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**Address:** Gortnagunned (Musicfield), Milltown  
**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014  
**Interviewer:** David Tunney,  
**Also Present:** Pauline Connolly & Trish O'Donnell  
**Transcription by:** Pauline Connolly  
**Location of Interview:** Milltown Community Centre

**David:** Good afternoon Padraig. Thanks for agreeing to this interview and signing consent form on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014. This the first of a series of interviews being conducted by Milltown Heritage centre in relation to a new project and a web launch in the New Year. So I'm here today with Padraig Coyne in Milltown Community Centre. First of all Padraig, can you tell us, where you were born and raised?

**Padraig:** I was born here locally in Milltown, Tuam, County Galway, born and reared here, never left home, worked part of my life in Galway city and now back working in Milltown for the last 19 years in the Community Employment Scheme. Went to school locally in the local Carrownageeha national school which unfortunately closed down there last September. I still live here in Milltown. I'm married to Ann (nee Geraghty) from Church view in Tuam and we have 4 children.

**David:** Can you tell us first, what school life was like here for you in Milltown Padraig?

**Padraig:** School life was, I suppose, was good, was a local school but it meant at the time there was no bicycles or anything. We walked to school when we were younger to the National School and if someone was fortunate enough to have a bicycle, they'd cycle part of the way, left the bicycle along the side of the road and the next one coming along hopped up and caught up to them but twas the norm for everyone that time. Everyone was walking to school, to the national school. Twas small, 2 roomed school but four lower classes in one room and four higher classes in the other room. Just a two teacher school at the time.

**David:** Ok Padraig. You're a big GAA man we understand. What peaked your interest in the GAA?

**Padraig:** Well, I suppose, as a youngster growing up, we'd have been watching the Galway 3-in-a-row team in the sixties and one of them happened to be a local man that lived near us, Noel Tierney who was probably one of the best full backs in Ireland so at the time football was the main source of playing around the area so as a youngster, you took it up. There wouldn't have been much football played in National School. It'd be sort of soccer or even whatever'll be happening at the time, if rugby was on, you'd be playing rugby and if soccer Ireland....you'd be playing soccer another day and when it came to the football season, twas football and where we went to school, it was on the border of Galway and Mayo and it was always Galway versus Mayo so it created an interest there and there was always a bit of buzz along the border area and a bit of banter between the Mayo followers and the Galway followers and gave rise to following on playing football.

**David:** Who were your football heroes Pdraig?

**Padraig:** Well, as I said probably Noel Tierney, I suppose, who was the local man and the likes of Mick O'Connell, I suppose at the time or Mick O'Dwyer. These were people that you looked up to in the football scene. You'd be also watching hurling at the time and you'd be looking at the likes of Eddie Keher, different people like that so there was good interest.....you were always aspiring to be saying well someday maybe you'll get there and hope to play when you'd watch them playing in Croke Park, you'd be hoping going along the lines and maybe do the same thing.

**David:** Ok Padraig, moving along. What were your best and worst moments of your football career, would you say?

**Padraig:** Well, I suppose, the best moments of my career, I suppose was to start playing football at all, to get involved and I happen to go to local school in Mayo, St. Coleman's and was fortunate enough to play every year around then and come away with different medals at juvenile, junior and senior and it cumulated in 1977 winning an All-Ireland Hogan medal with St Coleman's college in Claremorris. They were the first rural day school to win an All-Ireland college at the time. There were just two Galway lads on that team, of 15 lads, there were 2 Galway lads, a local neighbour beside me Aidan Varley. So there was a good aul buzz so. I do always make out that the two of us introduced football to Mayo a long time ago so we're a bit sorry for it now.

**David:** And what about your worst moment Padraig?

**Padraig:** I suppose, the worst moment would be possibly playing in the All-Ireland final in '83 where we got beaten by the Dubs of 12 apostles to beat us. Unfortunately it was a very bad day, not football wise but it was a bad day weather wise which didn't help the standard of football on the day and for the simple reason, there was a lot of collisions and clashes going on. It turned out that people had a bad outlook on it. Now many years later, we happened to meet up with all these Dubs again. Once you go onto the pitch, everyone gives it their 100 per cent or whatever you'd just get on and do it. It was just unfortunate that we turned out on the wrong end of the stick that day but I suppose I've my ups from playing with Galway. I started playing with Galway in 1976 as a 16 year old at minor level. I won a minor with Galway in 1976 and I played every code for Galway, every All-Ireland code actually. I played a minor final, an under 21 final, junior and senior final. There isn't too many that would say they have played in all them. I'd have seven Connaught championship medals, coupla All-Ireland medals between the colleges and the junior medal with Galway. I've a National League medal with Galway. I went onto represent Connaught at one stage. It's something that you look back on it, been there, done that.....was glad to have been able to have been part of it with some of the standard bearers that I've played with. I've played with the likes of, lord have mercy of him, Dermot Early and different people like that you know. When you're in your teens, you're watching these lads playing football and you're looking up aspiring to them, no more that Billy Joyce with Galway, one of the great midfielders as well but I went onto play football alongside them which was great because I went into play football with Galway seniors at a young age, I was only 19 years of age when I went in there so you had plenty of Daddy's in the corner looking after you as well.

**David:** Is there any particular match that stands out strongly in your memory Pdraig?

**Padraig:** Well, I suppose, the one that would stand out would possibly be an All-Ireland final in 1980. We drew the semi-final. I suppose it stood out because in a sense I scored a goal in that All Ireland final which even, these many years on, it stands to be a record at the minute, that it hasn't been broken. I scored a goal from a penalty spot. Now, we drew the game the same day and we were unfortunate, we lost the replay to Cork's team at the time but we lost because a few of our key players happened to be injured and we lost one or two players in the course of the game. At county level, you can't afford to lose many players at top level and still hope to continue on and win.

**David:** And, you moved into management level in the GAA structure Pdraig. How did you move to that level?

**Padraig:** Well, I suppose, when I gave up playing football, I gave my time back to go coaching at underage level in the club. My own oldest son at the time would've been playing football. I started training and coaching young fellas. You'd try and nurture them along and give them the advice that you had yourself.....some of it wouldn't have been good advice that you might have got yourself but you're given your experience back and saying look it, this is the way to do things rather than the bad ways and hopefully you were given them a good grounding in life and one thing with the GAA, it helped to gel people together and made new friends for a lot of people. You went out to play different opposition and you learn to respect them because no matter what games you play, you're going to lose more than you're going to win but you've got to be man enough to stand up and say well I've played in them, been there and hopefully that it stands better to people in life as well, if they take part in something you know and they have respect for other people and different types of mentors.....went along as a selector in the club for a while. I suppose 2007 would've probably been the best year where I went in with Alan Mulholland who was manager of Galway minors in 2007 and I went in as a selector, then young fellas went on to win an All-Ireland title in 2007 so that was a good year you know. [Phone rings]

**David:** How did you cope with the new responsibilities within the management structure of the GAA Pdraig. Was it difficult or easy?

**Padraig:** Well, I suppose the new responsibilities in the GAA, you have to move on with the different codes that are going on there now and there's different rules and regulations and there's more respect for players and there's more respect now for referees and coaches and everyone has to have a good bit of respect for everyone else. I know we all like to go out and win but winning isn't what it means all the time. It's taking part and being able to take part and especially at a small club level....it could be you might have a small number of players but you've got to have people there to coach these players because these are the people that might go on to represent their county at some level but we've got to give them the games and let them have the chance to prove their skill. A lot of coaching is going into local schools, in national and secondary schools. There's better opportunity for them there now to learn the different elements and aspects of the game. It seems to be better structured.

**David:** Well, I suppose, one key question Pdraig would be, why and when did you hang up your boots?

**Pdraig:** I probably hung up my boots, I suppose, I was young enough, I was only about 27 years of age. I suppose due to wear and tear down through the years of playing and possibly at top level from playing in goal, it wasn't easy at the time because you were always getting knocks, you ended up with bad ankles and sore knees or whatever. Touch wood, I never came out of it too bad. Eventually me ankles gave in. I tore ligaments in my ankles and had to slow down, played with them strapped. I suppose the reason, I gave up football, we lost two county finals, one in '86 and another one in '87 and I suppose it was a step too far we had won a county final in '81 but we lost two. It was time to move along and when the legs aren't there, enough is enough

**David:** How did you feel when you won the county championship medal with Milltown in 1981?

**Pdraig:** That was a great achievement. Milltown hadn't won it for 10 years previous. So you'd always seen the pictures, the old black and white pictures that were there and you were looking at these fellas that had played before you and you were looking up and saying well maybe someday, we'd go on and win it. So I got the opportunity. We were lucky enough, we played in a county final in '78 and lost a replay, then a couple of years later, we happened to come back and win the county final in '81. It was a great achievement in a way because the year previous in 1980, we actually lost to Tuam Stars, 14 points to 1 in the first round of the championship. There was 5 of us playing for Milltown that day that had represented Galway playing senior football so it wasn't a great day but we turned it around and the following year, we proved that Milltown were worth more than 14 points to 1 so no one ever looks at the beating of 1980 because of the 1981 final. It was a great achievement especially, we stopped a good, there were called St. Grellan's, Ballinasloe, there were going for a 3 in a row. They had 2 county championships won in 1979 and '80 and so we stopped them for going for 3 in a row so it was great. Got there in '86 and '87 but unfortunately Milltown haven't got back to winning again.

**David:** What advice would you give to young players and teams coming through, in particular upcoming stars?

**Pdraig:** For a start, the advice I'd give to any of them, even mentors, these young fellas, even girls, the ladies football is just as prominent as the men's football but any of them, no matter what sport it is, they should enjoy it for a start, get to enjoy it at an early age and it isn't all about winning. It's about taking part and being part and involvement in the game and everyone to get involved. It's all about learning to pass the football or whatever and pass the ball to each other and gel a good relationship between everyone. At club level, it's a 15 man game but at juvenile level in the local scenes / clubs, it's unfortunately gone down to 13 aside football because the numbers aren't there so it means you have a bit more respect for everyone else and everyone has to carry the can evenier and to get on and enjoy it and to respect their coaches and everyone else and enjoy their game and eventually it'll pay off dividends. If you're enjoying it, it's half the battle.

**David:** Ok Pdraig, one final question, what roles do you have now?

**Padraig:** Well now, I'm the coaching officer for the club at possibly underage level, it means involvement of organising Cúl camps in the summer time for the 6 to 13 year olds in the club or the local area. The last number of years, we have about 40 - 50 youngsters that take part and learn our games. Also, helping out in the coaching area of good young fellas are coming through that they are pushed along and that they get a chance to represent their Galway jersey and your sort of seen in the limelight that you're along these lines. I'm also a delegate for the club at County Board Level at meetings and hearing what's going on at the upper level of the GAA. I'm assistant secretary of Cois Peil na Nog as well for the past 3 years which involves organising 800 games from under 8s up to under 16s. It's mainly from 12s upwards we'd be looking after. The under 8s and under 10s ver near cater for themselves. It's from the under 12s upwards that the big organising is involved in and it ends up that you have to run off about 70 finals in the year as well as your 800 games so it's starts in February. You try and get your year over at the end of October and lucky enough this year, we were lucky enough to get it over because the year was good and the weather was good and pitches were good and we got through it.

**David:** So, you're basically very busy even though, your boots are still hanging up somewhere in Milltown?

**Padraig:** Ah ya but I'm never afraid. I do always have them in the car, just in case [laughs].....kept going and then family life as well. It's good to be involved and the GAA circles, you make plenty of friends, no matter where you go in the country. You meet friends and you have friends in your club, you have friends in your county, you have friends outside your county and your meeting new people all the time and it's a good way of life for both male or female to get involved, whether they play it or don't play it, there's plenty of roles there for people to get involved in whether it's at the playing level, coaching level, administration level or whatever it is, there's room for someone to get involved at different levels.

**David:** Thank you very much Padraig, that was Padraig Coyne. It's been a real pleasure doing this interview with you and thank you for taking the time to do so.

**Padraig:** Ok, thank you