

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Arlene Crampsie
Date of Interview	1 st Dec 2010
Location	Casement Park Social Centre
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Gilly McIlhatton
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1931 Home County: Antrim
Education	Primary: St. Paul's, Belfast, Co. Antrim; St. John's, Belfast, Co. Antrim
Family	Siblings: 8 brothers & 3 sisters Current Family if Different: Married to Eileen with 7 sons and 4 daughters
Club(s)	John Mitchel's
Occupation	Mill Worker; House Repairer; Gas Department
Parents' Occupation	City Council Road Sweeper [Father]; Housewife [Mother]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	Nationalist
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

REFERENCE NO. AN/1/2

Date of Report	13 th July 2012
Period Covered	1800s – 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Antrim, Armagh
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Managing, Coaching, Refereeing, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Commiserations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Material Culture, Education, Religion, Media, Emigration, Role of the Club in the Community, Volunteers, Identity, Rivalries, Irish Language, Culture, Scór, All-Ireland, Club History, County History, Irish History, Earliest Memories, Family Involvement, Childhood, Impact on Life, Career, Challenges, Sacrifices, Outsider's Perspectives, Violence, Politics, Northern Ireland, The Troubles, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Ban on Security Forces, Relationship with the Association, Professionalism, Retirement, Food and Drink, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Relationships, Economy / Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Gilly talks about his involvement in the GAA over the years. He discusses the history of John Mitchell's club and his family's involvement in the club. He talks about his playing and administration career with John Mitchell's and how the club has developed since he was involved. He discusses his management career with Antrim, winning three All-Ireland 'B' titles. Gilly discusses the impact of the Troubles on the GAA in Belfast and recalls the British Army's occupation of Casement Park in the 1970s. He talks about how the club was badly affected by emigration and internment. He gives his opinion on the differences between the GAA in the North and the South and discusses the ban on foreign games. Gilly talks about the long history of hurling in Antrim and the first clubs in the county that played the code. Towards the end of the interview Gilly highlights the important role the GAA has played in his life and what the Association has meant to him over the years.</p> <p>00:00 Introduction</p> <p>00:22 Gilly talks about his earliest GAA memory. Father more interested in soccer. Brother joined John Mitchell's in the 1940s, he joined soon after. Elected secretary when he was 18. His involvement in the club.</p> <p>02:58 Recalls his playing career. Also being elected vice-chairman, chairman and county hurling team manager of</p>

	<p>Antrim. Winning the All-Ireland 'B' hurling championship in 1978, 1981 and 1982.</p> <p>04:39 Managing a county junior winning team in 2002. His involvement in Scór. Describes the development of the club in recent years. How Antrim have fared in recent years. Mentions Dinny Cahill, the hurling manager.</p> <p>07:16 Recalls the first match he saw, Antrim v Kerry in the 1946 All-Ireland semi-final. Talks about Kilkenny v Cork in the hurling All-Ireland final that year. Mentions Con Murphy and his heavy hurl. Travelling to the match by bus, getting ice-cream after the match.</p> <p>11:32 Highlights the importance of the GAA in his life. The impact of the Troubles and the role of the GAA. Recalls an incident during the Troubles with St Paul's and Sarsfield's pitches and a gun battle.</p> <p>13:49 Talks about how the Ardoyne club had problems during the Troubles.</p> <p>14:20 Discusses the issue of pay for play and payments within the GAA. Cost of insurance for clubs.</p> <p>16:30 Describes how the GAA in Belfast is on one road, twenty clubs on the Falls Road. Situates each club on the road.</p> <p>19:26 Talks about the Mitchel's in the past and the development of the club and how the club has fared in recent years. Problems with finding players. Having five Spaniards and one Romanian in the club.</p> <p>22:30 Discusses training in Falls Park before moving to St Gall's pitch in Milltown to train. The work involved in running the club. Buying gear and jerseys for the club in McGlade's on Donegall Street in Belfast.</p> <p>25:15 Talks about the film 'The Wind That Shakes the Barley' and the GAA in that film. How the club got the sash on their jersey and the link to the tricolour, John Mitchel and the Gaelic League.</p> <p>28:00 Recalls how his father reacted to him getting involved in the GAA. His father played once or twice for Rory O'Connors. Played soccer for Springfield Amateurs.</p> <p>29:25 Talks about his mother's interest in the GAA and her interest in nationalism. Singing rebel songs in blackouts during the Second World War.</p>
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REFERENCE NO. AN/1/2

	<p>30:45 Discusses his brothers' interest in the GAA. Recalls how his brother Adam was interned during the Troubles.</p> <p>31:58 Recalls becoming secretary of the club at 18 following an incident after a party. Replacing older members. Mentions Ally McAllister, Father Andy.</p> <p>34:28 Talks about the first few club meetings and gives his opinion on confrontation.</p> <p>36:24 Describes the type of characters in the club. Recalls a number of stories about a certain player in the club.</p> <p>41:40 Tells a story about how a player's father was murdered during the troubles. Violence during the troubles.</p> <p>43:24 Recalls when the British Army occupied Casement Park in the 1970s. Mentions Frank Corr. Also occupied schools like St Teresa's in Belfast, Macrory Park became Fort Pegasus. All in Catholic areas.</p> <p>49:05 Tells a story about being stopped by police because of his car's tyres.</p> <p>51:00 Talks about Tommy the groundsman of the club when it was returned to the club. The state of the pitch at the time. Getting a Prunty pitch.</p> <p>53:18 Recalls the British Army calling to his house late one night.</p> <p>55:27 Discusses the history of Casement Park. Antrim previously played in Corrigan Park. Holding various fundraisers to get a new ground. Opened Casement Park in 1953. Mentions Seamus McFerran, Sean McGettigan, Cardinal Dalton, Captain Robert Monteith, Roger Casement, Father Flanagan, Michael O'Hehir.</p> <p>01:00:00 Talks about the building of the stadium and a story about a flying boat that was in Lough Erne in Killadeas, Fermanagh. Buying the steel from the hanger.</p> <p>01:02:25 Describes how schools like St Gall's and Holy Child moved into Casement Park during the troubles.</p> <p>01:03:25 Talks about the history of John Mitchel's. Formed in 1899. First match against Red Branch hurling club. Using the Irish Literary Society's grounds. Talks about the Parnell dispute and the formation of the Belfast Gaels, the Harps, Lisburn Red Hands.</p> <p>01:06:23 Discusses how the club played against Armagh</p>
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	<p>Harps in 1900 to raise money for Armagh Cathedral. Apparently first hurling match in Armagh. Players travelling by horse and cart.</p> <p>01:08:00 Playing in the first championship. Club disbanded in 1906 but reformed in 1907.</p> <p>01:09:12 Talks about how the British Army had a camp at La Salle Park and Mitchel's moved in after the army left.</p> <p>01:10:20 Discusses the club's first hurling championship win in 1909. Forming a camogie club in 1910. Success during the next number of years. Dispute in 1916 leading to a split in the club. Members leaving to form the Rossa club and the Daniel O'Connell Club.</p> <p>01:12:29 Talks about the reformation of the club in the 1930s after the Civil War. How the club got on in the following years. Winning minor football and hurling championships and senior league wins.</p> <p>01:14:40 Discusses how the club coped during the Troubles. Emigration and internment damaged the club.</p> <p>01:15:00 The club's success in recent times in 1996 and 2002. Redevelopment of the club's grounds and pitch. Hoping to move to a new pitch in Woodlands. Hopes for future funding after the Olympics.</p> <p>01:19:10 Describes Poleglass, the area in which the club gets its players from. Talks about coaching in a school in the area.</p> <p>01:20:40 Talks about the history of hurling in Antrim. Shinty style of hurling played in the 1800s. Lisburn Red Hands club played hurling in the 1800s. Talks about a riot at a hurling match.</p> <p>01:23:07 Discusses the first Gaelic League branch in Belfast on Beersbridge Road. Interest from Protestants in the Irish language and the Feis na nGleann. Mentions Chichester Clarke's mother was an Irish speaker.</p> <p>01:25:00 Talks about his and the club's involvement in the Scór competition. Gives his opinion on the competition and the issues with it.</p> <p>01:30:05 Discusses going to county conventions and the changes he has seen. Gives his opinion on modern conventions.</p> <p>01:35:40 Recalls lifting the ban on foreign games. Talks about the beginnings of the GAA in Antrim. Mentions Bulmer</p>
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REFERENCE NO. AN/1/2

	<p>Hobson and the issue of police officers being members of the GAA.</p> <p>01:38:35 Gives his opinion on the lifting of the ban and changes in the Association. Believes the GAA is getting less nationalistic.</p> <p>01:43:30 Talks about the difference in the experience of the GAA in Northern Ireland compared to the south. The role of the Protestant community in the GAA and the work being done in cross-community relations.</p> <p>01:48:20 Discusses the issue of finances in soccer clubs like Glentoran and Derry City.</p> <p>01:49:20 Recalls his best memory from his time involved with the GAA. Winning All-Ireland titles with Antrim. The friends he has made. Receiving awards from the GAA for his contribution to the Association.</p> <p>01:50:59 Talks about his GAA heroes. Mentions Brian Cody, Mickey Harte.</p> <p>01:53:00 Describes his biggest disappointment in the GAA, being beaten in a county final.</p> <p>01:53:18 Discusses the important role the GAA has played in his life.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Coach <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Steward</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chairperson <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Committee Member <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grounds-person</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Caterer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jersey Washer <input checked="" 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 from the age of 14. Won a junior and 2 intermediate hurling titles, a junior football, a senior hurling league and an Ulster minor and junior.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>He has been involved in administration since 1949.</p> <p>Club: Secretary, Chairman (since 1983), Treasurer, Communications and Delegate to the County Board.</p> <p>County: Hurling Board Chairman (for 2 terms), Vice-chairman, Assistant Secretary, Representative to Ulster Convention, Representative to Congress.</p>

REFERENCE NO. AN/1/2

Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:54:04
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: _____ Arlene Crampsie _____

Date: _____ 13/07/12 _____