

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	9 th Nov 2010
Location	Dominic's home, near Wexford Town.
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Dominic Williams
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1938 Home County: Wexford
Education	Primary: Taghmon NS, Co. Wexford Secondary: Good Counsel College, New Ross, Co. Wexford Third Level: Rosses Banking College, Dublin
Family	Siblings: 3 brothers & 1 sister Current Family if Different: Wife (Catherine), 3 daughters & 1 son
Club(s)	Taghmon-Camross GAA [Wexford]; Crokes Hurling Club [Dublin]
Occupation	Supermarket owner
Parents' Occupation	Bakery/ Small Grocery Shop Owners
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	Collectors Club; Founding member of Taghmon Badminton Club

REFERENCE NO. WX/1/22

Date of Report	27 th June 2012
Period Covered	1887 - 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Wexford, Dublin
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Education, Media, Emigration, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Childhood, Impact on Life, Challenges, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Purchase of Grounds
Interview Summary	<p>Dominic reflects on his passion for the GAA and sport in general. He recalls trips to Croke Park as a child and as an adult living in Dublin, and he describes his own experience playing in Croke Park with Good Counsel College in 1954. He outlines the history of Taghmon GAA Club and discusses his roles of secretary and treasurer of the club, county board rep, and county chairman of Bord na nÓg Loch Garman. He ponders the impact the founding of Bord na nÓg had on underage teams in Wexford. He also describes the work involved in compiling his book about the statistical history of GAA in the county.</p> <p>00:25 Describes how, in 2008, he published a book about the statistical history of Wexford GAA, from 1887 to 2008. Discusses the book launch, with Jason Ryan, manager of Wexford senior football team.</p> <p>00:51 From the speech he gave at the launch, recounts his third trip to Croke Park in 1951 for the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final between Wexford and Tipperary. Travelling in back of a Bedford van with five other passengers. Discomfort of journey. Pitstop for many Wexford supporters at Glen of the Downs for ham sandwiches and flask of tea. No sideline tickets left. Watching from corner stand. Recalls an incident between Tipperary goalkeeper Tony Reddin and Wexford's Nicky Rackard and Tony Brennan in the Tipperary goal. Recounts another incident involving Tipperary's John Doyle and Mickey "The Rattler" Byrne. Mentions notorious defenders Fowler McNerney of Clare and Diamond Hayden of Kilkenny. Also Paddy Kehoe of Wexford and Tom Doyle, only survivors of the 1945 provincial Wexford winning football side.</p>

	<p>07:36 Rural localities lacking electricity. Few radios, no television. Valve-operated wireless, powered by big batteries. Mentions neighbour Mrs Brady, who owned first wireless in the village. Recounts listening in packed Brady house to the broadcast of the All-Ireland Football Final in 1948 between Cavan and Kerry, broadcast by Micheal O'Hehir from the Polo Grounds in New York.</p> <p>09:36 Discusses the role of the carrier pigeon. In the late 40s and 50s, GAA games seldom broadcast on Raidió Éireann. Mentions Seán Óg O'Ceallacháin who announced the first news of away games on Sunday night. Wexford supporters sending carrier pigeons from Croke Park at half-time and full-time home with scores. Recalls a neighbour cycling nine miles to Wexford to meet the pigeon and nine miles home to bring news to locals.</p> <p>10:39 Mentions those involved in his book: his brother Tomás, Seamus Seery, John Furlong, Gerry Ford, Michael Dempsey, and Jim Byrne.</p> <p>12:04 Describes his family having an electrical charger in the garage to charge the wireless batteries. Selling transistor radios in GEC, then installing them in farmyards and houses in the locality. Busy around the time of a big game. Turning sound down to save the battery. Telegrams the only other form of communication.</p> <p>14:42 Recalls electricity coming to Taghmon in the late 1940s. Family had bakery so early adopters of electricity. His father's family running the bakery, some of them involved in the War of Independence. Mentions his aunt May O'Rourke, a prominent figure in the war. His father serving two terms in Portlaoise Prison. His aunt helping men on the run to hide in the bakery. Recounts May's life. Mentions her first husband Seán MacLoughlin, second husband Eddie O'Rourke, her involvement in Cumann na mBan. Imprisonment in England for smuggling letters in and out of jail. Mentions President Sean T. O'Kelly marrying a woman from Taghmon. Also Nell Ryan, sister of O'Kelly's wife, a major figure in local Fianna Fáil party.</p> <p>20:14 Discusses his father's involvement in the GAA. Bringing the children to matches. Recalls his first trip to Croke Park in 1949, Wexford's strength at football in the 1940s. Wexford being beaten by Meath in the final of the 1798 Commemorative Tournament in Croke Park that year. Mentions Wexford's Spider Kelly scoring a goal. Travelling to matches by bakery van. Excitement of trip to Dublin. Wearing</p>
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	<p>Sunday clothes, going to Mass beforehand.</p> <p>22:20 Recalls his first time playing in Croke Park in 1954. Boarding in Good Counsel College, New Ross. Playing before the National Football League final. Huge excitement. Recalls the bus journey, stopping for meal in Augustinian retreat house on the way. Scoring a goal and a point. Mentions Father Hackett, highly involved in the GAA. Recalls celebrations on their return to the school.</p> <p>25:34 Outlines the history of the GAA in Taghmon. Nicky Rackard starting Rackard League in national schools in the 1950s. No underage GAA games in schools until Bord na nÓg Loch Garman founded in 1970. Few rural clubs had teams, apart from Horeswood which had a strong hurling tradition. Explains when minor and juvenile levels were introduced. Recalls incident involving an overage player. Mentions story he heard from Tim Holland about playing minor football aged 23. Disregard in the GAA at the time for rules about age.</p> <p>29:01 Explains that Taghmon GAA Club comprises four areas: Trinity, Tomcoole, Camross, Taghmon. Taghmon's strength in football. Taghmon winning first title in 1915 with Trinity Stars. Trinity Stars senior team dating back to 1887. Popularity of handball in the area. Mentions Sergeant Sean O'Connell, who built a handball alley in the Taghmon village in the 1950s. Mentions John Doyle, of Taghmon, and John Ryan who brought many handball titles to Wexford. Also the Quigleys, Seamus McLoughlin, Pat Murphy winning underage handball titles. Strength of camogie in the parish. Mary Sinnott playing camogie for Wexford, also strong at badminton and tennis. Competing against men in badminton. Playing badminton and hockey for Ireland.</p> <p>32:38 Discusses building community centre in Taghmon in the late 1970s with badminton courts. The resulting strength of badminton in the parish.</p> <p>33:06 Reflects on Gaelic games in national school. Mentions John Kelly and John Ryan, teachers involved in football. Playing indoor parish leagues. Playing football in Mrs Stafford's field beside the school.</p> <p>34:30 Recalls watching Taghmon playing Ballinglen in the county junior final in 1954. He was a mascot.</p> <p>35:08 Describes attending Ring College in Dungarvan for a year aged 12 as a boarder in 1950. Playing hurling in Ring. Prioritised learning piano at the expense of hurling. Recalls</p>
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	<p>practising hurling with his brother in the yard of the bakery. Describes Munster versus Leinster hurling match in Ring College, scoring goals for his team. Strict rules about speaking Irish all the time. Mentions teacher Maurice Bowler.</p> <p>38:20 Outlines the daily routine of Ring College. Céilís at weekends. Strict bean an tí.</p> <p>39:30 Recalls the harshness of his schooldays at Good Counsel College, New Ross. Mentions lay teachers Toby Kavanagh, Dan O'Mahony, Maurice Foley, and John Moore. Fear of being beaten by teachers. His health problems today due to violence in school then. Failing inter cert the first year. Leaving school after fifth year to study for the bank. Doing farmwork for the college in Irishtown. His unhappiness in Good Counsel College. Students from all over Ireland in the school.</p> <p>44:42 Recalls going to Dublin and studying at Rosses College in St. Stephen's Green for a year. Getting a job in Dublin with General Electric Company in Trinity Street. Playing hurling with Kilmacud Crokes Club while he was at Rosses College. Matches in the Phoenix Park. No training. No dressing rooms or pitches.</p> <p>46:12 Discusses the strength of St. Vincent's GAA Club's football team in Dublin at the time. Living in Donneycarney with his aunt Helena Rowson. Recalls various trips to Croke Park while he lived in Dublin. Cheap entrance fee to Hill 16 for students for club matches. Also matches in O'Toole's Park in Kimmage. Attending soccer matches. The first League of Ireland soccer match he attended in Tolka Park between Bohemians and Drumcondra. Mentions Alan Kelly playing for Drumcondra. Lists various soccer clubs he visited.</p> <p>48:09 Explains how GAA members avoided the foreign games ban.</p> <p>48:53 Compares the GAA scene to the soccer scene. His interest in every kind of sport. His attendance at more soccer matches than GAA matches. Big crowds, great atmosphere. Explains the lack of Wexford soccer team. Mentions Waterford soccer players of the 1950s: Jack and Denny Fitzgerald, Paddy Cole, Alfie Hale, Eddie McElhiney.</p> <p>50:35 Explains that the foreign games ban became an issue when he was in Wexford in the 1960s and 1970s. Some traditional members of the GAA administration wanting to keep the ban. His own views of the ban.</p>
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	<p>51:50 Recalls returning to Taghmon in 1960. Involvement as secretary and treasurer of the senior club, county board rep. Also involved in badminton in the 1970s. Weak underage team, his involvement with them after the founding of Bord na nÓg. Their flourishing. His satisfaction with the Under-12 team. Organising committee to get children involved in underage GAA. Strong GAA families in rural areas. Starting parish leagues, which were very successful. Mostly football initially.</p> <p>54:46 Reflects on huge impact of formation of Bord na nÓg. Rackard League picking teams by school, Bord na nÓg according to parish of birth. Massive success of Bord na nÓg. Involvement of parents, challenge of getting non-parents involved. His views on the amount of awards and presentations nowadays. Mentions Ger Doyle becoming chairman, inquiring about bad intercounty record at underage level. His views that five divisions lead to poor standards. Discusses poor record of Wexford at minor football level.</p> <p>59:13 Describes the prioritisation of hurling at county level.</p> <p>01:00:08 Explains that since the Wexford hurling team dominated in the 1950s, emphasis has been on hurling. His view of the failure of the A.S.H. Project, introduced to train underage hurlers. Lack of success of hurling in the New Ross district. Importance of focussing on players with hurling skills in fewer divisions.</p> <p>01:02:07 Recalls his time as county chairman of Bord na Óg in the 1970s. Had been Ross district secretary for years. His strong feelings about disciplining teams which played over-age players. Explains how clubs get around the age limits.</p> <p>01:04:47 Discusses the significance of the GAA in people's lives. The narrow view of club members, disinterest in the county's performance. Parental involvement only when their children are playing. Negative reactions from parents whose children are not picked for teams. Cliques in GAA clubs.</p> <p>01:08:32 Describes development of Taghmon GAA Club. First pitch outside village. Mentions Dermot Traynor, who sold the club some land beside the pitch in 1950s. Concerns of county board a soccer pitch would be built on adjacent land. Extended pitch and built small dressing room. In 1979, building a community centre. Explains the lack of community spirit at the time. Mentions Noel O'Gorman, who handpicked committee members with expertise to build community centre. GAA taking over ownership of centre, successful.</p>
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	<p>01:13:17 Reflects on the impact of emigration on the club in the 60s and 70s. Wexford players who went to London joined Father Murphy's club there.</p> <p>01: 13:59 Refers to the large expenses of clubs nowadays. Discusses the success of Taghmon's football teams and lack of success of underage hurling teams. Mentions former club chairman Denis Nolan, who prioritised selection of underage committees at AGMs. Pros and cons of having separate underage committee in every club.</p> <p>01:17:05 Describes finance as the biggest change he's witnessed in clubs: insurance, entry fees, major expense of running clubs. Also the pressure players are under.</p> <p>01:18:03 Describes his involvement with the Wexford minor team until the late 1980s. Pressure of working in bakery as well. Working long hours. Benefits to his business of his involvement in the GAA. Mentions bingo as a major fundraiser for the club.</p> <p>01:19:54 Reflects on his involvement in the county teams. Recalls the Leinster Council introduced an Under-14 Leinster Championship in hurling and football in the early 1970s. Picking panels of players in the autumn, trials early in the year. Not much training then. Mentions several good players at Under-14 level who went on to play senior football: in Taghmon, the O'Gorman brothers John, Bernard, and Padraig. John O'Gorman's record for representing Wexford. Also George O'Connor, Billy Byrne, Seamus Fitzhenry, Eamon Clary, Brendan Murphy.</p> <p>01:22:45 Describes small amount of training at Under-14 level, more training at minor level. Training consisting of matches. Mentions Seamus Keevans who started a Southeastern League for Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny, and Waterford.</p> <p>01:23:56 Outlines his approach to managing young teams: knowing the players' different capabilities and weaknesses, looking for leadership qualities in players. Explains that the Wexford minor selectors have not been chosen for next year, the lack of organisation compared to his time. His disillusionment with this approach.</p> <p>01:26:21 Describes starting the Under-12 team in Taghmon as the highlight of his career. Interaction with the players. Mentions Fr. Harry Sinnott, a distant relation of Angela McCormack. Recounts an Under-12 match with James O'Connor of Duffry Rovers, who went on to play hurling for</p>
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REFERENCE NO. WX/1/22

	<p>Wexford at senior level. Brendan Doyle of Taghmon. Mentions Bill Franey of Duffry Rovers who was selector with Dominic.</p> <p>01:29:45 Explains how his involvement in compiling statistics for his brother's book <i>With Heart In Hand</i>, the story of Wexford winning the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final in 1996, evolved into writing his own book. Outlines the research involved. Assistance from local newspapers, library in Enniscorthy. Pressure of publishing the book before Christmas.</p> <p>01:33:10 Discusses his current research of the 2009-2010 season. Explains which matches he includes. Ponders his interest in sport of all kinds. Mentions his son, Kevin, who is involved in the sports department in Abbey Travel, owned by Conor and Neil Horgan. Abbey Travel's nomination by the FAI as their official travel agent. Dominic's own travel around the world for soccer matches. Explains how his love of soccer prevented his further participation in GAA administration. His love of international matches and meeting journalists. Mentions Tony O'Donoghue, George Hamilton, Eoin Hand.</p> <p>01:37:22 Discusses his son's love of sport. Describes his own love of horse-racing. Going to Cheltenham.</p> <p>01:38:10 Mentions the match in Croke Park with Good Counsel College as the highlight of his GAA involvement. Biggest disappointment was the 1954 All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final in Croke Park, in which Wexford lost to Cork. Mentions Nicky Rackard scoring a record seven points and seven goals in the semi-final with Antrim. Wexford's Nick O'Donnell breaking his collar bone. Bobby Rackard's great performance.</p> <p>01:41:05 Reflects on what the GAA means to his life. Recounts a family holiday in France in which he managed to tune in a broadcast of Wexford playing Kilkenny in the Leinster Final. Mentions Micheal O'Hehir commentating. Recalls travelling to England in 1966 to watch the Soccer World Cup, Leinster playing Kilkenny in the Leinster Final, listening to portable radio in toilet of digs.</p> <p>01:43:49 Describes his trip to the London for the World Cup. Pat Lubey and Con Dineen from Taghmon who met him in London.</p> <p>01:44:34 Discusses his optimism for the future of the GAA. Frustration with the organisation's reluctance to change. Lack of qualification of umpires. Issue of time-keeping, referees</p>
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REFERENCE NO. WX/1/22

	<p>have too much responsibility.</p> <p>01:46:42 Discusses the necessity of the GPA. His happiness they have come on board. His disinterest in paying players, frustration with what has happened with English soccer clubs.</p> <p>01:47:43 Recounts a humorous incident in the old Hogan Stand in Croke Park involving an ice cream cone. Recalls another incident in which he had his pocket picked during a match in Croke Park. Recalls different ways of sneaking into Croke Park when the gates were shut.</p> <p>01:50:12 Discusses the difference in the atmosphere in Croke Park in the past. Less money, less other distractions. Scores of supporters in the back of lorries travelling to matches. Recounts his trip to Germany for the European Championship in 1988, when Wexford beat Kilkenny in the Leinster Hurling Final, travelling home early to see the match.</p> <p>01:52:34 Describes how Kilkenny was Wexford's main rival. His views on the inadequate management of the hurling team in the 1980s and 1990s, despite talented players. Current lack of talented players.</p> <p>01:53:58 His pessimism about the future of Wexford GAA. Unfair structures: ineffectuality of the provincial system, favouring stronger counties. His views on how to upgrade the National Football League: creating three divisions and extending the league into summer, boosting the number of games, getting major sponsorship, picking an all-star team from all three divisions to give teams from the lower divisions a chance. Explains failure of hurling structures.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>✓ Supporter ✓ Player ✓ Manager ✓ Coach ✓ Steward</p> <p>✓ Chairperson ✓ Committee Member ✓ Grounds-person</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer ✓ 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 age 16yrs – 30yrs at all levels; Won Leinster Junior Hurling Colleges (1954)</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Managed Wexford U14 Football team (3/4 years); Managed Wexford Minor Football team; Chairman of Wexford Bord na nÓg (1978-79); District Secretary of Bord na nÓg (7/8 years); Secretary of Taghmon-Camross Senior Football Club; Taghmon-Camross delegate to Wexford County Board in the</p>

REFERENCE NO. WX/1/22

	1970s and early 1980s
Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:58:43
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