

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	27 th June 2013
Location	Croke Park Stadium
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Páraic Duffy
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1951 Home County: Monaghan
Education	Primary: St Mary's Boys NS, Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan. Secondary: St Mary's Secondary School, Castleblaney; St Macartan's College, Monaghan Town. Third Level: University of Ulster, NUI Maynooth, University College Dublin.
Family	Siblings: 1 brother Current Family if Different: His wife Vera and three children – Mark, Paul and Úna.
Club(s)	Castleblaney Faughs GAA [Monaghan]; Scotstown GAA [Monaghan]
Occupation	Ard-Stiúrthóir CLG
Parents' Occupation	Department of Social Welfare [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	8 th August 2013
Period Covered	1930s - 2013
Counties/Countries Covered	Monaghan, Down, Derry, Offaly, Louth, Dublin, Cork
Key Themes Covered	Facilities, Playing, Administration, Celebrations, Religion, Role of Clergy, Role of Women, Role of the Club in the Community, Identity, Culture, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Politics, Opening of Croke Park, Politics, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships
Interview Summary	<p>Páraic recalls the long tradition of GAA involvement in his family and the place of the GAA in life in Castleblaney. He describes the landscape of the GAA in Co. Monaghan and the fate of the Monaghan Senior Football team down through the years. He discusses his own playing career and the development and progression of his administrative career within the GAA which began at a young age and the many characters he has worked with along the way. He reflects on various positions he has held in the GAA and his approach to each role. He recalls life at St Macartan's school as a student, teacher and principal and reflects on the place of Gaelic games in the school. Finally he talks about his role as Director General of the GAA and the challenges ahead.</p> <p>00:00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:00:20 Páraic talks about his upbringing in Castleblaney, Co. Monaghan and about the place of the GAA in the town and in his family background including his father's role in GAA administration. Mentions Blackhill GAA club. Mentions his grandmother teaching Tommy and John McArdle in Shane Drumhawan National School. Tommy McArdle later working for RTÉ as a producer of <i>Glenroe</i>.</p> <p>00:02:20 Páraic's father's GAA administration career at a local, county and national level. Describes what he was like as person, mentions community involvement including St Vincent de Paul. Worked for Department of Social Welfare. His main interest being the GAA.</p> <p>00:05:08 Growing up in Castleblaney in the 1960s and 1970s. Mention McIlroys Furniture Factory as a large source of employment. Castleblaney Faughs. Going to matches in Ballybay, description of county finals and celebrations afterwards.</p>

	<p>00:06:40 Playing organised football for the first time in national school. Mentions Francey McAtavey. Mentions Magheraclune. Moving to a new house in Bree with a large back garden where kids gathered to play football.</p> <p>00:08:50 Talks about playing in St Mary's Park in Castleblaney and popularity of street leagues. Mentions Dickie Sullivan who was in charge of The Crescent street league team. Also mentions Brother Francis Duffy and a match with 'The Lane'.</p> <p>00:10:50 Memories of going to Monaghan games in the late 1950s. Joe Carroll and Mickey Forde being brought home from England to play for big matches. Success or lack thereof Monaghan from 1950s-70s. Supporting Down team of the 1960s.</p> <p>00:12:26 Going to All-Ireland Football finals. Memories of the first All-Ireland he attended in 1958 – Dublin v Derry. Supporting Down and watching them playing Offaly. Mentioned Liam McGuire who refereed that match and who was a Garda in Ballybay at the time.</p> <p>00:13:47 Being in Monaghan dressing rooms as a child because of his father's involvement, feeling part of it all. His father's enthusiasm despite Monaghan's lack of success. Talks about trips to Monaghan matches with his father and Christy 'Bud' Fisher.</p> <p>00:15:33 Memories of the first All-Ireland Final he attended. Supporting Derry. Listening to the semi-final, Derry and Kerry on the radio in his uncle's home in Tougher in Cork. Mentions Hugh Francis Gribben and Jim McKeever. Talks about 1959 and 1960s finals. Description of Croke Park at the time.</p> <p>00:18:19 Childhood heroes – Seán O'Neill, James McCartan and Paddy Doherty of Down team.</p> <p>00:19:30 Castleblaney very much a GAA town. Arrival of television and seeing FA Cup Finals and other soccer matches. Becoming aware of Tottenham Hotspurs who he continues to support. Places they played football. Going to The Lyric Cinema in Castleblaney. Watching <i>The Lone Ranger</i> on TV.</p> <p>00:21:44 His mother's interest and family interest in GAA. Mother from Rockcurry. Mentions Latin, Co. Monaghan and watching his uncle Liam McCormack playing football.</p> <p>00:22:58 Attending St Mary's Secondary School in Castleblaney. Mentions Jim Harmon who was a teacher in the</p>
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	<p>school. Transferring to St McCartans as a day boy. Getting a lift to school every day with McCartan McCormack.</p> <p>00:24:34 Playing football in St Mary's with Gerry Finlay but not so much at St Macartans. Canon Terry Molloy was principal of the school at the time. Strong GAA tradition in the school, Fr Enda McCormack responsible for teams there at the time. Continuing to play underage with Castleblaney Faughs. Prize being sponsored by Player Wills Cigarette Factory.</p> <p>00:26:58 Winning Minor Championship when he was seventeen. Playing on county minor football team. Mentions North Eastern Minor League. Playing against Louth in Ballybay. Story about playing Ballybay in the county final the following year in Carrickmacross. Mentions Gene Coleman who refereed the match.</p> <p>00:29:50 Playing football in UCD and playing senior football with Castleblaney Faughs. Returning to teach in Macartans after UCD. Switching his focus from playing to administration.</p> <p>00:30:56 Studying history in UCD. Mentions Earlsfort Terrace and Belfield. Mentions Garrett Fitzgerald. Studying at home for exams. Meeting Fr Enda McCormack and getting job in St Macartans. Attending NUI Maynooth by night to get his H-Dip. Buying his first car and starting to go out with his now wife Vera. Becoming assistant secretary of Monaghan county board the same year.</p> <p>00:35:10 Story about going to an AGM of Castleblaney Faughs when he was 12 years old. Mentions Liam McGrath, then chairman of the club. Outlines his administrative roles in club and county, including coaching juvenile teams.</p> <p>00:37:47 Description of Monaghan county board meetings in the 1970s. Meetings held at Riverdale Hotel Ballybay. Mentions Paddy McGlynn, Frank O'Brien and Mickey McGuinness. Role of county chairman of the time. His father's approach to being county chairman. Talks about 'the ban' mentality. Meetings of the executive at McGrains.</p> <p>00:43:52 What appealed to him about GAA administration. Importance of education in his household. Influence of his father. Administrative roles he held in his twenties. Mentions Seán McCague and the beginning of a successful period in Monaghan football in 1978. Starting to film matches to analyse them with the team afterwards. Winning Ulster Championship in 1979.</p>
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	<p>00:48:24 Working with Seán McCague. Castleblaney and Scotstown involvement in that 1979 team. Story about Fergus Caulfield and the 1979 Ulster Final against Donegal. Charismatic leaders in the GAA. Description of Ballybay GAA grounds.</p> <p>00:51:26 Impact of 1979 Ulster Championship. Mentions 'Jap' Finlay and the celebrations. Support for GAA in Monaghan. Being defeated by Kerry in the All-Ireland semi-final. Winning Ulster again in 1985 and 1988. Landscape of GAA in Co. Monaghan.</p> <p>00:54:38 Description of role of PRO in the 1970s. Mentions technology of the time. Tells story about Eamon Tavey. Talks about putting programmes and yearbooks together. Winning McNamee Award for Monaghan Yearbook.</p> <p>00:57:58 Teaching and being a GAA administrator. Getting married to his wife Vera in 1976. Managing his time. Vera's athletics career, Páraic's involvement in starting Faugh's Athletics club.</p> <p>00:59:43 Being involved in football teams in St Macartans. Place of football and handball in the school. Mentions Dr Enda McCormack's interest in GAA. Relationship between teaching and coaching.</p> <p>1:02:20 Progression in his administration career. Mentions Seán McCague, Peter Sherry and Tom Reilly. Living in Scotstown parish and travelling to meetings together. Standing for chairman of Monaghan county board in 1981. Being elected unopposed the following year in 1982. Seán McCague returning as manager of the Monaghan senior football team again in 1983 – good era for Monaghan football. Mentions selectors Paddy McKernan, Seán Hughes and Paddy Tavey.</p> <p>1:06:43 Michael Burns secretary when Páraic was chairman. Changes they introduced, modernisation of structures. His father being on the committee when he was chairman. Winning in the National League in 1985. Death of his father.</p> <p>1:08:02 Challenges and ambitions when he became chairman of Monaghan county board. Mentions discipline. Stories about Barney McDonald and Seamus Sherry, his brother-in-law. Success of Monaghan team at the time making it easier to introduce change and modernise. Mentions Gerry McCague, Pat McHugh and other people who were encouraged to get involved. Demands of the job, family life. Stepping down as</p>
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	<p>chairperson</p> <p>1:12:35 The impact of 'The Troubles' on GAA activity. Travelling to matches, going through checkpoints, buses being searched. Monaghan and students in Macartan's being very Republican. Mentions Hunger Strikes and H-Blocks.</p> <p>1:17:21 Doing a Masters in Educational Management in the University of Ulster at Jordanstown. Stepped back a bit from GAA during that. Children getting involved in playing. Getting involved in juvenile section of Scotstown. Coaching teams in Emyvale. Becoming principal of St Macartans in 1996. The nineties were all about juvenile and school GAA activity rather than county board activity.</p> <p>1:19:40 Coaching juvenile teams in Scotstown. Mentions Darren Hughes. Chairman of juvenile club in Scotstown in 1990s.</p> <p>1:20:48 Seán McCague becomes president of the GAA in 2000. Asked Páraic to become Chairman of the Games Administration Committee – mentions Frank Murphy and Joe McDonagh.</p> <p>1:22:10 First impressions of the GAA at a national level. Changes in structures over the years. Going to congress in Galway when Seán was elected. Issues that they faced on Games Administration Committee. Challenges and excitement of the role. Balancing being principal of Macartans and being in GAA role. Story about Peadar O'Brien, a journalist with The Sun.</p> <p>1:27:36 Story about Donal Keenan putting him onto a Communications Committee in the 1970s.</p> <p>1:27:08 Approach to chairing Games Administration Committee. Aspects of the job that appealed to him. Moving on to Coaching and Games Committee under Seán Kelly. How often committees met in Croke Park. The case of Brian O'Meara.</p> <p>1:31:02 Relationship with the media. Working to find the best decision in all cases.</p> <p>1:33:10 Nickey Brennan came in as President and invited him to get involved in National Audit Committee in 2006. Decision to leave his job as principal of St Macartans and to take the job of Player Welfare Manager. One year later succeeded Liam Mulvihill as Director General. Building relationships with the GPA.</p>
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	<p>1:37:07 Approaching working with the GPA. Building a personal relationship with Dessie Farrell. Role of Nickey Brennan in relationship building.</p> <p>1:38:38 Cork strikes in his first two weeks as Director General. Kieran Mulvey and Páraic brought in to help to settle the row. Relationship with Dónal Óg Cusack.</p> <p>1:39:23 Being approached to run for GAA president. The reasons he was not interested in that role.</p> <p>1:40:31 How he became Director General of the GAA. Encouragement from Nickey Brennan and Liam Mulvihill. Mentions International Rules competition meeting in Paris. Recruitment process. Mentions MERC Recruitment. Last interview was conducted by Nickey Brennan, Con Hogan and Seán Silke. Benefit of having been principal of Macartans, transferable skills.</p> <p>1:45:48 Approach to role of Director General and relationship with presidents. Breadth and challenges of the role. Mentions recession. Changing nature of the role. Issues that his role faces now that weren't there in the past.</p> <p>1:49:47 Dealing with Cork crisis as soon as he came into the role. Positives and learning that came out of that process. Working with Kieran Mulvey and Dónal Óg Cusack. Process of negotiations.</p> <p>1:51:47 Enjoyable and inspirational aspects of the job. Story about going to a school in Maghera and meeting groups from overseas.</p> <p>1:52:44 Queen Elizabeth II visit to Croke Park. Challenges, planning, logistics, the day. Mentions Mary and Martin McAleese. Meeting with the chairman and secretary of Ulster Council. Symbolic importance of the visit. Negative reaction. Visiting executive committee of Armagh County Board.</p> <p>1:57:05 Meeting foreign dignitaries in his role including Barack Obama and the President of China.</p> <p>1:58:03 Consultative and team focussed approach in role. Reflection on his experience in the role so far and on where the GAA is in light of the economic challenges it faces. Talks about keeping the association strong – mentions attendance at games, numbers of clubs and teams, cúl camps and upcoming infrastructural projects in Belfast and Cork.</p> <p>2:00:42 Frustrations with role and what motivates and excites him in the role. Mentions Monaghan matches and Dublin</p>
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	<p>winning the All-Ireland Football Final in 2011. Also mentions Kilkenny v Galway All-Ireland in 2012. Being a Macartan's supporter and a Castleblaney Faughs supporter.</p> <p>2:04:30 His son playing for Monaghan. The GAA and family life. Living and working in Dublin and being away from home.</p> <p>2:06:00 His future in the role.</p>
Involvement in GAA	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): Ard-Stiúrthóir CLG</p>
Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)	<p>Played underage football with Castleblaney Faughs GAA. Won U16 and minor county championship (1968). Played minor football for Monaghan. Stopped playing in his mid-20s.</p>
Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)	<p>1970s – 90s: Assistant Secretary of Castleblaney Faughs; Secretary of Castleblaney Faughs; Assistant Secretary of Monaghan Minor Board; Secretary of Monaghan Minor Board; Youth Officer of Monaghan County Board; Vice-Chairman of Monaghan County Board; PRO Monaghan County Board; Chairman of Monaghan County Board; Ulster Council Representative; Selector for Monaghan Senior Football team (1983-87).</p> <p>Chairman of Games Administration Committee (2000-2003); International Tour Manager in Australia (2001); Chairman of Coaching and Games Development Committee (2003-2006); Chairman of National Audit Committee (2006); Secretary of Player Burn-out Task Force; Player Welfare Officer (2007-2008). Ard Stiúrthóir (2008 -)</p>
Format	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual</p>
Duration	<p>Length of Interview: 2:06:17</p>
Language	<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: Regina Fitzpatrick

Date: 8th August 2013