

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	4 December 2008
Location	Milbrae Nursing Home, Newport, Co Tipperary
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Jimmy 'Butler' Coffey
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1909 Home County: Tipperary
Education	Primary: Newport National School
Family	Siblings: Three brothers and four sisters, he was the second youngest. Current Family if Different: Three sons, seven grandchildren, one great-grandson.
Club(s)	Newport
Occupation	Lorry driver (self-employed)
Parents' Occupation	Labourer and housewife
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A

Date of Report	1 September 2009
Period Covered	1920s-2000s
Counties/Countries Covered	Tipperary, Kilkenny, Limerick, Cork
Key Themes Covered	Playing, Travel, Training, Supporting, Facilities, Grounds, Opening of Croke Park, Material Culture, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Role of the Club in the Community, Politics, Ban of Foreign Games and Dances, Irish History
Interview Summary	<p>Also present PJ Maxwell</p> <p>Born in 1909, Chapel Lane, Tipperary</p> <p>.44 Earliest memory of pucking a ball around the lane and getting local fellas together to play in local places, before there was a minor championship.</p> <p>1.15 Broke ribs and perforated his lung in 1924.</p> <p>1.40 In 1926, they got to the final and won six years in a row with the same team.</p> <p>2.08 Remembers playing with Newport GAA club in local places and jumping into farmers' fields to eat a feed of turnips.</p> <p>2.30 Had no hurley, just a stick with a bend at the end.</p> <p>3.00 Remembers a match in Nenagh when he wasn't picked for selection but took his hurley to the match anyway and finding an old jersey in a kit bag and wearing it and pretending to be a sub on the team. He got to play that day and was promoted to the Senior team.</p> <p>3.35 Was a member of the Tipperary minor team from the start – minor championship started in 1928. Played with that team until 1930 (by which time he was playing illegally); then promoted to the Tipperary Senior team. Great story about playing in the All-Ireland minor final against Kilkenny when Kilkenny fielded an extra man. It was Jimmy's last game as a minor player.</p> <p>8.00 Travelling by train to matches. Story about going to play a match for Tipperary with some men from home who were keen to see to the game but had no train tickets, the players said they would not travel and play unless the men were allowed on the train, they were all allowed to travel eventually.</p> <p>8.36 1930 match in Cork, Tipperary v Cork. Tipperary won. Tradition for Tipperary men to go to Brents Hotel in Cork. Story about being their with his four brothers having a pint when the Cork selectors arrived in – 'Look whose after beating us'</p>

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9.25	Tipperary team stayed in the Belvadere Hotel when they were in Dublin.
9.42	Playing with Jim Close on a Toomevara selection for the Thomond Feis in Limerick. They won the shield. Description of the Thomond Feis. Playing for Tipperary in 1932 against Mick and John Mackey, Limerick on the rise. Great story about how Johnny Leahy (Tipperary Secretary) asked him to be on the team and playing on Paddy Clohessy.
12.32	The rivalry between Newport and Ahane, neighbouring parishes.
13.19	The honour of wearing a Tipperary jersey. Injuries incurred for the honour.
13.21	Description of 1937 Munster Final, Tipperary v Limerick and going on to meet Kilkenny in the All-Ireland final. Martin White playing for Kilkenny that day.
17.29	Description of the Cooney Case – the suspension of Jimmy Cooney from play following his attendance at a Rugby match.
18.50	Received a bad stroke to the knee which ended his inter-county career.
19.14	Repercussions of his injury.
20.50	Description of training regime when he was playing for Tipperary. Description of winning the 1937 All-Ireland final.
23.00	1930 – Tipperary wins three All-Ireland finals – Senior, Junior and Minor and were the first county every to do so. Great story about Neddy Maher, goal keeper who played minor for Tipperary until he was almost 30.
25.41	Hurling in his school days. Influential school teacher from Cork. No proper hurleys, played with crooked sticks.
26.15	Story about receiving his first pair of hurling boots and playing with a thread ball that his mother made and playing with empty treacle tins.
27.18	Standard of hurling played today. Comparison between hurling now and hurling in the 1930s.
29.02	People have more interests now than when he was young – Golf is taking over from hurling.
30.10	Story about going home from Killarney in 1937 after beating Kilkenny in the All-Ireland. The team were not given dinner in Killarney because it was tourist season and they had other priorities. Dinner was had in Mallow instead and they got a great

	reception on their return to Thurles.
33.33	Memories of going to matches on a pony and trap
34.30	The difficulties of playing for Tipperary when he lived so far away from Thurles. The honour of being the first man from his area to win an All-Ireland. Needed to fight harder to be on the team because he was not from Thurles.
36.15	Playing in goals for the football team in Newport. Playing against the Gardaí.
38.10	His heroes when he was growing up were: Phil Cahill, Martin Kennedy, Mick Darcy – all powerful men of the 1926.
30.00	The Tailteann team of 1924 – featured Mick D'Arcy. The Leahy's weren't on that team because they were Republicans and it was a free-state team. Team included Garrett Howard and Willie Ryan. None of the Tipperary men that played on the Tailteann team were allowed to go on the Tipperary tour of America in 1926 ('you had to be one way of thinking'). The politics of team selection.
41.56	Memories of the War of Independence and the Civil War – 'a very anxious time', brothers fought against each other but eventually 'fell in together' again with the hurling.
43.20	Foot and Mouth outbreak of 1941 – Tipperary had beaten Cork in the Munster Final but because of the Foot and Mouth outbreak Tipperary couldn't go to the All-Ireland and Cork played in their place.
44.30	His views on the playing of rugby in Croke Park. Thurles has the best hurling field in the country.
45.50	The importance of hurling when he was growing up, the prestige attached to being a good hurler, destroying white washed walls playing hurling against them.
49.03	Going to dances on the way home from matches, the ladies had 'great attention' for the hurlers.
50.04	Great story about how he met his wife.
54.54	Changes in the GAA – in its organisation, how players are treated, Cork hurlers strike.
56.25	Story about John Leahy of Boherlahan breaking his leg. PJ Maxwell asks him has he heard of a hamstring, he hasn't.
57.00	Most of the players in his time were farmers or labourers, already fit men without training. Limerick team of the 1930s stand out as one of the greatest teams of all time, description of the league final

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	<p>between Kilkenny and Limerick in 1935.</p>
59.07	List his all-star players of all time.
62.48	Modelled his own style of play on Phil Cahill, he played against him once at a club match against Moycarkey in 1931.
64.30	Walking through fields to find the makings of a hurley, making sure to do it under the cover of darkness, giving it to a carpenter to shape it out.
69.00	The whole team meeting in the middle of the field for the throw in at the beginning of a match.
73.58	Never got involved in any committees
74.15	Proudest moment of his hurling career – the 1937 All-Ireland final in Killarney marking Paddy Phelan who he believes was the best all round hurler of all time. Remembers all the people from Newport in the crowd.
75.14	His career lasted from 1926 to 1947.
77.10	Moving to Limerick to work, worked for a Kilkenny man.
77.32	His father used to hurl a little, his mothers family didn't but they had a great interest. His mother used to wash his jersey every Monday morning.
79.39	It was too later when the GAA realised that they should take care of their players, feed them well, treat them properly.
81.16	The friends he made through hurling, staying in touch with players from other teams, remained friends with Jackie Power for years after.
84.58	Biggest regret – being beaten by a ball that never crossed the line in a North Tipperary championship in 1934.
88.35	Three of his brothers also won All-Ireland medals with Tipperary. Playing on a railway cup team with Mick Mackey, 'It was the parish I was worried about, not myself'
90.20	Conor O'Mahony is a great player now.
91.25	The death of Paddy Phelan and his daughter.
92.20	Enjoying watching his family playing sport now.
95.12	His grandmother would have been alive during the famine. All of his aunts ended up in America and were never heard of afterwards.

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	96.00 Had an uncle Jim that hurled.
Involvement in GAA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input type="checkbox"/> Steward <input type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person <input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input type="checkbox"/> Referee <input type="checkbox"/> None <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Selector for Limerick 1955
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	1926-47 medals for Tipperary and Newport. Two senior championship medals with Ahane 1947/1948. 1949 = medal for the East Limerick Hurling Championship.
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	N/A
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 1:40:42
Language	English

To be filled in by Interviewer:

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Signed: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 2 September 2009