

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	21 st Feb 2011
Location	Glenview Hotel, Co. Wicklow
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Pat Mitchell
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1944 Home County: Wicklow
Education	Primary: St Kevin's NS, Glendalough, Co. Wicklow Secondary: Rathdrum Vocational School, Co. Wicklow
Family	Siblings: 1 sister Current Family if Different: Wife (Anne), 3 daughters & 2 sons
Club(s)	Laragh GAA [Wicklow] Rathdrum GAA [Wicklow]
Occupation	Retired Driver
Parents' Occupation	Department of Lands employee [Father]
Religion	None
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	28 th June 2012
Period Covered	1952 - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Wicklow, Meath, Cavan, Dublin, Louth, Cork, Waterford, Kilkenny, Donegal, Americas, USA, Canada, Australasia, Australia
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Managing, Coaching, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds
Interview Summary	<p>Pat discusses how his father, grandfather and uncles gave him his early interest in the GAA. He goes on to tell of his early days playing football for Laragh and then moving to Rathnew after his wedding. He talks of the successes at Rathnew and fundraising for the development of the club over the years. He goes on to discuss the various roles he has held at both club and county levels. He discusses the challenges facing the GAA and unique feeling of Irishness associated with the GAA. Finally, he talks of what the GAA has meant to him over the years.</p> <p>00:27 Talks about growing up in Laragh and tourism there at the time.</p> <p>01:30 Speaks of his father, uncles and grandfather taking him to matches at a child.</p> <p>02:25 Tells of his first All-Ireland final in Croke Park in 1952 a draw between Meath and Cavan. Three brothers played that day two for Cavan and one for Meath. Mentions that his photo was taken that day on O'Connell street with his father and uncle.</p> <p>03:10 Talks of travelling to the match by bike and bus via Roundwood. Mentions staying with his grandfather Patrick Mitchell who played with O'Tooles club in Dublin and going to Croke Park.</p> <p>05:17 Speaks of having a sideline seat for the 1957 All-Ireland Football final when Louth beat Cork. Mentions Louth Captain Dermot O'Brien, a famous singer and accordion</p>

	<p>player.</p> <p>06:07 Talks of his father captaining the Laragh football team that beat Donard in the final of the Junior County Championship in Aughrim on 10 October 1954. Mentions another Intermediate Championship win.</p> <p>07:33 Talks of being born and raised in Laragh but spending a lot of time in Dublin.</p> <p>07:58 Talks of the dedication to the GAA in his youth by all. Mentions the grounds they played on.</p> <p>08:54 Tells how the club got the ground they use to this day.</p> <p>09:39 Talks of 1962 and being a substitute on the Laragh team in the Senior County Football Final against Kilbride which they drew and subsequently lost by one point. Mentions the commitment of all those involved that kept the club going.</p> <p>11:55 Speaks of meeting his wife of forty years Ann and his move to Rathnew. Strong tradition of success in Rathnew.</p> <p>12:52 Discusses the set up in Laragh in his day. Mentions Seamus Holden, Michael Miley Captain Pat Byrne Jimmy Byrne and Mick Devitt. Talks of playing rather than winning and how the club struggled until Harry McGrath from Lismore Co Waterford brought a more professional approach to the club.</p> <p>14:52 Talks of the Gaelic football in school at the time and the lack of organisation. Mentions Seamus O'Brien and Mr Kirk the teachers that helped organise games for the children.</p> <p>16:38 Speaks about the other sports that he was interested in his youth but hurling and football came through.</p> <p>17:20 Talks of the friends he has made over the years and how the links are still there after all these years. Mentions how strong the GAA friendships can be as he saw recently at Michaela Harte's funeral which he attended with Brian Cody and many others.</p> <p>19:49 Speaks of the way in which the GAA comes together in times of grief and loss.</p> <p>21:34 Tells of his transfer to Rathnew shortly after his marriage to Ann after meeting her at a dance.</p> <p>23: 22 Talks of having his families support over the years and how it allowed him to have the involvement in the GAA that</p>
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	<p>he had for many years.</p> <p>24:48 Speaks of his wife's love of her local club and his involvement in the serious club that is Rathnew, which has won thirty championships.</p> <p>26:05 Talks of his son's involvement in playing for the club at an early age which led to Pat himself getting involved in the management of the club.</p> <p>26:23 Talks of his position at county level as a result of his work at club level.</p> <p>27:35 Discusses the developments at Rathnew over the years culminating with a new pitch and clubhouse which was opened by Seamus Howlin last year.</p> <p>28:11 Talks of the pride at being accepted into Rathnew.</p> <p>29:00 Speaks of Neddy and Margie Freaney. Who helped him settled in to Rathnew.</p> <p>29:45 Tells of being involved as a physio for the team in 1975 and from this he moved into various positions.</p> <p>31:04 Speaks of the rearrangement of the districts in Wicklow in 1979 and how the original three clubs in the district, Saint Patrick's, Rathnew and Ashford were joined to Bray Emmets, Greystones, Newtown and others. This increased competition at all levels from Under 10 to Under 16.</p> <p>32:42 Speaks of being the county youth officer from 1998 to 2000 and going to Croke Park with the kids.</p> <p>33:33 Discusses the success of Rathnew in term of this merging of the districts in 1979. Mentions from 1981 Moses Coffee and from 2010 Leighton Glynn, who is now the county coach.</p> <p>35:29 Talks of Rathnew's successes and failures over the years and how the success breeds success.</p> <p>37:36 Speaks of how the community all got behind the club and supported the players.</p> <p>38:22 Talks about the people who have moved to the area and are simply staying in Rathnew but their living in Dublin.</p> <p>39:42 Tells of the importance of soccer in Rathnew in the 1970's and 1980's and how popularity swung back to Gaelic football in the 1990's.</p> <p>40:56 Speaks of the importance of hurling in Rathnew with</p>
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	<p>ten Championships but focuses again on the thirty football Championships they have won.</p> <p>41:10 Talks of players playing both Gaelic football and soccer over the years since the ban was lifted.</p> <p>41:55 Speaks of when a Championship is won and the celebrations that take place and how this attracts the children. Remembers the Leinster Club Championship played on 23 December when the parade that took place was one of the largest ever. Mentions Tommy Walsh and Henry Shefflin of Kilkenny.</p> <p>44:15 Talks about Wicklow at county level and motivating players and their commitment.</p> <p>45:55 Talks of a big low in 1954 on 6 June at the Leinster Senior Football Championship Quarter Final when Meath beat Wicklow in “the day of the long count”. Meath went on to win the All-Ireland final.</p> <p>47:53 Speaks of Mick O’Dwyer and his work with Wicklow GAA.</p> <p>48:48 Tells of the success of the Wicklow Hurlers at Junior Level and Intermediate Level and National League Level. Mentions again 1954 and travelling to Naas to see Wicklow win the first Junior Leinster Hurling Championship.</p> <p>49:27 Discusses the low number of clubs playing hurling at the moment and the how this produces small but dedicated group of players to play at county level. Mentions Division three and the Christy Ring competition. Also mentions the Henderson family from Kilkenny John Junior, his father John Senior, and uncles Pat and Ger.</p> <p>50:53 Talks of the many roles within the club he has held throughout the years and the advice he gives to the youth.</p> <p>52:47 Talks of 1982 and representing Wicklow in football in Cavan at the Féile. Mentions the great support for the teams in the Under 14 second division All-Ireland final and losing by two points.</p> <p>55:17 Talks of Joe Byrne and the advice he gave him regarding the GAA and his role in it.</p> <p>56:04 Speaks about key decisions made of the years for the good of the club such as the purchase of the ground.</p> <p>56:52 Tells of fundraising in the 1980’s including a Lord Mayor where whoever raised the most money became the</p>
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	<p>Lord Mayor of Rathnew. Mentions travelling to Donegal for a National League game and to Thurles and selling lines for the club.</p> <p>59:25 Discusses getting involved at county level through Moses Coffey as kitman looking after the kit and equipment.</p> <p>01:00:12 Talks about his role as County Youth Officer 1998 – 2000. Mentions the structure of the games being played and dealing with the youth of the day.</p> <p>01:01:30 Speaks about becoming PRO in 2010 taking over from Jackie Napier. Mentions Mick O’Hagan’s help also talks of what is involved in the role. Jimmy Dunne is mentioned with regard to programmes and year books.</p> <p>01:05:15 Talks of the enjoyment at meeting people in the county set up. Mentions working with East Coast radio and giving them game updates.</p> <p>01:06:42 Speaks about the local media the Wicklow People and their three reporters club Chairman Mick O’Hagan, Mark Kennedy and Peter Keogh.</p> <p>01:08:20 Talks about the challenges involved in keeping the GAA going in Wicklow. Tells of being too close to Dublin’s media on slow news days.</p> <p>01:10:59 Talks of a couple of incidents in matches in 2000 and how things can be blown out of proportion by the media.</p> <p>01:11:38 Speaks of the benefits he has gained from his experiences at county level and how this has transferred to club level.</p> <p>01:12:50 Speaks of his fear of emigration taking players away to foreign countries. Mentions Australia and approximately 270 transfers to London last year.</p> <p>01:13:54 Talks of his optimism about the future of the GAA.</p> <p>01:14:57 Speaks of how the GAA gives a sense of Irishness to him not just here but also abroad. Mentions Canada, America and Australia.</p> <p>01:15:58 Tells how after his family and friends the GAA is the greatest thing that has ever happened to him. He goes on to thank his father, uncles and grandfather for bringing him into the GAA.</p>
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Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played with Laragh GAA from childhood until 1972; Played with Rathnew, 1972-78. Won Carter Cup (1978)
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Rathnew GAA: Chairman (1993-5); PRO (1977-79); Selector; Secretary Juvenile Club (1979-84); Manager Juvenile Club (1979-84); Chairman Juvenile Club (1979-84). Wicklow GAA: Youth Officer (1998-2000); PRO (2010-current); Selector for Wicklow Minor and U21 teams; Kitman for Wicklow Senior Football team (1978)
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:17:14
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