

GAA Oral History Project

Interview Report Form

Name of Interviewer	Regina Fitzpatrick
Date of Interview	3 rd Sept 2012
Location	Brian's home, near Portlaoise, Co. Laois
Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Brian Delaney
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1946 Home County: Laois
Education	Primary: St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Secondary: St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
Family	Siblings: 1 brother
Club(s)	Portlaoise GAA [Laois]
Occupation	Retired
Parents' Occupation	Lorry Driver for an oil company [Father]
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

REFERENCE NO. LS/1/14

Name of Interviewee (Maiden name / Nickname)	Teddy Fennelly
<u>Biographical Summary of Interviewee</u>	
Gender	Male
Born	Year Born: 1943 Home County: Laois
Education	Primary: St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise, Co. Laois. Secondary: St Mary's CBS, Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
Family	N/A
Club(s)	Portlaoise GAA [Laois]
Occupation	Works in Newspapers
Parents' Occupation	N/A
Religion	Roman Catholic
Political Affiliation / Membership	N/A
Other Club/Society Membership(s)	N/A

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Date of Report	13 th June 2012
Period Covered	1887 - 2010
Counties/Countries Covered	Laois, Americas, England, Great Britain
Key Themes Covered	Travel, Supporting, Grounds, Facilities, Playing, Training, Coaching, Officials, Administration, Celebrations, Fundraising, Sponsorship, Education, Media, Emigration, 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, Impact on Life, Challenges, Sacrifices, Ban on Foreign Games and Dances, Opening of Croke Park, Relationship with the Association, Socialising, Purchase of Grounds, Economy/ Economics
Interview Summary	<p>Teddy and Brian discuss their involvement with Portlaoise GAA Club, both as players and administrators. They outline the evolution of the club, its successes and failures, and the impact of the economic downturn on plans for new facilities. They reflect on various members of the club who played key roles in the development of the club. They also describe the involvement of their respective parents and children in Gaelic Games in Portlaoise.</p> <p>00:30 Brian discusses the founding of Portlaoise GAA Club in 1887. One of the earliest GAA clubs. Disbanded and reformed, currently doing well. Teddy recounts the club's prominence in county GAA in the early years.</p> <p>01:28 Teddy mentions Father Kearney, county chairman who helped to foster GAA, especially hurling in Portlaoise. As county chairman, Fr Kearney saw Laois win its only All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final in 1915 and was responsible for purchase of O'Moore Park for county grounds. Brian mentions club secretaries who were involved with the county board. Teddy discusses the decline of Portlaoise from the 20s to the 40s. In the late 40s, a new committee reformed the club.</p> <p>03:42 Brian explains Portlaoise played both hurling and football, with either sport thriving in different decades. In the last 40 years, both sports have flourished.</p> <p>04:53 Teddy outlines the local industries which employed Portlaoise players in the 1950s: Odlum's Mills, Irish Worsted Mills, St. Fintan's Hospital, Portlaoise Prison.</p>

	<p>05:49 Teddy describes the reforming of the club in 1949, the re-establishment of its identity. The club's mostly local membership. Open to newcomers.</p> <p>06:42 Brian explains that the local CBS, St. Mary's, provided many members. CBS brothers heavily involved in the club from the late 1950s. Mentions Brother O'Mahony, Brother Nolan and Brother Summers Teddy discusses the strength of the support for Portlaoise from the Christian Brothers.</p> <p>08:16 They discuss the predominance of Gaelic games in the CBS. Brian describes how soccer and rugby were disapproved of. Some athletics in the school.</p> <p>08:56 Teddy discusses the informal playing of soccer and rugby until their clubs developed in the 1960s. GAA the strongest in Portlaoise. Very little handball. Handball alleys in the CBS and in St. Fintan's Hospital.</p> <p>10:13 Brian recalls his family's involvement in the GAA. His father, Jack Delaney, and uncles played for Laois in the 1930s. His own first involvement with the Under-12 team in CBS that Brother Nolan formed in 1957. His progression through minor and senior levels. His father coming from Stradbally and playing football with them in the 30s and 40s. His switch to Portlaoise when he moved there.</p> <p>12:24 Brian recounts his father's stories: in the early 1930s, his father and friends sharing cycling and walking to the county final from Stradbally to O'Moore Park. Teddy discusses the lack of transport during the war years. Brian discusses the focus on GAA in his family home. Celebrations after county finals. The involvement of his mother, who came from a hurling background in Rathdowney. Mentions his brothers Noel, Pascal, Ray, his sister Imelda married to John Timmons a Dublin footballer, and another sister married to Ned Murphy. Recounts a story of his sister's divided loyalties during a match between Laois and Dublin in 1963 in Carlow.</p> <p>15:40 Teddy discusses his father's involvement in the club. The youngest of a family of 10, he attended every All-Ireland finals with his father. Recalls the first final he was at in 1949, when Laois played Tipperary in the All-Ireland Senior Hurling Final. On sideline in Croke Park.</p> <p>16:42 Teddy discusses his allegiance to Portlaoise. The club's difficulties in the 1950s. Lack of organisation. Breakthrough of winning county championship in 1964, its first senior football title in 57 years. Portlaoise has won 25 titles. Describes winning streak from then. Recounts the rise</p>
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	<p>and fall of hurling in the club. Challenges of hurling: buying a hurl, more time needed to practise skills. They discuss the success of Laois hurling, Portlaoise's growing strength. Mentions Tipperary hurler Jimmy Doyle's contribution to strength of club.</p> <p>23:35 Brian describes how the success of a senior team in a club encourages juveniles to take up the sport. Mentions footballer Phil Shanahan, from Tipperary, who trained the Portlaoise players and, along with Jimmy Doyle, spearheaded the development of the club.</p> <p>24:57 Teddy recounts the involvement of his father, Joe Fennelly, in Portlaoise football in the late 1910s, early 1920's. They describe Teddy's parents' passion for the sport.</p> <p>27:29 Brian discusses his pride in Portlaoise club. He played from juvenile to senior. Rivalry between rural and town clubs. Teddy discusses main local rival, The Heath.</p> <p>30:07 They recount the story of the county final in 1958 between Portlaoise and The Heath, when Portlaoise was stripped of the title over an objection to a player. Portlaoise hadn't won a final for 40 years. Brian mentions Tommy Flynn, local balladeer. Teddy describes the camaraderie between Portlaoise and The Heath players, who socialise together and play together for Laois.</p> <p>32:24 Brian reflects on the lack of discipline of Portlaoise in the 1950s. The increase in discipline in the 1960s. Their belief in preparation, respect for the jersey, proper lifestyle. Teddy's involvement with hurling now, Brian's involvement in football.</p> <p>33:55 Teddy reflects on Portlaoise football players' prominence in county teams. Mentions Colm Browne who captained the 1986 Laois team. Also on the team were Eamon Whelan, Tom Prendergast, Gerry Browne, Colm's brother. Also Liam Fitzgerald who led the minor Laois team which won their first Leinster title in 47 years in 2003. Winning one All-Ireland club title, and 7 Leinster titles, more than any other club in Leinster.</p> <p>35:23 Teddy describes Portlaoise's hurling team reaching 2 Leinster club finals. Losing one to Rathnure.</p> <p>35:56 Teddy discusses the restructuring of the club. No home field until the 1960s. Mentions several fields: just outside O'Moore Park, Mountmellick Road, The Barrack Field, one field owned by ESB, St. Fintan's Hospital. Formation of a committee in the 1960s, then in late 1970s negotiating a deal</p>
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	<p>with the Laois County Board under Sean Ramsbottom to purchase land from them at back of O'Moore Park. Describes increase of land from 8 to 18 acres, building clubhouse in late 70s, which opened early 80s. Facilities: indoor playing facilities, dance hall, bar, dressing rooms, archive and museum.</p> <p>39:58 Teddy discusses the decline of the museum and his and Brian's hopes for its revival to create a comprehensive archive of the club. Working on a club history together.</p> <p>40:50 Brian describes the social impact of the new clubhouse, as focal point for club. Possible relocation of the club to new facilities, plans stalled by An Bord Pleanála.</p> <p>42:28 Brian explains how the club bar and weekly lotto generated funds. Teddy discusses the hard work involved in acquiring the land and building the clubhouse. Mentions Brian who was secretary of the development committee at the time, Podge Dowling, chairman; and Jimmy Cotter, treasurer. Teddy was chairman of the club in 1976.</p> <p>45:07 Teddy discusses the loans they got. Brian describes sponsorship from major companies, weekly 50 pence draw. They discuss the club's official opening in 1981 by Paddy Buggy, president. They describe getting a weekly fee from club members. Teddy mentions club member Sidney Lewis who introduced him to Cyril Odlum, head of Odlums, who sponsored them.</p> <p>48:57 Teddy explains they did not poach players, contrary to such accusations. Mentions Sidney and Alfie Lewis, members of the Church of Ireland, who played for the club. Players of different social and religious backgrounds. No political tensions.</p> <p>50:06 Brian discusses various administrators of the club: Bill Phelan, a teacher who encouraged young players, club secretary for over 20 years; Jimmy Cotter, of Waterford; Podge Dowling; Ralph Dowling, and Jim Sexton and Jim Loughlin, both secretaries.</p> <p>52:16 Teddy reflects on the motivation behind the volunteering spirit of GAA administrators. The role of the GAA in the community.</p> <p>53:30 Brian explains how emigration affected the club in the 1950s. Players going to England to work, playing for clubs in London. Portlaoise club travelling to London in 1969 to play Sean Tracey's club that some Portlaoise players had been</p>
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	<p>involved in. Travelling by plane. The link with the London club which returned to play. Stayed in hotel.</p> <p>55:58 They discuss high membership of the club. Over 100 attending AGMs. Lack of bitter disagreements in AGMs.</p> <p>57:43 Brian reflects on his time as secretary of development committee in late 70s, early 80s. His daily dealings with Podge Dowling, chairman of committee, who was highly dedicated. Being a selector with senior football team. On committee for last few decades. Teddy discusses his involvement as treasurer in 1964 while playing and later as chairman from 1971 till 1981. Mentions Joe Bracken, chairman in the 1960s, brother of goalkeeper Paddy Bracken. Winning first football Leinster title in 1972. Recalls Jimmy Cotter taking over as chairman for a year. Discusses commitment required. His aim as chairman to revive interest in hurling in the late 70s. Mentions the dedication of Jimmy Doyle, Paddy Critchley, and Tom Lawlor in reviving hurling. His successes as chairman in football and hurling.</p> <p>01:04:08 Teddy recalls a trip to San Francisco with Bill Phelan and the Laois football team. Hearing about Laois winning their first senior hurling final in nearly 40 years in San Francisco Cathedral in 1981. Tour of America. Bobby Miller organised the trip. Visited New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco. Recounts meeting club president-for-life Fr Matt Walsh in Chicago. Fr. Walsh played hurling for Portlaoise.</p> <p>01:07:14 Brian describes the close links between Portlaoise and the County Boards. Bill Phelan becoming chairman of county board. Recounts specific incident of unrest in 1958 when Portlaoise were stripped of the county title.</p> <p>01:08:47 Teddy recalls being chairman in 1971 when the foreign games ban was lifted. A split vote in Portlaoise club, Teddy had the casting vote. Ban lifted. Mentions Pat Fanning as president. Mentions Lar Brady who tried to keep the ban in place.</p> <p>01:10:02 Teddy describes the lack of enforcement of the ban in Portlaoise. Suspension of several players for playing soccer. Brian ponders the lack of sense in the ban.</p> <p>01:11:03 They discuss the unilateral support of Portlaoise for the opening of Croke Park. Their pride in the decision.</p> <p>01:11:56 Brian recalls a specific incident during the ban of thumbing a lift on his way to a soccer match in Athy. Hiding his football boots from the county chairman who passed.</p>
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	<p>01:12:34 Teddy recounts an incident playing with a rugby ball on GAA-owned field with county manager's son Sean Veale when Jack "The Grinder" Conroy of the Vigilance Committee cycled by and confiscated the ball.</p> <p>01:14:39 Brian refers to the lifting of the foreign games ban, the opening of Croke Park, and the ongoing development of Croke Park as highlights of GAA history. Teddy ponders the evolution of the GAA. Increasing sense of identity. More property, large amounts of money involved.</p> <p>01:17:38 Teddy outlines the evolution of the club. Currently 24 or 26 teams in Portlaoise Club, including camogie and ladies' football. The need to build bigger training facilities. A proposed 38-acre site for new club. An Bord Pleanála's rejection of the plans, financial difficulties of the club, major loans from property developers, the need to generate funding. Difficulty of current financial position of the club.</p> <p>01:25:29 Brian discusses the proposed facility in Rathleague: swimming pool, gym.</p> <p>01:26:54 Teddy describes the reaction of the GAA to the club's difficulties. His confidence in the situation being resolved.</p> <p>01:30:31 Teddy reflects on the change in media coverage of the GAA. Scant coverage of Gaelic Games when he joined the <i>Leinster Express</i> in the 1970s. Lack of PR in the GAA. Becoming sports editor, boosting GAA coverage, which increased circulation. Ease of production of the paper with advent of computers. Discusses Croke Park's role in representing the GAA well. Increase in profile of the GAA.</p> <p>01:34:32 Brian ponders what the GAA means to him and his family. Looking forward to matches. Importance of Gaelic games in rural Ireland, particularly for elderly people. Importance of participation in sport for young people. His daughters and son's involvement in GAA. Teddy mentions Brian's son, Eoin, was on the first Laois team that beat Kerry to win the All-Ireland Minor Football final in 1996. Brian was selector at the time.</p> <p>01:38:47 Teddy explains how the influx of Dubliners and non-nationals has affected the town. The challenge of involving them in the club. His hopes for increased participation from newcomers to the town.</p> <p>01:40:55 Teddy ponders the impact of the GAA on his life. His interest in the statistics of Laois football. He shares some</p>
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	<p>statistics on the lack of success of Laois football teams in championships. His participation in the team the year Laois won the first minor team that won a championship match in 1960, reaching the semi-finals.</p>
<p>Involvement in GAA</p>	<p>Brian:</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporter <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Player <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Manager <input 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>Teddy:</p> <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 type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____</p>
<p>Record as a Player (Titles won; Length of time played)</p>	<p>Brian: Played football with Portlaoise GAA – won 1 Leinster Club Senior Football Championship; 1 Leinster U21 Football Championship; 1 Leinster Minor Hurling Championship; Won 6 Laois Senior Football Championships (over 16 years).</p> <p>Teddy: Played with Portlaoise GAA over a 20 year period. Won 7 Laois Senior Football Championships and 1 Leinster Club Championship; won 4 Laois Minor Football Championships and 1 All-Ireland U21 runners-up medal.</p>
<p>Record as an Administrator (Positions held; how long for)</p>	<p>Brian: Member of Portlaoise GAA committee for many years, held positions such as Development Secretary (6 years); currently Chairman of club.</p> <p>Teddy: Member of Portlaoise GAA committee for many years, held positions such as Treasurer, 1964; Chairman, 1964; 1971-76; 1977-81; Trustee for 30 years ongoing.</p>

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Format	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Audio <input type="checkbox"/> Audio-Visual
Duration	Length of Interview: 01:45:12
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: 12th June 2012