

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Report Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> March 2011
<b>Location</b>	Belle's home, near Warrenpoint
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Belle O'Loughlin
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Female
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1942 <b>Home County:</b> Down
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> St Claire's, Newry. <b>Secondary:</b> Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 sisters & 1 brother <b>Current Family if Different:</b> Husband (Arthur), 3 sons & 1 daughter
<b>Club(s)</b>	St Bridget's Camogie Club, Newry [Down]; St Peter's GAA, Warrenpoint [Down]
<b>Occupation</b>	Housewife
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Coach Driver [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Warrenpoint Tennis Club; Newry and Mourne Sports Advisory Committee

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<b>Date of Report</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1942 – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Down, Donegal, Tyrone, Antrim, Monaghan
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Identity, Travel, Grounds, Refereeing, Administration, Media, Training, Irish Language, Culture, The Troubles, Northern Ireland, All-Ireland, Childhood, Role of Women
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Belle gives an overview of how her childhood and how she became involved in camogie. She talks about playing at club and county level and focuses on the social aspect of the game. She describes her move into the administration side of the game. She discusses the role of women in the GAA, the development of camogie and administration, her time as President of the Association and the challenges she faced. She also considers the impact of the 'Troubles' on the sport in her area and other areas across Ulster. She reveals her fondest memories throughout her lifetime with the sport and considers the future of the sport.</p> <p>00:29 Belle recalls growing up in Newry, Co. Down in the 1940s and 1950s. Talks about her family. Mentions the Newry Mitchells. Mentions tennis.</p> <p>01:55 Tells of how her Italian mother came to Ireland. Explains what her mother thought of Gaelic games.</p> <p>02:48 Remembers an argument at home after a football match. Tells of her preference for tennis over football. Talks about her school days and her introduction to camogie. Refers to the facilities equipment and the coaching. Mentions Sister Mairéad Ferren, Sister DeSales.</p> <p>06:20 Tells of playing against other schools. Discusses the tradition of camogie in Sacred Heart. Mentions Fr Davies.</p> <p>07:28 Discusses the tradition of camogie in Warrenpoint and Newry and her memories of involvement. Mentions the Betsy Grays, St Brigids Newry. Mentions Sheila McNulty, the Sands Sisters.</p> <p>09:05 Highlights the social side of her involvement in Warrenpoint. Tells of travelling by van. Describes the camogie club structure in the 1960s. Mentions the Ards.</p> <p>10:45 Remembers the training in St Brigids. Compares that to</p>

	<p>the training today. Mentions Richie Crinnion.</p> <p>11:32 Describes the attitude of people to camogie in Down. Refers to the attitude towards women in general.</p> <p>12:45 Tells of her call-up to the Down county team. Describes the county set-up and her introduction to administration with the County Board. Mentions Downpatrick. Mentions the Sands sisters, Maura Caldwell.</p> <p>14:40 Talks about Nan Sands and recalls meetings she attended.</p> <p>15:45 Remembers winning the Ulster Championship in 1968. Refers to her family and pregnancies. Describes the type of women that played.</p> <p>17:26 Tells of the social aspect of the county team. Recalls the attitude of people towards women playing sports. Refers to injuries.</p> <p>19:20 Talks about her children coming to games with her.</p> <p>20:08 Recalls travelling around the country. Recalls several incidents. Tells of her loyalty to her club. Mentions John Brannigan, Gerry Mullen.</p> <p>23:30 Remembers setting up the club and its development. Tells of some more funny incidents travelling to the Ards. Mentions Bernadette.</p> <p>26:15 Stresses the importance of the schools. Mentions St Marks, Hilltown, Mayobridge, Sacred Heart.</p> <p>27:05 Discusses the nature of the relationship between the camogie and the local GAA club, St Peters. Talks about the underage set-up. Mentions Liam 'Toots' O'Hehir.</p> <p>29:30 Recalls the early days of the club. Refers to transport and fundraising. Remembers winning their first championship in the early 1970s.</p> <p>31:00 Tells of the camogie teams' position in St Peters. Refers to insurance. Describes her current involvement. Tells a story about a disciplinary incident at a game.</p> <p>34:30 Talks about when she stopped playing camogie competitively</p> <p>35.30 Describes her coaching of club and county camogie. Speaks fondly of club training in particular.</p> <p>36.25 Discusses the development of her administrative</p>
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	<p>career. Recalls how she was county chair for three terms, Ulster chair for two terms, Ulster secretary for a term. Also tells of her time refereeing.</p> <p>37.30 Recalls iconic figures in camogie, such as Sophie Brack, Kathleen O'Duffy, Mary Lynch (Monaghan), Mary Moore, and Mary Fenley. Describes how she met these figures while refereeing, on the Ard Chomhairle or on fixture committees.</p> <p>38.22 Describes how sport is a social outlet. Makes comparisons between society today and society while she was growing up and suggests that children are more restricted now, making sport an important social outlet.</p> <p>39.15 Discusses the development of sport and refers to better training and equipment available now.</p> <p>39.40 Explains the challenges that she encountered at county and provincial level while on the administration side, which mostly centred around securing sponsorship and the need for sponsorship in such a scattered county as Down. Also referred to the challenges associated with arranging training sessions for the same reason.</p> <p>41.05 Discusses rule changes, particularly field size and the difficulties with these changes initially.</p> <p>42.27 Describes developments in coaching, such as getting hurlers involved in the training, First Aid sessions, training for coaches in Gormanstown.</p> <p>43.20 Recalls key moments and memorable decisions made as an administrator in the Association at club and provincial level, such as when club members won All-Irelands. Refers to Leitrim club in Co Down.</p> <p>45.05 Describes how committees and sub-committees developed the game. Suggests they promote and encourage more people to join.</p> <p>46.10 Discusses commitment of time to the game and the difficulties for women in particular. Recalls her own experience, suggesting it was easier than most.</p> <p>47.50 Describes the events leading to her becoming President of the Association.</p> <p>49.10 Recalls her years as President and her schedule during that time. Talks of going to Galway four times in one month for example. Suggests that the schedule now is more</p>
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	<p>demanding, almost like a full-time job and recalls lessons learned during her time as President from the Association. Mentions Sheila Wallace</p> <p>50.50 Talks of Ard Chomhairle meetings and remembers them as mostly enjoyable.</p> <p>51.28 Discusses the relationship with GAA and Croke Park. Recalls how it usually centred on access to Croke Park and use of the pitch for big matches. Talks about use of Croke Park for minority sports, such as camogie and hurling.</p> <p>53.55 Discusses the autonomy of the Camogie Association and the importance of maintaining its identity.</p> <p>54.55 Considers attendance at matches which she describes as inexplicably poor considering the skill and training involved. Suggests some reasons as to why this is the case.</p> <p>56.50 Refers to chauvinism in GAA and explains that she did not experience it too much first hand. Considers the Camogie Association as part of a feminist movement in Ireland and the differences that female involvement at all levels of the game have made, including a sense of community women provide.</p> <p>1.01.40 Reviews media coverage of the sport and suggests the development of the PRO role has improved media coverage, although not television coverage.</p> <p>1.04 Discusses ladies' football and the impact it has had on camogie. Proposes that Tyrone, Monaghan and Donegal have been harder hit than Down in terms of a favouritism of football over camogie by players. Mentions Mary McKeever and Mary O'Connor</p> <p>1.06.50 Explains the impact of the 'Troubles' on camogie and reveals that Down was not as adversely affected as Antrim was. Talks about being stopped by members of the British Army on the way to and from matches. Describes an incident while coming home one evening from Newcastle.</p> <p>1.11.55 Considers politics in club life during the 'Troubles' and explains that it was more of an issue in West Belfast than it was in Co Down</p> <p>1.12.48 Describes the response of the Camogie Association to the 'Troubles', who held matches as close to the Border as possible.</p> <p>1.13.55 Talks about Irishness and camogie as expression of Irishness but also describes how Protestant girls also played</p>
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	<p>with them.</p> <p>1.15 Describes the suffering in Belfast, Tyrone and Newry of nationalists and the challenges of maintaining the unity of the Association in the face of diversity of experiences and how people felt about the 'Troubles'</p> <p>1.16.20 Talks about young people being approached to join the Provisional IRA and recalls her son being asked to join while at secondary school.</p> <p>1.17 Considers the difficulties for young people during the 'Troubles' and the importance of GAA games for them as a social and community outlet.</p> <p>1.19.02 Discusses the relationship between the Camogie Association and Irish language and culture, and how these links have weakened in recent times.</p> <p>1.20 Explains the development of camogie during her lifetime and refers to coaching, training, skill and administration, all of which, she argues, improved.</p> <p>1.21 Remembers marking players while playing and the playful rivalry that was involved.</p> <p>1.22.06 Explains that in Co Down, the relationship was between hurlers and camoges, rather than footballers.</p> <p>1.22.55 Recalls the best teams and players during her lifetime and mentions Leitrim club, Ballycran, Portaferry and Hilltown in later years. Remembers women like Sheila McAnulty and Lily Spencer.</p> <p>1.25.50 Says that playing for her club holds the best memories for her throughout her career in the Camogie Association, mainly due to friendships formed.</p> <p>1.26.50 Considers the future of camogie and explains that while she was worried in the past, she is now more optimistic.</p> <p>1.28.35. Talks about the importance of past players giving back to the game</p>
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<p><b>Involvement in GAA/Camogie</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): President of Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael, 1994-1997</p>
<p><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played camogie at Sacred Heart School and with St Bridgets Camogie club in Newry. 1970 formed St Peter's Camogie Club in Warrenpoint. Played for them and for Down senior county camogie team in 1968 for 2 or three years. Won 1 Ulster Championship (1968) and played on the Ulster team in the 1970s.</p>
<p><b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Referred 2 Senior Camogie All-Irelands and 1 Junior Camogie All-Ireland; trained St Peter's and Down Camogie teams; Held many positions in camogie at club, county, provincial and national level including club chairperson, Co. Down chairperson, Ulster secretary and Ulster chairperson. President of Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael, 1994-7.</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: 01:29:11</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<p>English</p>

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**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: \_\_\_\_\_Regina Fitzpatrick\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_30/08/2012\_\_\_\_\_