

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Patrick Murray
<b>Date of Interview</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2010
<b>Location</b>	Home of Thomas Toner
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Thomas Toner
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1930 <b>Home County:</b> Armagh
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Forkhill Primary School
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 10 brothers and sisters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Forkhill Peadar Ó Doirnín's GAA [Armagh]
<b>Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Religion</b>	N/A
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

<b>Date of Report</b>	15 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1930s - 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Armagh, Cavan, Canada, America, Down, Kerry, Meath, Antrim, Tyrone
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Education, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Alcohol, Food and Drink, Socialising, Grounds, Facilities, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, All-Ireland, Irish History, Impact on Life, Challenges, Outsider's Perspectives, Alcohol, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Professionalism
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Born in Forkhill in 1930, Tom Toner opens the interview by talking about the absence of Gaelic football during his school days and his introduction to the game through the exploits of the Mullaghbawn club, based in the neighbouring village. Toner talks about the scarcity of money and the absence of alternative recreational opportunity during his childhood. He talks also about travelling to games on foot, by bicycle and train. As a teenager, he would travel to Clones to games and he describes how he got there, what he ate and what he saw in the town on match days. The absence of alcohol is also stressed.</p> <p>In addition, Toner discusses the founding of the current GAA club in Forkhill, the lack of money or facilities and the age profile and occupations of some of those who played with the club. Toner emigrated to Canada and he discusses his involvement with Gaelic games in Canada in the early 1950s, including training in a public park and travelling long distances to compete in mid-west American league. He tells also a wonderful story of listening to the match commentary of the 1953 All-Ireland football final down a telephone line to New York where John Kerry O'Donnell held a receiver up to a radio. Toner didn't stay in Canada. He returned to live in Belfast, where he once again became involved with the GAA before returning to his native Forkhill following the outbreak of the Troubles. Toner addresses the impact of the Troubles on the GAA in south Armagh, reflecting on the experience of the Crossmaglen club and the general harassment of GAA members by the British army. Towards the latter part of the interview, Toner considers the contribution of 'voluntary</p>

	<p>labour' to the GAA, the changing role of women, the plight of the Irish language in Ulster and how the GAA might improve, the emergence of the GPA and various rule changes. Finally, he talks about the influence the GAA has had on his own life. 'It's been all of my life, not a part of it', he says.</p> <p>00:00:19 Interviewer mentions that interview is taking place in the house of Tom Toner's neighbour.</p> <p>00:00:35 Interviewer notes that Toner, born in 1930, comes from the Bog Road, Forkhill and was educated at St. Oliver Plunketts in Forkhill, leaving school at 13.</p> <p>00:01:17 Tom Toner says that he was one of 12 children and recalls the terror of going to school. Mentions having women teachers and no coaching in school.</p> <p>00:02:23 Talks about going to Mullaghbawn to watch the 'only team in the parish'. Mullaghbawn was a neighbouring village.</p> <p>00:03:00 Talks about family involvement: refers to his older brother playing with Mullaghbawn and Forkhill.</p> <p>00:03:20 Lack of money and football as the only social activity.</p> <p>00:03:38 No cars: refers to walking or cycling to games.</p> <p>00:03:50 Not paying into games, ca. Late 1940s.</p> <p>00:04:20 Earning money from farmers as a teenager and travelling to see matches on train to Clones. Mentions cost of travel, the food brought or purchased for the journey.</p> <p>00:05:35 Talks about the scene in Clones outside the ground. Crowds on street, chip vans etc.</p> <p>00:06:20 Remarks on not 'tasting drink' until he over 50 years old. Remarks also on the number of non-drinkers and pioneers among the Forkhill footballers.</p> <p>00:07:02 Talks about the players he admired with Mullaghbawn and Armagh.</p> <p>00:08:01 Foundation of a GAA club in Forkhill in 1948. Talks about the age-span it was open to, the early fortunes of the club and the training done by players.</p> <p>00:09:14 Comments on the appeal of the high catch in Gaelic football.</p>
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	<p>00:09:38 Talks about going to Crossmaglen and the quality of their players.</p> <p>00:10:00 Facilities: mentions absence of dressingrooms and the club's use of a Forrester's Hall for meetings.</p> <p>00:10:20 Comments on the role of women: reference to washing jerseys and making tea.</p> <p>00:10:33 Changing in the 'corner of the field'.</p> <p>00:10:45 Mention of the jobs young players would have on the farm or in grocery stores.</p> <p>00:11:12 Talks about the greater involvement of women.</p> <p>00:11:32 Reference to the existence of a prior GAA club in Forkhill, pre-1948.</p> <p>00:11:42 Discusses leaving Forkhill and emigrating to Canada. Setting up club in Toronoto, the Toronto Stars. Mentions the players involved and where they were from – Down, South Armagh, Monaghan, Galway.</p> <p>00:12:38 Talks about joining American mid-west league and the travel to play games in Rochester, Syracuse and Buffalo. Mentions meeting Chicago in a final of mid-west league and meeting them half-way.</p> <p>00:13:20 Training in the public park in Toronto.</p> <p>00:13:35 Talks again about the distances involved in travelling to play games.</p> <p>00:13:50 Refers to the enjoyment of playing Gaelic football in Canada and to the Irish keeping 'close together'.</p> <p>00:14:00 Tells story of listening to Armagh versus Kerry in 1953 All-Ireland final in Canada with John Kerry O'Donnell holding telephone up to radio.</p> <p>00:15:13 Returning to Ireland, marrying and settling in Belfast, where he played for James Connolly's. Says that it was 'country team' in Belfast, ca. Mid 1950s.</p> <p>00:16:28 Outbreak of Troubles and return to south Armagh. 'I jumped from the frying pan to the fire'.</p> <p>00:16:40 Back involved with Forkhill and the hassle received from the British army.</p> <p>00:17:15 Talks about admiration for Crossmaglen for keeping football going 'against all odds'. Refers to their experience of</p>
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	<p>the British army.</p> <p>00:18:12 Comments on the GAA's lack of involvement in politics and their positive contribution across the country.</p> <p>00:19:05 Remarks on the improvements in Gaelic football since the 1950s.</p> <p>00:19:30 Reflects on the Down team of 1960, describing them as the finest team he ever saw. Explains what it was about them that appealed to him.</p> <p>00:21:20 Talks about his admiration for Mickey Linden from the 1990s Down team and Paddy Doherty from the Down team of the 1960s.</p> <p>00:22:00 Refers to other great players from the past: Stephen White of Louth; Paddy O'Brien of Meath; Tom McCreesh from Armagh; Jim McCorry from Antrim.</p> <p>00:22:55 Discusses what the current wealth of the GAA and what could do for the youth – refers to scholarships for the Irish language.</p> <p>00:24:15 Talks about the experience of the Irish language in Ulster and Ulster as separated from the rest of the 'GAA world'.</p> <p>00:25:00 Refers to shame in not being able to speak Irish.</p> <p>00:25:13 Expresses a desire for ticket prices for All-Ireland finals to be reduced and for Minor, Senior Ladies and Senior Men's football final to be played on same day. Mentions giving Ladies game a 'platform' and reflects on women's place within the Association.</p> <p>00:26:15 General observations on what the GAA has done for the country and what it could still do.</p> <p>00:27:10 Recalls the work of volunteers in removing manure and weeds from fields in the past.</p> <p>00:27:45 Discusses the importance of 'voluntary labour' to the success of the GAA, as well as its parochial nature.</p> <p>00:28:26 Talks about Forkhill's rivalry with Dromintee.</p> <p>00:29:10 Considers the emergence of the GPA, its relationship with the GAA and the idea of 'pay for play'. Says that people have the 'wrong idea about the GPA'.</p> <p>00:30:30 Refers to how the GAA is perceived by others.</p>
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	<p>00:31:00 Discusses games-related rule changes and what, if any, impact they have had on how they are played. Also comments on changes that might still be introduced e.g. two man tackle only on midfielder.</p> <p>00:34:15 Recalls his years managing the Forkhill team – refers to the lack of money and the emphasis on running and catching.</p> <p>00:34:40 Expresses his satisfaction with the GAA.</p> <p>00:34:53 Reflects on the GAA's influence on his life, his identity and values: 'It's been all of my life, not a part of it.'</p> <p>00:35:36 Refers again to Crossmaglen's experience with the British army and the GAA's role within that community.</p>
<b>Involvement in GAA</b>	<p>✓ Supporter   ✓ Player   ✓ Manager   <input type="checkbox"/> Coach   <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson   ✓ 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>
<b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)	Player for 20 years, won South Armagh league with Forkhill
<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	<p>Manager of Forkhill team for 2 years</p> <p>Chairman of Forkhill for 2-3 years</p>
<b>Format</b>	<p>✓ Audio   <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 00:36:55
<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: Patrick Murray

Date: 12<sup>th</sup> Nov 2010