

**GAA Oral History Project**  
**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Padraic O'Connor
<b>Date of Interview</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2010
<b>Location</b>	Cooley Kickham's GAA complex
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Harry McCarthy
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1945 <b>Home County:</b> Louth
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> Rathcor Primary School, Co. Louth <b>Secondary:</b> Bush Community School, Co. Louth
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 2 brothers; 3 sisters
<b>Club(s)</b>	Cooley Kickham's GFC [Louth]
<b>Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	Blacksmith [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
<b>Religion</b>	N/A
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	Cooley Tourism; Louth Leadership

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<b>Date of Report</b>	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1930s – 2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Louth, Dublin, Kildare, Meath, Cork
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Managing, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Northern Ireland, Opening of Croke Park, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Economy/ Economics
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>The interviewee discusses his family background and his introduction to Gaelic football. He also charts the shifting fortunes of the Cooley club and the factors which helped to determine it. In doing so, he roots the Cooley Kickhams story in a wider social and economic context and touches on both the changing role of the clergy within the club and the changing role of the club within the Cooley community. The interviewee comments a range of potentially contentious issues, most notably the payment of managers and the impact of rule changes on the way Gaelic football is played.</p> <p>00:00:05 Interviewee introduces himself as a member of Cooley Kickhams GFC.</p> <p>00:00:24 Recalls introduction to Gaelic football playing for the Grange aged 11 even though he didn't attend school in Grange. Mentions that his own school had no team. Talks of putting money collected for his confirmation towards his first pair of boots.</p> <p>00:01:00 Family background: Mentions that father was from Meath and played Gaelic football as a child but not as an adult. Father travelled a lot and emigrated to England when the interviewee was a child. Stayed there until interviewee was 17. Comments that his Uncle had played in the Cooley League.</p> <p>00:01:33 Discusses schooldays. Mentions winning a league in 1957/1958, playing with north Louth in inter-area league and the influence of Fr. Keelin in helping establish the Grange.</p> <p>00:02:10 Mentions that Cooley's base at the time was Mucklagh and refers to the difficulties the club faced in the</p>

	<p>1950s with the closing of the railways and emigration. Fielding a team was a struggle, but numbers were helped by Guards and customs men joining, among them Seanie O'Donnell who won an All-Ireland with Louth in 1957. Cormac Breslin, a customs officer, won a Leinster medal the same year.</p> <p>00:02:45 Refers again to closure of railway line to Greenore from Dundalk c. 1951/2 and a difficult time for Cooley.</p> <p>00:02:57 Mentions that Cooley had been very strong in the 1930s, but declined thereafter. Considers the Cooley League a factor in that decline. Mentions the emergence of St. Pat's club in 1953 and indicates that it was 'a good idea to split up the peninsula'.</p> <p>00:03:25 Discusses the history of the club through the 1960s and 70s. Revival of fortunes in the 1960s coincided with his progression to the first team.</p> <p>00:04:13 Outlines the playing honours he has won with Cooley: 5 senior and 1 junior championships, 8 O'Donnell Cups and 8 'subsidiary leagues'. Mentions some of the influential players on those teams, among them John Maguire - 'the strong man' of the team.</p> <p>00:04:50 Discusses place of club within community. Mentions that club standing had been damaged by debt and lack of success but Fr. McEvoy helped 'pull things together'. Others influential figures are also mentioned. Talks about the purchase of a pitch and the re-positioning of club in the centre of community. Mentions the importance of the centre that was built to the community.</p> <p>00:05:55 Says migration/emigration was less a problem in the 1960s than 50s. Refers to the ability of people to get jobs at home.</p> <p>00:06:07 Discusses the role of Cooley GAA in providing a social outlet and how this extends beyond football – mentions computer classes and indoor keep fit classes that are held in club.</p> <p>00:06:50 Discusses past modes of travel: walking to games in Mucklagh and taking a bus with players and supporter to Sunday matches. Recalls journeys home to Louth from Dublin for training and matches.</p> <p>00:07:50 Contrasts unfavourably the food provided to players after training in Louth with received in Kildare. Believes reluctance to spend money on players affected Louth during</p>
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	<p>that time.</p> <p>00:08:30 Mentions the honour of playing for Cooley and captaining the club to win championship in 1971. Mentions playing for Cooley from 1962-84. Also played for Louth at minor, junior and senior levels. Discusses the playing record of the teams he played on at club and county level – in relation to the lack of success with the latter he voices criticism of the county board.</p> <p>00:10:05 Considers the voluntary ethos of the GAA and acknowledges that some managers are being paid. Says that he agrees with managers receiving expenses, but believes the amounts being paid are ‘too high’. Remarks on the onerous nature of the manager’s role with club and county and believes that it requires flexible work.</p> <p>00:10:58 Opines that Louth has too many small clubs and suggests that the teams should be amalgamated for the purposes of championship.</p> <p>00:11:45 Mentions that Drogheda has suffered from the loss of senior clubs.</p> <p>00:12:20 Recalls that in his early days the relationship between the clergy and the club was neither strong nor especially cordial. Influence began with Fr. McEvoy (who not in parish when he took over as chairman) and continued through Fr. McGrane. McGrane was influential in securing grounds. Comments on the declining influence of the clergy in the club and the reasons for it.</p> <p>00:13:10 Discusses on Louth’s inter-county rivalries. Mentions that Dublin as the team they couldn’t beat during his playing days.</p> <p>00:13:40 Expresses a preference for the game as it was played in the 1960s and 70s and mentions some of the players he enjoyed going to watch. Comments critically on the impact of rule changes on Gaelic football and identifies those aspects of the modern game he dislikes.</p> <p>00:14:30 Comments approvingly on the opening up of Croke Park to other sports and notes that he attended the first two non-GAA games held in the stadium.</p> <p>00:14:45 Recalls listening to a radio commentary of Louth V Kerry in an All-Ireland semi-final in the late 1940s.</p> <p>00:15:05 Remarks on the impact of TV on Gaelic football.</p>
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	<p>00:15:10 Rejects the idea that technology should be deployed to help match officials in games and makes reference to recent controversial incidents where officials didn't properly consult with each other.</p> <p>00:15:40 Discusses playing tournament games in the 1970s north of the border.</p> <p>00:16:20 Discusses the influence of religious orders and says that the Cooley club of his youth left the organisation of minor teams to the college – in his case, Omeath College. Mentions the diverse make-up of college teams.</p> <p>00:17:11 Comments on the role of the GAA in the promotion of the Irish language – recalls objecting to a team because a player wasn't listed in Irish.</p> <p>00:17:40 Looks to the future and sets out his aspirations for Louth – makes reference to the physical stature of players in the county with comparison to Cork.</p> <p>00:18:20 Sets out his future aspirations for the Cooley club.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter   <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player   <input 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><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Played between 1956 and 1985</p>
<p><b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Committee Member for 11 years; Club President for 5 years</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: 00:18:20</p>
<p><b>Language</b></p>	<p>English</p>

**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: Paraic O'Connor

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> Oct 2010