

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Joe Jordan
Date of Interview	5 th Mar 2011
Location	N/A
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Paul McArdle
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1963 Home County: Armagh
Education	Primary: Middletown Primary School Secondary: CBS Grammar, Armagh Third Level: University of Ulster, Coleraine
Family	Siblings: 5 sisters, 4 brothers Current Family if Different: wife and 2 sons
Club(s)	Middletown GAA [Armagh]
Occupation	Company Director
Parents' Occupation	Farming
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	None
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	None

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Date of Report	19 July 2012
Period Covered	1970s - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Armagh
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Relationship with the Association, Socialising, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Paul McArdle grew up one of nine children in a strong GAA family in Middletown, Co. Armagh. Recalling his childhood, he discusses games of football on the street and handball against the garage wall with siblings and neighbours. The GAA was, he says, ‘always there’ and he would listen to stories from his father about travelling to games by bicycle and train and being brought to local Middletown games. Paul McArdle discusses his experiences of playing football in Primary school, at the Christian Brothers in the 1970s and later at the University of Ulster, Coleraine. He talks about the competitions, the experiences had and the friendships made. He explains, for example, why attendance at the University of Ulster in Coleraine added a ‘whole new dimension’ to the GAA for him, exposing him to the intensity of university football.</p> <p>McArdle’s main GAA involvement remained with Middletown, however. He togged out in his first game for the Under 14s when he was 9 or 10 years old, debuting with the senior team when he was 15 and continuing to play through to his mid 30s. Because of his family background and his father’s involvement on local club committees, McArdle remarks on always being ‘conscious’ of the importance of the administrative dimension to the GAA. And his involvement with it began young. He was still in Grammar school when he first served on a Middletown committee and he returned to it in his late 20s. He talks about becoming Chairman of the Middletown club and his pride in holding this position in a club that was unique for being truly dual purpose – promoting football and hurling under the guidance of one committee. The highlight of his tenure as Chairman was the winning of the 2008 junior championship, bridging a gap of 36 years.</p>

	<p>McArdle himself had previously managed the senior team of the club in the early 2000s and he recalls the ups and downs of that experience. McArdle's contribution has not being confined to Middletown. He also become involved with the Armagh county board, taking up the role of Chairman of the CCC, a role he believes to have given him a wider perspective on GAA affairs. The recording concludes with McArdle reflecting on the value of the GAA to himself and to the society. He considers the changes that have taken place over the years, on the voluntary input that has kept the GAA going and, in the case of Middletown, the family connections that thread through its history. He notes, for instance, the links between the 1974 and 2008 junior championship successes and shows a photograph of himself, his father, and other family members taken in the wake of the 2008 championship triumph.</p> <p>00:00:02 Paul McArdle introduces himself, giving his date of birth and place of residence.</p> <p>00:00:12 The second youngest of 9 children, his father lived in an adjacent house from 1929 and his mother came from Derrynoose, 5 miles south of Doogary.</p> <p>00:00:30 Discusses what it was like to grow up in a big family and says there was always a ball or a game going on 'out on the street'. Remarks that it was a 'great childhood'.</p> <p>00:00:55 Comments that the GAA was a big part of that childhood. 'It was always there' like going to school and going to mass. Mentions that there was always a ball about and reflected on the suitability of the street for games.</p> <p>00:01:40 Refers to playing a lot of handball against the garage wall with his brother Philip and sister Susan, using an old tennis ball or a sponge ball. Comments on the occasional window break and the punishment that would apply.</p> <p>00:02:10 Listening to his father telling stories about going to Croke Park or cycling to Castleblaney or Dundalk to get a train to Dublin. 'It all seemed a million miles away...' he says of growing up in the 1970s.</p> <p>00:02:40 Talks of father taking him to watch Middletown play: 'we'd have never missed a game' and the discussion around the table on a Sunday evening.</p> <p>00:03:06 Discusses his schooldays and playing football in Middletown Primary School, now St. John's Primary School.</p>
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	<p>Refers to school link to the club and county through Gerry O'Neill, the headmaster who had played in the 1953 All-Ireland final and who was a son of PJ O'Neill.</p> <p>00:03:50 Comments on love of GAA and playing football. Recalls first outing with a Middletown team when he was 9 or 10 years old and being asked to go out with the Under 14s – the first team in the club. Tells of his an issue with his mother and not wanting to head off to Keady in 'short trousers'.</p> <p>00:04:29 Getting into Francie Casey's car and going to Keady, the match being played in the 'old meadow' on the Castleblaney Rd.</p> <p>00:04:55 Remarks on continuing to play until he was 35 or 36 years of age.</p> <p>00:05:02 Attending the Christian Brothers school in 1974. Says he wanted to go to Keady school along with other fellas in his class, but was sent to the Christian Brothers. Says it was there he got his first real coaching in Gaelic football from Jimmy McKeown, PE teacher at the time. Mentions playing on the Gaelic team in each of his seven years in the school. 'It was a fantastic experience' and he made lifelong friends.</p> <p>00:05:48 Mentions playing in 7 Ulster finals, 6 in football and 1 in hurling. And won 'only one' – the cup for Under 15 competition, won in 1978 when he was captain.</p> <p>00:06:20 Mention defeating a team from Donegal in the final on the same day as the school senior team won the MacLarnon Cup.</p> <p>00:06:35 Mentions being 'more of a club man' and playing Under 14, Under 16 for Middletown.</p> <p>00:06:42 First senior game for Middletown, aged 15, against Derrynoose. Refers to a number of players being unavailable and getting on in last 10 minutes.</p> <p>00:07:20 Remarks on playing through the 1980s and 'a good part of the 90s as well'.</p> <p>00:07:28 Discusses highlights of club career: playing in four Intermediate finals, losing them all.</p> <p>00:07:40 Recalls 1993, the year he got married and broke his collar bone (he mentions the 'pain') in the first match. Mentions the year turning out well as he captaining them to winning the all county league Division 3. Mentions being presented the cup by his own clubman, Joe Jordan. Remarks</p>
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	<p>that it was the last time the club won an all-county league.</p> <p>00:08:40 Reflects on the 3 years at college in Coleraine, which 'added a whole new dimension' to the GAA for him. Mentions not knowing much about the Sigerson cup until attended college. Recalls the experience of playing Sigerson, the 'cameraderie' of it and the 'hard hitting' nature of it.</p> <p>00:09:19 Mentions winning the All-Ireland Universities Division 2 League in 1982-3. Stresses the scale of the achievement for a small college in Coleraine. Mentions that he was the only one of the six forwards who wasn't a county player.</p> <p>00:09:45 Discusses the make-up of the Coleraine team and the representation from Armagh, including Adrian Moore from Armagh Harps, Noel Finn from Blackwatertown and McArdle's cousin Seamus McAtavey from Keady.</p> <p>00:10:10 Refers to his father being on local club committee and his Aunt Mary helping out with 'typing' for AGMs or meetings. Comments on being 'always conscious' of the administrative side.</p> <p>00:10:37 Mentions being on the committee in the 1979-80 when he was in the Grammar school – he served as Assistant Secretary to Sean Hughes, the secretary.</p> <p>00:11:05 Mentions working in Portaferry, Co. Down for a number of years after finishing in college.</p> <p>00:11:12 Taking up administration again in his late 20s and his belief that you can't depend on others to provide games for your children.</p> <p>00:11:30 Refers to becoming Chairman of Middletown. Mentions pride in taking role and running a project to build a new pitch. Explains the pressure on a single pitch when catering for football, hurling and Camogie in the parish.</p> <p>00:12:00 Describes his three years as Chairman as busy, productive and satisfying.</p> <p>00:12:10 Discusses the uniqueness of Middletown in being a true dual club, with one committee running both. Suggests that other clubs would have separate committees.</p> <p>00:12:35 Mentions that the dependence on the same group of people and the strain it puts on a rural club.</p> <p>00:12:43 Selects as the highlight of his tenure as Chairman the winning of the junior championship in 2008 after a gap of</p>
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	<p>36 years. 'A particularly proud day' as the secretary of the club was a nephew, as was the manager of the team. Another nephew, Aidan McArdle, won Man of the Match.</p> <p>00:13:20 Coming home from the Athletic Grounds with the cup. Talks about the cavalcade making its way to his father and he got a photograph of the four of them with the cup.</p> <p>00:13:48 Tells a story about a 'stunt' that Joe Jordan pulled on him when he was Chairman. Mentions being way about anyone asking you to do 'a wee job'. Remarks on the nature of the volunteer commitment in the GAA and what sets it apart from other sporting organisations.</p> <p>00:14:35 Recalls receiving call from county secretary to take on role of CCC Chairman. Remarks that he is now entering his fourth year in the position – 'it has brought a whole new dimension to my involvement in the GAA'.</p> <p>00:15:00 Remarks that he always a 'Middletown man first' but says it's great to be able to get a wider perspective at county level. Stresses the need to be 'even handed' on issues of fixtures and discipline.</p> <p>00:15:40 Comments on the opportunity the role has opened up – to meet people and get ideas on how the GAA might be run. Says he might one day 'Thank Joe' for getting him the job</p> <p>00:16:00 Reflects on being 9-10 and the profile of the All-Ireland final. Tells the story of 'warming-up' the television, receiving the RTE aerial – and the difficulty in picking up the signal.</p> <p>00:17:20 Mentions that if reception was too poor they would be taken up to neighbours, Pat and Sissy Mallon, who had 'a real humdinger of a TV'. Recalls Sissy Mallon serving up barn brack and mugs of tea, his father smoking 'Gallaher's blues' and discussing the match with Pat.</p> <p>00:18:06 Tells story about being picked for Armagh Under 16 team in 1978. At the time, the county was split into three divisions and McArdle lived in the mid division. Talks about going to play Down in Newcastle and the bus breaking down in Kilkeel on the way home (remarks that Kilkeel at the time was 'not great drying ground for young lads on a GAA team'). Mentions not being able to contact home – they had no phone in the home, anyway – and waiting for two hours for a replacement bus to arrive. This bus also broke down and a 'big Ford Granada arrived' driven by Patsy Nugent. Mentions</p>
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	<p>it was 7.30 on a Sunday morning before he arrived home and that he was up from bed again for 10.30 mass and a senior football match in the afternoon.</p> <p>00:20:50 Comments on what the GAA has meant to his life: a 'great recreation' and a 'labour of love'.</p> <p>00:21:05 Remarks on having two sons, one 13 and the other 9. Both are involved with school and the club. Considers the facilities they enjoy and all the jerseys they have to wear and contrasts it with his own youth.</p> <p>00:21:25 Recalls going into the Christian Brothers school and having to buy school football playing gear. Mentions being sent into the school secretary to purchase a jersey and Br. Kelly saying 'give him a large, he'll grow into it.' The shirt lasted 6 years.</p> <p>00:22:20 Comments on the fancy gear, the changing rooms, the buses to matches that young players enjoy.</p> <p>00:22:34 Believes the GAA has the best sporting facilities in Ireland and describes the Athletic Grounds in Armagh as the best stadium in Ulster. Looks at it and thinks of his father and others who kept the GAA going when they had nothing.</p> <p>00:23:27 Talks about his involvement in team management at all age groups. Recalls helping out with a team winning an underage league and losing an Under 14 championship final – John Toal from Keady, who went to win an All-Ireland with Armagh was playing on that occasion.</p> <p>00:24:56 Managing the club's B team, involving up and coming players and boys who though they should still be playing senior. Mentions winning leagues and championships with this team.</p> <p>00:25:16 Being asked to manage the senior team in 2000-2001. Says he did for three years and remarks on the enjoyment he got out of it. Mentions that they were playing Division 3 and Intermediate championship, that they were a very young side and that he went to committee and suggested they regrade to junior championship.</p> <p>00:26:08 Recalls playing Crossmaglen second team in junior quarter final in 2002. Says Middletown played 'exceptionally well' and felt the referee enjoyed the game more than the players. Mentions the disappointment of being beaten by a last minute goal when 9 minutes of extra time were played.</p> <p>00:27:00 Remarks on how 'cross' he was after it and how he</p>
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	<p>let his feelings be known.</p> <p>00:27:05 Looking back on the incident after being involved with CCC he remarks on the need to take things on the chin as nobody is getting paid.</p> <p>00:27:25 Comments on how ‘time consuming’ it is to manage teams.</p> <p>00:27:35 Finishing off management career with promotion to Division 2.</p> <p>00:27:55 Interviewer observes the similarities between the 2008 and the 1974 junior championship winning sides. Mentions that Mick McArdle, the interviewee’s father, was a selector in 1974. Says that he first represented in the 1930s and came back to help in the 1970s.</p> <p>00:28:45 Talks about family connections in the GAA. Talks about when Middletown won 1974 Junior championship, being 11 years old and being told he wasn’t allowed go to the match. Recalls telling his ‘tale of woe’ to Paddy Frank, the sacristy, after the ‘Holy Hour’ and being taken to the game. ‘Only for that I would have missed up until then the biggest day in Middletown history’.</p> <p>00:30:30 Winning junior championship in 2008 and taking the cup to older members of the club – Jimmy McKiernan, Pat McCann.</p> <p>00:31:40 Refers to the importance of handing on the GAA tradition in a ‘small rural parish’.</p> <p>00:31:55 Mentions the Casey brothers who would have played on the 1974 team and stopping at the house with the cup in 2008, before ‘touring the village’.</p> <p>00:32:55 Looking at photograph from evening of 2008 Junior championship victory, pointing to Stephen Taylor, club secretary; Alan Taylor, manager of the team; Paul McArdle, club chairman; Mick McArdle, a selector on 1974 junior team and Honorary club Vice President; Aidan McArdle, holding junior championship cup. Refers to the various accolades won by Aidan McArdle that year.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</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> <p> <input checked="" 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>

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	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	20 years (Middletown) Winner of Armagh all county league Division 3, 1993 winning the All-Ireland Universities Division 2 League in 1982-3
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	Armagh Co. Board CCC (Chairperson, 4 years) Chairman Minor Board (from Jan. 2012)
Format	<input type="checkbox"/> Audio <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 00:34:14
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: Joe Jordan

Date: 5th March 2011