

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Name of Interviewer</b>                          | Ann-Marie Smith   |
| <b>Date of Interview</b>                            | 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2009   |
| <b>Location</b>                                     | Interviewees home, near Salthill, Co Galway                         |
| <b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname) | Pádraig O'Toole   |
| <b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>   |   |
| <b>Gender</b>                                       | Male  |
| <b>Born</b>   | <b>Year Born:</b> 1950<br><b>Home County:</b> Dublin                |
| <b>Education</b>                                    | N/A   |
| <b>Family</b>                                       | <b>Siblings:</b> N/A<br><b>Current Family if Different:</b> Married |
| <b>Club(s)</b>                                      | St Patrick's GAA Club Donabate [Dublin]                             |
| <b>Occupation</b>                                   | Insurance Manager   |
| <b>Parents' Occupation</b>                          | Health Board Official [Father]                                      |
| <b>Religion</b>                                     | Roman Catholic  |
| <b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>           | Independent   |
| <b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>             | N/A   |

REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Date of Report</b>             | 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2012   |
| <b>Period Covered</b>             | 1884 – 2009  |
| <b>Counties/Countries Covered</b> | Dublin   |
| <b>Key Themes Covered</b>         | Grounds, Facilities, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Religion, Media, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Irish Language, Culture, All-Ireland, Irish, History, Family Involvement, Violence, Politics, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics  |
| <b>Interview Summary</b>          | <p>Pádraig outlines the contribution of his grandfather Luke O'Toole to the GAA. Elected as General Secretary in 1901, Luke worked tirelessly to ensure that the GAA had solid foundations which would allow it to thrive in Ireland. He was involved in setting up the first GAA offices in Dublin, in fundraising for and organising the purchase of the Croke Park grounds, and in developing strong links with branches of the GAA overseas. He worked alongside former GAA President Jim Nolan, travelling all over the country in an effort to boost the Association nationwide. Luke made it his business to ensure that the GAA got increased coverage in the national press, and he worked through some of the most turbulent times in recent history - the Easter Rising and the Civil War. Pádraig recalls stories from these times that have been passed down through his family - stories of panic at Croke Park on Bloody Sunday and of regular card games between Luke O'Toole and two of his close friends, Harry Boland and Michael Collins. Pádraig is a keen scholar and has a great passion for the Association, and his account of the life and times of his grandfather is never less than compelling.</p> <p>00:00:15 He is grandson of Luke O'Toole</p> <p>00:00:50 He feels Luke's work as General Secretary was not recognised</p> <p>00:01:00 Luke was elected in 1901, defeating Michael Cusack 19 votes to 17.</p> <p>00:01:40 Luke was a Wicklow man and involved with the Wicklow men's association in Dublin.</p> <p>00:02:00 In Wicklow, Arklow and Baltinglass there are monuments</p> |

**REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6**

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>00:02:10 The Arklow one is to Fr Murphy of Boolavogue, the Wicklow one is to the Pikemen who fought on Vinegar Hill and the Baltinglass one is to a McAllister who was involved in the 1998 rebellion.</p> <p>00:02:40 Luke was involved in getting these monuments put in place.</p> <p>00:03:00 He was from a farming background and opened tobacco and a paper shop in Rathmines Road and Charlemount in Dublin.</p> <p>00:03:25 He was also involved in running the Hibernian football club and was a Dublin County Board delegate at the 1901 Convention.</p> <p>00:04:00 He was in a role similar to Director General today.</p> <p>00:04:20 Mentions Irish Independent in 1934 for the GAA Jubilee which described the time when Luke took office and the Association was very disorganised.</p> <p>00:05:10 Property finances in the Association when Luke took over was bad and there was a lot of debt.</p> <p>00:05:50 He live in Ranelagh and set up the first official GAA office.</p> <p>00:06:15 He was newly married at the time to his wife, Bridget.</p> <p>00:06:55 He worked alongside President Jim Nolan, who has a park named after him in Kilkenny.</p> <p>00:07:25 In 1902 the two of them travelled the country - there was only eight county boards at the time.</p> <p>00:08:00 They recognised the importance of the parish to their grand vision for the GAA.</p> <p>00:08:35 After Congress of 1905 things had changed a lot and the Association was in a much healthier position.</p> <p>00:09:15 it was debt-free and 23 county boards attended Congress.</p> <p>00:11:00 Back then the GAA had the four-post format like Australian Rules, the only difference being the presence of a crossbar.</p> <p>00:11:30 Teams had 13 members on each side.</p> <p>00:11:45 The GAA Changed the posts and increased the</p> |
|--|--|

## REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>numbers on each team.</p> <p>00:12:20 Luke was also trying to expand the GAA internationally, visiting Edinburgh, Glasgow and England to promote the games.</p> <p>00:13:25 In 1903 they went to the U.S. with a football and hurling team.</p> <p>00:13:45 In 1911 the first American team visited Ireland and it was a success.</p> <p>00:14:45 They gave the team returning to the U.S. a grant of 300 pounds to develop the game back in the States.</p> <p>00:15:30 Luke worked hard on getting better coverage in the national press.</p> <p>00:16:00 In 1912 a paper, The Gaelic Athlete, was launched.</p> <p>00:17:25 In 1913 they moved to purchase Croke Park.</p> <p>00:17:35 They ran the Croke Memorial Tournament at the time to raise funds for a monument in Thurles.</p> <p>00:18:15 The final of the tournament was between Kerry and Louth; 25,000 people showed up and they raised 750 pounds. 32,000 showed up for the replay and they collected 2,700 pounds.</p> <p>00:19:00 Luke decided to introduce sideline seating for the replay.</p> <p>00:20:30 Mentions a book by Pádraig Purcell in which Luke was mentioned.</p> <p>00:20:40 Luke sold his businesses sometime around 1905.</p> <p>00:21:15 The first GAA offices were on O'Connell St Dublin in 1904.</p> <p>00:22:00 The Freeman's Journal eventually gave the GAA decent coverage.</p> <p>00:22:45 When they purchased Croke Park in 1913 Luke moved in there because there was a house by the entrance to the Canal End.</p> <p>00:23:40 Bertie Donnelly, a famous cyclist, had a house there too and on Bloody Sunday people used it to escape.</p> <p>00:25:10 Frank Dineen from Ballylanders in Limerick was a great GAA supporter. The Dineen Hill is named after him.</p> |
|--|--|

## REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>00:25:45 He purchased the Croke Park grounds and was a journalist.</p> <p>00:26:15 Frank was a sprinter so he appreciated the athletic side of the GAA.</p> <p>00:27:25 In the Dublin v Tyrone programme for the game in early 2009, Pádraig's writings on Frank Dineen were mentioned.</p> <p>00:28:30 the Croke Memorial Tournament money was for a monument to Archbishop Croke but Luke wanted to use some of the money for property.</p> <p>00:28:50 Central Council backed this but a delegation had to visit Dr Fennelly, Archbishop of Cashel, to put the proposal to him.</p> <p>00:30:15 Pádraig tells a story he heard from family members about how the visit went and an encounter with a Fr Bannon.</p> <p>00:32:20 He looked at two other possible grounds apart from Croke Park but eventually opted for Croke Park.</p> <p>00:33:30 Frank Dineen was in a lot of debt and had sold some of the grounds to Belvedere College in 1910.</p> <p>00:35:05 After purchasing the grounds Luke was appointed manager of the grounds and was paid 75 pounds per year plus a bonus of 100 pounds.</p> <p>00:38:05 Many GAA members were supportive of the Volunteers involved in the 1916 Rising.</p> <p>00:38:40 Praises Marcus de Búrca's work.</p> <p>00:39:35 Mentions a political meeting near Parnell Square in Dublin where Luke spoke in a private capacity.</p> <p>00:42:10 Pádraig spoke to Tommy Ryan who played on Bloody Sunday and he was reluctant to talk about that difficult period.</p> <p>00:42:45 Capt David Moran - Dan Breen's right hand man - was also reluctant.</p> <p>00:43:45 Jim Nolan was arrested on the Tuesday after the Easter Rising, as were many others. Luke went to Ballycumber in Wicklow.</p> <p>00:45:35 Liam Mulvihill unveiled a stone to Luke in Wicklow in 2001.</p> |
|--|---|

REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>00:46:50 Luke had eight children, three of whom died from TB.</p> <p>00:47:15 Luke's wife died in 1925 so a sister of Luke's reared the children.</p> <p>00:48:35 Luke returned to Dublin at the end of May and got back to work with the Association.</p> <p>00:49:20 In 1918 the GAA held Gaelic Sunday as a show of force against British rules which stated that a permit was needed to play a GAA game, a rule which was brought in after plans for automatic conscription to the British Army were resisted.</p> <p>00:53:10 Luke was often searched and the children had messages for dispatching hidden in their shoes.</p> <p>00:54:10 Marcus de Búrca stated that 100,000 people nationwide turned out for Gaelic Sunday.</p> <p>00:54:45 A camogie match took place on the street outside Croke Park and eventually the authorities relented.</p> <p>00:56:25 Luke had a letter printed in the Dublin papers the day before Gaelic Sunday.</p> <p>00:57:40 Bertie Donnelly made an escape route from his house to Jones' Road on Bloody Sunday and others followed him out.</p> <p>00:58:30 Tommy Ryan told Pádraig that when shots were fired the players knew that they weren't blanks.</p> <p>01:00:10 Tells a story of his aunt hiding under a bed and officers shouting at her.</p> <p>01:02:00 Luke apparently spoke of a plane going overhead after the game had started and then turning around and coming back.</p> <p>01:02:50 Luke was called over to a gate near Hill 16 and was told there was an armoured car outside the gate.</p> <p>01:04:45 Luke was friends with Michael Collins and Harry Boland and they used to play cards together.</p> <p>01:05:55 The GAA were caught up in the middle of the Civil War but stayed independent.</p> <p>01:06:00 In 1923 a committee was set up to try and talk to both sides.</p> |
|--|--|

## REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>01:07:30 Mentions the Kerry football team where both sides came together to play a game.</p> <p>01:08:30 Harry Boland and Michael Collins and had been best of friends but they were both in love with Kitty Kiernan.</p> <p>01:10:30 After the Civil War the GAA expanded.</p> <p>01:10:55 The 1924 All-Ireland had 60,000 attending.</p> <p>01:11:40 Mentions the Tailteann Games and how Luke was proud of that.</p> <p>01:12:55 Luke died suddenly whilst at work in 1929, aged 54.</p> <p>01:13:15 Mentions meeting Seán Ó Síocháin.</p> <p>01:15:45 Pádraig found that too many people were not aware of Luke and his legacy.</p> <p>01:16:45 He was glad to see Luke listed as the sixth most important person in GAA history.</p> <p>01:17:30 The people who were present at the founding of the GAA were always going to be remembered, but those who came in their immediate aftermath were not.</p> <p>01:18:20 The GAA was frowned upon by the State during the time when Luke was involved.</p> <p>01:20:35 His father used to recall playing on the Croke Park pitch with his dog.</p> <p>01:22:15 For Pádraig the GAA covers heritage, culture, national and personal identity, the Irish language, uniqueness...it is the soul of the people.</p> <p>01:25:20 Pádraig thinks Luke would be very proud of the GAA today.</p> <p>01:26:30 Mentions former GAA President Nicky Brennan going to the Asian GAA Games.</p> <p>01:28:10 Luke and Jim Nolan introduced the ban because they felt it was necessary for the GAA to revitalise Irish games.</p> <p>01:31:00 Luke is buried in his home town of Tinahely in Wicklow.</p> <p>01:31:35 Luke handed over a vibrant organisation to Pádraig O'Keefe.</p> |
|--|--|

**REFERENCE NO. DB/1/6**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Involvement in GAA</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None<br><br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |
| <b>Record as a Player</b><br>(Titles won; Length of time played)    | N/A   |
| <b>Record as an Administrator</b><br>(Positions held; how long for) | N/A   |
| <b>Format</b>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual   |
| <b>Duration</b>   | Length of Interview: 01:34:50   |
| <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:              19<sup>th</sup> Feb 2009