

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

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| Name of Interviewer | Regina Fitzpatrick |
| Date of Interview | 8 th March 2011 |
| Location | An Ríocht GAA Club, Dunaval, Kilkeel, Co. Down |
| Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname) | Tom Cunningham, Bill Quinn, Gerard McCrink, Seán O'Rourke |
| <u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u> | |
| Gender | Male |
| Born | Year Born: Tom: 1946 Bill: 1928 Gerard: 1942 Seán: 1945 Home County: Down |
| Education | Tom: Primary: St Colman's PS, Kilkeel, Co. Down Secondary: St Colman's College, Newry, Co. Down Third Level: De la Salle Teacher Training College, Manchester Bill: N/A Gerard: Primary: Dunaval PS Seán: Primary: Grange PS Secondary: St Coman's Newry, Co. Down. |
| Family | Tom: Siblings: 2 daughters & 2 sons Current Family if Different: Wife (Sally), 1 son & 1 daughter |

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| | <p>Bill: Siblings: N/A Current Family if Different: 2 sons & 2 daughters</p> <p>Gerard: N/A</p> <p>Seán: N/A</p> |
| Club(s) | <p>Tom: Kilkeel GAA, Lisnacree GAA, St Colman's GAA, An Ríocht GAA [Down] Bill: An Ríocht GAA [Down] Gerard: An Ríocht GAA [Down] Seán: Greencastle Wolfe Tones GAA [Down]</p> |
| Occupation | <p>Tom: Retired Teacher Bill: Boat Builder Gerard: N/A Seán: Joiner</p> |
| Parents' Occupation | <p>Tom: Agricultural Supplier [Father] Bill: Farmers [Mother & Father] Gerard: N/A Seán: Blacksmith [Father]; Housewife [Mother]</p> |
| Religion | <p>Tom, Bill and Seán: Roman Catholic Gerard: N/A</p> |
| Political Affiliation / Membership | N/A |
| Other Club/Society Membership(s) | N/A |

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| Date of Report | 23 rd July 2012 |
| Period Covered | 1920s - 2011 |
| Counties/Countries Covered | Down, England, Great Britain |
| Key Themes Covered | Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Emigration, Role of Clergy, 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, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics |
| Interview Summary | <p>Gerard, Bill, Seán and Tom reflect on the continuing evolution of the GAA in County Down. They recall their own memories of playing Gaelic games growing up, contrasting the level of organisation that went into activities with that in 2011. The county's successes at All-Ireland level are remembered with great pride, especially those during the 1960s. Some of them spent time working in England and they share their experiences from this period. All four are members of An Ríocht and the history of the club is explored in detail. Living in Northern Ireland they also discuss the impact of the Troubles on GAA life. Although the Association has changed beyond all recognition over the decades, all agree that it remains the lifeblood of their community.</p> <p>00:45 (Tom) Foundation of their club, An Ríocht in 1982. Amalgamation of Greencastle and Kilkeel.</p> <p>01:00 (Bill) First game he attended in 1938. Ballymartin playing Kilkeel. Game did not finish and why. Mick Green taking him to the game on his bike. Field was where St Colman's school is now.</p> <p>01:55 (Bill) His uncle was at the same game.</p> <p>02:45 (Gerard) His memories of Kilkeel, St Colman's and Lisnacree clubs.</p> <p>03:10 (Gerard) Going on a bike to watch his brother play when he was young. Playing soccer with a tennis ball.</p> |

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| | <p>04:00 (Gerard) Biggest disappointment. Playing Dromanness in a final. Protestations over a player, Tom Cunningham. What happened and what he did in reaction to the decision.</p> <p>04:50 (Gerard) Contrasting playing and managing.</p> <p>05:05 (Gerard) Old footballs they played with. Taking them to the cobblers. Treasuring what good balls they did have.</p> <p>05:40 (Gerard) Jerseys they had.</p> <p>05:55 (Seán) People emigrating in the 1950s and 1960s.</p> <p>06:00 (Seán) Greencastle being started in the late 1940s. Members taking a boat to Carlingford to buy jerseys. Pair of socks going missing and what became of them.</p> <p>07:15 (Bill) Another team in the area, Attical, recruiting players.</p> <p>08:10 (Seán) No set football field. Quality of pitches.</p> <p>08:35 (Seán) Playing against Drumgath. A player named Thomas White in goals. What he was wearing and how others reacted to that.</p> <p>09:20 (Bill) Greencastle playing Kilkeel with the league title at stake.</p> <p>10:30 (Seán) Rivalry. Three teams in the parish.</p> <p>11:15 (Tom) Playing 7-a-side football with Gerry. Other team disputing result. Argument spilling over into that night's céilí. Parish priest involved.</p> <p>31:20 (Tom) going to the local sports day on their bikes.</p> <p>13:35 (Tom) Kilkeel taking part in a tournament. Fight breaking out.</p> <p>15:05 (Gerard) Playing in Ballymun. Playing against Tom Higgins and what happened to him.</p> <p>15:35 (Seán) No set managers when they were younger. Playing a final in Rostrevor. Pat Joe producing a bottle of whisky.</p> <p>17:15 (Bill) Popularity of 7-a-side football in the area. Kilkeel playing Ballymartin in a final in Rostrevor. What happened in the game and that night at the céilí.</p> <p>18:10 (Seán) Going to matches on a Sunday and how that felt.</p> |
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| | <p>18:30 (Tom) No games when they were younger around religious holidays. How that has changed.</p> <p>19:35 (Gerard) Involvement of clergy in running of club.</p> <p>2-:00 (Tom) Fr Vaughan playing with the club. What became of him.</p> <p>20:45 (Tom) Asking the church for a ten-year lease on a field.</p> <p>21:25: (Gerard) Arrangement they came to with the church about the pitch.</p> <p>21:45 (Seán) Prevalence of female teachers when they were at school and effect that had on sport.</p> <p>22:15 (Seán) Families supplying footballers.</p> <p>22:55 (Seán) Forming their own team.</p> <p>23:05 (Seán) Getting his first bicycle from Jim Quinn's. Cycling home from a game. Mishap along the way.</p> <p>24:15 (Tom) Living in the town. Soccer teams there. Sean playing soccer with the town people in 1970 under the shadow of the Ban. Playing Banbridge and trying to nullifying their attackers.</p> <p>25:45 (Seán) Getting suspended for six months.</p> <p>26:00 (Tom) How they found out they were suspended. Having a hearing at St Malcolm's School.</p> <p>26:30 (Seán) Impact of their suspension on others.</p> <p>27:00 (Tom) Ban being lifted the following year.</p> <p>27:25 (Tom) Wondering how Tony Williamston had caught them. Blaming an Attical man for it.</p> <p>27:55 (Seán) Final game of the league against Attical.</p> <p>28:35 (Gerard) His brother missing out on All-Ireland medals because of the Ban.</p> <p>29:10 (Tom) Mix of Protestants and Catholics on their team.</p> <p>29:30 (Tom) Lack of games when the Down county team were successful. Playing soccer instead.</p> <p>30:25 (Tom) Protestant friends of his on the soccer team wanting to play GAA.</p> <p>31:05 (Tom) Protestants coming out of church on Sunday and</p> |
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| | <p>sneaking off to play GAA.</p> <p>32:05 (Tom) Political climate when they were younger and how that affected sports participation.</p> <p>32:25 (Seán) Getting stopped by security forces travelling to games.</p> <p>32:55 (Bill) Playing against Mountbridge and two brothers falling out.</p> <p>33:45 (Gerard) What happened with the games when people had been stopped trying to get there.</p> <p>34:45 (Seán) Starting to train for games in the 1970s. Training in the dark and how they solved that problem.</p> <p>35:20 (Seán) Type of training they did when the concept was first introduced.</p> <p>37:20 (Tom) Trainer at St Colman's deciding to make people run.</p> <p>38:05 (Seán) Training while at teachers college in Manchester in the 1960s. Getting ideas from there. Terence McWilliams taking training innovations on board. Liam Moran at that college also.</p> <p>39:50 (Tom) Innovations making it over to institutions like University of Limerick, where former Kerry footballer Pat Spillane went.</p> <p>40:10 (Seán) Managers less prominent when they were younger.</p> <p>40:45 (Gerard) Newry winning the championship when he was a minor. Players flying home from England when they reached the semi-finals.</p> <p>41:05 (Seán) People playing football until a later age when they were younger.</p> <p>41:20 (Seán) Injuries less prominent when they were younger.</p> <p>41:35 (Gerard) Playing numerous games every week.</p> <p>42:05 (Bill) Cavan's talented team in the 1940s and 1950s. McConvilles in Killeel a good footballing family. Danny telling a story about playing Cavan.</p> <p>43:30: (Bill) Reading about games in the newspapers like the</p> |
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| | <p>Irish Press.</p> <p>44:20 (Bill) A 10-year-old playing at a tournament in Killeel and coming up against Francie McNeil.</p> <p>45:25 (Seán) Popularity of local tournaments. Where the funds went.</p> <p>46:15 (Seán) Cassidy Cup a popular tournament. Big crowds. Seeded draws and the logic behind that.</p> <p>46:55 (Seán) No dinner dances then. Celebrating in an old hall after winning the Cassidy Cup. Food they ate.</p> <p>48:10 (Gerard) Winning the Rostrevor tournament. Playing Clonduff in the final. Patrick Cunnihy playing.</p> <p>49:00 (Tom) Sheep farmer telling a story at a funeral about his new hip, and about how he still managed to catch runaway sheep despite having undergone treatment.</p> <p>51:30 (Bill) First time he met the sheep farmer, Michael.</p> <p>52:15 (Gerard) Being in England in 1963. Playing for The Four Provinces. Meeting Jay Donnell and Tommy Flood. Lax laws on club transfers.</p> <p>53:30 (Seán) Armagh people playing for their club and them doing the same in return.</p> <p>53:50 (Gerard) Playing a club game and not recognising some of the participants.</p> <p>55:00 (Gerard) Playing in England and what the set-up was like. Playing soccer as well as Gaelic. Where the other members of the club were from.</p> <p>56:20 (Seán) Not being acquainted with anyone outside your own area.</p> <p>56:50 (Gerard) Being made welcome by people in London. Employment opportunities.</p> <p>57:15 (Gerard) Getting injured abroad and not having insurance. How the ex-pat community solved that conundrum.</p> <p>58:00 (Gerard) Professions of the people in England who played GAA.</p> <p>59:00 (Gerard) Down beating Offaly in 1961 and the big crowds there.</p> <p>59:20 (Tom) Arriving at Croke Park for that game and gates</p> |
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| | <p>of Hill 16 closed. Desperately trying to gain access. Negotiating with people who could help them out. Large numbers of people present. How he coped with that.</p> <p>01:02:15 (Seán) Getting buses to attend that game.</p> <p>01:02:35 (Gerard) Lack of club football due to that Down team's success.</p> <p>01:03:05 (Tom) People thinking that commentator Micheál Ó hÉihir was biased in favour of the southern teams.</p> <p>01:03:35 (Gerard) Bonfires to celebrate Down's successes during the 1960s.</p> <p>01:03:40 (Seán) Down's lack of success before the 1960s.</p> <p>01:04:15 (Seán) Attendance at the games in the 1960s predominantly male.</p> <p>01:05:15 (Seán) Down's success attracting younger people.</p> <p>01:05:25 (Gerard) Lack of underage football when they were younger.</p> <p>01:06:15 (Gerard) Advantages of underage football in modern-day GAA. Success of underage tournaments in the region.</p> <p>01:07:00 (Seán) Decline in adult tournaments.</p> <p>01:07:20 (Seán) Lower cost of running teams in the past.</p> <p>01:08:20 (Seán) Raising money through céilís and raffles in the past.</p> <p>01:08:50 (Gerard) Getting as much use out of jerseys as they could.</p> <p>01:09:25 (Seán) Women not at games so much in the 1960s.</p> <p>01:09:45 (Gerard) Getting sent off in a match and a woman named Bridie consoling him.</p> <p>01:10:15 (Tom) Gerry Sheehan, a Cork man, and how prominent he was in the club.</p> <p>01:11:15 (Tom) Gerry arriving with the opening of St Colman's College in 1958 and playing for Ballymartin.</p> <p>01:11:30 (Gerard) Gerry introducing hurling. Playing in Garrycastle pitch. Problems they encountered.</p> <p>01:12:10 (Gerard) Winning a hurling championship but one</p> |
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| | <p>vital element missing.</p> <p>01:12:25 (Gerard) Struggling to get numbers for the hurling team. Kilkeel a hurling club.</p> <p>01:13:00 (Seán) Possibility of a priest having been killed at a game in Ballinran.</p> <p>01:13:50 (Gerard) History of camogie in the area. Changing fortunes of the game.</p> <p>01:14:15 (Tom) State of hurling in the area in 2011.</p> <p>01:35 (Bill) Cor McGuidden getting a teaching job at St Mark's College and starting a camogie team. Slight rivalry with Gerry Sheehan of St Colman's College.</p> <p>01:15:25 (Tom) Success of school camogie team.</p> <p>01:15:55 (Bill) Mick Madden, a hurler, playing in the area. Complaining to the referee during a game and the referee's response.</p> <p>01:16:50 (Seán) Differences between how football was played when they were growing up and in 2011.</p> <p>01:17:15 (Tom) Struggling to get teams for a tournament in Longstone and possible reasons for that.</p> <p>01:18:10 (Gerard) His father never played football, but his uncle Eddie and brother Aidan did.</p> <p>01:18:45 (Tom) Going to a game in Ballinascreen in 1959 as Down marched to the Ulster championship title.</p> <p>01:19:05 (Tom) Level of interest in football among his family members.</p> <p>01:19:25 (Seán) Shanahan Cup being played in the area. Black and Tans stopping players on their way home from the tournament.</p> <p>01:19:55 (Seán) His father, a blacksmith, making boots for players.</p> <p>01:20:25 (Bill) Going to see Down play in Newry and cars being stopped by security forces.</p> <p>01:22:25 (Seán) Impact of the Troubles on the club.</p> <p>01:23:30 (Gerard) Tricolour being flown illegally at games.</p> <p>01:23:50 (Seán) Greencastle winning a championship in 1971.</p> |
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| | <p>Walking home with a flag and encountering security forces.</p> <p>01:24:35 (Tom) Playing in Kilkeel, near to a UDA and a British army base. How that worked out.</p> <p>01:27:35 (Bill) Workers' strike in 1974.</p> <p>01:28:00 (Tom) Formation of An Ríocht. Role played by local priest.</p> <p>01:28:45 (Seán) Poor economic climate in 1980s and how that affected football clubs.</p> <p>01:29:40 (Tom) Having a meeting in Kilkeel about possibility of setting up new club.</p> <p>01:30:25 (Tom) How they decided on a name for their club.</p> <p>01:31:05 (Tom) Holding a competition top design the club badge.</p> <p>01:31:25 (Seán) Deciding on club colours.</p> <p>01:32:00 (Tom) Sorting out a ground to play in.</p> <p>01:33:55 (Tom) Some people not happy with formation of new club. Reason for that.</p> <p>01:33:40 (Tom) Level of integration between different generations.</p> <p>01:34:30 (Tom) Success they have enjoyed. Lisnacree winning in 1954 and their relation to An Ríocht. Playing a final against Kilcoo.</p> <p>01:35:25 (Tom) Down and Australian Rules star Martin Clarke playing in a final.</p> <p>01:36:20 (Seán) What motivates him to remain involved with the GAA.</p> <p>01:36:40 (Tom) Why he stays involved.</p> <p>01:37:55 (Tom) Importance of volunteerism. Issue of people within the GAA getting paid.</p> <p>01:38:40 (Seán) Expense of running a club and impossibility of paying players.</p> <p>01:39:45 (Tom) Importance of keeping the youth interested in GAA.</p> <p>01:41:00 (Seán) Club's involvement in cross-community</p> |
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| | <p>affairs and work that is put into that.</p> <p>01:41:35 (Tom) Amount of work put in by certain individuals.</p> <p>01:42:50 (Seán) Responsibility placed on club as a hub of the community.</p> <p>01:45:05 (Bill) Changes he has seen in the GAA during his time.</p> <p>01:46:20 (Tom) Trying to convince local basketballers to play GAA.</p> <p>01:47:00 (Tom) Polish boy playing GAA for a while.</p> <p>01:47:50 (Tom) Albanian working as a GAA coach in the area.</p> <p>01:48:25 (Seán) Predominance of Catholics in the area.</p> <p>01:48:40 (Tom) Catchment area the club covers. Unionist population in Kilkeel.</p> <p>01:50:15 (Tom) Jarlath Kay playing for Down when they won the All-Ireland in 1960. Asking him his thoughts as the game was nearing its conclusion.</p> |
| <p>Involvement in GAA</p> | <p>Tom:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>Bill:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>Gerard:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> |

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| | <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 type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> <p>Seán:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> |
| <p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p> | <p>Tom: Lancashire County League, 1969, Senior Down League 1973.</p> <p>Bill: N/A</p> <p>Gerard: N/A</p> <p>Seán: Corn Rannafast; McCrory Cup, Played Minor, U21, Junior, Senior, Intermediate.</p> |
| <p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p> | <p>Tom: N/A</p> <p>Bill: Manager for 1 year</p> <p>Gerard: N/A</p> <p>Seán: N/A</p> |
| <p>Format</p> | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p> |
| <p>Duration</p> | <p>Length of Interview: 01:51:31</p> |
| <p>Language</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: 23rd July 2012