

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	25 th Jan 2011
Location	Willie George's home, near Foreglen, Co. Derry
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Willie George O'Kane
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1916 Home County: Derry
Education	Primary: Muldonagh PS, Co. Derry
Family	Siblings: 4 sisters & 6 brothers Current Family if Different: Married with 2 sons and 6 daughters
Club(s)	O'Brien's Foreglen GAC; St. Colm's, Drum
Occupation	Foreman Scaffolder
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Indoor and Outdoor Bowling

REFERENCE NO. DY/1/10

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Foncey O’Kane
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1942 Home County: Derry
Education	Primary: Muldonagh PS, Co. Derry Secondary: Christian Brothers, Derry
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Eileen with 4 sons
Club(s)	O’Brien’s Foreglen GAC [Derry]; Clann na nGael, Dunnamanagh [Tyrone]
Occupation	Clerical Officer in Dupont
Parents’ Occupation	Engine Driver [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Strabane Golf Club

REFERENCE NO. DY/1/10

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Noel McFeely
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1954 Home County: Derry
Education	Primary: Muldonagh PS, Co. Derry Secondary: Claudy, Co. Derry
Family	Siblings: 6 brothers & 6 sisters Current Family if Different: 4 sons
Club(s)	O'Brien's Foreglen GAC
Occupation	Developer
Parents' Occupation	Farmers
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Republican, but no party
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	1 st August 2012
Period Covered	1840s – 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Derry
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Media, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider's Perspectives, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Willie, Foncey and Noel talk about the club that defines them all, O'Brien's Foreglen in Derry. Each has their own individual memories of highs and lows throughout the years and they shed light on how the club has progressed by recalling the way things were decades ago. They remember a time when land was not owned, playing boots were for rich people and real footballs were at a premium. Having delved into the early history of the GAA they reveal that Gaelic games were played in the area as far back as the 1840s, with hurling also prominent at that time. There were obstacles to be overcome in terms of securing land and dealing with opposition to their participation during the Troubles, but thanks to perseverance and a strong sense of community spirit they amassed a significant collective achievement that spans many generations.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:50 (Willie) Earliest memory with O'Brien's football team. People asking about the team name. Finding out about O'Brien. Different times back then. No pitch. Sharing a ball with Claudy. Playing in a small pitch – Miller's Field. Playing in with his friend Bob's Johnny against Dungiven. Losing game on a big pitch. Fr Shields playing for Faughanvale. Willie McGlynn and Benny Dunne were also playing. Fr McGoldrick playing with Dungiven. Pat Curtin watching from the sidelines. Johnny and Jim Brolly playing. Eric Daly commenting on McGoldrick. Fallout from that. Game was in</p>

	<p>1935/1936. Dr Kerlin Cup played for the first time in 1936.</p> <p>07:15 (Noel) Earliest memory was a Dr Kerlin Cup game in Claudy Green. Taking the bus.</p> <p>07:50 (Noel) Meeting in Georgie McCormack's house. Wife washing jerseys. Attending many meetings when he was young. Dr Kerlin Cup was north Derry championships at the time. Success in that in the 1960s.</p> <p>08:45 (Noel) People cramming into car to watch an Under 21 game against Lavey (an amalgamation with Glenullin). Fight at the game. How that has changed. Less violence at games.</p> <p>10:15 (Noel) Winning an intermediate championship in 1985. Captaining the team. Beating Desertmartin in Ballerin. No club facilities at the time.</p> <p>10:55 (Noel) Winning a junior championship in 1990 as player/manager.</p> <p>11:10 (Noel) In 1969 watching Charlie Gallagher, dentist in Derry, playing for Cavan train a team. Philip McLaughlin a good player.</p> <p>11:50 (Noel) Facilities at club developing.</p> <p>12:10 (Noel) His role in administration. Buying land. Deal falling through. Later securing land. Being chairman of the club and later manager.</p> <p>13:55 (Noel) Best memory. Managing an Under 10 team to an All-Ireland. Captaining his club to the intermediate championship. Representing Derry in the 1980s.</p> <p>14:45 (Noel) Losing finals as a manager. Disappointment.</p> <p>***Noel leaves the interview***</p> <p>15:30 (Foncey) Earliest memory is of early 1950s. Altar Clarks competition, playing for Fr McNicholl's clarks team. Mr Reihill a teacher from Fermanagh who taught them Irish. Going to Christian Brothers. Being made secretary of club at 12. Why that was.</p> <p>17:00 (Foncey) Winning a Mahon Cup medal with Christian Brothers in Derry in 1955. Playing with Derry. Injury hampering his career. Return to action. Playing for Dunnamanagh in Tyrone. Return to Foreglen.</p> <p>18:20 (Foncey) Managing Dunnamanagh. Marking Paddy Ball, a Tyrone county team player in Strabane. Club joining</p>
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	<p>with Aughabrack and becoming Clann na nGael. Coaching Brian Dooher and Stephen O'Neill when they were young.</p> <p>19:30 (Foncey) Return to O'Brien's Foreglen. Administrative involvement. Developing land.</p> <p>21:15 (Willie) Playing soccer when he was young. What the local fields were like. Jim Brolly bringing up horses and reaper to cut grass before a match.</p> <p>23:45 (Willie) Going to Derry to get a football.</p> <p>24:05 Travelling to games in cars and buses. Johnny 'Toe' going to games on his horse and trap. Caught rabbits and birds including crows. Mentions Jack Farrell.</p> <p>25:10 Playing Limavady. Throwing himself at the ball. People watching over ditch that couldn't afford their entrance fee.</p> <p>26:20 (Foncey) Cycling to games. Travelling in Jim Brolly's Bedford van. Arty Duffy's minibus. George McCormack driving them in his Morris 8 car. How many fit into it. Cycling to games against Claudy, Drum, Banagher and Glack. What they did on the way home.</p> <p>28:50 (Foncey) Fr Donnelly writing a history of the club. Helping him out. Club formed in 1888. Mentions Celtic. Football and hurling played before that. Records of a hurling game between Foreglen and Hibernian in Rosemount in Derry City in the 1860s. Football played from the 1840s.</p> <p>30:40 (Foncey) Affiliation between Drum and Foreglen. Reason for that. Playing for both.</p> <p>31:30 (Foncey) Love for hurling. Playing in Antrim. Starting a team in Claudy in the 1970s. How that worked. Playing with Banagher players.</p> <p>32:35 (Willie) Hurling in Northern Ireland. Football dominant.</p> <p>33:20 (Foncey) GAA introducing its games through Hibernian in Derry City. Based in the Rosemount area, hurling was their principal game. Hurling in Glenkeen (now Ardmore) and Strathfoyle (now Faughanvale) clubs. Other hurling clubs were Sunburst, Fenian Stars. Link between Derry and Donegal. Hurling also played around Inishowen in Donegal in 1920s.</p> <p>35:55 (Willie) Family's GAA involvement.</p> <p>36:30 (Willie) Joining the fire service during the Second World War. Break from football. Difficult times. Using horses for</p>
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	<p>work. Germans bombing. Horses freed from stables. Dublin fire brigade called for.</p> <p>38:35 (Willie) Dungiven their biggest rivals. Faughanvale, Magilligans and Drum were also rivals.</p> <p>39:30 (Willie) Colour jerseys they wore.</p> <p>39:45 (Foncey) First colours in 1888. Changes over the years.</p> <p>40:25 (Willie) Lack of jerseys and boots when he was young.</p> <p>40:35 (Foncey) Foreglen's first football purchase and what that was like. Rules about its use. Foreglen playing in Jim Brolly's field 'Down the Lane'. Armagh footballer a guest speaker at a fundraising event. What he said about Foreglen. 'Miller's hill' adjacent to that. Going there before games. Why that was.</p> <p>43:30 (Willie) Joe Campbell a tall player who was useful in midfield and played for Derry. John Brolly, Jim Brolly, Mickey Farren, Bob's Johnny, Patsy Hegarty, Barney McFeely also playing.</p> <p>45:30 (Foncey) Jim Devlin a legendary full-back with Tyrone.</p> <p>46:10 (Foncey) Foreglen people and pride.</p> <p>47:10 (Willie) Going to club meetings. What they discussed. Bob McLaughlin there. Arguments.</p> <p>49:20 (Foncey) Players also serving as officials. Meetings going on for a long time.</p> <p>50:10 (Willie) Dancing going on and a roof cracking in the early hours. Parties in McCann's house on the mountain.</p> <p>51:20 (Foncey) Being secretary at an early age. What that entailed. Organising Guest Teas. Meetings taking place immediately after games. Issues discussed. North Derry meetings held once a month. Going to Coleraine with George McCormack on a winter night. What that was like.</p> <p>54:25 (Foncey) Foundation of GAA based in local community. Advantage of this.</p> <p>55:20 (Foncey) The Ban. Serving suspensions with Sean O'Connell for playing soccer.</p> <p>56:15 (Willie) Playing soccer locally.</p> <p>56:45 (Foncey) Issues discussed at North Derry board</p>
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	<p>meetings. Underage issues. Divisional underage committees later abolished. Why he feels that was a poor decision.</p> <p>58:50 (Foncey) Divisional boards dealing with match reports from north and south Derry leagues. Arguments over how incidents were phrased.</p> <p>01:00:40 (Willie) Furthest he has travelled for matches. Going to watch All-Ireland finals. Seeing Derry win the final in 1993. Arty Duffy taking him in the van.</p> <p>01:01:50 (Foncey) Club development in the modern era. Becoming chairman of the club. Calling a community meeting about a big decision about land. Eddie Murphy and his wife Bernadette central figures as they owned the land. Finbarr Fox winning the tender to develop the land. Quality of job he did. County matches played there when all others had been cancelled. Stepping down upon completion of project.</p> <p>01:07:45 How they raised funds. Corporate dinners and profit they made from those. Festival weekends. Other initiatives.</p> <p>01:10:05 (Willie) Fundraising in his time. Money scarce</p> <p>01:11:00 (Foncey) Impact of Troubles. Not advertising meetings and reason for that. Losing some players for Troubles-related reasons. Problems in Dunnamanagh. UDR presence there. Goals cut down. Why problems weren't so severe in Foreglan.</p> <p>01:13:25 (Willie) Problems he encountered. Stone throwing. Being ordered to take off pins he was wearing.</p> <p>01:15:30 (Willie) Protestant Tommy Armstrong and Joe, Dennis and Paddy McWilliams involved in the GAA.</p> <p>01:16:20 (Foncey) Geroge McGahey a non-Catholic playing with the club and not coming under pressure from either community.</p> <p>01:17:05 (Foncey) Playing cricket while he was suspended.</p> <p>01:17:55 (Willie) Best memory was becoming a member of O'Brien's football team. Why that was.</p> <p>01:18:45 (Foncey) Proudest moments.</p> <p>01:19:50 (Foncey) Getting a spinal injury and disappointment of that.</p> <p>01:20:50 (Willie) Willie McLaughlin and Benny McLaughlin his GAA heroes.</p>
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	<p>01:21:25 (Foncey) Jim McKeever, Mick Ruane of Mayo and Charlie Gallagher of Cavan heroes of his. John Eddie Mullan a local player he admired.</p> <p>01:23:30 (Foncey) What the GAA means to him.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>Willie George: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ Selector _____</p> <p>Noel: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>Foncey: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Willie George: Played from 1964 / 1965 for 10 years. Won a League and a Dr McKenna Cup.</p> <p>Noel: Played from 1968 until 1997. Won 1 intermediate championship, 1 junior championship.</p> <p>Foncey: Played for 23/24 years. Played minor, junior, Under 21 and senior for Derry.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how</p>	<p>Willie George: Was involved in administration from 1930 – 1960. He was</p>

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long for)	club chairman. Noel: Has been involved in administration since 1968. Has held every position at club level except treasurer. Foncy: Has been involved in administration since 1955. Club: Secretary, Chairman (10 years), President (5 years) North Derry: Chairman (5 years) County Board: Member
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:24:07
Language	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: _____ Arlene Crampsie _____

Date: _____ 01/08/12 _____