

## GAA Oral History Project

## Interview Log Form

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Regina Fitzpatrick
<b>Date of Interview</b>	19/02/2010
<b>Name of Interviewee</b>	Tom Lyons
<b>Period Covered</b>	1887-2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Cork
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Material Culture, Education, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish, History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy/ Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	Tom recalls his experiences of the GAA in west Cork. A native of Dunmanway, he grew up in an area where football was the popular sport. At primary school he played in tournaments and he later joined the local GAA club, Doheny. He went to boarding school at Coláiste Íosagáin in Baile Mhuirne in Cork and played football with the team there. He then trained as a teacher at St Pat's in Dublin and was introduced to a wide range of sports, which he enjoyed. He later settled in Clonakilty, where he got a job teaching. He joined the local club and was heavily involved in the GAA scene. He wrote a column on Gaelic games for the local newspaper, worked as an administrator, wrote a history of Clonakilty GAA and became a referee. Tom shares his opinions on issues like player power within the Association, the vulnerability of hurling, and what he sees as the gradual shift of the GAA away from its roots. Throughout his account he tells stories of things that happened that are unique to his own experiences and offer an insight into the weird and wonderful world of the GAA.

	<p>00:25 He was born in 1949 in Dunmanway, west Cork. It was very rural and football was the main sport as it was the home of Sam Maguire.</p> <p>01:10 It was old-fashioned GAA and they used to 'clatter each other around the field'.</p> <p>01:30 His father never played GAA, although Tom later found out that his grandfather played football when the GAA was set up in west Cork around 1890. His father never went to matches, save for one time when Tom's two brothers were playing. There was a fight and Tom's father became quite agitated on the sideline.</p> <p>02:30 His mother had no interest but her two brothers were very interested in the GAA.</p> <p>03:00 Earliest memories are of being eight years old and watching the junior footballers train in Dunmanway. They would play their own little games themselves.</p> <p>03:50 They got involved in tournaments in school. When Tom was in third class he got on a team with older boys and that was a real boost and good for his image.</p> <p>04:30 Teachers played a huge role and often trained underage teams. When two teachers were coaching opposing teams they would have arguments and then go to school the next day as if nothing had happened.</p> <p>05:40 The kids voted for the captains of the primary school teams and the day that votes were cast was very exciting. It was democratic. The old cup is in the school museum in 2010.</p> <p>06:25 If you were voted captain there was then a draw to see who got first pick of the available players. Tom got first pick one year and selected Donal Crowley, an unbeatable player. The team went on to win the cup.</p> <p>07:00 Outside of school there were no competitions below Under-14 level. There was no Under-14 level in Dunmanway until a priest came along and started a team. It was 1962. They won a hurling competition but were well beaten by Bantry in football. Bantry had top quality players like Donal Hunt.</p> <p>08:10 Remembers going to Skibbereen for an Under-16</p>
--	---

	<p>game. Jack MCCULL? was driving them and they had a minor crash. They were late for the game.</p> <p>09:15 There was a man named George who drove a bus and he was very slow. One day a car passed him out on the inside and kept beeping the horn at George.</p> <p>10:05 Sometimes they only played three games in the year. They trained officially once a month but always played amongst themselves.</p> <p>11:15 He spent two years in St Pat's training college and played a lot.</p> <p>11:50 He went to a secondary school in Dunmanway with three teachers. One was an ex-footballer who had suffered a serious injury and was very angry with the GAA so he didn't like the pupils playing GAA. If someone didn't have their homework done after having played a match they got in big trouble and it could get physical.</p> <p>12:50 He then went to Hamilton High in Bandon and GAA was very popular there.</p> <p>13:15 After that he went to Coláiste Íosagáin in Baile Mhuirne because he wanted to be a teacher. It was football mad and hurling was banned there. One year some of them brought their hurleys back after Christmas and they got in big trouble.</p> <p>14:00 They played in the Corn Uí Mhuirí, playing against teams like Críost Rí from Cork and the Sem from Killarney. Life revolved around football and their best players often made the Cork minor team.</p> <p>14:40 The brother in charge at school was from Kerry and despised hurling. Another brother - who was head of the college - often drove boys to matches. He had only one good eye but regularly drove at 60 miles/hour. They were terrified in the car with him.</p> <p>15:40 It was 1967 and before they played games they were made to eat raw eggs as a special diet.</p> <p>16:15 Críost Rí were their big rivals - they had players like Ray Cummins. The Sem were rivals too and they loved to beat them.</p> <p>16:55 One day they played St Flannel's and Tom scored 11</p>
--	--

	<p>points.</p> <p>17:20 If you were on the senior football team at school you were a hero.</p> <p>17:30 When Tom was at school Mickey Ned O'Sullivan arrived from Kenmare as a pupil. He went on to captain Kerry to an All-Ireland. Mickey Ned was big into athletics, especially the pole vault.</p> <p>18:25 He went to training college in Dublin in St Pat's and you could do all sports. Tom played handball in Croke Park. He also played rugby in Clontarf. They usually ate oranges on the pitch at half-time but in Clontarf they were approached by a man who had carefully sliced oranges on a silver tray.</p> <p>20:10 He was suspended for six months back home because he was playing rugby for the college team in Dublin. He had mentioned the rugby to his friends back home and was quickly reported to the county board because the Ban was in effect.</p> <p>21:20 When he came out of training in 1970 the Ban was still in force. There was a soccer team named Cork Hibs and vigilantes used to go to games to try and catch GAA people there. Cork Hibs played a league decider against Waterford and Tom went along and he saw Kerry footballer Mick O'Connell there too.</p> <p>22:40 There were strict GAA rules on dances but to get around that a club would set up a new independent committee and hold a dance in that committee's name. Everyone knew it was really a dance for the club but it was a way of getting around the rules.</p> <p>23:15 There were great characters in Clonakilty, like Lar Shea. One day in the 1930s men came into a meeting with a scarecrow they had found on the road. They sat the scarecrow in the meeting and the following night hung the scarecrow from a pole. Somebody went to the police to report that a person had hung themselves from a pole.</p> <p>24:25 Another character was the president of the club. He died turning the sod. One day they were playing a county semi-final and spent an entire night in the pub at home celebrating the win afterwards. The president came out of the pub in the morning and still thought it was the evening before.</p>
--	--

	<p>25:30 Recalls being at a game in BALNEEN? and a player kept falling over, somebody shouted for the player to put studs in his knees instead of his boots.</p> <p>26:15 There was a referee in Clonakilty called Michael Collins, who once refereed an All-Ireland. He was refereeing a game between Castlehaven and Skibbereen and a spectator was not happy with the referee and shouted that they had shot the wrong Michael Collins.</p> <p>22:35 St Pat's was a new college in the 1960s. He liked to skip art class and one day was in his room and saw the man in the room above him fall past his window.</p> <p>28:45 Recalls being in a seminar translating Irish to English.</p> <p>30:05 They had a loan of the alley in Croke Park and he tried all sports, but could not master swimming.</p> <p>30:40 One time he was sent off in a rugby game and a priest later refused to sign a reference for him because he had been sent off.</p> <p>31:10 He got a job in Little Island and hurling was big there.</p> <p>31:20 In St Pat's he met people like Murt O'Connor who later played for Offaly. It was great to play against them.</p> <p>31:25 They played a game in Queens in Belfast just before the Troubles started. The people in Queens were wearing blazers.</p> <p>33:45 There were no girls in St Pat's - they were in Careysford and the boys used go out there to visit them. They had no money for the bus so they would walk there and back.</p> <p>34:50 At Croke Park he saw the first Australian team that played in Ireland. They played Meath and were 'mighty men'. The crowd were in awe at what they could do.</p> <p>36:10 He saw a game with the Aussies in Cork and that got out of hand and was too physical.</p> <p>36:30 Recalls Cork playing Dublin in the 1983 All-Ireland football semi-final. They drew. Barney Rock got a goal for Dublin in the last minute, so the replay was in Páirc Uí Chaoimh and the Gardaí expected trouble from the Dublin fans. The atmosphere was electric. Dublin won well and at</p>
--	--

the end of the game the Dublin crowd headed towards the Cork crowd but the Gardaí were ready for them. Tom saw Munster and Leinster play in Croke Park in 2009 in the rugby and the atmosphere at the Cork game was much much better.

40:00 Dublin won games against Cork that they shouldn't have won at all so there was always a spiky rivalry between the two.

41:00 There was a minor game between local teams in Kilbriain and the game erupted and that spread to the terraces. One woman started hitting people with an umbrella. The umbrella appeared mounted on the wall of a local pub a few nights later as 'the umbrella that beat Newcestown'.

42:25 It was unusual in Dunmanway for people to go away to college. At 16 he was on the junior team and then went away to college and was not picked when he came home in the summers.

43:15 University teams didn't really exist back then.

43:25 The best hurlers in west Cork went to a school called Farranferris and won All-Irelands with them. One Dunmanway lad captained Farranferris to an All-Ireland.

44:00 Farranferris captains usually made the Cork minor team and one Dunmanway boy kept boasting about it but was never picked by the minors.

45:00 The Southern Star was their local paper and Tom ended up writing for them. One correspondent John 'páiste' McCarthy went around to houses looking for local news.

45:00 In Coláiste Íosagáin there was an Ahern boy from BALNEEN? and his parents would send The Southern Star by post every week.

46:30 Sometimes Dunmanway would send a car to collect Tom from school. Newcestown were playing Doheny one time in a final. Maurice O'Callaghan was at the school with Tom and was a Newcestown player. Tom got a lift with Tom and Francie O'Brien was driving the car. Doheny won and after the game Francie refused to drive him back to college.

48:45 He got a black eye one time against Newcestown. Johnny Carroll was attacked by one of the Newcestown

	<p>players, Tom rushed in to help and he got a punch.</p> <p>49:40 When he was 15 he went to school in Bandon and had to thumb home after training. A Newcestown man picked him up and Tom's brother had given a controversial decision against Newcestown in a match whilst refereeing a few days before. Tom was kicked out of the car.</p> <p>51:00 There was nobody to collect Tom after he finished his Leaving Cert but Maurice O'Callaghan's older brother drove him home.</p> <p>51:35 Johnny Carroll used to play with the Newcestown players on a divisional team called Carbery. They won a championship in 1968. Johnny never spoke to the Newcestown players socially until he was 50.</p> <p>52:20 The Carbery team made the county final in 1964 and there was a big split between Skibbereen and Doheny which made the national press. The Dunmanway players refused to wear the Skibbereen jersey during the final or to play alongside Skibbereen players.</p> <p>53:15 The GAA unifies people but it is also divisive. Today it is more of a sporting organisation and the younger people are less aware of the roots of the GAA.</p> <p>54:00 Clonakilty and Rosscarbery games have great atmosphere, as do games with Skibbereen, Castlehaven, Newcestown, Kilbrittain. That keeps the GAA rooted.</p> <p>54:40 They always travelled to Killarney for Munster championship games. It was special. Cars were always breaking down on the way.</p> <p>55:20 His favourite player was Kerry's Mick O'Connell and Cork were always trying to rattle him. In 1966 a Cork player had the job of 'looking after' Mick O'Connell. O'Connell kept his composure.</p> <p>57:20 The best Kerry/Cork game he saw was in 1976, Páirc Uí Chaoimh had just opened and it was a Munster final which went to extra-time. After that Mick O'Dwyer's team began to dominate.</p> <p>58:45 Before they used to have to go down early in order to get in early. They let in too many people and some had problems with their view being obstructed. Stones and other</p>
--	---

	<p>implements were thrown at those towards the front to make them sit down.</p> <p>01:00:10 His uncle took him to a Munster final against Tipperary and Christy Ring was playing. Paddy Barry was also playing.</p> <p>01:00:50 They have had great games against Waterford and Kilkenny over the years. Recalls beating Kilkenny and it was a great feeling.</p> <p>01:00:55 Recalls playing Kilkenny in hurling in 1999, Jimmy Barry Murphy was training Cork and Kilkenny were favourites. Cork were winning near the end and DJ Carey almost scored for Kilkenny and the Cork fans were relieved.</p> <p>01:02:40 Cork won the Double in 1990 and Tom was in the Cusack Stand in Croke Park and there was a pillar in front of a woman near Tom. The game was too exciting so she had to stare at the pillar instead.</p> <p>01:03:50 He was living in Cork city before he got married and a local team let him train with them. The same happened in Clonakilty and he joined the club. 20 years later they were arguing about whether the team should drop to junior B level and an opponent called him a blow-in.</p> <p>01:05:10 A father of his friend's had moved to Clonakilty in 1900 and in the 1940s the team was very good and they were arguing about team selection and he was told to shut up because he was only a blow-in.</p> <p>01:05:50 It takes about three generations to become a Dunmanway or a Clonakilty person.</p> <p>01:06:05 He became chairman of the club around 1983 and was training teams. They were arguing at a meeting and Tom wanted to stop people smoking in the club room. Somebody called Tom a Blueshirt.</p> <p>01:07:20 Tom sees the GAA as a Fianna Fáil organisation. If Fianna Fáil aren't in government the GAA will oppose them. It's the same in Clonakilty.</p> <p>01:08:15 The pitch in Clonakilty did not have an official name. In Dunmanway they have the Sam Maguire Park, in Skibbereen O'Donovan Rossa Park, in Bantry Wolfe Tone Park, in Bandon Charlie Hurley Park. At an AGM one year</p>
--	--



	<p>Tom proposed to name Clonakilty park the Michael Collins Memorial Park as a joke. There was mayhem.</p> <p>01:10:20 Tom was writing a Clonakilty GAA history book. He discovered that Michael Collins won a west Cork final with Clonakilty. The club was to edit the book and they demanded that the Michael Collins aspect be taken out.</p> <p>01:12:05 Things were very political in west Cork in the 1930s and 1940s and in west Cork there was an attempt to set up a rival organisation to the GAA by the Blueshirts in the 1930s. It collapsed after about a year.</p> <p>01:13:20 There was a man involved in picking teams in the club and he was very aware of whether a player came from a Fianna Fáil or Fine Gael family. One day the team were losing and he was asked to make changes but he was reluctant because they were all Fine Gael people on the bench. Some players got fed up and left.</p> <p>01:14:30 In the 1930s Clonakilty would play the Agricultural College nearby. Clonakilty had a player who had played for Cork and they had to put up a makeshift goal with a rope as a crossbar. That led to trouble when the goalkeeper pulled down the rope.</p> <p>01:15:30 Another time they were supposed to play in the Showgrounds and when they went to the pitch it had been littered with glass by the Blueshirts.</p> <p>01:16:35 There was a chairman of the county board, Gene Fitzgerald, who went on to become a government minister. Jack Lynch became Taoiseach. Political parties often hunted GAA players, like Christy Ring.</p> <p>01:17:15 Tom feels Seán Kelly, former GAA President, used his position to boost his political career.</p> <p>01:18:25 When they were young they were not very conscious of the fact that Sam Maguire was from Dunmanway. This is possibly because he was a Protestant - and they didn't play GAA.</p> <p>01:19:00 Recalls a boy in the 1980s from Skibbereen who won an All-Ireland minor medal, and he was the first Protestant from west Cork to get that far, Tom believed.</p> <p>01:19:10 There was a Protestant family in Timoleague called</p>
--	--

	<p>the Smiths and they got involved in the local football club, which was very unusual.</p> <p>01:20:10 When Down won the All-Ireland around 1960 they came to Dunmanway with the cup to see where Sam Maguire was from.</p> <p>01:21:00 They were told all about the IRA men who were involved with the club but not the Protestants.</p> <p>01:21:45 Hurling was played in west Cork before the GAA arrived in 1887 but it seems to have died out soon after.</p> <p>01:22:35 There was a political parade in Rosscarbery in 1890 organised by the Land League and the GAA paraded with their hurleys.</p> <p>01:22:50 The first official hurling in west Cork was in 1905. There was probably a lack of hurleys.</p> <p>01:23:50 There was a pitch in Bandon called 'the bogs', which is the site of supermarkets now. Jack Lynch played in a county final there in 1958, Clonakilty were playing his team St Nick's. They only had one ball for the game. One local, Mick Finn, decided to get rid of the ball near the end and kicked it into the river. He thought that would end the game but Jack Lynch waded into the water to get the ball.</p> <p>01:26:00 Kerry won a hurling All-Ireland in 1891 before they ever won a football one, but football grew in popularity and that probably rubbed off on west Cork as it was close to Kerry.</p> <p>01:27:05 No club in west Cork has ever won a senior county hurling title. Many clubs were football-only, like Castlehaven. In 2010 there were only three clubs not playing hurling.</p> <p>01:28:00 Hurling is more associated with the city and one time west Cork tried to set up their own county board because they felt the existing one only cared about the city.</p> <p>01:28:50 Hurling is in a bad way in Cork city at underage level in 2010.</p> <p>01:29:55 Football takes precedence within the club.</p> <p>01:30:30 They have a big SCIA NA SCOIL? in west Cork but there is no hurling played.</p>
--	---

	<p>01:31:15 The same counties keep on dominating hurling in the country. Something has gone wrong.</p> <p>01:31:35 They tried to start camogie in Clonakilty in the 1960s and 1980s but it didn't come to much. There was not much space due to lack of pitches.</p> <p>01:32:30 They got new facilities in 2009 and ladies football and camogie suddenly became very popular.</p> <p>01:33:00 The Cork ladies football team has been very successful nationally and west Cork take credit for that because they started a SCIANA SCOIL? in 1990 for girls before the city ever did it.</p> <p>01:34:10 The growth in ladies football in Cork is damaging camogie.</p> <p>01:34:55 The development of Gaelic football is what threatens hurling most because you need a lot of equipment for hurling. One man in Tom's club says the only way to boost hurling is to take a knife to every football in the club.</p> <p>01:36:00 Women used to help out with washing jerseys, making tea after matches, running Scór na nÓg. Only in recent years are they getting involved in administration. In the past they had to be at home with the family. They are more educated now and want to be involved.</p> <p>01:37:40 A lot of women are drifting away from the GAA and over to ladies football.</p> <p>01:38:00 Lots of GAA people don't like the fact that underage girls are allowed to play football with boys but underage boys are not allowed to join the girls' teams.</p> <p>01:38:30 Lack of male teachers in a primary school is also a problem.</p> <p>01:39:10 A fully unified organisation that includes ladies football and camogie is unlikely to happen, Tom feels. Some people want hurling and football to have separate organisations.</p> <p>01:40:20 Tom was always involved in Scór and there used to be trouble with mothers because of children who weren't picked</p>
--	--

	<p>01:40:50 Meetings are rarely carried out through Irish in the GAA</p> <p>01:41:05 At underage hurling he had two Polish boys and a Czech join up and it is impossible to translate their names into Irish.</p> <p>01:41:25 Any use of Irish in the GAA is paying lip service - all the Irish and culture had been pushed over into Scór.</p> <p>01:42:05 Tom feels that rugby is our native sport, and not football. The original GAA game was a catch and carry game and there was no kicking. Football is a manufactured game.</p> <p>43:10 The games in the 1880s never finished because there were arguments over rules.</p> <p>01:43:40 In historical documents they call the ball an 'oval'.</p> <p>01:44:35 They have suffered in Clonakilty from players emigrating. In past years there have been teams in London and Boston that were better than the teams at home.</p> <p>01:45:10 The immigrant players do not stay around long enough; often the family move on.</p> <p>01:45:40 Recalls two Under-8 Nigerians coming along. He hopes they stay around.</p> <p>01:45:55 No effort is being made to attract the immigrants into clubs even though there is a lot of potential there.</p> <p>01:46:35 Recalls an Under-12 hurling game in 2009 against Bandon and their best player was black, even though he was unable to perform some of the basic skills.</p> <p>01:47:55 The GAA is moving towards becoming a sporting organisation that will have to make changes to keep up with the times.</p> <p>01:48:35 Young people don't understand the history of the GAA as they learn mainly social history in primary school.</p> <p>01:49:15 Opening up Croke Park finished off the old anti-English GAA, which is good, but it also meant that the Association was losing its roots.</p>
--	--

REFERENCE NO. CK-1-15

	<p>01:50:00 In the old days you played for the team and yourself; now players want tracksuits and physios and things like that. it is ruining the club and county scene.</p> <p>01:51:00 The physio is not covered by the insurance scheme anymore and clubs cannot afford it.</p> <p>01:51:35 Amateurism is everything within the GAA because professionalism is too expensive and threatens the club scene.</p> <p>01:52:15 The amateur soccer scene is booming but the professional soccer is a disaster, and the GAA could fall into that trap.</p> <p>01:53:00 Inter-county strikes lead the club hurlers to expect the same treatment as county players. Recalls club players refusing to accept names nominated for the position of coach. There are two players refusing to play for the man who was selected. Players are dictating more now.</p> <p>01:54:35 Cork hurlers only have to show up for training with their boots and hurleys; everything else is laid on for them. It costs over 1 million euro a year to keep the county teams going.</p> <p>01:55:15 As an administrator he encounters many problems. There are more meetings. The club has 33 teams and training schedules have to be drawn up.</p> <p>01:56:15 Many people are backing away from getting involved as it is too complicated. It is worse in the cities.</p> <p>01:57:50 It's fine for 2010 GAA President Christy Cooney to pour money into new developments but people will be needed to volunteer.</p> <p>01:58:10 Recalls looking for volunteers to collect at the gates at a meeting of 50 people and nobody volunteered.</p> <p>01:59:00 He was sent off for the first time in a rugby game for St Pat's.</p> <p>01:59:15 He became a referee and never got hit once, but came close one time when a man and his daughter came after him.</p> <p>01:59:45 If the GAA did not pay referees there wouldn't be</p>
--	--

	<p>any. They get a lot of abuse, and it's worse at underage games.</p> <p>02:00:20 He has seen mentors being hit at underage games.</p> <p>02:00:45 Recalls an incident at a SCIAL NA SCOIL? game. The referee was getting abuse and the women who were supposed to be in charge of the team were in the dugout chatting while the game was in chaos.</p> <p>02:02:10 It's fine to have courses for referees but if they don't use his common sense in a match there will be trouble.</p> <p>02:02:55 Recalls an Under-14 game when a winning team attacked the referee. The team was from Beara.</p> <p>02:03:35 Recalls a local Under-10 league. He was refereeing the final and it got heated. The mother of a player hit him over the head with an umbrella.</p> <p>02:05:10 He would like to see more women refereeing men's matches - the men would be slower to give them abuse.</p> <p>02:05:25 There are few female referees in ladies football.</p> <p>02:06:10 Recalls a team in the 1930s that lost six county finals in seven years. After four years they were playing a team for north Cork. Clonakilty were favourites and they froze. They all blamed the referee and chased him into the dressing rooms. The club was suspended for a year and some of the players for life.</p> <p>02:07:05 Tom saw a similar incident when Clonakilty were playing a junior game against Skibbereen in Rosscarbery. The referee made a controversial decision and he hopped a ditch after the game and sped off in his car with supporters chasing him.</p> <p>02:09:10 The GAA is his whole life since he retired. It is a whole social scene and he has made lots of friends.</p> <p>02:10:30 Mentions a club called GOLEEN? and in 100 years they have won one single title, but they persist regardless. That is what the GAA is about to Tom.</p> <p>02:12:00 Being involved with committees means you are involved all year long.</p>
--	---

**REFERENCE NO. CK-1-15**

	02:12:25 He nearly ended up in court once for writing a controversial article about a referee.
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Audio</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 02:13:26
<b>Language</b>	English