

GAA Oral History Project
Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Joe Jordan
Date of Interview	2nd Feb 2011
Location	Middletown, Co. Armagh
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Eamon Long
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1955 Home County: Tipperary
Education	Primary: New Inn Primary School, New Inn, Co. Tipperary Secondary: St. Joseph's College, Cahir, Co. Tipperary Third Level: University College Cork
Family	Siblings: 4 brothers and 4 sisters Current Family if Different: Married with 3 sons
Club(s)	Middletown Eoghan Ruadh/Na Fianna [Armagh]
Occupation	Civil Engineer
Parents' Occupation	National School teacher [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Middletown and Tynan Historical Society

REFERENCE NO. TP/1/24

Date of Report	15 July 2012
Period Covered	1950s - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Tipperary, Cork, Armagh
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Managing, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Education, Religion, Media, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Eamon Long's GAA experiences take him from Cork and Tipperary in Munster to Armagh in Ulster. Born into a staunch Cork GAA family – his grandfather had been a long-serving Treasurer of the County Board and a county minor selector – his parents settled in Cahir in County Tipperary, their home becoming a pit-stop for Cork teams and supporters en route to and from matches in Thurles and Dublin. The Cork influence was everywhere in his family life, a photograph of Christy Ring hanging on the wall beneath the Sacred Heart lamp. Despite remaining a supporter of Cork, his father joined the local Cahir GAA club, serving on committees and becoming a Trustee of the club. He was also involved in fundraising activities and played a prominent role in establishing a tournament in the early 1960s which attracted some of the top hurling clubs from Cork and across Munster.</p> <p>It was with Cahir that his sons would make their mark. They were raised with 'GAA activities'. Eamon Long talks about his brother's role in captaining a juvenile football team to Under 15 county championship success in 1967. He also talks about his support for Tipperary hurling teams and attending All-Ireland finals in the late 1960s and early 1970s, including the 1971 All-Ireland hurling final when Babs Keating played in bare feet. Other highlights in Tipperary's subsequent hurling history are also recounted. After attending school, Eamong Long attended university in Cork in the mid 1970s and he refers to his modest sporting talents and the early end to his playing career. He continued to support Tipperary and Cork team, although he spent a number of years living outside the country – at work in Nigeria and Britain. Marriage led him to settle in Middletown in the late 1980s and the second half of the interview concentrates on Long's links with the area and his tentative involvement with the Middletown GAA scene. His involvement deepened with the participation of his three</p>

	<p>sons – he ended up serving on committee and helping out with underage hurling teams.</p> <p>Long reflects on the difference in the GAA experience north and south and considers the practical difficulties presented by the Troubles. It was, he admits' an 'eye opener'. However, he also considers on the progress of hurling in Middletown and Armagh since 2000, a progress rooted, he suggests, in the Féile performances of Middletown teams between 2001 and 2005. The role of these Féile teams in raising standards is discussed and memorable games recalled. The interview concludes with Long selecting highlights from his involvement in the GAA in Armagh, which includes with a story about how he and his sons managed to access the Armagh team dressing-room after the 2002 All-Ireland final.</p> <p>00:00:03 Eamon Long introduces himself as a member of Middletown Eoghan Ruadh/Na Fianna football and hurling club.</p> <p>00:00:10 Earliest memory: talks about running around as a child in Tipperary and the large numbers playing in his back garden. Mentions that they were the Cork hurlers and footballers on their way to Thurles to play big games.</p> <p>00:00:50 Explains that both his parents came from Cork and his grandfather was a long serving member of the Cork County Board – the latter being mentioned in a book 'Making Connections: A Cork GAA Miscellany'. The book claims that Tom and Seamus Long were unique in being the only pair of brothers to serve on the County Board, serving together in the 1940s and holding the office of Treasurer for 30 consecutive years.</p> <p>00:01:55 Describes grandfather as an 'out and out GAA man' who also served as a selector on the Cork Minor hurling team for many years and was involved in bringing Christy Ring onto the team. Mentions that grandfather was a schoolteacher who was encouraged by another teacher in Cloyne who suggested he give the young Ring a run-out. Suggests that he had difficulty in getting others to believe there was a good hurler in Cloyne.</p> <p>00:02:40 Memories of being in the family kitchen in Tipperary, with the sacred heart lamp on the wall. Hanging under it was a picture of Christy Ring.</p> <p>00:03:00 Discusses his parents move to Cahir, Co. Tipperary</p>
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	<p>in 1947. Mentions that it was 20 miles from Thurles and his grandfather would stop at the house, using it as a watering hole for the Cork team and selectors. Says they always stopped if they were passing.</p> <p>00:03:40 Recalls big match days and team buses stopping, with players having a stretch of the legs.</p> <p>00:04:00 Mentions the older siblings who were born in Cork before the family move to Tipperary. Talks about growing up as an avid Tipperary fan, but older brother and sister were avid Cork fans. Munster final days would see a Cork and Tipperary flag flown from the two pillars on the road front.</p> <p>00:04:55 Comments again on the frequency with which cars stopped at house and tells of a couple thinking it was an 'eating house'.</p> <p>00:05:13 Growing up in Cahir and becoming a member of Cahir GAA club. Picks up a history of the club which was awarded a MacNamee award from Croke Park.</p> <p>00:05:40 Talks about father's joining Cahir GAA club, serving on committees and his involvement in the late 1950s, early 1960s in the obtaining of a new pitch for the club. Remarks on becoming aware that he was a Trustee of the club after his death in 1988.</p> <p>00:06:20 Refers to book and an article by his brother, Ciaran Long, in the Cahir book. Refers to his brother's connection to Middletown in that he married Patricia McCardle, the interviewee's wife's sister, daughter of Francie</p> <p>00:06:47 Mentions that brother Ciaran was captain of Under 15 Cahir juvenile football team which won county championship in 1967. Refers to his brother's memories of that victory and his account - published in the Cahir history book - of his family background and the move of the family to Cahir. He also explains how as children they were 'reared with the GAA', going to matches every Sunday, supporting Cork and later Tipperary.</p> <p>00:07:55 Reflects on Sunday journeys to games. Suggests that maybe 10 people would be crowded into car, stopping on road with flasks of tea and eating sandwiches. Mentions the early breakfast before departure and the dinner on the return, prepared by his mother. When they didn't travel, they sat around radio.</p> <p>00:08:45 Recalls grandfather, Seamus Long or Seamus O Loinigh, being a founder member of Ballinahulla club in Cork.</p>
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	<p>Remarks that he died in 1953 and that Cork GAA subsequently presented a trophy in his honour, which was awarded to the Intermediate hurling champions. Says that he has a sister living in the current champions parish of Ballymartle.</p> <p>00:09:40 Refers again to his father and his brothers involvement on committees in Cahir GAA club.</p> <p>00:10:14 Recalls the fundraising activities in Cahir at the time of the new pitch. Mentions his father's role in starting a hurling tournament in Cahir, attracting clubs from Cork to come to Cahir. In the early 1960s, teams like Glen Rovers, Blackrock, Thurles Sarsfields, Bennetsbridge, Cork Sarsfields, Mount Sion all played in the Cahir tournament. Says it helped raise funds to pay for new pitch.</p> <p>00:11:20 Refers to his father's late involvement in local bingos, playing the role of auctioneer.</p> <p>00:11:38 Reiterates that he was raised with the GAA and 'GAA activities'. Mentions again cars turning into the family home at mid-night or one in the morning on match days. Describes the house as a 'stepping stone for Cork people'.</p> <p>00:12:20 Mentions becoming an 'avid' Tipperary fan as he got older – the result of going to school in Tipperary and having friends from Tipperary.</p> <p>00:12:35 Attending his first All-Ireland final in 1966 when Cork won.</p> <p>00:12:50 Attending the 1969 All-Ireland final when John Doyle of Tipperary was going for his 9th All-Ireland final.</p> <p>00:13:00 Attending the 1971 All-Ireland final when Babs Keating played in his bare feet for last 10 minutes. Describes it as a 'great year' – his first year seeing Tipperary winning a title.</p> <p>00:13:30 Refers to a tournament game in Cahir and seeing his idol Jimmy Doyle play with Thurles Sarsfield – recalls him coming off pitch covered in blood and getting his autograph.</p> <p>00:14:25 1971 All-Ireland final when Babs Keating 'threw off the boots'</p> <p>00:14:30 Going to university in Cork. Says he wasn't involved in any club, but played hurling and football in Cahir. Mentions that in south Tipperary football would be more dominant than hurling. Remarks that the hurling strongholds were mid-</p>
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	<p>Tipperary and north Tipperary.</p> <p>00:15:10 Talks about playing hurling on the main Cork-Dublin road on a Sunday after mass – traffic was light enough at the time to do it.</p> <p>00:15:44 Remarks that he wasn't the most gifted of players, but tried his best.</p> <p>00:16:05 Going to university and the ending of his playing career. Mentions that his brother was based in Dublin, but returned at weekend to play with Cahir. Says that he always brought his hurley to help him get lifts.</p> <p>00:16:55 Continuing to follow Tipperary hurlers and Cork hurlers and footballers.</p> <p>00:17:12 Talks about attending the 1987 Munster final in Killarney, beating Cork: recalls Richie Stakelum's remark – 'The famine is over'. Talks about his father as a Cork man having the Cahir locals 'demented' during the 'famine period'. Tells of putting his Tipperary hat on his father after the 1987 Munster final and his father's response about the 'weaker counties'.</p> <p>00:18:35 Says that by the time Tipperary won All-Ireland in 1989 he was 'ensconced' in Middletown. Recalls travelling to games in 1989 from Middletown.</p> <p>00:19:00 Recalls attending university in Cork in 1974 and travelling afterwards.</p> <p>00:19:20 Interviewer says the only Tipperary men who ended up in Middletown before were those involved in building the Great Northern Railway from Armagh to Monaghan.</p> <p>00:19:38 Eamon talks about the early 1980s when his brother Ciaran started courting Patricia McArdle from Middletown. Mentions that he was working in Nigeria when he heard they got engaged. Mentions returning for their wedding in September 1981 – one of his first trips to the north.</p> <p>00:20:58 Emphasises the significance of the date to the effect that Middletown hurlers 'won nothing 'til I arrived in Middletown' – the club's first senior hurling championship was won in October 1981.</p> <p>00:21:25 Talks about how he ended up moving to Middletown – after working in Nigeria and England. Refers to a friendship between his younger sister and Patricia's McArdle's sister, Rose. Mentions his younger sister's wedding in 1987 and</p>
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	<p>meeting Rose McArdle.</p> <p>00:22:40 Mentions that he is a Civil Engineer and how it involved moving from site to site, place to place. Decided to give up engineering and settle down. Mentions living in Armagh at first and subsequently building a house in Middletown.</p> <p>00:23:55 Mentions taking up work in Middletown with Francie Joe and Sean Paddy McArdle's business, Reen Compost.</p> <p>00:24:15 Remarks that Francie Joe was heavily involved in Middletown GAA and he learned about the club from him.</p> <p>00:24:45 Mentions moving to Middletown and the birth of his three boys – Donncha, Cormac and Ronan. Says that once they started to go to school, he became involved with the community in Middletown.</p> <p>00:25:00 Recalls being aware of Middletown's championship successes in the 1970s and attending a 25th anniversary dinner to celebrate those victories alongside Francie Joe – 'it was my first real function....'</p> <p>00:25:40 Becoming a member of the club and becoming more involved as his boys played football and hurling. Explains how he ended up on committee.</p> <p>00:26:20 Refers to his preference for hurling over football and recalls buying his boys a 'wee hurley' when they were born.</p> <p>00:26:50 First impressions of the GAA in the north. Mentions not knowing much about it, about not being seriously involved before the mid 1990s. Mentions that he had been 'away from the GAA' for a few years, though he still travelled to see Tipperary play. Recalls rare trip by Tipperary to Clones for qualifiers – 'it was one of my first times in Clones'.</p> <p>00:28:25 Mentions that in the 1990s, the 'glory years for Armagh was yet to come' and that he attended few matches in the Athletic Grounds.</p> <p>00:28:45 Comments that as he got more involved in Middletown GAA club he saw facilities in other clubs. Contrasts it with the 'basic' facilities in the 1960s in Tipperary. Remarks that Middletown pitch and complex 'looked impressive'.</p> <p>00:29:45 Reflects on the character of the GAA in the north during the Troubles and remarks on hearing of the difficulties of people travelling to games. Says that this was a 'shock'</p>
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	<p>him. 'I wasn't aware that that was going on.'</p> <p>00:30:55 Remarks that he was aware of the Crossmaglen situation, but he came to appreciate the practical difficulties associated with the GAA in the north by seeing it up close – refers to the road check points when he came up first and mentions that his family travelling up were 'scared stiff'. 'It was a foreign culture...'</p> <p>00:31:56 Mentions that Cahir would have been known as a British army garrison town and had a soccer club when he was growing up. Recalls when new GAA field was developed in the late 1950s, early 1960s beside the soccer pitch and 'you were not allowed to look left'.</p> <p>00:32:35 Tells story about his brother, a goalkeeper, being told not to look behind him where the soccer pitch was.</p> <p>00:32:53 'The ban was one thing' but he describes the GAA experience during the Troubles as an 'eye opener'.</p> <p>00:33:00 Contrasts GAA north and south: Mentions that in many clubs in the south it was everyone assumed that everyone was Catholic, even if there were Protestants involved. Up north, it was clear that there was 'two sides'.</p> <p>00:33:45 Mentions that in Tipperary and elsewhere in the south there was 'no bad feeling' towards the Protestant population. 'Everybody got on with their life and they mixed together'.</p> <p>00:34:00 Interviewer remarks on the 'unscrupulous' Unionist politicians who stopped their people from playing.</p> <p>00:34:28 Eamon remarks on his boys playing Under 12 hurling and the starting up of the Middletown Historical Society.</p> <p>00:35:03 Remarks that when his boys began to play football and hurling he would stay on a 'help out' – mentions that he helped in underage hurling and mentions that his boys didn't play much football. Talks about the nature of his son's sporting participation.</p> <p>00:36:02 Following his sons at under 12 and under 14 and how impressed he was by the hurling set up in Middletown in 2001-2003. Discusses the numbers playing and their commitment and quality. Refers to some of those involved in underage coaching in hurling.</p> <p>00:37:30 Mentions that he helped out at under 14 level in</p>
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	<p>hurling for 3-5 years.</p> <p>00:37:35 Moving up to help out at Under 16 with Seamus McKernan, Con Casey and Sean Goggin.</p> <p>00:37:50 Comments on the current success of Armagh hurlers can be traced to the underage developments of 2001-2005. Recalls that Middletown reached their first All-Ireland Féile in 2001 in Kanturk. In 2002 Middletown won an All-Ireland Féile in Belfast. In 2003, Middletown got to final of All-Ireland Féile in Ardclough. In 2004, they also got to final. In 2005, they travelled to Cork for All-Ireland Féile.</p> <p>00:39:00 Comments that the underage in Middletown at that time built up the skill levels – says that the players from those five Feile’s are now on the senior teams.</p> <p>00:39:40 Refers to Feile players who went on to play for Armagh senior hurlers: Cathal Carville, Nathan Curry, Paul Gaffney, Kieran McKernan, Marty Mone, Donie Carville.</p> <p>00:40:07 Remarks on how Féile helped build the standard.</p> <p>00:40:30 Mentions his ‘privilege’ in helping out with those Feile teams when they came to Under 16 – they won 5 Under 16 championships in a row.</p> <p>00:41:15 Believes the only reason the club hasn’t ‘been there’ at adult level in recent years is the ‘numbers’.</p> <p>00:41:30 Remarks on the commitment of the Minor hurling coaches: Stevie McCann, Kitty Hughes, Declan McBride.</p> <p>00:41:50 Mentions that Armagh minor champions are afforded an opportunity of entering a competition in Ballinascreen. Selects as a highlight the day the club played and defeated the Antrim champions, Loughiel, in Ballinascreen in an Ulster minor semi-final.</p> <p>00:42:46 Recalls the Féile in Ardclough, playing Ballycran in final and being invited to the Ards peninsula for a tournament the following year. Got to final and were beaten by Ballycran again. Mentions that Ballycran also beat them in the Ulster championship where they defeated Loughiel.</p> <p>00:43:40 Mentions the respect they got in Ulster.</p> <p>00:43:55 Interviewer recalls two ‘exceptional’ players on the Ballycran team.</p> <p>00:44:20 Eamon believes that the Armagh hurlers are closer</p>
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	<p>than they were 20 years previously to the best in Ulster.</p> <p>00:44:30 Recalls the day that Middletown defeated Loughiel and returning that evening to the club's gala night.</p> <p>00:44:25 Recalls the 2002 All-Ireland final and mentions having a programme with autographs of the entire Armagh panel and management, Mary McAleese, Bertie Ahern and others. Recalls how he got to the Armagh dressing-room after the games by 'pure accident and luck'.</p> <p>00:45:50 Mentions having tickets for the upper deck of the Canal End and tells of securing his ticket in a draw. Mentions that he managed to get 3 tickets together and went with his two sons, Donncha and Cormac.</p> <p>00:46:24 Talks about the aftermath of the match, the crowds on the pitch, wearing his reflective orange jacket, taking a 'wrong turn' and ending up at the cars for the President and Taoiseach and the entrance to the two team's dressingrooms.</p> <p>00:48:30 Talks about Middletown in Ulster Feile competition and his experience of travelling to other club's grounds – convinced him of the need for another pitch and new dressingrooms.</p> <p>00:49:40 Talks about the 'improvements' in the GAA and the money made available to development squads.</p> <p>00:49:53 Comments on the introduction of Nicky Rackard and Tommy Murphy Cups. Recalls that the Tommy Murphy Cup final involving the Tipperary footballers was a curtain raiser to All-Ireland football semi-final between Armagh and Tyrone.</p> <p>00:50:20 Talks about attending that game with his three sons, wearing their Tipperary jerseys. Mentions being pleased for Declan Browne in winning a medal and the four family members taking off their Tipperary jerseys with Armagh jerseys underneath.</p> <p>00:51:32 Mentions that the previous year Armagh and Tipperary were both in Division 2. Recalls going to Crossmaglen for the game.</p> <p>00:51:40 Interviewer recalls the only other occasion that Tipp and Armagh met – it was c 2001 in the Hastings Cup for Under 21. Talks about getting to know Mick Frawley well on that occasion.</p> <p>00:52:30 Mentions being in Crossmaglen early on the occasion of the senior league tie between the two counties.</p>
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	<p>Mentions meeting people from Cahir and the fact that Tipperary gave Armagh a 'fright' that day.</p> <p>00:53:14 Concludes that he went to many games since Armagh footballers starting doing well – it was all 'new to me' and different to his experience when he was young in Tipperary.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<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> <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> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Fundraiser</p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	<p>Played hurling and football until early 20s</p>
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	<p>Former Committee member (5 years)</p> <p>Former Underage Hurling mentor (8 years)</p> <p>Current Senior Hurling mentor</p> <p>Current member of club lotto committee</p>
Format	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Audio <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
Duration	<p>Length of Interview: 00:53:47</p>
Language	<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: Joe Jordan

Date: 2nd Feb 2011