

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Ann-Marie Smith
<b>Date of Interview</b>	16 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2008
<b>Location</b>	Glasnevin, Dublin 11
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	John Campbell
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1952 <b>Home County:</b> Dublin
<b>Education</b> (Optional)	<b>Primary:</b> De La Salle Primary School <b>Secondary:</b> Beneavin College <b>Third Level:</b> UCD
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 brothers and 1 sister. <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with 2 children
<b>Club(s)</b>	Erin's Isle, Na Fianna
<b>Occupation</b>	Retired from teaching in 2007. Part-time Tour Guide in the GAA Museum since 2007.
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Shop assistant [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	N/A
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A

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<b>Date of Report</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2008
<b>Period Covered</b>	1950s-2008
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Dublin, Down
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Earliest memories, Role of the club in the Community, Celebrations, Managing, Training, Volunteers
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>The interview concentrated on the important role the GAA club plays in John's life. He spoke about his first attempts to play the game right through to playing for Erin's Isle Club. His interest in GAA led him to train teams both at Beneavin College where he worked and Na Fianna Club where both his 2 children play. After retiring from teaching in 2007, he continued his involvement in the GAA by commencing work as a Tour Guide in the GAA Museum.</p> <p>Start: Introduction to interview. Name of interviewee.</p> <p>0.38: Date of Birth.</p> <p>0.53: John's father was a shop assistant and his mother was a housewife.</p> <p>1.06: John has 2 brothers and 1 sister and he is the 2nd youngest in the family.</p> <p>1.23: From 1958-1965, John attended De La Salle Primary School and then went onto Beneavin College, where he was a student until 1970.</p> <p>1.40: John completed his degree in UCD in 1974 and then completed his H.Dip in Education in 1975.</p> <p>1.58: John began work as a teacher in Beneavin College in 1976. He taught there until 2007.</p> <p>2.25: John's earliest memory of the GAA is playing class leagues in De La Salle. Erin's Isle was the local club and it would have attracted the young boys from the school into playing for them.</p> <p>2.47: He recalls that his first competitive game was playing for the under 12s who were trained by Fr. O'Connell. From the</p>

	<p>age of 12 onwards he played competitively.</p> <p>3.14: There was no family involvement in the GAA. His brother played soccer and his father played soccer and refereed soccer games until he was 60.</p> <p>3.33: John's interest in GAA came about from his involvement in school teams and then Erin's Isle.</p> <p>4.00: John has very vivid memories of his first attempts to play the game. He believed he was good enough to play for the A team, however management picked him for the B team.</p> <p>4.20: Other early memories include going to matches in vans, 12, 13 or 14 lads in the back of a potato van or truck. John said they were like cattle in a van.</p> <p>4.58: John believes that the GAA has changed just like Irish society has changed. The GAA has more wealth now. When John was playing there were no socks or togs and the jerseys were heavy. Also clubs were a lot smaller.</p> <p>5.45: John was involved with Erin's Isle for all his playing days. For the last twelve years he has been a member of Na Fianna GAA Club because his son is involved with the team there.</p> <p>6.13: John has coached many of the teams in the club.</p> <p>6.57: The club plays a more important role in the community than it did in the past. The GAA is central to the community. In John's playing days there was no camogie, no girls and no real social aspect attached to it, now there is Scor and boys and girls mix together in a healthy manner. This would be one of John's praises for the GAA. It is now more community and society orientated.</p> <p>8.23: An important victory for John in his own playing career was in 1970 when his team won a minor league game.</p> <p>8.35: Structurally the club changed with new playing fields, dressing rooms. It also won the Club of the Year Award because of its contribution to social life in Finglas.</p> <p>9.12: Very little female involvement in the club when John was playing. The local men acted as mentors and the men would bring the boys to matches in the cars.</p> <p>9.33: John recalls that Erin's Isle main rivals were Na Fianna, O'Connells and Vincents.</p> <p>9.53: John marked former Dublin selector, David Billings of</p>
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	<p>Vincents in a minor championship match and Vincents won.</p> <p>10.32: Match victories were celebrated back in the Erin's Isle club.</p> <p>11.00: John remembers travelling to Athy and Drogheda to play matches for the club and he says that this was one of the highlights of being involved with the club as you wouldn't have got to visit such places in the normal course of life. He never travelled abroad with the club.</p> <p>11.42. He believes that being involved with the GAA has enhanced his life and personal relationships. His two kids are involved with Na Fianna and it has had a huge influence on them for the better. The club is the focus of all John's family's social life.</p> <p>12.47: Apart from supporting Dublin, John has always been interested in Down. His first memory of attending a match in Croke Park was the 1968 All Ireland Final when Down beat Kerry, it was a packed house. Joe Lennon and the O'Neills were playing for Down that day. Down would have been John's heroes.</p> <p>13.20: John didn't travel too much to games around the country to watch Dublin play. He would attend matches in Parnell Park and in new grounds that were opening up.</p> <p>14.00: John acted as both linesman and umpire at some inter county matches if Dublin were playing another county team in the club's grounds. He had no controversial stories from his time as a linesman.</p> <p>14.42: John would prefer to be a referee today rather than be a linesman or an umpire because he believes too much controversy surrounds the other two roles.</p> <p>15.02: John believes there is a unique atmosphere at GAA matches. He believes that the main reasons for this include the crowd freely sitting/standing beside each other at games, the speed of the game and its intensity. In addition there is no threat at GAA matches unlike soccer.</p> <p>15.24: The last league of Ireland match John was at was 10 years ago when he brought his son to a local soccer game. He was shocked at the level of bad language and the treat of violence. John never witnessed this at GAA matches.</p> <p>16.12: John believes that because a lot of GAA people are members of clubs, they are also members of one organisation, the GAA. Soccer supporters are associated</p>
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	<p>with just one team; they are not members of a higher organisation.</p> <p>16.42: Next to the church and the school, the GAA is the most important institution and according to John it is becoming even more important than people realise. The GAA club is going to keep society intact. Soccer tends to be very fragmented. The idea of being able to transfer from Home Farm to Stella Maris and the idea if one manager poaching half a team to his team is unheard of in GAA and the way the GAA club tends to be parish based, attracting girls and boys running discos, helping in the social mix, it gives great focus and keeps young people on the straight and narrow.</p> <p>18.16: The GAA is so much more than just a sport. In most clubs there are card playing, set dancing and handballs. There is also social membership.</p> <p>19.08: A GAA low point for John was in 2000, when Na Fianna lost to Crossmaglen on St. Patrick's Day in the Clubs Final, it was a particularly disappointing performance. Another low point was Erin's Isle loss to Corrafin in the All Ireland Club Final.</p> <p>19.45: Highlights include Erin's Isle winning the Dublin Senior Championship for the first time. Also Na Fianna winning the Clubs Final in 1999. Great memories of travelling around the country supporting the team.</p> <p>20.20: All Ireland Club Final very special to the club. Next to the All Ireland Final with the county it is the next most important thing for a player. The local area would have banners up, good luck wishes, buntings everywhere; there would be a buzz around the club. It is a great advertisement for the club as people will send their kids there.</p> <p>21.24: The GAA has shaped John's identity but he is not sure how exactly. He has been involved in it throughout his entire life and it has coloured his attitude.</p> <p>22.23: One of John's outstanding memories of the GAA is the team that he trained in Beneavin College beat Gormanstown in a Dublin A Championship in Croke Park. Gormanstown were expected to beat Beneavin and one of John's colleagues said that they needed a different angle or edge so the boys ate raw eggs every day for two weeks and they won the match.</p> <p>23.17: Another memory is again whilst John was training Beneavin, they beat Moate who were the reigning Leinster</p>
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<p>Champions. The team from Finglas comprising a lot of soccer lads were expected to fold against these strong talented players but Beneavin won.</p> <p>24.07: One of John's worst memories is as a result of a mistake made by the goalkeeper, the school team was knocked out of the championship and it felt like the whole year was ruined by one mistake.</p> <p>24.54: John believes the Dublin team of the 1970s was the greatest team of all times, with players like Mullins, Kevin Moran; they were superstars of the day. Dublin's win over Kerry in the semi-final was a particular highlight.</p> <p>25.30: Joe Lennon of Down was John's hero. He also admires DJ Carey and Cha Fitzpatrick.</p> <p>26.24: John's training as a player involved running, very little ball work and there was no emphasis on diet.</p> <p>27.22: He was a good team player, didn't just look out for himself.</p> <p>28.10: When he was a player, victories were celebrated by going back to the club and having sandwiches. John believes that the senior players today are very well looked after.</p> <p>28.53: He doesn't believe that he made any sacrifices because of his involvement in the GAA.</p> <p>29.12: He suffered no injuries during his playing career.</p> <p>29.20: It would pain him to see players being paid. The amateur status is crucial to the GAA. Once payment is made a contract is involved and under freedom of movement there would be great mobility between teams and counties and between counties. A radical change will take place if players are paid. In England, it is the soccer teams with the most money that get the best players.</p> <p>30.26: He gave up playing too early. He thinks there should be over 35 leagues like there are in soccer and it allows players to retire gradually.</p> <p>31.19: He is not in contact with any of his team mates any more.</p> <p>31.34: From his involvement in the GAA, John believes he has learnt to understand people better.</p> <p>31.58: He became involved in managing teams because it was expected of the staff in Beneavin College to get involved</p>
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	<p>in sports. He first got involved with the under 14s, then the under 16s and then the seniors. When he moved house, he became involved in managing some of the Na Fianna teams.</p> <p>32.33: His involvement in the GAA and training the teams didn't conflict with his teaching commitments, in fact it complimented it. He says that some of the lads who might have given him grief in the classroom were in fact nicer to him because he was coaching them. He recalls one of the lads in the school saying to him in his early days of teaching that they would look after him.</p> <p>33.29: His training methods were a product of their time. He placed a lot of emphasis on ball work and running. His attitude was that you could do a lot of physical training with the ball which was quite revolutionary for its day.</p> <p>34.18: Some of the well known people that John trained were Keith Barr, John Barr and Charlie Redmond. Both Keith and Charlie won All Ireland medals with Dublin in 1995. In relation to both Redmond and Barr as young players, John said that they always had a good approach to the game, that they were very determined and skilful. They were also great team players, great leaders on the pitch and always did what was asked of them.</p> <p>35.31: There was one player who was even better at the games than Barr and Redmond but for some reason he didn't make it.</p> <p>36.00: If John was a trainer today, he would place greater emphasis on the skills of the game.</p> <p>36.34: One of the hardest things John had to do as a manager was to drop players especially when the parents are on the side of the pitch.</p> <p>37.47: He co-managed Na Fianna teams and brought them from under 10s to under 16s and minors. They were very good under 12s but it became harder to motivate them after that age.</p> <p>38.17: John's perception of the GAA changed when he became a manager. In Dublin, he says, matches get cancelled for flimsy reasons and it is difficult to motivate teams if you don't have matches for weeks on end.</p> <p>39.44: John believes that the Irish language is not important to the GAA. The GAA pays lip service to it.</p> <p>41.00: The GAA is the centre of his life outside of his working</p>
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	<p>hours. Everything he and his family do is shaped by the GAA. It is the focus of their lives.</p> <p>41.48: John co-wrote the book “A History of Erin’s Isle Club Finglas,” 2000) with his former team mate Bill Casey. During his research, John learned about the many difficulties people had in keeping the club going down through the year and the sacrifices people made.</p> <p>43.18: The GAA is extremely strong in Dublin. Clubs like Kilmacud, Ballyboden and Vincents all have people giving up their time and their money to keep the clubs going.</p> <p>44.22: John believes that his role as Tour Guide in the GAA Museum, Croke Park is the next best thing to teaching. It is a dream job and he has the best of both worlds.</p> <p>46.08: The main message that he would like visitors to leave the GAA Museum with is that the GAA is the biggest voluntary organisation in the world that the games are played by amateurs. He believes that people should leave with a great insight into what the Irish character is like.</p> <p>46.49: The voluntary ethos is crucial to the GAA. If it goes, John believes that the GAA is dead in the water.</p> <p>48.43: John believes that even when his children move out of their home, he and his wife will remain involved in the club.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></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 type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p>



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	<input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None  <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): ____linesman and umpire_____
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Played leagues with De La Salle and then went on and played for the Erin's Isle Club, Dublin
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	John was involved in training teams in Beneavin College and in Na Fianna Club, Dublin.
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 49 mins 26 sec
<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:     \_\_Ann-Marie Smith\_\_\_\_\_

Date:        10<sup>th</sup> December 2008.\_\_\_\_\_