

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	4 th May 2010
Location	Interviewee's home, near Dundalk, Co. Louth
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Jim Burns
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1930 Home County: Louth
Education	Primary: Dulargy NS, Ravensdale, Co. Louth
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Maureen (RIP) with 2 sons; 1 daughter and 2 grandchildren
Club(s)	St. Patrick's, Lordship; St. Finbarr's, Coventry
Occupation	Farm Labourer; Cloth Dryer in Ravensdale Dying and Finishing Works; Salesman Pre-Packed Coal; Dunlop & Jaguar Plant Workers in England; Paths & Gardens in FÁS
Parents' Occupation	Ganger with Council [Father]; Hotel Cleaner [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Republican
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Athletic Club

REFERENCE NO. LH/1/3

Date of Report	15 th June 2012
Period Covered	1887 – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Louth, Great Britain, England
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Jim talks about a lifetime of being involved with the GAA. A native of Louth, he was brought to a county final at the age of nine and became hooked on Gaelic games. There was no club in his parish so he and others set about forming the St Patrick's club. There had been other teams in the area down through the years but none had survived. The club became established and they got great help from members of the clergy. Athletics and soccer were also prominent at the time, but the Ban was in place and there were vigilantes around to make sure that it was enforced. Jim has been to numerous All-Ireland finals down the years and he talks about the adventures he had trying to get to Dublin – and trying to gain access to Croke Park when the gates were shut. He later emigrated to England for some years and became involved with the GAA there, which was very important to the Irish population. He then came back and got involved as a trainer and selector with his local team St Patrick's. Jim has no shortage of stories from both history and his own experiences with the Association. He recalls with great fondness Louth's 1957 All-Ireland win and a championship win for St Patrick's - the club which he helped to found and has been an integral part of his life ever since.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:30 He went to school in Deerpark, Ravensdale and his uncle was into football - his father's people were from</p>

	<p>Dromore County Down.</p> <p>01:00 At nine years old he went to see the Louth county final between Cooley Kickhams and Newtown Blues. His mother bought him sandals and his grandfather took him by pony and trap to the Young Islanders' field in Dundalk.</p> <p>02:10 He ran straight into the grounds and climbed a tree and watched famous Louth player Eddie Boyle. Cooley Kickhams won. It was 1939.</p> <p>03:15 After that he was big into the GAA. Kerry, Cavan and Galway were good at the time, and Meath and Louth had great battles in Croke Park. It was sixpence to get in.</p> <p>03:55 There were no GAA teams in his parish but there were five soccer teams - Greenore, Carlingford, Lurgan, Ravensdale.</p> <p>04:15 He played with a team in the Faughart parish but that was soon disbanded and there was no Gaelic in the parish for years.</p> <p>04:30 He went to Dundalk to play for Sean O'Mahony's.</p> <p>04:45 Noel Tasker grandnephew Freddie played in the 2010 All-Ireland for Armagh.</p> <p>05:20 In 1950 a team in Mount Pleasant was formed called Mount Pleasant Plunketts. People from Dromiskin, Ardee, Kilcurry, Ravensdale, Cooley were all members of the club. They got to a second division final in their first year but lost to Naomh Colmcille's of Togher. That was the end of the club.</p> <p>06:05 Jim, his brother, and Noel Tasker were looking for a team that needed help so they joined Sean O'Mahony's in 1952 for one year.</p> <p>06:40 There was a move in their home parish to form a club and that led to the formation of St Patrick's GFC.</p> <p>07:10 Lordship was the central town in the parish. A meeting was held in Mullin's Loft in Mountpleasant in 1953 of former members of Mountpleasant Plunkett's, Bally Rangers and St Patrick's. They decided to form a club and enter teams in division 2 and minor grades. Sean Burke of Castletown Cooley proposed the name St Patrick's and it was agreed. Their colours were black and amber and the minor team wore</p>
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	<p>maroon and white.</p> <p>08:35 Rev Father Michael Hardy was chairman, Tom Mullen was vice chairman, Sean McDermott was secretary, Tony McDermott was treasurer. Paddy Ruddy, Danny Ferguson, Michael Fagan, Podge Coleman, Kevin English and Jack Dennehy were committee members. Other members in attendance were Jim himself, Paddy Hoey, Noel Tasker, Leo Gray, Jackie Gray, Joe Margey, Harry O'Connell, Johnny Mullen, Jim Tiernan, Patsy Hanlon, Paddy Murphy (Mountpleasant captain 1903), John Coleman, Paddy Rogers, Petey Sands. Patsy Reilly, Gerry McIntyre.</p> <p>09:45 There were also some people there who were too young to take part - Paddy Matthews, Emmet Woods, Jim Johnson, Sean McIntyre, Rory Traynor. All five played for the club in time.</p> <p>10:10 Athletics was strong in the area and many lads played football back with their own clubs. Jim had no way of playing football so Jim Tiernan and a few others would talk about how to get a club going.</p> <p>11:05 Jim Tiernan was a decorated county player and hearing him talk about it got the others going.</p> <p>11:55 He was 19 when they got to the final in their first year against Naomh Colmcille. There were four Murphy brothers on the opposing teams and they all had pet names - 'Haymaker', 'Farmer' and 'Cashcrop'. Jim was nervous and the goalkeeper told him not to allow Haymaker Murphy to make any hay during the game.</p> <p>13:05 They had a chairman from Glenmore who was a real character. They were playing a game in Castleroche and the chairman was struggling and called to Jim for help. Jim Savage was Jim's playing partner and was on the ground laughing.</p> <p>14:05 Henry Cooper was fighting Cassius Clay in London the same night and John Sharkey brought a radio to the match and put it by the posts to listen to the fight. John White made a comment to say that the boxers would not keep the opposing team at bay. Everyone was happy.</p> <p>15:05 Fr Michael Hardy was vital to them. He had played for Louth in All-Ireland semi-finals and started to work in schools and Jack Dennehy of Cooley helped him and they started</p>
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	<p>successful teams in the schools.</p> <p>17:05 There were no parish boundaries back then like there are today.</p> <p>17:35 Before the club came about there was a team called the Urban Gladstonians in 1887 - the first ever team in the parish. They played friendlies and lasted a few years. The Ravensdale Mountaineers was another club in 1887 – they affiliated but didn't play. John McDermott started that team.</p> <p>19:50 Jim and Ted Rodgers got a teacher, Ms Brady from Monaghan, to raise money to buy a football and John McDermott pumped it up for them. They played in a field at the back of the school. That was around 1938.</p> <p>21:00 John and Fran McGeown ran the Ravensdale Mountaineers and they played in Byrnes field in Ravensdale.</p> <p>21:45 The third team was from the Cooley end of the Lordship parish. They didn't last long.</p> <p>22:20 Then Lurgan Shamrocks came along and made the Louth senior championship final. A Collins man was referee - he was involved in the purchase of Croke Park - and the Dundalk Democrat reported that there were 10,000 people there. It was 1904.</p> <p>23:15 That team disbanded in 1905 and Mount Pleasant came through then. They were hit by emigration and lasted until 1917. A Kilcurry man, John Cockburn emigrated to Belfast to work in a bar and played for Antrim. In 1912 Louth met Antrim in the All-Ireland final and he captained Antrim. Louth won the game. There is a plaque to his memory in Casement Park.</p> <p>25:40 John formed a club named St John's and was an Ulster Council delegate for many years.</p> <p>26:40 Some people ended up playing for Armagh as there work on the railways brought them there.</p> <p>27:15 His grandfather, Neil Daly, followed Cooley at the time as they were a very strong team at the time.</p> <p>28:40 The Mullan family gave St Patrick's a field to play in and after a few years they moved to John McDermott's field in Deerpark. Then they got a field in Lordship. Sometimes a field</p>
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they used would end up with potatoes or crops on it so they would move on and find somewhere else.

29:25 Fr Eamon Devlin was an administrator in Tyrone most of his life, but in 1970 he was Jim's new parish priest and when he heard of their problems with fields he compared them with tinkers.

30:20 He looked for a plot of land to extend the school and got the owner of the land to donate some of it to the club. They started to develop it then into a proper pitch. Fr Eamon died after three years in the area.

31:30 They also used a sports field in Ballymakellett.

32:00 They used coats for goalposts at first but eventually made their own posts with steel bars or wooden poles.

32:50 Pat Spillane the former Kerry star visited the club and Jim asked him if he ever changed under a bush. He said that he didn't.

33:45 The balls were pigskin and were heavy when wet. They got them from O'Neill's in Dundalk. In the early days a pig's bladder was used. If you made a county final you got to play with a proper ball.

34:55 The priests were a great help. They weren't allowed to play themselves but once upon a time they did.

35:30 Fr Kevin Connolly from Ravensdale was a Louth player and they reached the All-Ireland semi-final against Kerry in 1953 but he was barred from playing as he was ordained in 1949. He approached Jimmy Masterson, chairman of Louth County Board, and offered his services. Before half-time he was called to go for a warm-up run. He got to play, and did so under his grandmother's name – McCarroll – and he gave everything. JD Hickey wrote about it in the Independent. Fr Connolly never got in trouble over it.

39:00 Fr Connolly was later involved in developing the Lourdes Stadium in Drogheda for track and field. This led to a fall out with the Louth County Board and he kept away from the GAA after that.

40:15 Jim played a little bit of soccer, and scored past Paddy McCoy in a minor cup final in England for Dunlops Aeros against Birmingham.

40:45 Lots of young people played soccer but there were vigilantes out to catch people. Teams played in All-Ireland finals and they were illegal due to their soccer involvement.

41:35 You never knew who the vigilantes were.

42:15 He was happy with the lifting of the Ban.

42:45 In 1942 Dublin were playing Galway in Croke Park and Jim was 12. Jackie McManus, his neighbour and Kevin English from Aghnaskeagh went with Jim on the train. It cost four shillings return. They got a seat on the sideline. There were lots of trains then. Michael O'Hehir was nearby commentating.

43:25 There was a blessed St Oliver Plunkett pilgrimage to Drogheda and they would take the train there.

46:20 There was a great atmosphere in Dublin for the All-Ireland. Jim has been to 36 All-Ireland finals and up to 60 football finals. In the 1990s he went to Croke Park 23 times in one year.

47:20 His mother used to make him a lot of sandwiches to take on his journey.

47:35 Recalls the 1949 All-Ireland final between Meath and Cavan. Meath won it for the first time. Jim had been working for the Franciscan Sisters in Dundalk and he had to milk the cows on a Sunday – he, Michael Connor and Pat O'Shaughnessy took turns to do it on a Sunday. In 1949 Louth played Meath in the semi-final of the Leinster championship – there were two drawn games and the third was a draw. He was working in the field working at potatoes and saw Sr Tekla asked him was he going to the game but he said he had to work. Her uncle Jim Kearney was due to play in the game and she told Jim to just go to the game and milk the cows in the morning and late evening.

51:15 Jim lost the lunch at that final. A priest from Cavan gave them some food. Jim had a Scapular to give Jim Kearney and at the final whistle he ran out onto the pitch to give it to him. Jim did not see him again for 23 years. He was in Navan at the Railway Bar and Jim Kearney owned that. They spoke. Jim Kearney nearly collapsed when he heard who Jim was.

56:15 He went to England before he was married in 1958. Had had been working in a linen mills in Ravensdale and was made redundant. He played for St Finbarr's. Gerry, Sean, Michael, Alice and Evelyn - all brothers and sisters - were there. Jim did not like it and came home. He married his wife Maureen in 1958.

58:30 Recalls telling Maureen that they had to go to England, come back and get married, and go back to England for a few years. They went in 1965 and came back in 1971. They both worked in Dunlops.

59:55 Winners of the home final at that time played Warwickshire, London, Herbertshire, Lancashire in GAA. The children got involved in Irish dancing and Jim refereed matches on a Sunday in New Elton.

01:02:20 Jim played football with St Patrick's for 13 years

01:03:00 Football was played in his parish since 1887, when there were 14 clubs in the parish. They won a junior championship final in 1961 and only Lodge Rovers and Mountpleasant Plunketts had done the same.

01:04:35 There were huge celebrations in Ardee after that final. It was a new experience.

01:04:55 In the early 1950s all the adult players had gone to Cooley and only the minors kept the St Patrick's name going. They were joined by the Cooley minors as neither club had enough numbers.

01:06:30 They day after they went around parading the cup Jim's daughter Marian was born.

01:07:50 The whole parish came together to celebrate – maybe 60 people which was a lot then. They went to the local hall for a meal. People sang and danced.

01:09:50 They lit a bonfire when Down won the All-Ireland in 1960. A few weeks after Down won St Patrick's won and Paddy King writing in the Democrat compared St Patrick's with Down. Jim was driving a bus for the Ballymascanlon Hotel at the time and collected a lot of tyres. His father's family was from Down and that's why he lit the bonfire.

01:10:30 Louth won the All-Ireland in 1957. Maureen and her sister Helen and Jim's cousin Paddy Dooley went to Mass in

	<p>Ravensdale and drove to Croke Park. In Dunleer the fan belt went in the car but they made Croke Park. They were late and Meath were playing Armagh in the minor final but they had missed it. The gates to Croke Park were closed.</p> <p>01:13:05 He was interviewed in McKeown's bar in Dundalk and told that story.</p> <p>01:13:35 A train came from Mayo and they went in the gates to Hill 16 with that crowd and got under the Cusack Stand.</p> <p>01:14:20 One team wore green jerseys and another blue and they weren't sure which team was which initially because they weren't the usual colours.</p> <p>01:15:10 Dermot O'Brien, Louth captain, couldn't get in as he had gone to the hospital to get an injection and arrived at the gate late. The stewards didn't believe who he was. The crowd recognised him and they let him in. He was a good accordion player.</p> <p>01:16:30 They came home with the cup to the school and Jim McCarroll handed Jim the cup.</p> <p>01:16:55 After the game they went home in a pony and trap.</p> <p>01:17:25 Recalls Louth playing Mayo in a National League final in 1949/1950. They were getting the car ready to go at Mullan's Loft. Johnny Mullan, Arthur Cusack and Jim were due to go. Tyres were scarce so they had to patch up old ones. Two of them were damaged when they got to Dublin and they had only won left. Johnny was going to an athletics congress and dropped them at Croke Park, where there was over 70,000 people. Johnny was due to collect them at the Bishop's Palace in Drumcondra.</p> <p>01:19:30 They saw De Valera coming in and the gates were closed so Jim ran in the gate De Valera's car went in. Mayo won. Dr Pdraig Carney played for Mayo.</p> <p>01:20:55 Emigration affected every family. Hibernia operated a ship from Dublin. The Princess Maud was another ship. A ship from Greenore sank in 1921 and 84 people died. One man, Jimmy Boyle, was saved and Jim met him whilst working in Coventry. Jimmy told Jim the story of the sinking. It is said he went ashore at Cranfield and got a hold of an animal's tail and was found on the beach by a family.</p>
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	<p>01:24:25 Emigration was worst in the west of Ireland, places like Donegal and Mayo.</p> <p>01:25:30 It was great to have the GAA in England. There was a park in Birmingham with a lot of pitches. There were some great players there - the McAndrew brothers of Mayo, Brendan Scullion of Antrim, Frank McDonnell of Mayo, Jim Murphy of Armagh, Peter Cahill of Cavan, Paddy McCormack of Offaly, Joe Greene of Offaly, Joe Lennon of Down.</p> <p>01:26:45 He liked to referee schoolboy games.</p> <p>01:27:45 He was vice chairman at St Patrick's and was on a lot of committees but administration wasn't really for him.</p> <p>01:28:35 He organised teams and players a lot.</p> <p>01:28:55 His first county board meeting was in 1956.</p> <p>01:30:05 He could bring his knowledge of the game to his coaching and selector duties.</p> <p>01:30:55 Dedication and fitness are important to be a good player.</p> <p>01:31:35 He got involved with the youth in Warwickshire because his sons used to play. St Finbarr's had their own pitch in Coventry. Joe McCarthy from Tipperary was there and Jim suggested starting a juvenile club. They started a league and visited Ireland in the summertime.</p> <p>01:33:30 They had to try and make things like at home for the kids and the parents were happy that they were playing.</p> <p>01:34:00 They would sing songs on buses and bands from Ireland would come over to England to play. Irish dancing was popular.</p> <p>01:34:55 Irish culture is very important to the GAA.</p> <p>01:35:35 Former Kerry star Mick O'Connell would be his GAA hero.</p> <p>01:36:20 The 1977 Dublin v Kerry All-Ireland semi-final was the best game he ever saw. They were two great teams. Down were also a great team.</p> <p>01:37:05 Best memory is getting to hold the Sam Maguire</p>
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	<p>after the 1957 All-Ireland. Seeing his club win the Joe Ward Cup in the Louth senior championship was another great memory. Sean White collected the cup and Jim and watched him play since he was a boy. It was the Golden Jubilee year. Paddy Keenan captained them to it again and then Darren Kirwan did it another year.</p> <p>01:38:50 His liked playing football the best but organising was also enjoyable.</p> <p>01:39:40 He likes horse racing and his son Tony died on his honeymoon. He worked on a racing stable in England and Jim used to bring him to meetings.</p> <p>01:40:40 It was disappointing to see Louth in the doldrums for so many years, having achieved so much in the past.</p> <p>01:41:40 Mayo and Cavan are in a similar position.</p> <p>01:42:15 The GAA has been a huge part of his life. Nicholas Marry, chairman of the Louth County Board, used to ring Jim in England with local results. Often the news was bad because his team would have lost. It hurt Jim because the club becomes like a family.</p> <p>01:44:00 He got in touch with a man in Newry for a job and returned to Ireland. St Pat's were after losing two finals and he became a selector. Tom Ruddy and Thomas O'Connor stood too. They won the championship and the McArdle Cup.</p> <p>01:45:40 They had a Mayo man on one of the teams and a Meath man on another.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input 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): __Selector_____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:47:10
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: _____Arlene Crampsie_____

Date: _____15/06/12_____