

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Tommy Gunn
Date of Interview	22/12/2011
Location	Lisnakea
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Eugene Reihill
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1943 Home County: Fermanagh
Education	Primary: Lisnakea PS Secondary: Enniskillen St. Michaels
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Lisnakea Emmetts GFC [Fermanagh]
Occupation	Retired Store Manager
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Michael Reihill
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1932 Home County: Fermanagh
Education	Primary: Lisnakea PS Secondary: Enniskillen St. Michaels
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Lisnakea Emmetts GFC [Fermanagh]
Occupation	Retired Publian
Parents' Occupation	Publican [Father]; Nurse [Mother]
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	John James Collins
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1935 Home County: Fermanagh
Education	N/A
Family	Siblings: N/A Current Family if Different: 3 daughters & 2 sons
Club(s)	Lisnakea Emmetts GFC [Fermanagh]
Occupation	CXC Manager
Parents' Occupation	Labourers
Religion	N/A
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Clones Golf Club

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Date of Report	24 th July 2012
Period Covered	1940s - 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Fermanagh, Cavan, Monaghan, Antrim, Armagh, Down, Derry
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Outsider's Perspectives, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>The interviewees, all connected through the GAA in Lisnaskea, engage in a wide-ranging interview which encompasses both personal GAA experiences and wider analysis of the development of the GAA and its place in Irish life. When it came to their early reminiscences, the interviewees focus on the informal, unorganised, nature of Gaelic games in their youth, the underdeveloped state of grounds and facilities and the experience of travelling to and from games in Fermanagh, Clones and elsewhere. The interviewees shed a particular light on community relations in Lisnaskea throughout the second half of the twentieth century and, in particular, the attitudes of the local Protestant/unionist community to the GAA. The changing role of women – a particular feature of the GAA experience in Lisnaskea – is discussed, while concerns are raised about the threat to volunteerism and the growing commercial focus of the GAA at various levels.</p> <p>00:00:20 Five interviewees are introduced as members of Lisnaskea and Roslea GAA clubs.</p> <p>00:01:32 (Jim) Earliest memories of the GAA: talks about the getting to the GAA field as a child in the mid 1940s.</p> <p>00:02:34 (Eugene) Recalls living in the country and riding a bicycle to games, the people who gathered at games, the rivalries and excitement, c. 1957-8. Refers to occasional 'rowdiness' at games, gaining free access to games and the limited social opportunities for young people. Also comments</p>

	<p>on levels of activity laid on for young people.</p> <p>00:05:20 (John) Earliest memories: Mentions being part of a big family and following his elder brother. Refers to walking to games, the place of the club in the community, the scarcity of money. Talks about the arrival of cars and a local man, John McCarroll looking after him and others.</p> <p>00:06:47 (Jim) Tells story of playing a Minor match in Enniskillen and 16 players being crowded into a car.</p> <p>00:07:23 (Michael) Earliest memories: Talks about difficulties in crossing drain with father and Tom Lunney to get to playing field, known as Galvin's field. Horses grazing on field during the week and being cleared for games.</p> <p>00:08:24 (Tommy) Mentions being born in Roslea and living beside football field. Talks about playing in field and at lunch-hour in school. Comments on the use of improvised ball and pupils contributing to purchase of a leather ball. Refers to those youngsters maturing to become senior players with Roslea in 1955.</p> <p>00:10:10 (Tommy) Talks about having to walk to Clones for matches and to being carried on the bar of his father's bicycle. 'Food was like food to me', he says. Mentions his knowledge of Cavan and Antrim teams of the 1940s.</p> <p>00:11:04 (Tommy) Reflects on the rivalries in the Fermanagh club scene. Refers to lack of fencing around pitches and the potential for a 'squabble'.</p> <p>00:11:52 (Jim) Describes as early pitches as a 'disaster'. Comments on the contribution of Michael Reihill's father to the purchase of Emmett park. Also talks about improvements to the field, cutting blackthorn and using it, covered with clay, as a drain. Mentions the use of calf-sheds as changing rooms in certain clubs.</p> <p>00:14:44 (Jim) Tells story of going with club colleague to buy a double-decker bus to use as changing rooms, but falling out over price.</p> <p>00:15:20 (Eugene) Recalls pitches being grazed by livestock, goalposts being cut from the forest, absence of nets. Talks also of lack of changing facilities, the 'rough' state of the grounds and the use of single set of jerseys by multiple teams. Refers also to umpires using handkerchiefs and to general acceptance of conditions.</p> <p>00:17:44 (John) Discusses the absence of changing facilities</p>
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	<p>and the ways in which players tried to keep clothes dry. Comments on the lack of money.</p> <p>00:18:38 (Michael) Recalls horses on Galvin's field, as well as the move to the new pitch. Refers to father's acquisition of new pitch for club, securing land from a solicitor named Winslow. [Unspecific comments at this point suggest political sensitivities over the land purchase]</p> <p>00:19:53 (Tommy) Reflects on the poor quality of pitches in Roslea and compares it to Lisnaskea in the 1940s and 50s. Refers also to the acquisition of a first Prunty pitch in Fermanagh in the 1960s. Mentions that Fermanagh played Down, with Sean O'Neill and Paddy Doherty on its side, at opening of pitch.</p> <p>00:21:25 (Tommy) General observations on the improvements to club pitches in Fermanagh.</p> <p>00:21:50 (John) Recalls an incident when the RUC damaged wall around the GAA pitch.</p> <p>00:22:55 (John) Comments on lack of local objection to Lisnaskea Emmets.</p> <p>00:23:05 (Group) Reflects on the nationalist political rallies in the area and on the general good relations in the town – refers to influence of Michael Reihill's father.</p> <p>00:23:50 (Group) Remarks on the East Belfast background of the RUC officer who damaged club wall. Comments also on positive local relations.</p> <p>00:24:26 (Group) Discussion of the damage to wall by RUC patrol painting slogans in the 1970s.</p> <p>00:25:10 (Eugene) Discusses the attitude of Protestant/Unionist population in Lisnaskea to GAA.</p> <p>00:26:20 (Tommy) Comments critically on players who put soccer first by playing the day before a GAA match.</p> <p>00:27:11 (Jim) Recalls assistance received from the club by business people 'not of our persuasion'. Refers to the 'tolerance' of the club's founders and the role of GAA players in keeping soccer alive in Lisnaskea. Discusses the number of Protestants who played for Lisnaskea over years.</p> <p>00:29:03 (Group) Discusses of Protestant involvement in Lisnaskea GAA and the barriers to their further involvement, including games on Sunday and the flying of tricolour.</p>
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	<p>00:30:15 (Group) Discussion on absence of Protestant/unionist attendance at GAA games.</p> <p>00:30:50 (Jim) Memory of fellow pupil, Kevin Sreenan (Later a county players), playing with a tennis ball. Says that there was no football played in school.</p> <p>00:31:43 (Eugene) Recalls attending a small primary school, the absence of organised games and informal play in the schoolyard.</p> <p>00:32:27 (John) Comments on absence of facilities and playing informally behind the school.</p> <p>00:32:59 (Mike) Comments on the absence of a school team in primary school. Recalls football being played in the evenings. Talks about move to St. Michael's in Enniskillen and the active football scene in the school, Br. Alfred teaching the rules of the game.</p> <p>00:34:13 (Tommy) Talks about picking teams in school and the absence of juvenile football in the late 1940s and 50s. Says organised games started at minor, but players could be playing at 14. Comments on the availability of football in the colleges, Monaghan Seminary and St. Michael's. Contrasts the provision of underage football past and present.</p> <p>00:35:50 (Tommy) Remarks on frequency of illegal players playing underage football.</p> <p>00:36:00 (Tommy) Discusses the ban on foreign games. Tells story of a minor player, Pat Devenney, in 1951 attending a rugby match and receiving a suspension.</p> <p>00:36:39 (Michael) Tells story of brother who was selected to play for Fermanagh minors when over-age and the local priest, Fr. Brennan, who had vouched for him, reading him 'the riot act'.</p> <p>00:37:40 (Jim) Tells story of being lectured by Canon Donnelly for playing more football than praying.</p> <p>00:38:20 (Tommy) Story about a player suspended for playing illegally.</p> <p>00:38:48 (Eugene) Recalls cycling to attend Down V Cavan in Ulster final at Clones. Tells of 'hiding' bikes to avoid them being stolen.</p> <p>00:40:26 (Jim) Talks about riding bicycle to Clones, being asked to bring home Killeshandra butter and price rises in a</p>
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	<p>shops on Fermanagh street on Ulster final day.</p> <p>00:41:20 (Jim) Mentions profile of Antrim and Cavan and the rivalry between them.</p> <p>00:41:53 (John) Speaks of cycling to Clones for Ulster finals and kicking football in the fields after returning home.</p> <p>00:42:30 (Michael) Bicycles as the only means of transport and absence of cars. Recalls also travelling by pony and trap.</p> <p>00:43:20 (Tommy) Mentions walking to Clones from Roslea, which was only 4.5 miles from Clones. Refers to the dominance of Cavan and the profile Monaghan, Antrim and Armagh.</p> <p>00:43:55 Recalls attending Fermanagh's Ulster final with Cavan in Clones, 1945. Recalls attending Cavan and Monaghan in an Ulster final and rushing to meet Mick Higgins after game. Talks about size of crowds at Ulster finals and alludes to occasional bit of trouble.</p> <p>00:46:49 (Tommy) Talks about his admiration for Peter Donohue, forward and free-taker, from Cavan.</p> <p>00:47:35 (Eugene) Talks about his admiration for the Down team of the 1960s and the support they received from Fermanagh. Comments on their style of football and their status as the 'North's' representatives. Refers to particular admiration for Sean O'Neill.</p> <p>00:49:01 (Eugene) Recalls occasion at Emmet Park when a former player, Johnny Neeson, aged 45, passed away. Recalls family at scene at the ground and the individual's contribution to the club.</p> <p>00:50:20 (Eugene) Discusses the community's response to Johnny Neeson's death and the support they offered family. Comments on the connection of the local nationalist population with the GAA club.</p> <p>[Eugene Reihill leaves the interview at this point]</p> <p>00:52:03 (John) Reflections on volunteerism and payments in the GAA.</p> <p>00:52:50 (Michael) Comments on the voluntary foundations of the GAA and the influence of money on other sports.</p> <p>00:53:45 (Tommy) Discusses the voluntary contribution to the GAA and the GAA's contribution to community. Refers to levels of land ownership by GAA units. Reflects on</p>
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	<p>suggestions that players and managers should be paid and comments on the GPA.</p> <p>00:56:01 (Jim) Talks about the GAA as a 'religion' and the indebtedness of current generation to those who went before. Reflects on changes in the GAA and the 'big money' culture.</p> <p>00:59:05 (Michael) Discussion on the GAA's involvement with 'moneymen' through redevelopment of Croke Park and hotels etc.</p> <p>00:59:35 (Jim) Considers the economic crisis in the country and the reasons for it. Criticises funding for GAA President.</p> <p>01:00:17 (Michael) Comments on the expenditure on county teams and the physio bill for Lisnaskea.</p> <p>01:00:55 (Tommy) Remarks on increasing professionalism in the GAA.</p> <p>01:01:10 (Jim) Claims that the GAA is no longer an amateur organisation.</p> <p>01:01:29 (Jim) Talks about those who have contributed to GAA club and the responsibility not to squander the money raised.</p> <p>01:02:50 (Michael) Expresses concerns at the overly commercial focus of the GAA – claims that name is used to 'further business.'</p> <p>01:03:34 (Jim) Talks of attending first All-Ireland in 1952 for Cavan and Meath and walking on the pitch afterward. Counterpoints this experience with GAA policy to keep supporters off the field.</p> <p>01:04:38 (John) Comments on the importance attached to walking onto Croke Park.</p> <p>01:05:13 (Jim) Discusses the attractiveness of Ladies football and the advances that women have made.</p> <p>01:06:25 (John) Describes the arrival of a girls team as 'best thing ever happened in this town'. Mentions that his granddaughter is first female secretary of Lisnaskea Emmets.</p> <p>01:07:22 (Michael) Talks about past treatment of women in the GAA and welcomes the changes that have taken place.</p> <p>01:07:45 (Tommy) Speaks of his admiration for what women have done, the distance they have travelled in GAA terms and how they play.</p>
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	<p>01:08:42 (Group) Discuss the work that women would done in the club in the past. They were described as 'staunch supporters'.</p> <p>01:09:40 (John) GAA Rules: Voices displeasure at yellow card system.</p> <p>01:10:13 (Jim) GAA rules: reflects on the over-use of the handpass and stresses the need for a 'lot of changes' to be introduced.</p> <p>01:10:50 (Tommy) Comments critically on the number of changes that have already been introduced and the problems they have created for referees.</p> <p>01:11:29 (Jim) Reference is made to a referee who was 'beaten' up recently. Stresses the importance of rule enforcement.</p> <p>01:12:00 (Tommy) Comments on the quality of refereeing and the amount of time lost in games due to referee stoppages.</p> <p>01:12:33 (Jim) Recalls foundation of GAA in 1884 and the amount of attention that GAA writer current give to the rules of other sports, especially soccer and rugby.</p> <p>01:13:16 GAA rules: speaks of his admiration of the high catch and the lack of protection the fielder is provided.</p> <p>01:14:05 (John) Discusses his hopes for the GAA's future.</p> <p>01:14:42 (Michael) Expresses the wish that GAA rules are more respected by players. Compares favourably Gaelic games to other sports.</p> <p>01:16:30 (Tommy) Reflects on the increasing costs of supporting Gaelic games. Refers to unaffordability of games in a recession. Comments also on the example that gaelic football could take from hurling.</p> <p>01:20:14 (Jim) Comments critically on the costs of attending GAA matches and the number of individuals involved in the GAA for self-gain. Reflects on plans to take Ulster finals out of Clones and move them Casement Park.</p> <p>01:22:45 Recalls going to a county match in Enniskillen and attitude of the official at the stiles.</p> <p>01:24:05 (Jim) Tells story about gate receipts in the mid 1950s – the story involves an MP for Fermanagh South Tyrone who was a playing member of the Lisnaskea club and</p>
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	<p>an Ulster Council representative.</p> <p>01:25:05 Talks about travelling to Croke Park with sons when he would lift them over the stiles – contrasts that situation with the way it has become.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>Eugene Reihill:</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 checked="" 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>Michael Reihill:</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>John James Collins:</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 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>John Curran:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Honorary President</p> <p>Tommy McDermott:</p>

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	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" 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 checked="" 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>Eugene Reihill: Lisnakea Emmetts – several senior championships</p> <p>Michael Reihill: Captain, St. Michaels College Played with in Fermanagh minors and U18</p> <p>John James Collins: Played for 12 years, won Junior Football All-Ireland.</p> <p>John Curran: Minor, junior, senior, medals in both football and hurling, intermediate. Played for 26 years.</p> <p>Tommy McDermott: 3 senior championships; 2 junior championships; 2 minor championships. Played form 1948 – 68.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Eugene Reihill: N/A</p> <p>Michael Reihill: Club treasurer 1950 -1960</p> <p>John James Collins: 2 County leagues (1 minor, 1 junior), 2 O’Duffy Cup Medals.</p> <p>John Curran: None</p> <p>Tommy McDermott: Club chairperson, secretary, treasurer; selector; Ciste Gael County Coordinator</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:26:25
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: _____

Date: _____