun.</p> <p>08:40 They got some land from the Land Commission and that became their new pitch.</p> <p>09:15 They travelled to games on bicycles and sometimes a tractor or a bus. It wasn't easy in war years as petrol was rationed.</p> <p>10:05 Longford was 19 miles away.</p> <p>10:45 First went to Croke Park for a pioneer day.</p> <p>11:05 He also went to provincial finals, All-Ireland semi-finals and finals, driving to Dublin and back.</p> <p>11:45 The last game he was at he was clamped and received</p>
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	<p>Garda fines.</p> <p>13:40 In the past they would eat at the Castle Hotel in Dublin.</p> <p>14:05 Recalls watching Mick O'Dwyer play in Dublin, and Jerome O'Shea.</p> <p>14:45 The GAA is bigger now in the locality than it was in the past.</p> <p>15:25 He was involved in Macra na Feirme and community games and Macra na Tuaithe and this gave him a schooling in the art of publicity.</p> <p>16:25 Recalls winning three games in the junior championship, but they had no senior teams for 20 years after 1946.</p> <p>17:10 There was a convention in Longford and a county player Frank Brady and Johnny decided to put their case at convention. A neighbour of Frank Brady's acted as the third delegate.</p> <p>18:00 The same day Stevie Reilly, a county player, also decided to do something so then there were six.</p> <p>19:25 His county minor trial was tough.</p> <p>20:50 Longford won an All-Ireland junior championship in 1937 and played a championship game against Kerry to open Pearse Park and although Johnny's father never attended GAA games, he went along to see Kerry.</p> <p>22:10 They often played with a pig's bladder or they kicked a handball on the ground.</p> <p>22:25 The girls did not play very much at the time.</p> <p>22:55 Dromard was affiliated in 1897. There had been three teams named after three patriots.</p> <p>24:05 One time they were playing Drumlish in Killoe and didn't come out for the second half; Jack Bruton mentioned that story in a speech.</p> <p>25:30 They had an intermediate team in 1977 and organised a trip to America.</p>
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	<p>26:05 They were in New Jersey, Toronto and Washington.</p> <p>26:15 In 1982 they went again; previously only Longford Slashers had gone on such trips.</p> <p>27:00 They played against St Vincent's in Toronto and a team in New Jersey, and got a letter from the New Jersey Lord Mayor.</p> <p>28:10 He did a leadership course in Naas and was friendly with Liam Mulvihill.</p> <p>28:45 They met former GAA President Seamus Ryan, and Johnny's cousin Fr McGee was there too.</p> <p>29:20 Ryan told him a story about going to America with the All Stars and being asked by someone at home to deliver a parcel to a friend in the States.</p> <p>30:50 Longford won the League in 1966, beating Galway, and there was a dinner afterwards so Johnny wrote a rhyme.</p> <p>32:30 Longford's population is too small to have success at national level.</p> <p>32:45 Pdraig Berry from Abbeylara was promising but he moved to Australia.</p> <p>33:20 Johnny was treasurer of the club, as well as occupying secretarial and PRO duties.</p> <p>33:50 They have never had an election of officers in Dromard; everything is agreed in advance.</p> <p>34:20 They don't do awards for individuals as they believe it can lead to jealousy.</p> <p>35:10 Johnny played for about ten years. He was affected by a shoulder injury.</p> <p>36:25 He enjoyed being PRO but wasn't popular.</p> <p>37:05 Many people overseas said the first thing they would look for when reading news from home was the Dromard notes.</p> <p>37:45 To raise funds they sometimes held kitchen dances, and concerts in the national schools. 50 pounds a year would</p>
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	<p>keep the club going.</p> <p>38:40 Developing their pitches was expensive but they got donations from people abroad.</p> <p>39:00 The footballer Stevie Reilly died and they had a cup in his honour and established a Stevie Reilly fund.</p> <p>39:35 They got grants from the National Lottery for their new pitch and made good presentations to Sports Minister Jim McDaid, which paid off.</p> <p>41:10 He was involved in negotiations with the Land Commission and the man who was head of the commission had relations in the parish which helped.</p> <p>41:50 Fr Noonan was their chairman at the time and went with Johnny to meetings. They got 11 acres.</p> <p>42:40 The head of the commission was from Killeshandra and the meetings were straightforward.</p> <p>43:15 Jack Boothman was very complimentary at the pitch opening.</p> <p>44:35 He was a delegate to the county board and cause a lot of hassle.</p> <p>45:30 Recalls objecting to a wall at Pearse Park and Albert Fallon from Ballymahon took what he said on board.</p> <p>46:50 Colmcille are their biggest rivals but it is not as intense as it used to be. The game was rougher back then but not as professional.</p> <p>47:40 The club colours are blue and gold.</p> <p>48:15 Teachers play a big role in the GAA but there are less male principals in national schools which has a knock-on effect.</p> <p>49:10 The clergy were very important, especially Fr Jimmy Reynolds and a Fr Cox who was parish priest. Fr Corkery is very interested in the GAA.</p> <p>49:55 Volunteers are the lifeblood of the association. Pay-for-play would mean trouble for the GAA.</p>
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	<p>50:40 He was in Belfast the day the ban was removed, in Queens University. He supported its removal.</p> <p>51:15 They had a 'vigilance committee' to make sure local players weren't at soccer games and it was controversial.</p> <p>52:10 He wasn't sure about the opening of Croke Park initially but ended up supporting it fully.</p> <p>52:45 Drugs and alcohol are a challenge for the GAA.</p> <p>53:00 Commercialism could be a problem too.</p> <p>53:15 Recalls being in Longford and it was lunchtime in St Mel's College and he wondered if the pupils there played GAA.</p> <p>53:50 Dromard won an Under-14 championship in 1969 and the urban clubs wanted separate rural and urban competitions.</p> <p>54:50 Most boys living in Dromard played football but it wasn't like that in the towns.</p> <p>55:55 The Dromard teams have great spirit and that's why they succeed.</p> <p>56:30 Favourite memory is Longford winning the League and Dromard winning the championship in 1999.</p> <p>56:50 They had big celebrations when Dromard won but they made sure to keep it sensible.</p> <p>57:15 There was no pub in Dromard so they had to celebrate elsewhere.</p> <p>57:55 Disappointments include smaller counties not being able to get good teams together.</p> <p>58:25 heroes include Kerry's Jack O'Shea, Mick O'Connell and Mick O'Dwyer. Sean O'Neill of Down is another.</p> <p>58:50 GAA gave him an interest in life and something to do in his spare time.</p> <p>59:25 Tells a story of a man he met in Toronto who was married to a woman from Louth.</p>
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	<p>01:01:00 Recites a poem he wrote for the Under-21s dinner dance.</p> <p>01:05:10 He was a county minor chairman for three years, and a selector for a year.</p> <p>1:06:20 When he was minor chairman thy lost to Wicklow in the Leinster final, the first time a minor team had got that far since 1928.</p>
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played for ten years, won nothing.
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Secretary of Club for 10 years from 1950 / 1951; Treasurer for 20 years; PRO for 30 years; Vice-President of County Board for last four years
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 01:07:19
<b>Language</b>	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



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the right to use and make available to the public the content of this interview.

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

Date: \_\_\_\_\_22<sup>nd</sup> May 2012\_\_\_\_\_

The logo of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), featuring the letters 'GAA' in a stylized, white, serif font on a black background.