

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> Aug 2010
<b>Location</b>	Gerry's home, near Clonaslee, Co. Laois
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Gerry Culliton
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1936 <b>Home County:</b> Laois
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Tinnahinch NS, Co. Laois; Clonaslee NS, Co. Laois <b>Secondary:</b> Cistercian College Roscrea
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 10 sisters & 1 brother <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Wife (Monica); 4 sons & 2 daughters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Clonaslee GAA [Laois]; Mountmellick GAA [Laois]
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Farmers
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Wanderers RugbyFootball Club, Lansdowne Road, Dublin; Donaghmore Co-Operative, Co. Laois

<b>Date of Report</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> June 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1936 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Laois, Dublin, England, Wales, Scotland, Great Britain, France, Europe
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Playing, Training, Officials, Celebrations, Education, Religion, Role of Teachers, All-Ireland, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Gerry discusses his time spent playing hurling for Laois and rugby for his club, Leinster, and Ireland. He explains how Roscrea Cistercian College introduced him to all kinds of sports and how he excelled at rugby and hurling. He describes the effect the GAA foreign games ban had on his hurling career. He recalls the highlights of his international rugby career and reflects on the positive implications of opening Croke Park to rugby.</p> <p>00:22 Explains he was born in 1936 in Rerymore, 600 yards from his current home.</p> <p>01:48 Recalls walking to school in Tinnahinch 3 miles away, then cycling to Clonaslee aged 8, another 3 miles away.</p> <p>02:38 Recalls his father having an interest in sport, including cricket. Says that GAA was his father's main sport. Describes his father listening to Michael O'Hehir's broadcasts.</p> <p>03:42 Discusses being part of a family of 12: 10 sisters, one brother, growing up on a farm. Describes his brother getting an agricultural science qualification in 1939, around the time of The Emergency, joining the army, and progressing from cadet to officer in 6 weeks.</p> <p>05:05 Recalls his brother's interest in farming and work on it during the holidays and in his retirement until his death when his son took over the farm.</p> <p>06:02 Describes his interest in hurling from the age of 5 or 6. Discusses his sisters' interest in tennis, the tennis court on the farm. Explains that his brother was 17 years older so he was surrounded by 10 sisters.</p> <p>07:04 Recalls playing hurling in The Green in Clonaslee during lunchtime at school. Describes his earliest memories</p>

	<p>of hurling: listening to Michael O'Hehir's broadcasts, gathering together in one house to listen to matches.</p> <p>08:55 Says that Clonaslee were enthusiastic hurlers but lacked success.</p> <p>09:24 Explains that in Clonaslee he never played competitive hurling, until he went to Roscrea.</p> <p>09:52 Mentions Paddy Bates's father, Jack Bates, who was involved in hurling in Clonaslee.</p> <p>10:35 Says he went to Roscrea aged 9 or 10 and can't remember attending matches before that age.</p> <p>11:09 Recalls attending the Cistercian College in Roscrea after his brother, who got a scholarship. Discusses his own lack of intellectual prowess and his sporting talents. Says he entered Roscrea aged 11, the youngest in the school, and repeated first year so he spent 7 years there.</p> <p>13:00 Discusses life as a boarder, which he enjoyed. Recalls his fascination with sport: played hurling, rugby, athletics, won high jump intermediate medal in Iveagh Grounds in Dublin, was placed in medals in hurdles.</p> <p>14:06 Recalls being on a junior rugby team for three years, reaching the semi-final the second year, and being beaten by Newbridge College, who went on to win the junior cup. Explains how, the following year, Roscrea were beaten by Blackrock College, who went on to win the junior cup.</p> <p>15:02 Explains that when he was too old for junior rugby, he went on to play hurling. Recollects beating St. Kieran's College in the first round and being beaten by Ballyfin College by a point in 1952, who went on to win the final. Recalls being beaten by St. Kieran's College in 1953 by one goal, and in 1954, playing O'Connell Schools and getting beaten by 4 points.</p> <p>16:06 Explains that the Roscrea Cistercian College played for Leinster because the college grounds were in Offaly.</p> <p>16:27 Mentions Roddy Ryan, the GAA trainer, a teacher, and Father Aidan, the gamesmaster, who trained the rugby teams.</p> <p>17:13 Describes the training involved in rugby and hurling: every day after dinner, they trained for an hour and were called in at 4:45pm. Describes the tough training involved: running and exercises.</p>
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	<p>18:29: Outlines the daily routine in the college, beginning with rising at 6.30 for mass at 7.30, breakfast at 8, 10-minute break, half an hour morning study, classes at 9, lunch at 12 (a slice of bread and cup of tea), class at 12.50, finish at 14:50, dinner, sports hour, returning to study from 4.45 till 7, tea at 7, rosary at 7.30, more study till 9.30.</p> <p>20:25 Recalls lack of trips home. Describes holidays: 1<sup>st</sup> November for 2 days, Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays.</p> <p>21:20 Explains how he tried both rugby and hurling teams when he started in Roscrea. Describes his talent for rugby, being big for his age. Says he spent three years with junior rugby team. Mentions it was unusual to transfer from one sport to the other. Says that hurling had better opportunities for getting days off school.</p> <p>23:28 Discusses hurling's better prospects compared to rugby and the attraction of hurling for this reason. Recalls playing Thurles CBS, a strong side, which demonstrated true ability.</p> <p>24:52 Describes playing handball in school, winning handball medals, and also playing tennis. Mentions his talent for sports in general.</p> <p>25:44 Recalls playing rugby in Tullamore for 3 years, after he finished in Roscrea, before he played with Wanderers Rugby Club.</p> <p>26:36 Mentions Gerry O'Leary, who worked in a bank in Mountmellick, inviting him to play rugby in Tullamore. Describes his refusal because he thought he would be picked for the senior hurling team for Laois. Discusses O'Leary's offer to play him under a different name in order to evade the GAA's ban on foreign games. Describes his acceptance, playing a couple of games, and being contacted by the county secretary. Recalls the Vigilance Committees who monitored involvement in foreign games. Describes his immediate suspension. Explains that he wasn't allowed to play for Mountmellick in the minor hurling final.</p> <p>29:06 Recalls his first match with Tullamore Rugby Club and scoring a try from the halfway line early in the game. Explains that he didn't win any major cup final.</p> <p>30:12 Recalls playing minor hurling for Laois and Mountmellick. Discusses his awareness of the foreign games ban but lack of concern about it. Mentions rumours of Vigilance Committees going to foreign sports matches ,</p>
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	<p>ignoring the players breaking the rules.</p> <p>31:00 Describes the consequences of being banned: not playing with Mountmellick and Laois. Discusses reactions of fellow players to his ban. Mentions Bill Lawlor, in his 80s, and their reminiscences of Mountmellick getting to the final. Explains that Lawlor was chairman of the Mountmellick board at the time and how Culliton's suspension affected the team.</p> <p>32:31 Explains locals' view of the ban. Refers to his cousin's criticism of him for breaking the rules. Says that this cousin was a relation of Lar Brady, chairman of the Laois County Board, and that this family was fanatical about and Irishness and Irish sport.</p> <p>33:33 Recalls going to Dublin in 1957 with Wanderers and in 1958, 1959 being picked for the Leinster team and subsequently the Irish team. Says that he had more followers than critics.</p> <p>34:22 Explains how rugby and hurling coexisted in Roscrea College, along with other sports. Mentions Kilkenny man Liam Moloney of Ballyhale, a talented all-rounds sportsman, who played with the rugby team when Culliton had changed to hurling. Says that Roscrea's president wrote to the GAA when Roscrea were playing St. Kieran's, asking for permission for players to play both sports, but they were refused.</p> <p>36:06 Explains that in school, they were allowed to play both sports and attend both games.</p> <p>36:48 Says there was no difference in the backgrounds of students who played different sports.</p> <p>37:21 Mentions being selected for sub on the 1952-3 Leinster hurling team. Describes being badly beaten by Munster. Recalls playing centre half back the following year on the Leinster team and winning against Munster. Describes misplacing his medal from that match.</p> <p>39:11 Recalls his pride in being chosen for the Leinster squad. Mentions four other Roscrea students being picked: Harding, a Dublin minor; Kavanagh, of O'Connell Schools; Willie Hayes, who had been a Tipperary minor.</p> <p>40:54 Mentions prominent Leinster schools: Cistercians Roscrea, O'Connell Schools Dublin, St. Kieran's, and Ballyfin , with St. Kierans being the strongest team.</p> <p>41:35 Recalls 4 or 5 hackney cars from the town which brought them to matches in Thurles or Rockwell and</p>
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	<p>hackneys to championship matches.</p> <p>42:28 Discusses the support among the entire school and getting time off from lessons to watch or play matches.</p> <p>43:42 Describes being called for the Laois minors, being spotted by selectors when he played for Roscrea or Mountmellick. Recalls Billy Flanagan, the county secretary, ringing him to pick him for the team,</p> <p>44:57 Discusses his pride in playing for the Laois team.</p> <p>45:33 Says he had no role models but mentions Christy Ring, Jim Langton, the top Laois players. Recalls Laois playing Tipperary in the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final in 1949 and being beaten 3:14 to 4 points. Mentions Jimmy Kennedy who played for Tipperary, the great sharp shooter.</p> <p>46:51 Explains Tullamore Rugby Clubs lack of interest in the ban, their shock when he left them, and getting on the senior team in Wanderers.</p> <p>47:44 Describes the effect the ban had on him personally: his disappointment but his excitement at playing rugby.</p> <p>48:11 Explains how he came to play for Wanderers. Describes an exhibition match in Tullamore to play Old Bevedere. Mentions several players: Ronnie, Jean, and Paddy Kavanagh, Paddy Lawlor (an Irish international at the time), Tim O'Toole of Bective Rugby Club. Explains that he played that day for Wanderers. Recalls a meeting with a traveller who said he would put him forward to play for Wanderers. Describes being picked for the seconds for a senior match. Explains that when Peter Young (an English international), didn't play a game against Waterloo Rugby Club with the firsts, he took Young's place, and was then picked for the firsts the following week. Recalls playing Bective and St. Marys. Discusses his progression. Explains that Ronnie Kavanagh became a close friend.</p> <p>52:56 Says that he travelled up and down to Dublin every week in his father's old Volkswagon car. Mentions his friend David Pimm from Mountmellick, who was playing with Wanderers and would also drive a car. Says he didn't go up to Dublin to train midweek. Explains that he would go running in the darkness after 10 o'clock when he finished farm work. Says that before several weeks before Cup matches, he would go up to Dublin to train on a Tuesday.</p> <p>54:35 Mentions that Wanderers were one of the best teams in Leinster at the time, with the three Kavanagh brothers, three</p>
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	<p>back rows, Willie "Boldy" O'Neil, captain and international prop; another prop Cecil Fagan; Irish hooker Ronnie Dawson; Peter Young, another international; Jamie Clinch, who was in the second row with Peter Young. Explains that he replaced Jamie, whose father was Old Jamie Clinch, an international. Recalls getting a Leinster trial which went well. Mentions being on the Irish second row with Bill Mulcahy from the North, being picked with Bill for the trial match which they won, then being picked for the official Leinster team. Recalls beating Connacht 6-3, beating Munster in Thomond Park, and having their last match in Ulster in Raven Hill. Recalls scoring a dramatic try and the referee predicting he'd be on the Irish team.</p> <p>59:08 Explains that he got on the Irish team in 1958-59, played 19 times for Ireland, in the second row and back row (number 8 and wing forward).</p> <p>59:50 Recalls getting the news he was going to play for Ireland and subsequently answering congratulatory cards.</p> <p>01:01:25 Explains that he never considered moving to Dublin because of farm duties.</p> <p>01:01:55 Says that he drove up to Dublin every Saturday for matches with Wanderers. Explains that for the Irish team, he had to go to all the training sessions: when he played away in London or Wales, he went to Dublin on a Thursday and flew over Thursday evening. Says that for home matches, he went to Dublin on Friday morning, had a light training session in the afternoon, and match next day. Mentions that training sessions for Ireland took place in Lansdowne Road.</p> <p>01:03:06 Recalls the first game he played for Ireland, in which they were beaten 6-3 by England in Lansdowne Road. Describes beating Scotland 6-0; Wales beating Ireland 10-8; Ireland beating France 11-8 on 19<sup>th</sup> April in Lansdowne Road. Explains that France had won all their matches before that, including matches in New Zealand and Australia. Describes how this was his greatest personal achievement playing for Ireland. Mentions that in 1964, in Twickenham, Ireland beat England 18-3.</p> <p>01:05:00 Describes the feeling of playing for Ireland.</p> <p>01:05:26 Discusses a trip to South Africa in 1962. Explains that as a sub for 1959 Lions, he didn't travel because he was never called. Recalls the excitement in South Africa because he and others had never travelled before. Mentions Cape Town, Mossel Bay playing a provincial side there, and</p>
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	<p>Johannesburg. Describes South Africa beating the Irish team 24-6 in Capetown and explains that he was dropped then and wasn't playing. Recalls South African players all being white.</p> <p>01:08:55 Discusses local interest in rugby matches then, listening to them on radio.</p> <p>01:09:40 Describes how they were treated for playing rugby: staying in expensive hotels, for example the Shelbourne in Dublin, and hotels in Wales, Scotland, London, and Paris.</p> <p>01:10:25 Describes the social side of rugby.</p> <p>01:11:01 Explains the similarities between rugby and hurling training. Discusses lack of awareness of nutrition then.</p> <p>01:12:04 Describes the foreign games ban being lifted in early 70s, and getting involved immediately then with local hurling again. Recalls missing hurling in the summer during the ban. Explains that he had lost some of his hurling skills. Describes winning the junior championship playing full back aged 42, Bill Flynn's brother playing corner back aged 43, and the other corner back, Maher from Clonaslee aged only 17. Match against team from the Carlow side of the county, Milltown.</p> <p>01:15:50 Describes an incident in which he almost passed out from heart trouble in a past pupils match in Roscrea College alongside his recently graduated son, playing against another son. Discusses getting an aortic valve by Maurice Neligan after that.</p> <p>01:17:21 Ponders his retirement from sport and explains how golf is an absorbing pastime now.</p> <p>01:18:04 Explains that four of his sons play rugby and that one is in a wheelchair from a rugby accident. Mentions that three of them played senior for Wanderers, Brian played for Leinster a couple of times. The youngest girl plays golf.</p> <p>01:19:08 Considers the importance of sport.</p> <p>01:19:42 Compares the organisation of rugby and GAA sports.</p> <p>01:20:50 Mentions Eddie Byrne from Kilkenny who won an All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final and has an Irish rugby cap.</p> <p>01:22:30 Recalls his highlight: playing for a Barbarians team against South Africa in 1961. Explains how Springboks won every match in Ireland until the last match, when he was playing, and beating Springboks 6-0, their first defeat in 31</p>
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	<p>matches. Mentions fellow Irish players Tony O'Reilly on the wing and Davy Hewitt.</p> <p>01:24:06 Mentions Willie John MacBride, who played after him in 1962 and playing a couple of seasons together.</p> <p>01:24:35 Discusses his delight when Croke Park was opened to rugby matches. Credits Sean Kelly of Kerry for the acceptance.</p> <p>01:25:24 Recalls playing twice in Croke Park: with Leinster Colleges team against Munster and with for Laois against Dublin.</p> <p>01:25:52 Describes his dissatisfaction with rugby nowadays. Mentions the changes that have occurred. Explains how professionalism has changed rugby.</p> <p>01:27:13 Discusses his lack of certainty that the GAA will become professional.</p> <p>01:28:12 Explains how the ban affected his opinion of the GAA as an organisation. Reflects on his hopes for the future of the GAA and his passion for watching hurling and football.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager ✓ Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Hurled with the Cistercians College in Roscrea and got as far as Leinster Finals in 1953 &amp; 1954. Played on Leinster Colleges Hurling team in 1953 &amp; 1954; Played minor hurling with Mountmellick; played minor hurling with Laois in the 1950s; played Junior Hurling with Clonaslee post-ban.</p>
<p><b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

**REFERENCE NO. LS/1/10**

<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 01:29:43
<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 the right to use and make available to the public the content of this interview.

Signed:      Regina Fitzpatrick

Date:      12<sup>th</sup> June 2012