

GAA Oral History Project

**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Mary McDonald
<b>Date of Interview</b>	24 <sup>th</sup> April 2010
<b>Location</b>	Killoughey, Co. Offaly
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Jim McDonald
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1945 <b>Home County:</b> Offaly
<b>Education</b>	N/A
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 4 brothers & 4 sisters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Killeigh GAA [Offaly]
<b>Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Religion</b>	N/A
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

REFERENCE NO. OY/1/2

<b>Date of Report</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1945 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Offaly
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Administration, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Relationship with the Association
<b>Interview Summary</b>	Jim talks about his experiences of the GAA throughout his life. See script below.
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<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): _____
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Junior Hurling Medal 1970; played from 1963 – 74.
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 0:22:11
<b>Language</b>	English

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_Mary McDonald\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_24/04/2010\_\_\_\_\_

REFERENCE NO.

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**Q1: Describe your earliest GAA memory and how you became involved in the GAA?**

My earliest GAA memory would be back in the '60s; Offaly was playing Down in Croke Park in 1961. It was my 1<sup>st</sup> time to Croke Park. Down won the match to our disappointment. I remember being under the stand as there was no seating at that time. I was with my uncle Mick, a few friends and neighbours. We cycled in that morning to the train station and we went to King's Bridge and we walked down to Croke Park. We were disappointed when Down won it.

**Q2: Did your family have a tradition or history of GAA involvement?**

We had. My mother was a Camogie player. Most of my uncles played hurling with club and the occasional time with the county.

**Q3: Did your relatives discuss their GAA experiences with you? What were they?**

Always. They always chatted and talked about it. On a Sunday evening we would be interested in the results and reports given by Sean O Callaghan on the radio. That's what the GAA meant to them. It was everything.

REFERENCE NO.

04/1/2

**Q4: Tell me how GAA affected your family life?**

Well, it affected family life because it was entertainment and sport. It was the only entertainment around that time. Hunting and shooting was another part of life but there was no such thing as transport to anywhere else other than local and listen to the radio.

**Q5: Tell me what it was like to support your club/county when you were young and down through the years (travelling to games, prices of tickets, food, grounds visited, clothes worn, match-day traditions, local celebrations and traditions).**

It was great. It was great to see your county or club involved in the game. You'd be out and be shouting especially against rivalry clubs, your neighbours that would be rivalry club. That's where the bit of craic was. There would be a build up the week before the match. That was the great part in it, on the day and the next day but we made good friends. We had good auld craic. The travelling was crazy at that time. We cycled to it. If you wanted to go to Croke Park you went on the train. At that time there wasn't as much transport as there is now. There wasn't as much money either. The tickets into a match, I remember I saw two shillings marked over a door going into a turnstile. The first few matches I went to, I didn't have to pay I was on the young side. My first ground was probably into O Connor Park, Tullamore with my father. He carried me on a bicycle to the matches. That would be club matches. He was mostly involved with the football. That was in my earlier days and there were great names in football. The local celebrations were probably in a pub or at the crossroads. There would be a bit of craic, maybe a few drinks but I don't think there was much drinking. There would be a crossroad meeting, where people cycled to a crossroads. The games would be reviewed. We would talk about who played well and who played bad. That's what went on.

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**Q6: If you had to choose just one game from all you've experienced, which would you choose? Why?**

It was disappointing to see Down winning the All Ireland in 1961 but fair play to Down, they hadn't won an All Ireland. That was their 1<sup>st</sup> All Ireland so we had to wait 'til '71 for Offaly to win an All Ireland. That was great to be there and to be part of that. Ten years later we won again. It was great and things were getting better and more way of travelling. That time I was driving a car to Croke Park in the 70s.

**Q7: What impact has the GAA had on your life?**

Ah sure it was a great entertainment to look forward to going to games on a Sunday. And to look forward to playing the sport as well. I played hurling and football. I met up with friends and we would go to carnivals in the evening and dances. There could be a match of 7 a side, hurling match or football match. We would be involved in it. That was the craic. I enjoyed it. It was great craic.

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**Q8: What place and role does your club have in your community?**

The club was the entertainment and it was built around the club. The GAA is part of the local community and if there was a sports day the GAA would be involved. It was all built around sport. It was a great way of entertainment.

**Q9: What role did the GAA play as part of your school and/or college life?**

It was an introduction to the game. I remember when I was going to school, the local curate used to come in at lunchtime or evening with a bag of hurleys and would say "come on 'til we get hurling". We would start a bit of a hurling match. We would be running up and down the field and he would tell us to pull on the ball. It was there that it started but my 1<sup>st</sup> introduction to hurling was when I was about sixteen with the club, that was it. That's where it started off.

**Q10: Who do you admire most in the GAA and why?**

There are many people that I admire but one that comes to mind was Matt Connor. He was such a talented free taker. He was the one Matt Connor and a song wrote about him. He always looked up and smiled and enjoyed the game so that's why I admire Matt Connor. He made the sport so easy and simple looking. He played for Walsh Island and Offaly.

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**Q11: In your experience what have been the biggest changes in the GAA?**

The biggest changes are the facilities around now compared to my day where you togged out under ditches and behind trees or maybe an old shed. Now they have showers and dressing rooms and all sorts of facilities and exercise rooms as well. It has changed a lot but for the good. It is good for the game and good for the health of the players.

**Q12: Have changes in your community affected your club and how?**

Yes there has. There is other entertainment now besides GAA. The leading thing still is the GAA though. I wouldn't be over anxious about any other sport only GAA at the present time. I like hurling and football matches but particularly hurling. I enjoy it.



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**Q13: Do you think the role of women in the GAA has changed over the years and how?**

Yes, it has changed a certain amount. Women now take all the young kids to training sessions and underage matches so women are playing a very important part there. They are transporting them around which is not easy. Also secretarial work, women are taking over a lot of that.

**Q14: Describe the role of the churches and clergy in your club and how it has changed over the years?**

Clergy was the introduction when I was serving mass. The curate used to always get us up when there was a match in Portlaoise when I was living in Killeigh at the time. He would say "We're going to a match today" if Offaly was playing. He would fill up his car and drive on to it. He would get us all in and bring us home again, safe and sound. He made sure we enjoyed the game. I enjoyed it greatly. There would be six of us going together. We probably wouldn't have went only for the priest. We would be talking and chatting and when we were coming home he would encourage us to start playing the game ourselves and to get down to the field tomorrow and the field was the green in Killeigh or small part of a field near the school or near the village. We would throw two coats down and someone would stand between them as a goals. That was the entertainment for the week especially after an Offaly match. If they won there would be a great bit of interest.

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**Q15: Was there a connection between politics and the GAA for you, if so what?**

No, none.

**Q16: What have been the main disappointments you have had with the GAA?**

My main disappointments would be, well there wasn't many as I enjoyed helping out the club with sports days and dinner dances but my only disappointment is that I wish I could have done more for the club.

**Q17: Did the GAA shape your own identity in any way?**

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It did. It makes you popular. You meet friends. You go out to the game and meet your opponent, it's rivalry on the field but when the game is over we're friends and you're always friends for life. You could threaten a lad on the field but when it's over its forgotten about. That's the way sport should be.

**Q18: What role has Irish language and culture had in your club and on your personal involvement with the GAA?**

In the club the list of players for a match would be wrote out in Irish bit I never got involved in the writing out the list of players because I wasn't too fluent in Irish. I left that to someone with more Irish.

**Q19: How important are rivalries within the GAA and what are yours?**

Rivalry was great craic. You can't beat a bit of rivalry. It works up a bit of tension and a bit of pressure to play the game to your best ability. You can't beat a bit of club rivalry and county rivalry but when the game was over we're all one. I like to see it that way. I like to see a bit of craic and then to get as serious as anyone but when it's over we're the best of friends.

**Q20: Comment on the role of volunteers within the GAA?**

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Volunteers are needed; it's what has the GAA going so well. It's a voluntary organisation. I encourage any fella that has time or girl that has time to give as much time to the GAA as they can. It is a voluntary organisation and amateur sport. Long may it live.

**Q21: Describe your experience with teams as a player, manager, committee member or supporter.**

As a player I enjoyed playing the game. My greatest experience was I won the junior hurling title in 1970 for Killeigh against Drumcullen against all odds. We played in Tullamore. There was a great bit of excitement from it and I enjoyed it. My biggest disappointment as a player was in 1964. It was a minor final against St. Rynagh's. But there again that St. Rynagh's team went on to win twelve senior titles so they were good.

**Q22: Describe your experiences, if any, with the GAA outside Ireland.**

None.

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**Q23: Describe how media coverage of GAA in your lifetime has changed.**

It has improved immensely. There is a great lot of coverage for all games now. No matter where they are they are covered somewhere.

**Q24: What in your opinion are the biggest challenges facing the GAA in the future?**

Foreign games are a bit of a challenge but there is room for all sport. But the unemployment at the present time you see lads having to get up and emigrate and get their education and just as they enjoy the sport.

**Q25: What does the GAA mean to you?**

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It is my native sport. It is a great game. It's enjoyable. It's a voluntary game and amateur sport so make the best of it.

**Q26: Do you have any pictures, documents, video etc. that you could share with us? Please provide a brief description.**

**Do you know any songs or poems about the GAA in your local area that you can send us or write in here?**

**Can you think of anyone else in your locality or in your family circle who we should contact for this project? Who are they and why?**

- Not to my knowledge
- None really that would be local
- Not off hand I suppose, several people but to get them is another story, my uncles would have had a fair knowledge of the sport down the years of all the great names in the different countries such as Christy Ring

**Q27: Is there anything else you would like to say about the GAA?**

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Long may it live and it's a great sport and the young people should keep it going and be kept amateur. I don't think players should get paid.

**Q28: How did you hear about this project?**

I was just told about it.

I hereby assign the copyright of the answers 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 questionnaire.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Mary McDonald \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 24/04/2010 \_\_\_\_\_