

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

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| Name of Interviewer | Arlene Crampsie |
| Date of Interview | 26 th Feb 2009 |
| Location | Hampton Inn, Milford, Connecticut |
| Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname) | Brendan Crawley |
| <u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u> | |
| Gender | Male |
| Born | Year Born: 1947 Home County: Monaghan |
| Education | Primary: Inniskeen NS, Co. Monaghan Secondary: CBS Dundalk, Co. Louth Third Level: De La Salle College, Manchester |
| Family | Siblings: 2 sisters and 1 brother Current Family if Different: Married to Maureen |
| Club(s) | Inniskeen Grattan's [Monaghan]; Matt Talbot's [Dublin] |
| Occupation | Teacher, House Cleaner |
| Parents' Occupation | Carpenter [Father]; Housewife [Mother] |
| Religion | Roman Catholic |
| Political Affiliation / Membership | Sinn Féin |

REFERENCE NO. MN/1/2

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| Date of Report | 19 th August 2012 |
| Period Covered | 1938 – 2009 |
| Counties/Countries Covered | Americas, USA, Dublin, Monaghan, Great Britain, England |
| Key Themes Covered | Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA Abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, 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, Politics, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics |
| Interview Summary | <p>Brendan talks about his many adventures whilst involved with the GAA. He grew up in Inniskeen, County Monaghan, and played with Inniskeen Grattans at all levels. He spent some time living in Liverpool and played with the John Mitchel's club. He moved to Dublin, where he worked as a teacher at an inner city primary school. There he and a few others started up a GAA club, Matt Talbot's. They started running an exchange programme with the John Mitchel's club in Liverpool and with other clubs in England, which helped develop the underage GAA scene over there. Later he brought the Matt Talbot's club to the United States and in time he and his wife moved to Boston. He kept up his involvement in the GAA and has had numerous teams from Ireland visit over the years - many of them staying at his home, which became known as 'The House of Ireland'. Brendan's methods are unconventional and he will often take a gamble in order to get things done. He has a great rapport with the youth and their well-being means a great deal to him. Life is rarely dull when Brendan is around.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:30 Originally from Inniskeen in County Monaghan, his local club is Inniskeen Grattans.</p> <p>00:45 Earliest memory is playing juvenile football. He played minor, junior and senior after that.</p> <p>01:05 His father, Jack Crawley, was captain of Ulster in 1938</p> |

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| | <p>and captained Monaghan in the All-Ireland semi-final against Galway in Mullingar in 1938 - the first match that Micheál O'Hehir ever commentated on. Monaghan lost.</p> <p>01:40 Brendan played for Monaghan at minor level.</p> <p>01:55 He has played in four senior championships in one year, despite the fact that he should only have been playing in one.</p> <p>02:10 He played illegally for the Sean O'Mahony's club against St. Pat's in Louth, for Inniskeen against Castleblayney in Monaghan, for John Mitchel's in Liverpool in the Lancashire championship and he played for Cheltenham in the Gloucestershire championship. He won a Lancashire medal.</p> <p>02:35 He won a minor championship medal and Seamus Dooley - former president of the GAA in New York - was on his team.</p> <p>03:00 He played with John Mitchel's whilst at college in England and went back to Dublin and formed the Matt Talbot's club. He brought the kids - who were from the inner city, Dorset Street, Broadstone, Dominic Street - to play in Liverpool and that encouraged people in Lancashire to start juvenile football. It was 1977.</p> <p>04:00 Clubs sprang up in Lancashire and in Manchester St. Kentigern's, St. Brendan's and Oisín's started up juvenile teams.</p> <p>04:15 In 1978 Liverpool came to Ireland and Seán Ó Síocháin gave them Croke Park for the afternoon. 115 kids came over.</p> <p>05:00 St Patrick's of Cheshire later came over.</p> <p>05:15 They went to Leeds to boost the GAA scene over there.</p> <p>05:35 In 1979 they pioneered the juvenile game in the United States - they went to Philadelphia, New York, New Haven, Boston, Hartford, Canada, the Catskill Mountains. It had a great effect on the inner city kids from Ireland.</p> <p>06:40 New Haven, Boston and Hartford decided to bring their kids to Ireland and they all had to be put up. Parnell's club in Dublin put up some of the players.</p> <p>07:25 Brendan asked Liam Mulvihill if they could use Croke Park and he eventually said yes. Brendan spoke to the groundsman Con O'Leary and he consented to a kick about. He then contacted John Mitchel's in Liverpool and they came</p> |
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| | <p>over for a match.</p> <p>08:20 It was the first ever juvenile game between underage kids played at Croke Park.</p> <p>09:05 Tommy Walsh was president of the Irish associations and big into the Gaelic football club in Liverpool and he hailed Matt Talbot's for establishing a firm link with Liverpool - the club went over there ten years in-a-row.</p> <p>09:50 When they first went to Liverpool Seán Ó Síocháin also praised the Matt Talbot's club.</p> <p>10:30 President Sean McCague thanked the club personally for being 'a shining example'.</p> <p>11:20 Inniskeen also sent over kids and Liverpool made a return trip.</p> <p>11:50 The Matt Talbot's team of 1976 were still playing together in 2009 – 30 years after they first went to the US.</p> <p>12:45 Every kid had to pay £2 a week for one year in order to go to the US. The kids were enthusiastic and would follow him into pubs in Drumcondra on a Saturday night to give him their £2 for the week.</p> <p>13:25 Some of the kids ended up living in the US.</p> <p>14:10 On one trip they went to a soccer game at Old Trafford and the bus driver got a puncture on the motorway. Brendan ran off the bus to get to the game.</p> <p>15:20 Before going to the US Brendan's car was stolen in Dublin. Brendan went to the editor of the Evening Press and told him that the kids' passports were all in the back of the car. It was a lie and it worked.</p> <p>16:20 John Mitchel's were in an All-Ireland final in 2009 and lost to Skellig of Kerry by a point.</p> <p>16:35 Inniskeen won an All-Ireland intermediate club final a few years before that.</p> <p>16:40 Whenever the clubs have functions they all support each other.</p> <p>16:55 He helped a lot of Dublin clubs travel to England - Thomas Davis, St Anne's, O'Connell's and various schools.</p> <p>17:30 They won an Under-14 league in Dublin but Brendan feels that the greatest thing they did was demonstrate how powerful the social side of the GAA could be. It gave the kids</p> |
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| | <p>something to look forward to and they made new friends.</p> <p>18:05 In 2009 New Haven were due to send 80 kids to San Francisco.</p> <p>18:20 Brendan was living in Boston and he met a man, Brother Ennis, who was bringing over the St Pat's College from Armagh to the US to New Haven. Brendan and his wife put the whole team up.</p> <p>20:10 Earliest GAA memory is being a young boy and gathering stones off a new pitch before they put the grass seed down.</p> <p>20:55 His father was captain of Inniskeen in 1947 and 1948 – the last time they won a championship.</p> <p>21:35 His father did not talk a lot about his GAA experiences but apparently he was a hard man at the back.</p> <p>22:20 Brendan's uncle was involved in the GAA for a little while.</p> <p>22:40 There was nothing but football in Monaghan. To get on the team was everyone's ambition. They won a minor championship.</p> <p>23:30 He went to England at the age of 21 and went to college at night. The club at home used to pay for him to return for championship games.</p> <p>23:55 He was homesick but the John Mitchel's club was a great comfort.</p> <p>24:40 In England he used a false name so that he could play.</p> <p>25:00 In England they went to Newsham Park and put the goalposts up and when they were finished playing they took them down again.</p> <p>25:15 They did too much drinking back then, going out on a Saturday night and playing the next day.</p> <p>25:50 He made some great friendships and spent \$250 on stamps for Christmas cards in 2008.</p> <p>26:55 He went to the US because he felt that he had to get away from the GAA or he would never have enough money for a house.</p> <p>27:30 Seán Ó Síocháin and Liam Mulvihill were always good to him.</p> |
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| | <p>27:50 Matt Talbot's flew Liam Mulvihill's daughter to the US when she was suffering with meningitis.</p> <p>29:20 He loved the night of the Dublin/Tyrone game in 2008 at Croke Park to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the GAA. It was a great spectacle.</p> <p>29:50 He has no children but he looked upon the people at Matt Talbot's as his children and the GAA as one big family.</p> <p>30:20 In Boston he didn't get involved with a club because he was busy saving for a deposit for a house. He would go to functions and matches.</p> <p>31:00 His house was nicknamed 'The House of Ireland' because they always put people up who needed help.</p> <p>31:40 There was never a club in inner city Dublin until they set up Matt Talbot's, and the result was that it brought all the parents closer together.</p> <p>32:05 When deciding what kids to bring to the US they consulted the parents and worked together on it. The parents were unselfish in how they approached the process.</p> <p>33:40 In New York they went to the Forge Bar in the Bronx near Gaelic Park and the kids dumped their suitcases there and took whatever items they needed for the month.</p> <p>35:15 They had just come back from Philadelphia and had to get on the subway at Times Square and they had sixteen bottles of whiskey as presents. One of them broke on the subway and stank out the carriage.</p> <p>35:30 In New Haven one player was unenthusiastic and Brendan gave out to him. The boy apologised the next day.</p> <p>36:00 Kenneth McLoughlin was one of the players who later ended up in the US. He won Farrier of the Year in Dublin, was hired by Vincent O'Brien and then Aidan O'Brien and he shod Johannesburg in the Breeder's Cup.</p> <p>36:45 He ended up in Dublin because he got a teaching job in the inner city.</p> <p>37:15 He played with a teachers' club and they almost got to play in Croke Park but were beaten by the Gardaí.</p> <p>38:05 He was with 2009 Director General Páraic Duffy in the Gaeltacht in Donegal. He used to teach in St Macartan's in Monaghan.</p> |
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| | <p>38:45 Teachers have done great work for the GAA and it's not the same in 2009.</p> <p>39:15 In the inner city school in Dublin there was no Gaelic football so they decided to start it up. They won a primary schools' league and when the kids were leaving the school they decided to set up a club.</p> <p>40:25 City councillor Finian McGrath - a TD in 2009 - and teachers like Seamus Torpe, Brendan Taffe, Mike Forry all helped out.</p> <p>40:40 Matt Talbot's go to Inniskeen every September and the original teachers still go every September too.</p> <p>41:00 He hasn't missed an All-Ireland since 1989.</p> <p>41:30 When the club was set up soccer was the popular sport. Brendan would arrange his GAA fixtures around the soccer fixtures.</p> <p>42:20 The north city board were a little jealous of the attention Matt Talbot's got. They often got newspapers and RTÉ's Mick Dunne came to interview them.</p> <p>43:30 60 of them went to Liverpool and everyone had a fantastic time. It was a great scene to be part of.</p> <p>44:15 The Matt Talbot club could not be sustained over time but they achieved a lot. Roughly 100 people played for the club in total.</p> <p>46:05 The media has a huge role to play in the GAA. Websites are very important.</p> <p>46:45 The Northern Standard in Monaghan is full of GAA coverage.</p> <p>47:25 Croke Park is also a big boost to the GAA; it impresses the younger people.</p> <p>47:55 After work in England he would get a train to Holyhead, take the ferry and then the bus to Inniskeen.</p> <p>48:10 He went to England 13 times in one year when he was living in Dublin.</p> <p>48:40 He would play with Mitchel's on a Sunday and bring his guitar and get the boat back on Monday for work.</p> <p>49:35 In Inniskeen they never socialised with opposing teams but that changed over the years and there is a lot of fun to be had when you do socialise. Matt Talbot's and John Mitchel's</p> |
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| | <p>and New Haven all have a bond between them now.</p> <p>50:25 When Talbot's visit Inniskeen it is the biggest weekend in the village. Pat McEnaney the inter-county referee officiates at the game. They have great fun.</p> <p>51:55 Everyone is proud of their culture, games and language and it would be a shame if the Irish language were to die out. It wasn't a big factor in Brendan's GAA experience.</p> <p>53:20 Women's role in the GAA has increased all the time and is a very positive thing.</p> <p>53:50 In his village they have as many women's teams as they do men's teams. They also have three pitches which helps.</p> <p>54:25 Women play in Gaelic Park and they always have their say in what goes on.</p> <p>56:45 Favourite memory is when the boat was pulling into Liverpool in 1976 and he saw hundreds of people on the docks waving and cheering them. Their presence meant a lot to the locals and it was unforgettable.</p> <p>57:45 Football is his life and the highlight of his year is going home to play in the reunion game with Matt Talbot's in Monaghan.</p> <p>58:05 He has made sacrifices but his wife has done just as much. He might have made more money but that doesn't bother him.</p> <p>59:45 Recalls getting a call from home saying his mother was on her deathbed. He travelled home with the Armagh players who had been staying with him. They all showed up at his mother's funeral.</p> <p>01:01:25 He and his wife went on a cruise for her 50th birthday. Inniskeen were in the All-Ireland semi-final against Carbery Rangers around the same time and won. He told his wife he wanted to back out of the cruise to see the final against Caherlistrane from Galway. They won.</p> <p>01:04:00 Years ago he was going on the boat to England and a boy was missing from the tour group. Brendan went to the house and asked his father to let him go. He did and the boy took a brown bag with boots in it.</p> <p>01:04:45 Recalls a sing-song on top of a shed in Monaghan on a Sunday morning after being up all night. The locals</p> |
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| | <p>going to Mass were bemused.</p> <p>01:05:30 Recalls when Scoil Uí Chonaill were over in England and they went to Old Trafford to watch a match. He gave the camera to Pat O'Keefe to video the kids at the match. He realised there would be a problem with the camera and met Manchester United great Bobby Charlton and he made an announcement over the loudspeaker for Brendan.</p> <p>01:06:45 Recalls when kids were over in Liverpool and staying in the Bootle Community Centre. When they were due to go back the kids did not turn up for the boat because they had told the people at the community centre that they were allowed to stay another day.</p> <p>01:07:55 He once fitted 12 players into a Ford Capri to travel from Dorset Street to the Phoenix Park in Dublin for a match.</p> <p>01:08:25 Teachers play a huge role in the GAA. Before it was mostly male teachers and now female teachers dominate in primary schools, which is not good from a GAA perspective. The GAA owes teachers a great debt.</p> <p>01:10:30 His biggest disappointment is the Cork senior hurlers' strike of 2009.</p> <p>01:11:15 He doesn't like the idea of monetary compensation in the GAA.</p> <p>01:12:45 Liam Mulvihill is his GAA hero. He showed great leadership.</p> <p>01:13:30 Former Tyrone player Peter Canavan was a great footballer. He played with McAnespies's in Boston.</p> <p>01:14:40 He admired Brother Ennis a lot. The kids had a lot of respect for him. He visits Brendan on holidays regularly.</p> <p>01:15:25 The GAA has been the biggest part of his life. It's the people that make the Association and it has been a pleasure to be involved. Tommy Phelan and Tommy Fahey have been involved in New York GAA for over 30 years and they've been doing fantastic work.</p> |
| <p>Involvement in GAA</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 type="checkbox"/> 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> |

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| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |
| Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played) | Played from the age of 4 to 62 with the Over 40s. |
| Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for) | Founder and Co-ordinator of Matt Talbot's. |
| Format | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual |
| Duration | Length of Interview: 01:18:07 |
| 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: _____ 19/08/12 _____