

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Andy McHugh
Date of Interview	27 th Dec 2011
Location	Interviewee's home, Derry
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Andy McHugh
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1956 Home County: Tyrone
Education	Primary: St. Patrick's PS, Castleberg, Co. Tyrone Secondary: St. Eugene's, Castleberg, Co. Tyrone Third Level: Derry Tech, Belfast Tech
Family	Siblings: 6 brothers & 4 sisters Current Family if Different: Married with 2 sons
Club(s)	Castleberg [Tyrone]; St. Davog's, Aghyaran [Tyrone]; Tir Chonaill Gaels [London]; Brothers Pearse [London]; Sean McDermotts [San Francisco]; Ulster [San Francisco]; Steelstown Brian Ógs [Derry]
Occupation	Metal Worker, Welder
Parents' Occupation	Bicycle Shop Owner [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	21 st August 2012
Period Covered	1960s – 2011
Counties/Countries Covered	Tyrone, Derry, Antrim, Great Britain, England, Americas, USA
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Alcohol, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Andy McHugh, who interviews himself, opens the recording with reflections on his early experiences of the GAA when growing up in Castlederg. He recalls, amongst other things, travelling to attend and play games. In search of work, Mc Hugh charts his travels from Castlederg to Derry, Belfast, London and San Francisco and his involvement with the GAA in each of these locations. His experiences in London in the 1970s reveal much about a particular aspect of the GAA culture among Irish emigrant communities. But it was in San Francisco that McHugh spent most of the 1980s and 90s and he links his personal experience with a wider theme of emigration. McHugh was joined by his brothers in San Francisco, one of whom, Marius, would be diagnosed with cancer. The support and funding he received from the Irish community is highlighted, as is the contribution of Marius, following his death in 1989, to the acquisition of new club grounds in Castlederg. McHugh talks about the social and economic benefits to GAA membership abroad, as well as his involvement in the establishment of a new club, the Ulster club, in San Francisco in 1987. The rise of women's football in America and the emergence, and importance of, youth championships is outlined. McHugh returned to Ireland in 2007. In addition to the above, McHugh reflects with concern on the growing professionalism and money culture of the GAA; he considers the changes to the role of media, women and clergy in the Association and urges the need for greater inclusion of members of the unionist community.</p>

	<p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:00:20 Andy McHugh mentions that recording is being conducted in Derry City.</p> <p>00:00:38 Earliest memories: being a child travelling in a mini-bus with his father, an organiser of the GAA in Castlederg, and others. Recalls being taken to games around Tyrone.</p> <p>00:00:35 Talks about travelling to juvenile games with all the children singing popular songs of the day – The Beatles ‘Yellow Submarine’ etc.</p> <p>00:02:00 Recalls a number of incidents when travelling to games, including the stoning of the bus.</p> <p>00:02:55 Mentions the amalgamation of underage clubs in the 1960s. Talks about playing under 14 and minor with Aghyaran.</p> <p>00:03:55 Recalls moving to Derry, the absence of Gaelic football in the city c. 1970 and hitch-hiking home to games.</p> <p>00:04:18 Recalls first ever senior game, aged 16 or 17, with Aghyaran against Ardboe, when he was sent off.</p> <p>00:05:20 Recalls another occasion when he should have been sent off, playing in Los Angeles. Says it was ‘dirtiest thing I ever did in my life.’ Describes football in America as ‘rough and tough’.</p> <p>00:06:15 Moving from Derry to Belfast and playing for a team there, returning to Tyrone to play at weekends.</p> <p>00:06:44 Moving to London in mid 1970s for work. Talks about playing with Tír Chonaill Gaels and being based in Biddy Mulligans o the Kilburn High Road. Recalls drinking before games and on bus when travelling to New Eltham.</p> <p>00:07:55 Comments on the low attendance at training sessions in London.</p> <p>00:08:05 Return to Ireland and working on building south across the south of the country. Says he didn’t play much but returned to London to play odd game with Tír Chonaill Gaels.</p> <p>00:08:22 Travelling to America in 1980 and ending up in San Francisco. Talks about the Sean McDermotts club and the counties from which it drew its players. Mentions that games were 13-a-side and that there were only 3 teams in the city. Refers to the county composition of those clubs.</p>
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	<p>00:09:50 Recalls the fun and 'craic' associated with the GAA scene in San Francisco. Tells story about playing against Rangers club after an 'all night party' – a priest playing for the Rangers was 'decked' in the course of the game.</p> <p>[00:10:35 Refers to drink and 'other substances' been taken]</p> <p>00:12:20 Mentions that players went to the pub after games for 'all day drinking' sessions.</p> <p>00:12:38 Leaving San Francisco in 1983 for Ireland. Emigrating again to London and playing for the Pearses, with whom his brother also played.</p> <p>00:13:31 Return to San Francisco in 1985-86. Talks about the big Irish influx and new teams being starting up. Mentions brothers playing with Sean McDermotts club.</p> <p>00:14:16 Refers to two Irish American club being started: the Harps and the Boru's. Mentions the style of football played by the Harps and the tensions between Irish 'kids' and 'Irish American' kids.</p> <p>00:15:40 Talks about the hostility of the Irish American teams to the importing players by other clubs for the championship season – links this to the assault on Mark McGovern in a club game in San Francisco in 2011.</p> <p>00:16:34 Talks about his brother breaking his leg in a match and, in hospital, discovering a cancerous tumour in leg, necessitating amputation. Talks about the fundraising among Irish community in San Francisco and back home in Ireland to pay for medical bills.</p> <p>00:18:16 Mentions that brother, Marius, died three years later in 1989 and that he left money to Castlederg GAA club in Tyrone, which was used to purchase and develop a pitch in the early 1990s. Mentions that club pitch has been named after Marius McHugh.</p> <p>00:20:14 Talks about starting up a new club, the Ulster Club, in San Francisco in 1987 – the club would include a GAA club, a political party and a Ladies soccer club. Outlines a brief history of the endeavour, the fragmentation and folding up of the soccer and political elements.</p> <p>00:21:40 Discusses attending meetings of Western Divisional Board. Recalls meeting in 1989 when a Waterford RTC were bringing teams, including a women's gaelic football club, to San Francisco. Interviewee, who was ignorant of women's football, took up the job of bringing together a team to meet</p>
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	<p>them. Talks about finding players, training and beating the Waterford RTC team.</p> <p>00:23:40 Discusses developments in women's football in San Francisco and elsewhere post 1989. Establishing San Francisco Ladies GAA Club, putting motion to North American Board to affiliate and the holding of the first women's championship in 1992 in Philadelphia.</p> <p>00:24:55 Role of emigration in growth of women's gaelic football in the United States.</p> <p>00:25:19 John O'Flynn (Cork) and the establishment of a Youth League in 1992. Describes it as the 'single greatest thing probably set up in North America'. Talks about the development of Continental Youth Championships and how it has shaped the multinational character of adult teams and clubs.</p> <p>00:26:35 Refers to the halting or slowing down of emigration to America during the Irish boom. Comments that downturn in Irish economy may reverse trend again.</p> <p>00:27:00 Leaving San Francisco in 2007 to return to Ireland., becoming involved with a club in Derry and then returning to Castlederg GAA club.</p> <p>00:27:45 Talks about going to club and county games and meeting people.</p> <p>00:28:28 Recalls the North American championships of 1990 in Chicago and a game between the Bolands from Chicago and the Fianna hurling club – recalls the buzz in the crowd and the controversial ending to game.</p> <p>00:30:36 Considers the place of the Castlederg club in the community – refers to the number of children involved and other social events. Talks also about the role of the club abroad – making connections, getting work etc. 'It was your ticket to making a living.'</p> <p>00:32:05 Reflects on place of Gaelic games in St. Eunan's in Castlederg. Mentions playing for Tyrone Vocational Schools and getting a meal after games.</p> <p>00:32:58 Admiration for the volunteers in the GAA 'who keep the whole show on the road' and for referees. Remarks on his policy of not shouting at referees.</p> <p>00:34:15 Discusses the big changes in the GAA – the growing professionalism and the increasing number of people</p>
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	<p>being paid. Refers to the corporate boxes in Croke Park. Comments also on the quality of GAA facilities - contrasting with his childhood experiences - and the organisation of Gaelic games.</p> <p>00:35:50 Reflects on how changes in community in Castlederg on the GAA. Mentions the scale of emigration from Castlederg.</p> <p>00:36:40 Considers the role of women in the GAA. Contrasts the example of his mother – who may never have attended a game – with the contemporary conspicuousness of women in the GAA clubs, Castlederg included. Argues for the full affiliation of women’s games into the GAA.</p> <p>00:38:06 Talks about the role of clergy in the GAA. Mentions the official role of priests in clubs in the past and the naming of clubs after saints – contrasts this with the American GAA experience, where clubs were named after ‘heroes’.</p> <p>00:39:10 Recalls attending a recent Castlederg AGM which finished with a prayer – described by interviewee as ‘kind of weird’.</p> <p>00:39:25 The relationship between politics and GAA. Talks about GAA and nationalist identity and urges more unionist involvement in the GAA. Talks about America where no one cares about religion etc.</p> <p>00:41:00 Mentions ‘Protestant’ players in Castlederg in the past.</p> <p>00:41:28 Expresses concern at the importance of money and sponsorship in the GAA.</p> <p>00:42:00 Importance of the GAA to his personal identity when abroad.</p> <p>00:42:42 Reflects on the importance of parish rivalries to the GAA. Talks about Castlederg and Aghyaran rivalry and how this buried when they go away.</p> <p>00:43:45 Talks about volunteers as the ‘unsung heroes’.</p> <p>00:43:00 Recalls his love of playing the game, getting injuries into his 30s and his move into management and the founding of clubs. Discusses the particular difficulties of managing the women’s team and holding onto players.</p> <p>00:46:51 Considers the changes in media coverage of Gaelic games. Recalls listening to Michael O’Hehir’s commentaries of All-Ireland finals, the crowds gathered around television</p>
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	<p>sets in the 1960s – ‘half the town would be up there’. Voices frustration at over analysis of games and referees performances.</p> <p>00:48:08 Challenges facing GAA into future: concerns over growing professionalism and people ‘making money’ out it.</p> <p>00:48:30 Describes the GAA’s contribution to his social and working life over many years.</p> <p>00:49:05 Talks about the need to focus more on clubs and away from the ‘stars’ playing in All-Ireland finals.</p> <p>00:49:30 Talks about the value of the GAA Oral History Project.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input type="checkbox"/> Player <input 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>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: 00:50:24</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: Andy McHugh

Date: ___21st August 2012_____