

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

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| Name of Interviewer | Regina Fitzpatrick |
| Date of Interview | 8 th Nov 2010 |
| Location | Seán's home, near Coolballow, Co. Wexford |
| Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname) | Seán Ormonde |
| <u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u> | |
| Gender | Male |
| Born | Year Born: 1935 Home County: Wexford |
| Education | Primary: Killahard NS. Co. Wexford Secondary: St Peter's College, Wexford Town |
| Family | Siblings: 2 sisters Current Family if Different: Wife & 3 children |
| Club(s) | St Brigid's Blackwater GAA [Wexford]; Ballymurn GAA [Wexford] |
| Occupation | Laboratory Technician with Teagasc |
| Parents' Occupation | Housewife / Farmer [Mother]; Member of the British Army [Father] |
| Religion | Roman Catholic |
| Political Affiliation / Membership | Fianna Fáil |
| Other Club/Society Membership(s) | Macra na Feirme |

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| Date of Report | 27 th June 2012 |
| Period Covered | 1930s – 2010 |
| Counties/Countries Covered | Wexford, Waterford, Kerry, Longford, Carlow, Kilkenny, England, Great Britain, Americas |
| Key Themes Covered | Travel, Supporting, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Emigration, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Alcohol, Politics, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Food and Drink, Socialising, Relationships, Economy/ Economics |
| Interview Summary | <p>Seán discusses his involvement in the GAA as a football and hurling player, coach, and administrator. He outlines his playing career in St. Brigid's Blackwater GAA Club, Co. Wexford, and describes his highlight of winning the 1957 County Junior Hurling Championship with his club. He also discusses the mixed history of the club and his efforts in training juvenile teams. He describes Wexford's hurling success in his lifetime and considers the impact of emigration on teams, both in the 1950s and in the present. In addition, Seán reflects on his various administration roles in Bord na nÓg, Scór, and his term as county secretary. He considers the challenges he has faced in these roles and reveals how he believes the GAA can improve. Finally, he discusses his passion for the GAA and his hopes for its future.</p> <p>00:20 Seán describes being born in 1935 in Skreen, Castlebridge. His family background: farming, drapery, blacksmith. His father emigrating to England, conscripted, fought in war. His father's refusal to talk about his war experiences. Returning to Ireland aged 68.</p> <p>05:00 Outbreak of whooping cough during the war, his baby sister dying. Sean sick. Mentions Doctor Murphy.</p> <p>07:08 Discusses moving to Blackwater in 1944 when he was 9. Attending national school in Blackwater. No organised hurling, children hurled themselves. Attending St. Peter's College, Wexford, starting his GAA career. Mentions James Ormonde, his cousin.</p> |

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| | <p>09:15 Mentions hurler Johnny Doran of St. Brigid's Blackwater GAA Club. Strong hurling team, playing first county final in 1951. Beaten by Buffers Alley. All hurling in Blackwater. Mentions Wexford footballer Jim Rogers, winning Railway Cup medals, learning to hurl. Playing with Oulart in football. No football team in Blackwater.</p> <p>11:03 Describes hurling with Blackwater in 1953, while he was in St. Peter's College. His experiences as a boarder. Inadequate food. Porridge, bread, tea. Junior and senior football leagues, no hurling. Kilkenny's Ned Power introducing hurling to the school. First senior team in 1952.</p> <p>12:59 Reflects on the prominence of football in St. Peter's College. Also handball, tennis, running. His lack of success at running in school. Mentions Leinster chairman Martin O'Neill, his sons' skill in sports. Mentions Mick Lanigan's skill in athletics.</p> <p>14:46 Mentions schools St. Peter's played against in Gaelic games: St. Finian's College, Mullingar; Knockbeg College, Carlow; St. Mel's College, Longford. Outlines strength of these teams.</p> <p>16:02 Describes his lack of skill at football before he went to St. Peter's. Learning the game. Playing centre-field for his own club. Mentions his cousin James Ormonde starting a football team in 1955 in Blackwater. Sean playing hurling and football for club. Recalls playing for Ballymurn where his grandparents lived in 1950s. Outlines progress of Blackwater in 1950s. Mentions Sergeant Mannion training team.</p> <p>18:49 Working in grain merchants in the 50s. Long hours, training in morning while mother milked cows. Failure to make hurling team in 1957 when club reached junior county semi-final. Mentions Mogue O'Leary. Also mentions Mick Cullen of Warrenstown College, Meath, who played on Blackwater team. Winning county final in 1958. Mentions Jimmy Mannion. Outlines progress of club. Losing team members in 1959-1960 to emigration.</p> <p>24:35 Describes staying in Cappagh Hospital in 1959 for vertebrae problem. Club players emigrating to England, some to Birmingham. Mentions losing PJ Whelan, Johnny Doran, Joe Neylon, Jimmy Mannion of that team. Describes a photo of the winning team. No money for jerseys for subs. Mentions Martin Byrne. Also mentions Joe Neylon, Mick Cullen, Dan Gallagher, Jimmy Whelan, James Ormonde, Sean Cullen.</p> <p>30:09 Describes being beaten in 1959 by Oylegate. Mentions</p> |
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| | <p>arrival of John Murphy in 1961 to team. John Murphy winning All-Ireland Intermediate Hurling title with Wexford in 1963. Seán recalls hurling until 1972. Going to Johnstown in 1960, playing hurling there, returning to play with Blackwater. Re-grading of Blackwater in 1960. Club winning county title in 1975 again, with Martin Nolan.</p> <p>36:00 Describes strength of Under-14 school football team in 1972, under teacher Tom O'Shea. Mentions Rackard League, named for Nickey Rackard. Seán starting to train the team in 1972. Beating Bunclody and winning football championship . Recalls going to Bord na nÓg convention with O'Shea. Mentions Father Harry Sinnott. Seán becoming county secretary for Bord na nÓg in 1972.</p> <p>39:50 Discussion of lack of coaching. Some coaching at juvenile county level, none at club level. Sporadic coaching at school level. Mentions Sarsfield and Duffry Rovers. Outlines successes with juvenile teams. Less grades then, compared to now.</p> <p>41:47 Attending coaching courses: within Wexford, also Waterford. Learning coaching from Ned Power. Power's approach: tactics, objectives in different positions.</p> <p>44:05 Reflects on giving up Bord na nÓg secretary post in 1977. Involvement in juvenile teams in Blackwater, junior football team, reaching county final one year. Outlines successes in 70s and 80s of club juvenile teams. In 1981, Blackwater joining with Shelmaliers, reaching minor final. Mentions Arthur Kelly. Mentions Blackwater's Matt Furlong, Sean O'Shea, Michael O'Leary, Jack O'Leary on county junior team. Jack O'Leary's skill at hurling and football.</p> <p>48:14 Recounts stories involving Jack O'Leary, who died tragically.</p> <p>50:44 Explains training methods. Mostly training football. His own ideas, influences. His views on excessive hand-passing today. Mentions Sean Turner. His own skill at catching. Teaching basics. Tom O'Shea's influence.</p> <p>53:36 Describes start of Bord na nÓg in Wexford in 1971. Lots of coaches of underage teams, also teachers and priests. Mentions Father McDonald coaching in Kilmore. Ponders why Wexford haven't won a minor All-Ireland title since 1968. His friendship with Ned Power. Mentions Father John O'Brien and himself driving Ned to match. Also mentions Kilkenny hurling manager Brian Cody. Importance of</p> |
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| | <p>relationship between players and coach.</p> <p>57:10 Reflects on his administration experience from 1972 to 1977. Lack of fixtures. Mentions Seamus Seery, Dominic Williams, Jim Lucas, Tim Doyle. Explains how he developed a fixtures plan. Winning 2 Leinster finals at Under-14 level. Playing in Croke Park in 1977, beaten in minor hurling. Mentions John O'Connor.</p> <p>01:01:08 In 1985, becoming county secretary. Lack of success of Wexford in his tenure. Beaten by Kilkenny. Mentions DJ Carey. Also mentions Jim Berry, Tomás Ó Murchú. Seán describes being the last Hon. Secretary. Mentions Mick Kinsella. Challenges of post: lack of organisation, difficulty of balancing the post with his job, long hours. Assistance of district secretaries. His suggestion of making county secretary a full-time job with office.</p> <p>01:05:27 Discusses the major issues of his term. Finance. Lack of sporting success. Mentions good support from clubs. Mentions Dick O'Donnell's funeral. His experience refereeing matches. Mentions Big Mick Kinsella. Sean's biggest issue: discipline. Recounts going to Belfast with hurling team, manager wanting to stop bus in Dublin to drink. Mentions Hopper McGrath. Recalls going to Jack White's Inn, being served sandwiches by Catherine Nevin.</p> <p>01:10:13 Credits Liam Griffin for introducing discipline. His views on players drinking after matches.</p> <p>01:11:13 His enjoyment of fixtures. Fixture meeting a social event in Murphy Floods Hotel Enniscorthy, tea and biscuits served. Dislike of monthly county board meeting: less meetings today. His like of matches, attending training sessions. Disappointment after losing matches.</p> <p>01:13:12 Discusses Scór in Wexford, its lack of strength compared to Westmeath and Offaly. Chairman of Scór since 1992. His love of the competitions. Explains how he became chairman. Outlines the objectives of Scór: preserving Irish culture. Insufficient participation from clubs, lack of knowledge about it. Importance of Irish language. Promotion of Irish culture. Ponders its success. Lack of participation around Wexford. Describes other distractions: pantomime, Tops of the Town. His views that Irish culture is supported more in Liverpool or London.</p> <p>01:19:00 Describes need for a good Irish and cultural officer in every club. Mentions music, set-dancing. Professionalism of Westmeath Scór. Mentions Des Maguire. Regina mentions</p> |
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| | <p>Johnny Haniffy and Rose Longworth, involved in Scór in Westmeath.</p> <p>01:23:20 Discusses the issue of adjudication. His experience as an adjudicator, dislike of the marking system. Adjudicating the All-Ireland last year, responses to his marking.</p> <p>01:26:07 Explains selection of adjudicators. Mentions Judy Heffernan. His enjoyment of the music, and ballad group. Figure dancing, traditional singing, instrumental music, recitation. Mentions Brother Sylvester from Offaly. Issue of vulgarity in recitation.</p> <p>01:30:54 Growth of story-telling in Wexford in Crossabeg and Oulart. Uneasy relationship between Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Scór.</p> <p>01:32:39 Reflects on the contribution of Scór to GAA clubs. People taking part in Scór who can't do sport. His son John Ormonde playing hurling in Blackwater. Discusses the change in the locality, new people moving in, neighbours not knowing each other.</p> <p>01:37:16 His disappointment that the entertainment during the All-Stars is not Scór any more. Promoters' failure.</p> <p>01:38:39 Failure of the GAA to promote Scór. Mentions Maura Grannell. No money spent on Scór. Social aspect of Congress.</p> <p>01:41:08 Ponders his hopes for the future of Scór. The need for an energetic new chairman. Mentions involvement of Aine Kennedy and Aileen Kennedy. Sean mentions Jim Ferguson, Michael Wallace.</p> <p>01:43:50 Reflects on trying to balance GAA and family life. Mentions Tony Dempsey, Irish & cultural officer. Need for better promotion of Scór.</p> <p>01:47:49 Ponders what the GAA means to him. His disinterest in post-match celebrations. His views on excessive alcohol consumption related to celebrations.</p> <p>01:49:52 Describes his favourite memory: winning the 1957 championship.</p> <p>01:50:15 Considers what his involvement in the GAA has meant to him.</p> <p>01:50:46 Describes the banquet after Wexford won the 1996 All-Ireland Senior Hurling Championship. Going to Malahide. His son a friend of Seamus Kavanagh. Mentions coming off</p> |
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| | <p>the field after winning the 1957 County Junior Hurling Championship as his most enjoyable memory. More meaningful than the medals presentation. Recalls various aspects of that match. Blackwater's recent intermediate success.</p> <p>01:54:34 Mentions Robbie Jacob of Oulart. Seán being persuaded to manage team. Recounts story about vote for managing team. Sean's success as trainer – getting them to semi-final. Best player injured at rugby. Mentions Father Jim Butler. Re-grading of Blackwater.</p> <p>02:01:26 Considers whether the GAA is a political organisation. Lack of loyalties among members. Blackwater losing several players this year to emigration.</p> <p>02:03:45 Discussion about the biggest challenges facing the GAA: positive impact of recession on amount of players. His belief that hurling and football will continue. Considers the negative financial state of soccer clubs in Ireland.</p> <p>02:05:14 Reflects on the importance of volunteerism and amateurism. Passion for game. Difficulty of training young people nowadays. Less disciplined, less respect for authority figures now. Mentions Jack O'Leary's teenage son.</p> <p>02:08:55 Issue of player burnout at young age. Negative impact of so many matches nowadays. More distractions for young people now, too many matches. Pressure on young people. Younger players upset after matches. His son John's skill as a coach.</p> <p>02:11:17 His pride that his son and grandchildren play GAA. Coaching his grandchildren.</p> |
| <p>Involvement in GAA</p> | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" 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> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p> |
| <p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p> | <p>Played hurling for many years with St Brigids Blackwater. Won Wexford Junior Hurling Championship, 1957; Played on the Wexford Intermediate Hurling team.</p> |
| <p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how</p> | <p>Secretary of Wexford Bord na nÓg, 1972 – 77; Chairperson of Wexford Scór Committee, 1992 – 2010.</p> |

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| Format | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual |
| Duration | Length of Interview: 02:11:46 |
| 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: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 27th June 2012