

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Arlene Crampsie
<b>Date of Interview</b>	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
<b>Location</b>	Interviewees home, near Kenagh, Co. Longford
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Paddy Egan
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1936 <b>Home County:</b> Longford
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Kenagh NS, Co. Longford <b>Secondary:</b> St Mel's College, Longford, Co. Longford <b>Third Level:</b> NUI Maynooth – Local History
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 6 brothers <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married with 6 children
<b>Club(s)</b>	St Dominic's, Kenagh
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Farmers
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	Fine Gael
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b> (Optional)	Vice-chairman of Longford Historical Society; IFA; Tidy Towns; Kenagh Co-op; National Director of Irish Rural Link

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<b>Date of Report</b>	28 <sup>th</sup> May 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1867 - 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Longford, Roscommon, Dublin, Cavan, Americas, USA, Offaly, Tipperary
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Rivalries, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Violence, Politics, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism Socialising, Relationships
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Paddy talks about countless aspects of the GAA experience in his native County Longford. He was not the most talented of players, but was an ardent supporter of the GAA and got involved in administration as well as being a correspondent for the local paper. He was also a keen participant in Scór events, and a friend and neighbour of Liam Mulvihill, who rose to the very top levels of the GAA. Paddy's family were GAA people who told him many stories of their own experiences - stretching back to the 19th century - which he has never forgotten. He talks in great detail about the history of the GAA in his area, his involvement with the local club Kenagh, political strife down through the decades, memorable games and characters, and his admiration for some great people who epitomised the spirit of the GAA, giving their all each and every time despite the fact that the odds were regularly stacked against them.</p> <p>00:15 Earliest GAA memory is 1944 when Jimmy Murray captained the Roscommon team to All-Ireland glory. Paddy was eight years old, and from then on he and his six brothers took a great interest in the GAA. Paddy is the longest standing officer in the club in his parish in 100 years. He was a PRO but not so good at football. When he was young they got a football for Christmas, and his father donated a field for a pitch.</p> <p>02:20 The local team would tog out in Paddy's yard on a wet day. The boys had heard that sucking raw eggs was good for fitness so they did so too.</p>

03:10 When he was young they often cycled to Longford to see games and walked other places. Paddy played for St Margaret's as a minor whilst working in Dublin. Simon Deignan from Cavan and Billy Monks from Dublin were there, two All-Ireland winners. Deignan had a shop in Finglas and Paddy went in to have a look at him. Simon played with Mick Higgins and had played in New York. Paddy had listened to the 1947 All-Ireland in New York on the radio at home.

04:50 -Paddy had four uncles who all played football. One, Johnny Hanlon, played for Longford. They played for the Ballymahon club and on one occasion had an argument with a referee which led to the match being called off. The club was suspended, his uncles started playing rugby and Ballymahon had no club from 1925 to 1936.

06:35 Growing up, Paddy's neighbours were the Mulvihills and they are also related. When Scór was started in 1969 Liam Mulvihill, Tommy Flanagan and Paddy were picked on the team and got to the All-Ireland final in 1970, where Paddy met Michael O'Hehir. Liam became the youngest chairman in GAA history when he was made chairman of county Longford. He went on to the Leinster Council and eventually Croke Park in 1979. Everyone was proud of him, although outsiders suspected they got All-Ireland tickets easily as a result, which was not true.

09:10 Paddy once wrote to the Sunday Game - "It's the spirit of the weaker fry that makes the Sunday Game". Longford has not been successful at national level but still they keep on going. James McGahan would always tell a losing team that there was always next year in which to win things. The emotional connection with the GAA keeps them going. Paddy keeps up with the national GAA scene and is a great fan.

11:40 As children Paddy and his friends used to go to a nearby place called 'The 'Planting', cut down trees and took them back to the pitch to make posts. Fergus Smith, an All-Ireland Army champion from the parish of Legan, once came down to Kenagh to play a game. They only had 14 players and spotted a man coming out of the pub after a few pints and got him to play for them to make up the numbers.

14:20 Clough Dillons once played the Legan Sunbursts in 1923 and a gun was pulled after a row. They never played again.

15:20 When Paddy was a minor Billy Geraghty was in charge

of their team. One of their players was overage for the minor team and was very disappointed. They went down to play Newtowncashel one time and they had overage players. 'Hairy minors' they were referred to, because they used to shave their legs.

17:30 Pindar Farrell used to talk of a 'horse and brake' in 1917 - a horse pulling a team of lads to a game. Paddy's club Kenagh played their first game in 1889 against Ballymahon. The whole team and supporters walked the six miles to Ballymahon to play the game, a walk that was restaged years later. Young Grattans Ballymacormack, was a club on the way and saw them coming. They had issues with the Kenagh team and attacked them. Sometimes problems from games spilled over into parish halls that night.

19:40 Many local people cycled the 75 miles to All-Ireland finals in Croke Park. Willie Lennon and Matty Fox were two that did it.

20:30 Paddy has done a lot of work for the GAA but does not have many medals. He has a lot of photos, one is of Barney O'Boyle from 1938.

21:30 Their first set of jerseys were in Tipperary colours. Michael McGrath got the jerseys. He helped start the GAA in Longford as the man who proposed the ban on British police from joining the GAA. They had the jerseys until 1956, the club went dormant for a few years, and then switched to maroon. The schoolboys were togged out in blue t-shirts, they didn't always have proper jerseys. The togs were made from flour bags

25:00 Most of the games were played on famers' fields, so when they were playing a game somewhere, they first had to pull up all the weeds in the field.

26:40 Paddy cycled to his first minor match in Newtowncashel. Some people in the parish got cars and they would use them for transport. Paddy Fagan from Ballymahon had a cattle lorry and they used that sometimes. Tractors and trailers were brought too, and sometimes you would see people on the roofs of buses. Paddy has seen people on the roof of the Hogan Stand in Croke Park in his time. There was risk involved in all these things, but being there was all that mattered. Nowadays people won't get on a bus if it's not heated and won't play a game if there are no shower facilities.

30:00 One year they ran the club on £18. They had little expenses, and there was no insurance then. Paddy sees the GAA as a semi-professional organisation now. There is a lot of money being spent on various facilities now.

32:00 Paddy admires the resilience of the GAA. It has survived through the decades. There were old IRA men involved in the GAA. There was 'the dark horse' - players from other places pretending to be local and playing for the team. In 1939 Moydow Harpers won the county championship with a couple of dark horses.

33:50 Liam Mulvihill, 'one of the greatest GAA men ever' was raised in the local area. Paddy wrote a poem about him.

34:15 Mike McGrath from Tipperary (mentioned above) gave the name Clough Dillons - in 1867 the Fenians fought in Ballingarry and there was a Dillon. 'Dillon' was a very political name at the time - John Blake Dillon was a member of the British parliament, and then there was James Dillon, a Fine Gael TD. Mike McGrath started the Gaelic League and the IRB in the local area, as well as the GAA. He is buried in the local area and died in 1909. A man was shot in the area in 1923, and there was no club in the local area from then until 1936. Many people played football and fought in the IRA.

38:20 Roscommon winning the All-Ireland final for the second time was the first one Paddy heard on the radio. They went to a packed pub in the village to listen to the game. The following year Paddy's uncle bought a radio. Michael O'Hehir was very entertaining. Paddy's daughter Bridge worked in the Beaumont Hospital nursing home and Michael O'Hehir was there. She would help feed him.

42:30 Paddy's father had to leave Roscommon in 1912 to work in Dublin. Football was not so big in Roscommon then, but handball was big in his father's native Curraghboy, and it still is. When Paddy went to St Mel's College in Longford he played some handball, but it was never all that popular. Hurling was not common either. Paddy did not see a hurling game until he was in Croke Park in 1954 (he thinks). It was the All-Ireland final and Christy Ring was playing for Cork.

46:00 Because Paddy was usually a substitute when he played football, he was always happy that he could contribute through his involvement in Scór. At St Mel's the footballers were a breed apart. Some of the Cavan team that won in the Polo Grounds in 1947 were trained at St Mel's - John Wilson

was one of them. Children of the diocese of Ardagh went to St Mel's College so you had people from places like Offaly attending, and trainee priests who were good footballers.

49:00 Paddy was a correspondent for the local paper and got involved in Scór. Liam Mulvihill was a key man in the club. When they set up Scór large numbers of people would turn up to participate. They filled parish halls all over the county. The weaker counties adopted Scór as they did not have All-Ireland medals. That suited Paddy. When football does well in the area, Scór goes down. It is not as popular in the area now. The future of Scór will depend on the schools. There are commercial talent competitions now that can offer far bigger prizes than Scór.

57:35 Liam Mulvihill would be Paddy's GAA hero. He has given everything to the GAA. Paddy has great admiration for footballers who never won anything. Local man Barney O'Boyle had great spirit. Mick O'Connell and Christy Ring were great players. Other players he liked include 'The Jobber' McGrath, a hurler in Westmeath, Gerry O'Reilly in Wicklow, Gerry O'Malley in Roscommon. Roscommon's Dermot Earley - whose son later played for Kildare - was fantastic.

1:00:05 The best match he ever watched was the Louth v Dublin Leinster final in 1957. There was an awful lot of blood in that game. Dermot O'Brien and Billy Monks were playing at the time. It was a tough match. Dermot O'Brien was Louth captain but arrived late for the All-Ireland final - which Louth won - and was not allowed into the game. The year of the 1988 minor championship in Longford which Kenagh won was also memorable.

1:03:00 Disappointments include the fact that the GAA is, in Paddy's view, heading in the direction of professionalism. He was also disappointed when the GAA allowed rugby to be played at Croke Park. The lifting of the ban on foreign games was different, because the ban was only a ban in name as far as Paddy was concerned. When Ballymahon were suspended from the GAA and formed a rugby team a man named Paddy Whelan strongly disapproved of the move. The field he used was near his house, he would pass it on his way to Mass and if there was a game on while he passed he would look the other way for fear that he was breaking the ban. For the most part there was no soccer or rugby in the village, so the ban didn't apply to them. Paddy feels that Paddy Mulvihill did not approve of letting foreign sports into

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	<p>Croke Park, although the two never discussed the matter.</p> <p>1:07:15 His uncles often told stories about their GAA experiences - playing in the moonlight, cycling far and wide, playing the role of the dark horse - his uncle played for Tubberclair in Westmeath. His uncle played county football from 1908 to 1925 but when Ballymahon was suspended so was he, so he played some rugby with them.</p> <p>1:10:00 Kenagh were sure they were going to win the county championship one year and even had a bonfire ready to light before a ball was kicked. They lost. But one of the Killashee men sneaked into Kenagh and lit it himself. There were bitter rivalries but even so there was a great closeness between clubs within the county.</p> <p>1:11:30 County President Jimmy Fox is a good friend of Paddy's, as is Mick Higgins, who came up when the last President, Jimmy Flynn, died. Johnny Creegan lives 30 miles from Paddy but yet they are friends. Paddy then tells a story about his grandson which illustrates the ways in which the next generation are quickly absorbing the GAA values of those who have gone before.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input checked="" 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): _Refereed one camogie match_____</p>
<p><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played up to the age of 18</p>
<p><b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Club PRO for 20 years (1988 – 2008); Paddy was also involved in Scór and was on a county board committee for Liam Mulvihill's retirement.</p>
<p><b>Format</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<p><b>Duration</b></p>	<p>Length of Interview: 01:13:58</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<p>English</p>

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Arlene Crampsie \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 28/05/12 \_\_\_\_\_