GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	17 February 2009
Location	Clontarf, Dublin
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin, Donal Ó Síocháin, Aisling Gogarty, Rónán Ó Síocháin, Jack Ryan
	Biographical Summary of Interviewee
Gender	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin: Female
	Donal Ó Síocháin: Male
	Aisling Gogarty: Female
	Rónán Ó Síochái: Male
	Jack Ryan: Male
Born	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin: Year Born: 1960 Home County: DublinDonal Ó Síocháin: Year Born: 1944 Home County: DublinAisling Gogarty: Year Born: 1950 Home County: DublinRónán Ó Síocháin: Year Born: 1945 Home County: Dublin

	look Byon
	Jack Ryan: Year Born: 1946
	Home County: Tipperary
Education	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin:
	Primary: Belgrove National School
	Secondary: Scoil Chaitríona
	Third Level: N/A
	Donal Ó Síocháin:
	Primary: Belgrove National School
	Secondary: Gormanstown College
	Third Level: N/A
	Aisling Gogarty:
	Primary: Belgrove National School
	Secondary: Holy Faith, Clontarf
	Third Level: Sion Hill Primary Teaching
	Rónán Ó Síocháin:
	Primary: Belgrove National School
	Secondary: Gormanstown College
	Third Level: University College Dublin
	Jack Ryan:
	Primary: Dunkerrin National School
	Secondary: St Flannan's College, Ennis.
	Third Level: University College Dublin
Family	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin:
	Siblings: Donal, Rónan, Órla, Aisling, Fiona
	Current Family if Different: Brian (husband); Paul and
	Kevin (sons)
	Donal Ó Síocháin:
	Siblings: Rónán, Orla, Aisling, Fiona, Blaithín
L	I

	 Current Family if Different: Maeve (wife), Seán, Sinéad, Ross, Rory Jack Ryan: Aisling Gogarty: Siblings: Donal, Ronan, Orla, Fiona, Bláithín Current Family if Different: Paddy (husband), Barry. Colm. Rónán Ó Síocháin: Siblings: Donal, Orla, Aisling, Fiona, Bláithín Current Family if Different: Dara and Oran Jack Ryan: Siblings: Monica, Philip, Diarmuid, Mary, Seamus, Anne, Eugene, Margaret, Bernadette Current Family if Different: Orla (wife-deceased); Naoise (daughter); Shane and Feargal (sons)
Club(s)	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin: Clontarf Donal Ó Síocháin: N/A Aisling Gogarty: Naomh Mearnóg Rónán Ó Síocháin: N/A Jack Ryan: Monegall, Co. Tipperary
Occupation	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin: School Secretary Donal Ó Síocháin: Retired Airline Pilot [Retired] Aisling Gogarty: Primary School Teacher Rónán Ó Síocháin: Retired Solicitor Jack Ryan: Retired Secondary School Teacher
Parents' Occupation	 Bláithín Ní Shíocháin, Donal Ó Síocháin, Aisling Gogarty, Rónán Ó Síocháin: Seán Ó Síocháin – Director General of the GAA [Father]; Housewife [Mother] Jack Ryan: National School Teacher [Father]; Home maker, former nurse [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin: N/A Donal Ó Síocháin: Progressive Democrats Aisling Gogarty: N/A Rónán Ó Síocháin: N/A Jack Ryan: N/A

Date of Report	22 October 2009
Period Covered	1940s-2009
Counties/Countries Covered	Dublin, Cork, Tipperary
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Other sports
Interview Summary	Introduction of all present: Donal Ó Síocháin; Bláithín Ní Shíocháin, Jack Ryan, Aisling Gogarty, Rónán Ó Síocháin. :40 Earliest of memories – Donal – memories of the old office in Jones Road – description of the offices – members of staff, his father, Seán (Assistant General Secretary), Paddy O'Keefe (General Secretary)and Bridie Moriarty (secretary) – Seán went on to become General secretary and Director General.
	1:48 Bláithín – earliest memory – 1916 50 th year commemoration pageant - happened at night time – her sister Orla took part in it – people on pitch had fluorescent hurls – she was six years old – huge spectacle. Also remembers going to the Munster Final with her father and sitting on his lap and saying 'wake me up when the band comes out' - not much interest in the games at the time. Starting to play camógie – getting her first pair of camógie boots - playing in the Phoenix Park with the cow pats on the field – becoming more interested in the games.
	4:05 Aisling – earliest memory – going to matches with her father every Sunday as a child- hanging around after the matches – getting hurls from the hurlers and camógie players – the excitement of getting Kathleen Mill's broken hurl after a match – her father counting the takings after the match in an office under the Hogan Stand – taking the money to the Munster and Leinster Bank on Dame Street where Seán would be let in a side door. Memories of the starting of the club in Clontarf in 1961 – céilís in the school hall to raise

money for the club – meeting her husband, Paddy Gogarty, at a céilí, he later played for Dublin.
6:20 Rónán – earliest memories – story about his father being involved in a drama group which may have been part of Craobh an Chéitinnigh and performing in a play which was in Irish and running at the Damer Hall on St Stephen's Green – Rónán himself very proud that he was involved in a play as a part of the Dublin Theatre Festival that also ran in the Damer Hall. Other memory – going to an All-Ireland final when he was ten or eleven years old in 1956 – Cork v Wexford – going to mass in the morning – going to meet Christy Ring and Jim Barry in a B&B with his father – a great match – Art Foley in goal – the famous Rackard brothers – Christy Ring.
9:09 Dónal – seeing the Rackards chairing Christy Ring off the field after that match. Ring as a hero - he would have been 36 at the time – Mick O'Connell – the same heroism.
10:10 Rónán - Seán Ó Síocháin playing for Cork and Dublin – in Clan na nGael Club in the Phoenix Park.
10:55 Rónán – Seán leaving teaching and taking the job as Paddy O'Keefe's assistant. Donal and Aisling– 1946 teachers strike –father didn't take up job until the strike ended.
12:02 – Seán's career as a primary school teacher – started in Ballyvourney, then Harolds Cross, then Haddington Road.
12:45 Seán's interest in all forms of Irish culture – singing – member of Craobh Cheitinnigh choir – organised trips to America with other Irish musicians including Kathleen Watkins, Edmond Brown, Albert Healy, Roddy McCormack – bringing Irish culture over to the USA – played in Carnegie Hall – in Denver – was a soloist with the Dublin Opera Society – won the Feis Ceoil – sang with Dame Jude Sutherland in the Grand Opera Society. Craobh an Céitinnigh singing at the Theatre Royal on a Saturday night.
14:55 Was a founder of Gael Linn and produced some albums for them – also involved in Comhgháil Náisiúnta na nGael – his interest in all things Irish.
15:37 [Aisling] story about sending an Aran sweater to a German – the philosophy of meitheal, his philosophy.
16:31 Speaking Irish in the household – Bláithín and Fianna went to Gaelscoileanna – he was fluent.
17:26 Seán's motivation for being involved in the GAA – the Irishness of it – loved hurling, though he didn't start playing it

until he was 14. Father from Cill na Martra in West Cork and there was no GAA there when he was growing up – but people from Cill na Martra were very proud when he became Director General in 1964 – Paddy Cooney's involvement in the GAA in Cill na Martra – Seán prominence in the GAA in Ireland – the pitch in Cill na Martra now called after Seán Ó Síocháin.
18:53 Building up of club facilities around the country during his time as Director General.
19:13 [Aisling] He trained as a teacher in St Patrick's Drumcondra and got involved in going to Croke park by singing the National Anthem there at matches and bringing entertainment for half time – them started refereeing and becoming more involved.
20:07 [Donal] He also did commentary on GAA matches for RTÉ in Irish – played football for Macroom, the Cork, then Dublin, then Cork, then Munster.
21:33 [Aisling] playing camogie with the Holy Faith School in Croke Park – success of the team – her father used to training the team in the evenings – soaking hurls in linseed oil. Her sister Orla – a great camógie player – had three All- Ireland medals for Dublin – was the star of the team.
22:28 [Dónal] Orla a great sports person – Shane Ryan (Jack's son) successful in football – Dónal's daughter a great hockey player – Aisling has two club All-Irelands.
23:24 [Bláithín] – was on the senior team – Fianna played junior for Dublin and was a good player. Dónal and Rónán played in school.
23:47 [Aisling] story about Orla getting a team together when they were in primary school in Belgrove.
24:30 [Bláithín] playing camógie in the Phoenix Park – driving to matches – [Jack] camogie more attached to GAA clubs now – orange quarters at half time – conditions of facilities, the pitch the dressing rooms – the pride of getting camogie boots, her own camán – the camogie uniform, the tunic and black tights, stockings and suspenders
27:26 [Bláithín] huge nursery's for camogie now in Scoil uí Chonaill – nowadays girls have club experience by the time they get to secondary schools – improvement of underage facilities.
28:43 [Aisling] member of Mearnógs club – recently acquired

an all-weather pitch.
28:49 Change in relationship between the GAA and camogie – most camogie clubs now part of a GAA club – part of a GAA community – no paid staff for camogie.
29:54 Father attending their camogie matches – playing at home.
31:14 [Rónán] – memory of playing in Croke Park for Gormanstown College against Joeys.
31:49 [Rónán] Seán's involvement in Craobh an Cheitinnigh – review of a play that was put on in the Peacock.
32:40 [Dónal] – he was one of the leading ballad singers of his day in the 1940s and 50s - had two radio programmes – gave up singing in 1964 when he became Director General of Croke Park – <i>Balladmakers, Around the Fire</i> and <i>Around the</i> <i>Boorey Log</i> were his radio programmes – also presented television programmes – had a full broadcasting career until 1964.
34:04 [Dónal] – didn't see him much when they were growing up – saw him at matches on Sundays – his schedule. 1964 made a decision between the GAA and his broadcasting career.
34:56 [Dónal] He wasn't around much when they were growing up – county secretaries calling the house.
35:40 [Bláithín] In national school when the ban was lifted – a teacher took it out on her in school.
36:25 [Aisling] – story about him comparing concerts in Belgrove National School.
36:55 [Bláithín] – her father bringing gifts back after he'd been down the country – bags of onions or potatoes, pheasants, turkeys etc.
38:00 [Aisling] Going to matches down the country – waiting around after matches – her father spoke to everyone. Travelling around the country.
38:49 [Bláithín] Easter for her and her sister Fianna always meant Congress – travelling on Good Friday – stopping off for the Stations of the Cross – eating sweets on Easter Sunday.
39:19 [Aisling] Gaeltacht competitions – the Oireachtas in different Gaeltachtaí; [Dónal] – Oireachtas used to be held in Dublin in Marlborough Street and also in The Mansion House

 speaking with De Valera who was a friend of his fathers – Seán was not party political.
40:28 [Aisling] Seán taking hurls and sliotars up to Áras an Uachtaráin to meet the King of Belgium when Jack Lynch was president, showing the King how to play hurling.
41:00 [Rónán] – in his administrative role in the GAA Seán careful not to let it be known what side he was on – story about Pat Fanning visiting the house when he was about to become president and the ban was the big issue – debating the ban with Pat Fanning – still unsure if he was for or against it. [Dónal] Seán would always be the recorder of these debates.
42:51 [Aisling] - Seán's vision for the GAA – each parish having their own clubhouse. Jack's father, Séamus Ó Riain starting Féile na nGael when he was president – that being close to Seán's heart – as was Scór. [Jack] Seán used to give policies a high profile.
44:14 [Aisling] In his retirement involvement in Féile na nGael – job of generating funds for a new Ceannáras for the GAA – raised 3,500,000 for it, went to America to fundraise – involved in the All-Star games – went to Australia with the Meath team on their first trip.
45:43 [Dónal] – Seán as a well-known figure – remembers being in New York with him in the early 1970s when he was there on an All-Star trip.
46:53 [Rónán] – both mother and father were great singers and would have great parties in the house – great musicians and actors etc would be there.
47:27 Busy household – everyone had their phone number.
47:47 [Aisling] – advertisement hoardings around Croke Park started in his time – how he worked out what to charge for each position in the pitch.
49:03 [Aisling and Bláithín] Children helping out in Croke Park – sending out tickets, leaving tickets in the shop across from Ceannáras, Hughes, for people to collect on the morning of an All-Ireland.
50:00 [Aisling] Sourcing goalposts from Ireland – buying Irish goods.
50:39 [Rónán] – What the house was like coming up to September every year– being asked for tickets – Seán taking

notes on his cigarette boxes – his father handwriting letters to people.
50:44 [Aisling] – Morning of All-Irelands – getting new clothes to go to the match – polishing her fathers shoes.
53:23 [Bláithín] Bláithín and Fianna had their own little stools in the Ard-Chomhairle – stools made my Con O'Leary, her god-father who was also the groundsman in Croke Park.
53:55 [Bláithín] – Dublin football in 1974 – Heffo's Army – supporting Dublin – Aisling's husband, Paddy on the team - Seán going to the winners or losers dinner – begging to be allowed to go – he bought them Dublin teddy bears instead.
56:50 [Aisling] Photograph from that year – all sharing one Dublin hat. [Jack] 1974 the last year they played in Blue and white – crépe paper hats – having a doll and rosette.
57:47 [Dónal] – Hopalong Cassidy the film star going to a match in Croke Park; [Jack] Princess Grace at an All-Ireland final – [Dónal] The filming of Rooney.
58:20 [Aisling] – Paddy Hillary when he was EU Commissioner. Normality of meeting well-known personalities.
59:09 [Bláithín] – working for the bank on O'Connell Street – seeing a wax model of her father and the Sam Maguire in Clery's window.
1:00:00 [Bláithín] – going to Munster Finals – people pointing into the car at them – he was a well-known personality.
1:00:37 [Rónán] – Took up golf when he was sixty – playing in Hermitage and Royal Dublin – playing with Bill O'Herlihy – Dublin GAA golfing society – Anna Livia; Cork Players Association – trophy named after Seán Ó Síocháin- Nicky English proposed by her father for membership in the Royal Dublin – Fr Kitt his golfing partner.
1:02:30 Their social life tied in with the GAA – [Rónán] – played soccer and went to Rugby club dances and tennis club dances – [Dónal] no club in Clontarf when they were growing up.
1:03:56 [Aisling] – Became friendly with girls playing camógie in UCD – Anne Caher – teams they used to play against eg. Callan girls – good social life with them – tied in around the Sigerson, The Fitzgibbon Cup and the Ashbourne Cup.
1:04:55 [Bláithín] – Bláithín and Fianna went to an all Irish

school and so their social life was always skills in No Figure
school and so their social life was always céilís in Na Fianna and Coláiste Mhuire camogie was totally separate from GAA at that time.
1:05:37 [Jack] Seán Ó Síocháin and Seamus Ó Riain good friends before Jack and Oral met – Jack and Orla met at a match.
1:06:20 [Bláithín] Story about Jack and Orla at a match in UCD after Jack had had back surgery – Orla's interest in Gaelic games.
1:07:35 [Jack] Jack playing for Tipperary at the same time as Orla was playing for Dublin. – Orla played for 19 years – missed out short stretches when she was having the children and the year they got married because of the rule in Dublin that married women could not play, 1973.
1:08:21 [Bláithín] Orla was 51 when she finished playing with Naomh Mearnóg's – he daughter was playing mid-field – [Dónal] played international racquetball until her forties – [Rónán] Her relationship with referees. [Aisling] – now a trophy in Mearnógs for a social hurling competition in Orla's memory – [Dónal] – Orla also on the Leinster Team of the Century – very passionate about sports – all the daughters also played ladies football when it came out first.
1:11:16 [Rónán] – Orla known as a tomboy when she was a child.
1:11:48 [Jack] – They lived in Dublin – Jack still playing for Tipperary – [Bláithín] Jack played for Moneygall until he was in his forties – travelling down for training – Jack's passion about Moneygall – Obama – a Tipperary parish for hurling. – [Jack] taking the children to training in Monaygall and people minding them on the sideline – travelling up and down to play for Tipperary.
1:13:45 [Jack] – His son Shane a football All-Star for Dublin – also a great hurler.
1:14:27 [Bláithín and Aisling] -Values that their father passed down – embraced every sport – Bláithín's husbands interest in sport involve motorsport and cricket – he spoke to everyone the same way no matter what walk of life – loyalty to Cill na Matra – two of his staff from there.
1:16:40 Saw his grandchildren play at underage and the first time his grandson Barry played for Dublin was the day after he died.

1:17:30 [Bláithín] When he became general secretary in 1964 – celebrations in Cill na Martra – bonfires from Macroom up the hills - reception for him – pride.
1:18:21 What Seán's views would have been of the modern GAA – pride – Croke Park – opening up Croke Park – pride in that clubs are so well resourced – development of clubs first and then Croke Park.
1:19:50 Big changes that they have seen – [Bláithín] Threat of it becoming professional – growth of the GAA – remaining importance of the grassroots – story about a friend of hers always looking for the GAA pitch whenever they go anywhere in Ireland. [Rónán] – looking at older matches and comparing them with the modern game – players now playing like professionals. [Jack] – Game was tougher in the past – the heaviness of the sliotars.[Rónán and Aisling] – the 125 celebration match in Croke Park – Dublin v Tyrone.
1:22:28 [Dónal] – Big difference in the attitude of players – Cork players strike – would never have happened twenty years ago – [Jack] those players still playing passionately for their clubs. [Aisling] facilities in Mearnógs – now have a special needs group at the weekends there and a nursery group – club always packed. [Jack] clubs are better resourced one football, one set of jerseys.
1:25:27 – life without the GAA – the GAA was his fathers whole life – he loved it – it was a lifestyle – never had family holidays – going to Cill na Martra – but no-one went on holidays back then.
1:28:10 Their mother would go to the big matches – not from a GAA background – Jack washing jerseys.
1:29:02 [Aisling] Story about Seán watching the Munster final on the TV when he was in his eighties.
1:30:10 [Rónán] – When his parents got married – she was a beautiful woman – from Dublin. Story about a phone call between his grandmother and Brendan Behan who was painting the Cusack stand at the time.
1:31:57 Legacy of Ó Síocháin – [Jack] – interview with Pádraig Ó Cumáin – wanted his legacy to be his marriage and his children growing up. [Rónán] – his family, his religion, his GAA – had great charisma [Aisling] He took great care when writing speeches – opening clubs around the country – great speaker and singer – his song was 'The Boys of Bothar na Sráide', 'The Banks of the Salan'; Percy French songs;

	'Rose of Mooncoin' – great parties in the house.
	1:34:44 [Jack] Spent time with people – very genuine – a man of simple needs – a good person.
	1:35:44 [Rónán] – He retired in 1979 – [Bláithín] – big void in his life after that – fundraised for the ceannáras for three years – helped to set up insurance for players – found it difficult when it ended – played golf – went on the Donnchadh Ó Dualaing walks for the Irish Wheelchair Association – also involved in the Ireland Fund - made a charity cassette for 'Alert' – read at the local church – stayed involved in the community.
	End of interview.
Involvement in GAA	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin:
	✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager □ Coach □ Steward
	Chairperson Committee Member Grounds-person
	🗆 Caterer 🗸 Jersey Washer 🗆 Referee 🗆 None
	□ Other (please specify): Driver
	Donal Ó Síocháin:
	✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager □ Coach □ Steward
	Chairperson Committee Member Grounds-person
	□ Caterer □ Jersey Washer □ Referee □ None
	□ Other (please specify): Driver
	Aisling Gogarty:
	✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager ✓ Coach □ Steward
	□ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
	✓ Caterer ✓ Jersey Washer □ Referee □ None
	□ Other (please specify): Driver

	Rónán Ó Síocháin:
	✓ Supporter ✓ Player □ Manager □ Coach □ Steward
	□ Chairperson □ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
	Caterer I Jersey Washer I Referee I None
	□ Other (please specify): Driver
	Jack Ryan:
	✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach □ Steward
	□ Chairperson □ Committee Member □ Grounds-person
	Caterer I Jersey Washer I Referee I None
	□ Other (please specify): Driver
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	Bláithín Ní Shíocháin: Fifteen years playing.
	Donal Ó Síocháin: Eighteen years playing
	Aisling Gogarty: 2 All-Ireland Schools camogie medals
	Rónán Ó Síocháin:
	Jack Ryan: 1 All-Ireland Senior Hurling; 2 Munster Senior Hurling; I National Football League (Div.2); 1 All-Ireland U21 hurling; 2 Munster U21 Hurling; 2 Tipperary Senior Hurling; 1 Dublin Senior Hurling (UCD); 5 Fitzgibbon Cup
Record as an Administrator	N/A
(Positions held; how long for)	
Format	✓ Audio □ Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 1:39:11
Language	English

REFERENCE NO. DB/1/5

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: 22 October 2009