

**GAA Oral History Project**  
**Interview Report Form**

<b>Name of Interviewer</b>	Jimmy Smyth
<b>Date of Interview</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2011
<b>Location</b>	Brian's home, near Lurgan.
<b>Name of Interviewee</b> (Maiden name / Nickname)	Brian Seeley
<b><u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u></b>	
<b>Gender</b>	Male
<b>Born</b>	<b>Year Born:</b> 1933 <b>Home County:</b> Armagh
<b>Education</b>	<b>Primary:</b> St. Peter's Primary School, Lurgan
<b>Family</b>	<b>Siblings:</b> 3 Brothers-Rory, Jim, Leo
<b>Club(s)</b>	Clan na Gael GAA [Armagh]
<b>Occupation</b>	Painter
<b>Parents' Occupation</b>	N/A
<b>Religion</b>	Roman Catholic
<b>Political Affiliation / Membership</b>	N/A
<b>Other Club/Society Membership(s)</b>	N/A

<b>Date of Report</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> August 2012
<b>Period Covered</b>	1949-2010
<b>Counties/Countries Covered</b>	Armagh, Roscommon, Kerry, Dublin, Cork, Great Britain, Scotland.
<b>Key Themes Covered</b>	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Celebrations, Commiserations, Education, Religion, Media, Involvement in GAA abroad, Role of Clergy, Role of Teachers, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, GAA Abroad, Identity, Rivalries, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Retirement
<b>Interview Summary</b>	<p>Brian Seeley, a Clan na Gael clubman and former Armagh footballer, discusses his early years playing underage Gaelic football with club and county and his progression to playing senior county final, up to and including the 1953 All-Ireland final. He recalls training with Armagh, the famous missed penalty by Bill McCory in the 1953 final; he also concedes that Kerry were the superior team in 1953 and outlines his reasons for giving up inter-county football. Thereafter, the focus is predominantly on Seeley's involvement with the Clan na Gael club in Lurgan. It is a focus which enables Seeley to discuss not only his own personal experiences, but the achievements of the Clan na Gael club and competitiveness of the Armagh and Ulster club scene between the 1950s and 70s. Seeley took over managing the club team in 1972 and led them to three successive Ulster club titles, and these victories and the subsequent All-Ireland club championship defeats are recalled in some detail. Towards the end of the interview, Seeley is drawn back to his early GAA experiences and forward again to the Armagh and Ulster club scene in the 1970s, which contrasts favourably with that which exists in 2011.</p> <p>00:00:05 Brian Seeley is introduced as someone whose contribution as player and manager to Clan na Gael football was 'unsurpassed'.</p> <p>00:00:30 Discusses playing county minor football in 1950. Mentions names of those he played alongside.</p> <p>00:01:35 Winning first Ulster championship medal in 1951. Discusses protest by Cavan against Fermanagh in</p>

	<p>championship, returning to play Cavan and defeating them. Beating Kerry and losing to Roscommon in final.</p> <p>00:03:02 Refers to being captain of county minor team in 1951.</p> <p>00:03:37 Talks about Meath playing Cavan in All-Ireland senior final, 1951.</p> <p>00:04:15 Mentions winning Ulster senior final in 1953, defeating star-studded Cavan team. Refers to the profile of Cavan football at the time.</p> <p>00:04:55 Tells a story about the different treatment of minors and seniors in the early 1950s.</p> <p>00:05:40 Recalls beating Roscommon in All-Ireland semi-final replay and meeting Kerry in All-Ireland final. Discussion about the 'well known' names in the Armagh team.</p> <p>00:06:29 The size of the crowd which attended the 1953 All-Ireland final – tells story of hearing steel gates into Croke Park break.</p> <p>00:07:27 Talks about Bill McCorry, later his brother-in-law, missing a penalty in the All-Ireland final. Mentions McCorry is 'more famous for missing a penalty than for playing' and recalls that McCorry 'trained' to take penalty kicks.</p> <p>00:08:08 Concedes that Kerry were the 'best team' in 1953 and recalls the physicality of Kerry teams in the tackle. Recalls incident where the 'breath was knocked clear' out of him.</p> <p>00:09:12 Discusses giving up his inter-county career – falling out with Fr. McKnight, Armagh team selector, over a decision to go to the pictures with his girlfriend in 1953. Recalls row with F. McKnight and his subsequent decision to opt out of inter-county football in favour of club football.</p> <p>00:10:54 Discusses the reaction to his decision to quit and his belief that players from South Armagh got 'more leverage' from county team management than they did.</p> <p>00:11:36 Interviewer, Jimmy Smyth, whose inter-county career began in 1968 concurs with the assessment that south Armagh players received preferential treatment.</p> <p>00:12:09 Recalls training and having to row to Coney Island. Tells story of falling asleep after getting to island and receiving a 'dressing down' afterwards.</p>
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	<p>00:12:57 Talks about playing for the county junior team and being beaten by Cork in All-Ireland semi-final.</p> <p>00:13:45 Reflects on playing record with club and county – mentions the ‘gold medals’ won by Clan na Gael which were ‘sneaked from the Free State.’ Discusses winning the first unofficial Ulster club championship in 1949, defeating St. John’s from Belfast – refers to the 10 busloads who travelled to game.</p> <p>00:14:40 Discusses the crowds, including women and children, who attended games in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Mentions that ‘Peter’s’ always brought a band with them.</p> <p>00:16:07 Story about winning unofficial Ulster championship in 1949 and the presentation of medals.</p> <p>00:17:00 Winning the Armagh championship in 1949, aged 16, beating Crossmaglen in final. Interviewer mentions the opening of Davitt Park in 1947 and the club playing in Gaelic Park previously.</p> <p>00:17:47 Profile of Armagh Harps in Ulster football at the time – refers to the players who played with them, including Jack Broughton, Dessie Slevin, Matt Grimley, Pat Campbell.</p> <p>00:18:24 Recalls Michael O’Hehir commentating on match and describing Armagh’s Sean Quinn as a ‘rubber ball’ – Quinn, he notes, was in the ‘Free State’ army at the time. Tells a story about a training session with Armagh when he received a hit from Quinn and being ‘knocked’ into water.</p> <p>00:19:30 Recalls the collective training regime: beginning with mass every morning; drills to practice catching a ball that was tied to a cross-bar; the quality of food etc. Seeley talks about working on a railway and the GAA getting him ‘off’ to go collective training; he mentions also the GAA’s contribution to the railways.</p> <p>00:21:26 Club record with Clan na Gael: winning championship in 1949 and 1954. Discusses decline in Clans thereafter.</p> <p>00:22:19 Reflects on his personal relationships, romance and football. Mentions that McCorry, Bill McStay, Jackie King and himself married four sisters.</p> <p>00:24:33 Discusses the failure of Clan na Gael to fulfil promise and acknowledges the strength of other clubs in Armagh in the mid to late 1950s, including Crossmaglen, Clan</p>
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	<p>Eireann, St. Peter's. Mentions that 'Clans' were the first team out of Lurgan to 'win a championship on their own.'</p> <p>00:28:08 Jimmy Smyth recalls beating Clann in the county final and celebrating around town on a lorry, stopping outside Brian Seeley's house – it was Clan na Gael's first win since 1953.</p> <p>00:29:03 Recalls being asked by his grandfather about the best ever Clan na Gael team and responding the team of the 1970s. Considers the relative merits of club players from different generations.</p> <p>00:30:44 Ardboe beating Clan na Gael in 1968 in the 'Battle of Coalisland' resulting in suspension for 6 months. Jimmy Smyth recalls the success of the club's 'B' while the 'A' team players were suspended.</p> <p>00:31:40 Beating Crossmaglen in 1969 and the implementation of the rule 'if you didn't train, you didn't play'.</p> <p>00:33:12 Tells story of playing Ardboe in the Armagh Grounds tournament in the wake of the 'Battle of Coalisland.'</p> <p>00:34:34 Jimmy Smyth speaks about a 'new era for the Clans' and list off their achievement in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Smyth and Seeley discusses losing to Bellaghy in 1971 Ulster final and the Derry side going on to win the All-Ireland.</p> <p>00:35:28 Discusses the quality of club teams in Ulster in the early 1970s – mention is made of playing Bryansford on numerous occasions.</p> <p>00:36:50 Talks about becoming club manager in 1971 – his appointment and retirement from senior club football.</p> <p>00:37:48 Jimmy Smyth outlines the club's record in the early 1970s: winning Ulster championship in 1972, 1973 and 1974.</p> <p>[00:38:08 Interview is interrupted by telephone call]</p> <p>00:38:32 Reflects on playing a brilliant match against St. John's Belfast in an Ulster club final – with future Northern Ireland soccer player in the St. John's team.</p> <p>00:39:15 Comments on the quality of teams in Ulster at the time; contrasts it with the lack of competition faced by Crossmaglen at the time of the interview (Crossmaglen were then the dominant club football team in Armagh and Ulster).</p> <p>00:40:13 Jimmy Smyth remarks that Clan na Gael were the</p>
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	<p>first team to win three Ulster club titles in a row.</p> <p>00:40:24 Jimmy Smyth mentions losing All-Ireland semi-final to Dublin's St. Vincent's, beating UCC All-Ireland semi-final the following year, a college comprised of leading Kerry and Cork footballers, including future Irish rugby international, Moss Keane; Losing to UCD in All-Ireland club final.</p> <p>00:40:50 Brian Seeley regrets not winning an All-Ireland club title and reflects on the quality and style of football played by Clan na Gael teams.</p> <p>00:41:45 Comments on the change in qualification criteria to College teams.</p> <p>00:42:08 Drawing with Nemo Rangers in the Mardyke – Seeley and Smyth reflect on a missed opportunity and the decisions that were taken on the pitch and on the line.</p> <p>00:43:20 Recalling Clan na Gael trips to Glasgow.</p> <p>00:43:55 Jimmy Smyth mentions that club's return to Ulster final in 1976 and losing. Smyth and Seeley reflect on a glorious period for the 'Clans' and the tendency to remember the games that were lost.</p> <p>00:45:00 Reflection on the intensity of club rivalries in Armagh during the 1970s.</p> <p>00:45:50 Jimmy Smyth comments on the similarities with later Crossmaglen team – 'People loved to watch...loved to beat us'.</p> <p>00:46:00 Brian Seeley talks about the following the Clan na Gael club team had in the 1970s and comments on the lack of opposition to Crossmaglen in Ulster in the 2000s. Remarks on the fear of Crossmaglen among other teams in Armagh.</p> <p>00:46:54 Discusses club record in the late 1970s, the end of Seeley's tenure as manager c 1978 and Smyth taking over in 1980.</p> <p>00:48:00 Seeley reflects on over three decades involved with Clan na Gael teams – starting as a player aged 10 and the influence of Gerry Kelly, a teacher in St. Peter's school, who took over 'Clan Óg'.</p> <p>00:48:34 Gerry Kelly was a brother of Hugh Kelly, who, Jimmy Smyth explains, was his wife's Uncle and played for Glenavon, Belfast Celtic and Northern Ireland and also for the 'Clans'. Tells story of why Hugh Kelly finished playing for Clan na Gael when his suit got soaked after hanging under a hole</p>
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**REFERENCE NO. AR/1/93**

	<p>in the roof.</p> <p>00:49:18 Seeley mentions that Hugh Kelly followed the club 'everywhere' in the early 1970s. Mentions also his reputation as a singer and story teller.</p> <p>00:49:49 Seeley returns to his underage story when an individual named Harry McGarry took over Clan Óg, which was made up of schoolboys, before progressing to minor. Recalls being rewarded with 6 pence and a mineral in the school if they won.</p> <p>00:50:21 Tells story of Belgian soldiers being moved out of football field.</p> <p>00:50:50 Recalls being taken on knee in the car to matches as a child. Seeley and Smyth exchanges stories of travelling to games, including on the handlebars of bicycles.</p> <p>00:52:02 Discusses the continuity of certain names in the Clan na Gael club.</p> <p>00:52:15 Reflects on the changes in Gaelic football and the quality of the Clan na Gael team of the early 1970s.</p> <p>00:53:30 Talks about the GAA has meant to him – comments on the entertainment it has brought him and watching the young players. Remarks that he doesn't agree with everything the GAA has done.</p> <p>00:54:55 Mention that Ronan Austin gave Seeley his All-Ireland under 21 medal.</p> <p>00:55:40 Jimmy Smyth recalls meeting with Bryansford who remembered former games and mentions their fond memories of their GAA involvement.</p> <p>00:56:59 Seeley remarks that football twenty years ago was better than today.</p>
<p><b>Involvement in GAA</b></p>	<p><input 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 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><b>Record as a Player</b> (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Ulster Minor Senior McKenna Cup. County 3 Senior Championship. 1 Junior Championship Cup</p>

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<b>Record as an Administrator</b> (Positions held; how long for)	Manager of club which he led to 3 Ulster club titles and All-Ireland Final.
<b>Format</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
<b>Duration</b>	Length of Interview: 00:57:20
<b>Language</b>	English

**To be filled in by Interviewer:**

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Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Jimmy Smyth \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ 29/12/2011 \_\_\_\_\_