

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Aoife Doherty
<b>Date of Interview</b>	19th July 2010
<b>Location</b>	Rangers Hall, Crossmaglen
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Margaret McConville (nee Morgan) and Tom McKay
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee: Margaret</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Female
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1936 <b>Home County:</b> Armagh
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Crossmaglen, Co. Armagh. <b>Secondary:</b> Technical School, Crossmagleen, Co. Armagh.
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 4 brothers; 3 sisters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Crossmaglen Rangers GAC [Armagh]
<b>Occupation</b>	Retired
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Blacksmith [Father]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Former Secretary, Armagh Supporter's Club

<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee: Tom</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1935 <b>Home County:</b> Armagh
<b>Education</b>	N/A
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 brothers; 1 sisters <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Wife and 4 daughters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Crossmaglen Rangers GAC [Armagh]; Newry Shamrocks [Down]
<b>Occupation</b>	Retired Civil Servant
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Whiskey Blender [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Chair of the Board of Governors at St Joseph's High School, Chair of Crossmaglen District Development Company.

<b>Date of Report</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1970s – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Armagh, Down, Louth, Monaghan
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Officials, Administration, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Outsider's Perspectives, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Tom and Margaret both discuss their long involvement with Crossmaglen Rangers, the interview focussing predominantly on issues of Irish identity, culture and the impact of the Troubles. Both interviewees recount incidences of British army harassment of club members and response of the club to repeated provocation. The role of the GAA club in providing an outlet for young people, keeping them out of trouble, is stressed. So too is the impact of the club's remarkable run of success at county and national level on the changing perceptions of Crossmaglen and its people.</p> <p>00:00:05 (Tom) Mentions his involvement with Newry Shamrocks club prior to his marriage and move to Crossmaglen. Refers to his involvement in founding a youth club and his role – since 1996 – as PRO of the club.</p> <p>00:00:30 (Margaret) Discusses her early involvement with the GAA. Home beside the pitch. Father and brothers played. Began by helping out in making tea etc.</p> <p>00:01:12 (Tom) Explains the manner in which the GAA – and the people involved in it - shaped his identity and values.</p> <p>00:01:34 (Margaret) Recognition that comes from being involved in such a successful club – tells a story about taking an hour to get to the stands from her car in Clones because of all the people she would meet.</p> <p>00:02:26 (Tom) Observes how GAA members in many parishes are often the leaders in the community – they set the standards.</p> <p>00:02:43 (Tom) Discusses the GAA's role in shaping Irish culture and identity – mentions the all-Ireland, 32 county</p>

	<p>nature of the Association.</p> <p>00:03:14 (Margaret) The relationship between the GAA and Irish identity. Reference to Scór and running Irish classes and to the absence, in the past, of Irish from the primary school curriculum in Northern Ireland. Local school now does Irish.</p> <p>00:04:10 (Tom) Club encouragement for the Irish language, including financial assistance.</p> <p>00:04:26 (Tom) Few fluent Irish speakers in club.</p> <p>00:04:50 (Margaret) The importance of GAA promotion of the Irish language - being able to follow games and programmes on TG4, the need for knowledge of the language for those who club office.</p> <p>00:05:26 (Tom) Says he has a working knowledge of language. Shame at not being fluent. Reference to schooling system. Reference to club members, including Frank Short, who helped promote language. Reference to club participation in Irish quizzes.</p> <p>00:06:30 (Margaret) Occasional use of Irish language in the 1970s and 80s – filling out forms etc.</p> <p>00:07:00 (Tom) Mentions prominent Irish language speakers and activists in club – Sean Murphy and Con Short.</p> <p>00:07:30 (Margaret) Extension of the parish, but not the club, into Louth. Con Short was a teacher in Louth.</p> <p>00:08:00 (Tom) Every year club promoted an Irish language school, run by Frank Short, Con's son.</p> <p>00:08:19 (Tom) Discusses impact of British occupation of club grounds. Sense of isolation. Perception of Crossmaglen as a garrison town. Reluctance of other clubs – their underage teams – to travel to Crossmaglen. Impact on fundraising, social events and club development. Says that club is now 10-15 years behind other clubs. Comments on the cost of development and the inadequacy of the compensation received. Isolation forced club to look at themselves, to cater better for their own young people. Harassment and refusal to yield to 'forces of occupation'. British army knocking down club gates.</p> <p>00:13:09 (Margaret) Mention of the 'fear' experienced by young people. Pitch was the only play ground, but there would be attacks on the army barracks. Children taking shelter. Efforts to fight a 'dignified battle' and keeping children</p>
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	<p>away from 'the other side' of things. Football as way of keeping children safe and 'on the right road'.</p> <p>00:14:22 (Tom) Reference to strong characters involved with the club. Policy of club to be non-political. No political parties involved in dispute. Indebtedness to, and importance of, the Croke Park Committee, especially Con Murphy. Importance of Cardinal Ó Fiaich in raising issue with British and Irish governments.</p> <p>00:15:55 (Margaret) Reference to Club V. British army, not political parties.</p> <p>00:16:08 (Tom) Club avoidance of politics. The occupation of the grounds was considered an injustice.</p> <p>00:16:20 (Tom) Reflects on why the British army established themselves in Crossmaglen – reference to being a border town, a reputation for being a nationalist/republican area.</p> <p>00:16:55 (Margaret) Reference to proximity of club to army base and occupation. GAA members regarded with suspicion.</p> <p>00:17:37 (Tom) Discusses links between occupation of club grounds and republican activity in the area. Refers to the impact of various atrocities on participation in republican activities. Cites the shooting of Tullydonnell-man Harry Thornton in Belfast and the riots that followed in Crossmaglen c. 1970s-80s.</p> <p>00:19:00 (Tom) Tells story of team being harassed on way to game. Mentions that the Armagh GAA relaxed rules on late arrival for games because of the security interference. Perceptions of Crossmaglen among security forces in other parts of Northern Ireland.</p> <p>00:20:50 (Tom) Refusal to display anger at British army. Exchanges with soldiers. Routine harassment.</p> <p>00:21:19 (Margaret) Harassment of players going to training. Emptying of sports bags. Difficulty of keeping temper in check. Tells story of a girl who had underwear removed from a bag in town square and placed on the end of a rifle. After all the harassment endured, Margaret says the club's success was her 'reward'.</p> <p>00:23:25 (Tom) Discipline instilled into young people by club – kept them out of trouble. Says no member of club ever convicted of a crime.</p> <p>00:24:02 (Margaret) Members might questioned after attacks.</p>
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	<p>00:24:28 (Margaret) Club record of success – 3-in-a –row county titles in 1970s, 2 titles in the 1980s (1983 and 1986). Ten years, the club won their first of 13 successive titles.</p> <p>00:24:59 (Tom) Reference to British newspaper report – <i>News of the World</i> or the <i>The Sun</i> - alleging that Crossmaglen Rangers committee were meeting in their hall to plot the overthrow of the British army. Expresses a view that the club facilities were bugged. States that the high school was bugged. Says that the newspaper report was damaging to those in the club working as civil servants – already difficulty for Catholics looking to gain promotion. Article made targets of people travelling through loyalist areas. Club took case against the newspaper and won a 5 figure sum.</p> <p>00:26:35 (Margaret) Discusses the hard work and determination of club. Emphasises the dignity of campaign. Mentions that success preceded the return of the ground. No ladies football in that time.</p> <p>00:28:05 (Tom) Irish psyche not to lie down. Troubles forced club to look inwards. Structures were put in place to develop young people. Mentions the good fortune of a group of gifted young footballers came on the scene – winning every trophy from underage up.</p> <p>00:29:09 (Margaret) Mentions that many of those talented young players were involved in Scór. Won an Ulster quiz. Irish dancing. Irish language classes. Laid on as recreation at a time when there was limited social opportunities.</p> <p>00:30:25 (Tom) Refers to some of the leaders of the Crossmaglen teams of the 1970s and 80s – Tim Gregory, a player and later manager, who was instrumental in developing younger players.</p> <p>00:31:15 (Margaret) Mentions the late Gene Larkin, a player in the 1960s and 70s. Also Tom McCreesh, who also played for Armagh. Gene Duffy and his brothers. Many of the former players stayed involved with the GAA – they didn't disappear.</p> <p>00:32:20 (Tom) High emigration in the 1970s and 80s. Farming community. No industry in area.</p> <p>00:32:55 (Margaret) Mentions a paper converter factory in the town in the 1970s. Big employers, but closed due mainly to the Troubles. Manager blown up in a case of mistaken identity – he drove a similar car to that of the army or police. Factory soon after moved to Newry.</p> <p>00:33:40 (Tom) Predominance of family businesses in the</p>
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	<p>area. Many involved in construction up to the late 2000s would have had to travel – to Dublin.</p> <p>00:34:11 (Tom) Mentions how club became the most famous in Ireland. Expresses gratitude for the support provided by other clubs. Parades against occupation attracted clubs from across Ireland and England.</p> <p>00:34:50 (Margaret) Achievements of the 1990s and 2000s meant Crossmaglen was known for its football success rather than the Troubles. Impact of first All-Ireland club win in 1997 and consequent success.</p> <p>00:35:55 (Margaret) Crossmaglen previously known for acts that were not their own doing. ‘People would fire a few shots at the barrack and then clear off. But we had to suffer the aftermath.’ Raids on houses etc.</p> <p>00:36:36 (Margaret) No big celebrations when grounds were returned. Process was protracted. Bit was returned in a way to avoid publicity and fanfare.</p> <p>00:37:08 (Tom) Mentions quiet satisfaction when grounds were returned. A job well done. Club had put it case with dignity. Club helped dispel British army and media created image of ‘bandit country’. There was another side to south Armagh.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p>Margaret</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>Tom</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" 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): _____</p>

**REFERENCE NO. AR/1/13**

<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Tom: 1 County Senior Championship; 2 Minor County Championships
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Margaret: Committee Member over 60 years; Secretary 7 years; President 4 years. Tom: Secretary, PRO and Committee Member
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 00:38:56
<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:      Aoife Doherty

Date:          20<sup>th</sup> July 2010