

OUT OF BENT AND SAND





OUT OF BENT AND SAND
Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club
A centenary history: 1909–2009

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January 2009

Mr Owen Kenny
Captain
Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club
Bettystown
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Ireland

Dear Mr Captain

On behalf of the Members of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club, I send you our warmest congratulations on your Centenary.

We trust that your Members both present and future will enjoy their golf and the friendships made and renewed during your celebrations.

With all good wishes for your continued success.

Yours sincerely

H.M.J. RITCHIE
Captain

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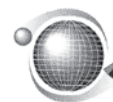
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Brian Keogh is a freelance golf writer from Dublin.

He is a regular contributor to The Irish Times, the Irish Sun, Irish Independent, RTÉ Radio, Setanta Ireland, Irish Examiner, Golf World, Sunday Tribune, Sunday Times and Irish Daily Star.

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Foreword *by Pádraig Harrington*

TRAVELLING THE WORLD makes you appreciate what you have at home and while I have played in many great championships, I believe that club golf is the lifeblood of the game in Ireland. What better example of club spirit than Laytown & Bettystown, where I have been made very welcome over the years as an amateur and a professional.

I certainly remember chasing a lot of rabbits at my home club in my early years and Laytown & Bettystown was a similar children's playground. I know that my old Walker Cup partner, Jodie Fanagan, had a fantastic time playing golf there as a summer member when he was a youngster. I have made many visits to Bettystown over the years and a couple of them are still very fresh in my mind. I remember having eight birdies and shooting 64 in a Hilary Golf Society outing back in 1992. I also remember winning my very first cheque as a professional, the very handsome sum of £100, at a Boyne Links outing in 1995.

I'm sure I was on a high at the time because soon thereafter I earned my European Tour card at Qualifying School in Spain. And then with a little help from a member of Laytown & Bettystown, Des Smyth, I celebrated my first tour win at the Spanish Open in 1996 in Madrid.

Des was a great help to me when I started my career and played a major role in my early success. Two weeks before we got to Madrid I was having problems with my bunker play, so I asked Des to give me a lesson. He showed me how to get more spin by hitting a softer shot and cutting more across the ball, which helped me win my first title. I got up and down from sand seven times out of eight that week and won by four shots.

A centenary is a major milestone in the history of a club and I wish to congratulate everyone connected with Laytown & Bettystown for their hard work and dedication. I have no doubt that the next 100 years will be just as successful.

Good luck and happy golfing.

Pádraig Harrington



Breaking 100 *A welcome from our centenary officers*

A CENTENARY IS as much a celebration of a club's past as it is the beginning of a new chapter, and a centenary history cannot pretend to give more than a thumbnail sketch of the rich tapestry woven by the hard work of generations. These pages pay homage to the men and women who, in the words of former Honorary Secretary Stephen Henly, rendered 'a wilderness of bent and sand into a first class golf course'.

Laytown & Bettystown is one of around 150 true links golf courses in the world. Yet a club is more than just a collection of tees and greens. We have been shaped not only by mother nature but by the thoughts and actions of an entire community over 100 years.

As the club prepares for the challenges of the next century, we thank our members and friends for the countless days of pleasure we have enjoyed so far and, with their help, we look forward to many more.

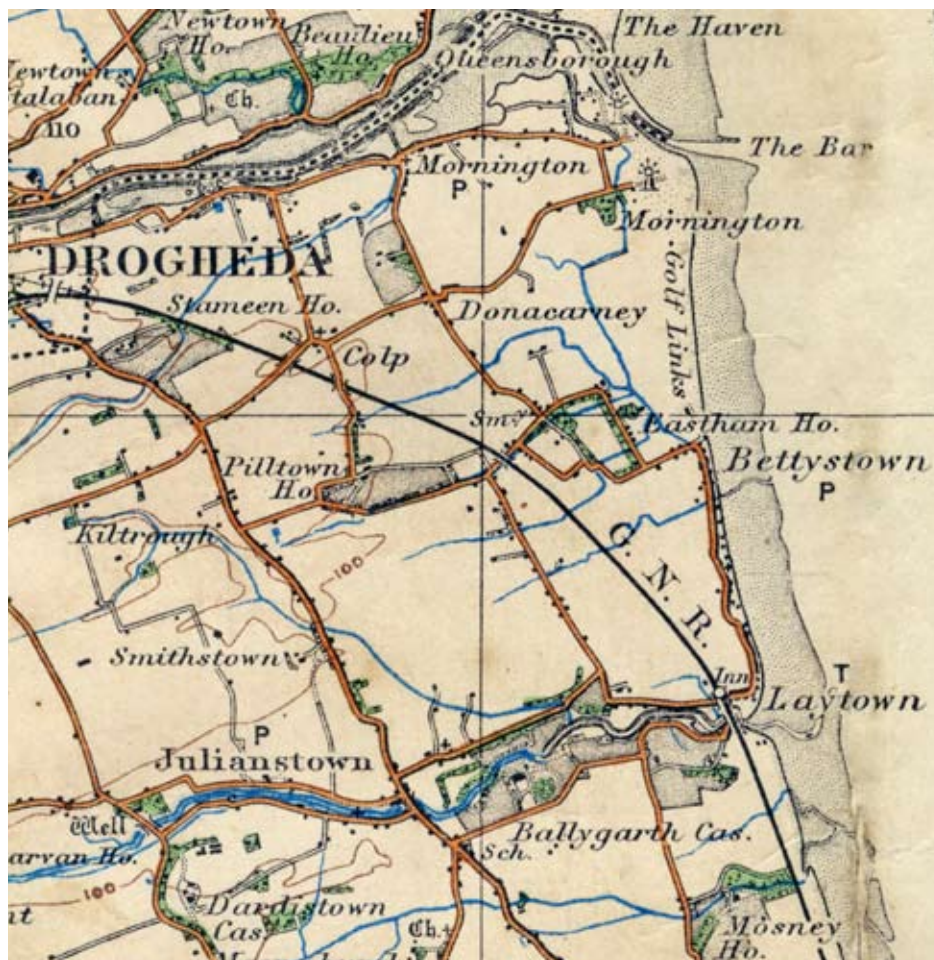
Lady President Mary Delany, President Des Smyth,
Captain Owen Kenny, Lady Captain Carol Wickham ▶







Once upon a time in the east...



Golf is deceptively simple and endlessly complicated; it satisfies the soul and frustrates the intellect. It is, at the same time, rewarding and maddening and, without a doubt, the greatest game ever invented. Arnold Palmer

According to legend, St Patrick baptised his first convert near the spot where the River Nanny meets the sea at Laytown, or 'An Inse'. From here, three miles of golden strand stretch northwards past Bettystown and on to the fishing village of Morningson. It is a place of great natural beauty, and the setting for one of the finest links courses: Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club.

The history of the club starts in 1885, when Tom Gilroy, a retired Scottish banker and golf enthusiast, moved into Coney Hall and built a rudimentary course amongst the dunes that meander along the coast from Laytown to the Elizabethan Maiden's Tower at Morningson. As the land here was plagued by rabbits, Gilroy eventually abandoned his private course and headed across the River Boyne to Baltray, where he helped found County Louth Golf Club in 1892. Happily for a century of golfers at Laytown & Bettystown, this decision did not mean the end of golf on the south side of the river.

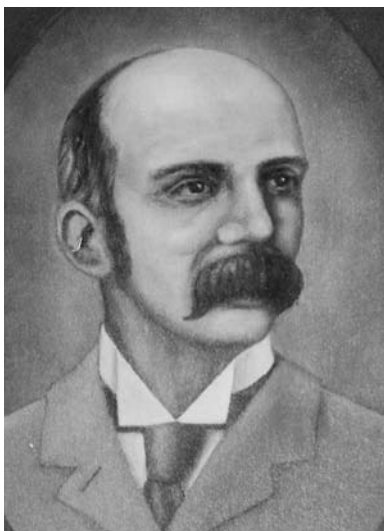
The Boyne, now world-famous for its association with the Battle of Boyne of 1690, was for many years the lifeblood of the fishing village of Morningson, which was one of the earliest seats of the Wellesley family, who would give the world the Duke of Wellington. In 1816, just a year after the Battle of Waterloo, the estate passed to the Brabazons, who would eventually lease the lands at Morningson to a keen band of golfing pioneers in 1908. The following year Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club was founded and a great sporting story began.

Tom Gilroy and the arrival of golf at Mornington

In the early history of golf at Laytown & Bettystown the names of Tom Gilroy, who played such a pivotal role in the setting up of both The Royal Dublin and County Louth clubs, and his compatriot John Lumsden are writ large. Born in Dundee on 2 October 1852, Gilroy had played the game since the age of six or seven at Carnoustie before continuing his golfing education at St Andrews, where he often played golf with ‘Young Tom Morris’, the winner of four Open Championships between 1868 and 1872.

Lumsden, on the other hand, emigrated to Ireland via India in 1867 and worked initially in the Provincial Bank in Kilkenny before being transferred to Drogheda, where he lived for thirteen years without ever mentioning the subject of golf. He was eventually transferred from Drogheda to Dublin, where his passing interest in golf was rekindled during a casual stroll through the Phoenix Park, which struck him as an ideal place to play any game. He opted for golf, and on Easter Sunday 1885 played a foursome there that led to the foundation of the Dublin Golf Club, later to become Royal Dublin.

By this stage Gilroy had already built a rough-and-ready course just 200 yards from the gates of Coney Hall in Mornington, which was later incorporated into the first nine-hole links at Laytown & Bettystown. Lumsden knew Gilroy from his Drogheda days and his fellow Scot was immediately encouraged to help out with the establishment of the new Dublin club.



The ex-patriot Scottish community included the Chief Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, an inveterate golfer who would later become captain of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews (1894–5) and Prime Minister of Britain (1902–5). Balfour played the Phoenix Park course regularly, employing two armed members of the famous ‘G’ Division of the Dublin Metropolitan Police to ‘caddie’ for him.

The red-coated golfers became known to the people of Dublin as the Red Loonies and were soon to be seen playing a few holes on Gilroy’s rudimentary course at Mornington, where they played a match against their counterparts from Royal Belfast in 1886. It is more than likely that, as a member of the Dublin Club, Balfour was a regular guest at Mornington. An article in *The Irish Times* on 18 September 1909 describing progress at the fledgling club at Laytown & Bettystown speculated that he may have played at least one game there:

◀ Tom Gilroy / ▼ Coney Hall, Mornington



The marvellous thing is that this superb golfing ground was not usurped long ago. As a matter of fact, Mr Gilroy, one of Ireland's golfing pioneers, did have a few holes on this ground and he only left it for Baltray because of the rabbits. I believe Mr AJ Balfour also played on one occasion over Mr Gilroy's little course.

After a three-year residency in the Park, the Dublin Club moved to Sutton for a short time before eventually establishing its present home on Bull Island at Dollymount, where Gilroy copper-fastened his reputation as a golfer of the highest quality. He was captain of Royal Dublin in 1888, 1889 and 1890, played off a handicap of plus four and reached the semi-finals of the British Amateur Championship at St Andrews in 1891. On 8 August 1892 a notice in *The Irish Times* announced the institution of the County Louth Club, but Gilroy was obviously unwilling to give up his private course at Mornington as it was still in existence the following year.

According to an article in *Golf*, dated 17 February 1893, 'There may be seen at Mornington, fluttering in the breeze, the flags of an excellent 14-hole course, which Mr Gilroy has laid out upon his property, the tee for the first hole being not 200 yards distance from the entrance gates of Mornington House (Coney Hall), where Tom Gilroy now resides.'

Gilroy eventually emigrated in 1895 to take up the post of Secretary at Seaford Golf Club in East Sussex. Despite his departure, the golfing bug had well and truly bitten the people of Drogheda and just fourteen years after he left Ireland, flags were fluttering proudly once more on the south side of the River Boyne.

This quaint resort

Well-heeled visitors from the capital and from other parts of Ireland flocked to the Laytown/Bettystown resort to enjoy the bracing sea air and the saltwater and seaweed baths at hotels such as the Neptune, the Strand, the Northlands and the Alverno. The annual regatta and race meeting were already attracting visitors in great numbers, but with golf firmly pinned on the Irish sporting map at the dawn of the twentieth century, it was time for Laytown & Bettystown to make its presence felt on the fairways.

According to a report published in *The Irish Times* on 18 September 1909, 'The commencement of the club was due to the remarks of a merchant sea captain (Captain Lowry), who happened to be staying with



an old comrade, Captain Lyons, who is a native of the district. A chance remark of a visitor thus began a club, which, with its fine possibilities of an eighteen hole course, should come to the front of Irish golf.'

Captain Lowry's 'chance remark' has been lost in the mists of time, unfortunately, but Captain James Lyons, a retired merchant navy skipper, would continue to play a major role in daily life at Bettystown until his death on 21 July 1933. When he passed away, a glowing obituary, penned by TA Grehan, advertising manager of *The Irish Independent*, paid tribute to his unstinting devotion to the improvement of Bettystown:

Jimmy Lyons, as we knew him, was a prince of sailormen. He sailed out of Drogheda as a strip of a lad, and enduring his over 30 testing years afloat he never lost his soft, genial, retiring, almost shy manner. If you met him on the glorious strand of his beloved Bettystown and did not know who he was, you would imagine you encountered a retired bank manager. He was the very embodiment of placidity.

Behind that genial, modest demeanour, however was a splendid equipment of brains. Captain Lyons came back from the far places of the world, but not, as so many of his fellow sea adventurers do, to settle down to a lazy enjoyment of the yams. He practically 'founded' an Irish seaside resort – Bettystown ... I had hardly ever heard of the spot. When I told him so, he said, 'Come down. Bring the missus and have a look at the damn place.' I went. In due time the Irish Independent had a small, modestly-worded announcement. As a result, Bettystown was packed out for that season, including all of Captain Lyons' serried rows of splendid villas. This quaint resort has never looked back. It is invariably booked out year after year.

Founding of the club

A golf club cannot exist without land, and in 1908 Captain Lyons was focusing his efforts on obtaining a lease on the sand dunes, known locally as The Burrows, that stretch from the village of Bettystown to the North Lighthouse in Mornington. With the help of Messrs Lynch, Gogarty and Delany – whose descendants would play a leading part in the future club – a lease was secured on the lands owned by the Brabazon estate.

Both *The Irish Times* and the *Irish Independent* carried reports of the court proceedings, held on 2 November 1908:

Yesterday, in the Chancery Division, before the Master of the Rolls, in the case of Smith v Brabazon, Mr Norwood (instructed by Mr E White) applied on behalf of the defendant, who is tenant for life of the lands, the subject matter of this suit, for an order of the Court sanctioning a lease by him for 31 years at a rent of £20 annually of 260 acres of the lands of Mornington near Drogheda, to Messrs. Lynch and others for the purpose of establishing a golf links.

On 4 March 1909 a meeting was held in the Laurence Street offices of Drogheda auctioneer Mr George Daly, 'for the purpose of forming a new Golf Club on the south side of the River Boyne'. The first entry in the Minute Book of 1909 recorded this important moment for future generations:

There were present Mr GH Daly in the Chair, Capt. J Lyons, Messrs P Delany, C Gogarty and SH Searancke. It was unanimously agreed upon that the Club should be formed under the name of the Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club; that Col. Pepper DL should be invited to become president; that the trustees shall be Messrs Peter Lynch, Patrick Delany, Christopher Gogarty and Capt. James Lyons and that the above trustees together with the Captain, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, John Markey, John Smyth, JV Byrne, GH Daly and SH Searancke should form the committee.

- 1909 -
Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club.

Founding Club.

At a meeting held in Mr. G. H. Daly's office, Laurence F. Drogheda on 4th March, for the purpose of forming a new Golf Club on the south side of the River Boyne, there were present Mr. G. H. Daly, in the Chair, Capt. J. Lyons, Messrs. P. Delany, C. Gogarty & S. H. Searancke.

It was unanimously agreed upon that the Club should be formed under the name of the Laytown and Bettystown Golf Club.

That Col. Pepper, D.K. should be invited to become President.

That the Trustees shall be Messrs. Peter Lynch, Patk. Delany & Chas. Gogarty & Capt. Lyons.

That the above Trustees, together with the Captain, Hon. Secretary & Treasurer, John Mackey, John

Peter Lynch, who was an influential figure in the securing of the lease on The Burrows, was present at the second club meeting on 10 March, when Patrick Tallan was elected Captain for the club's first season. The founding fathers initially agreed to dispense with the office of President after the secretary read a letter from Lord Gormanston declining the office. A pavilion was built by one of the founders, Christopher Gogarty, at a cost of £135 and it remained largely unchanged until 1952, when extensive improvements were carried out by Edward Ferris & Sons.

As the summer season was quickly approaching, things were kept moving apace. An article in the *Irish Field* on 3 April 1909 revealed that the new club on the south side of the Boyne would be formally opened at the beginning of May, adding: 'Everything is ready, the club organised, the course constructed and the clubhouse erected ... I hear that the Drogheda golfers, who are no mean judges, have a high opinion of the possibilities of the new course.'

Founding fathers ▶ from left Captain James Lyons, GH Daly, Peter Lynch, Christopher Gogarty, Patrick Delany, SH Searancke, Patrick Tallan.



Par was 38 strokes and membership fees were set at £1 per year for gentlemen and ten shillings per year for Lady Associate membership. The layout of the initial nine-hole course remains a mystery, though it appears that both W.C. Pickeman of Portmarnock fame and Cecil Barcroft, the designer of courses such as Carlow, Castle and Skerries, had a hand in its creation. Both men were subsequently made Honorary Members, as was the Superintendent of the Great Northern Railway Company, whose help in promoting affordable return fares to Laytown played a major role in the exposure of the new course to holidaymakers for years to come.

Despite such a splendid start, however, there were rumours that the new club might have trouble carving a playable course out of such wild terrain. *The Irish Times* laid those fears to rest in an article published on 16 September 1909:

With certain misgivings in my mind I set out to play the new course at Laytown, or rather, Bettystown. These misgivings are due to erroneous reports of the course and the consequent relief was all the more pleasing. Frankly there are great possibilities about the Bettystown course. To begin with, the present nine holes are full of those characteristics which one associates with the best seaside courses. As it was only commenced this year, it naturally is in a rough condition, but one does not condemn a course for this in the year of its inception.

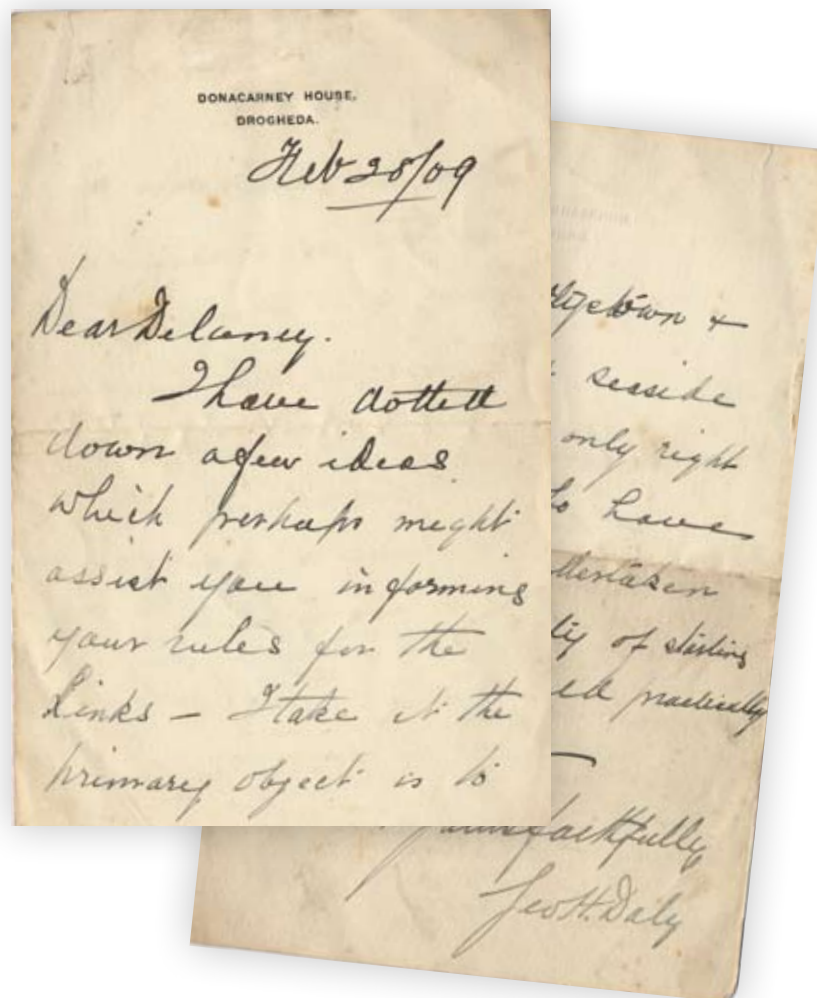
The original nine at Bettystown was hardly a monster, with the holes measuring 280, 110, 230, 260, 395, 212, 133, 415 and 450 yards. The review of the course in *The Irish Times* called for some length to be added to the first and the fourth, but the writer was still impressed by what he saw, noting that ‘the first impression of the course is that a master architect has been at work, and when one learns that Mr Pickeman stayed for a month or two at Bettystown, it is not difficult to single him out’.



In 1910 an article in the *Irish Field* described the course as an 'interesting and even sporting' nine-hole links. Praising the way the course had been laid out using the natural features available, the writer added that all that was now needed was a little more money and a great deal more play to perfect things. No doubt the correspondent enjoyed a fine tea, which was dispensed in a tent adjoining the clubhouse 'in a most attractive manner'. But his calls for improvements to the poorly drained greens would not be heeded for several years. After the flurry of early activity, life began to move slowly at the club during its formative years and it was not until a meeting of the Trustees, held in the clubhouse in the summer of 1913, that it was unanimously agreed to extend the links from nine to eighteen holes at a cost not to exceed £100.

The *Irish Times* reported in October 1915 that eighteen holes were available for play, adding that for some reason best known to the members, most preferred to play over a shorter course of nine holes. The First World War deprived the club of new members, however; so little golf was played during this time that a club competition could be contested by as few as ten players. Indeed, little activity was recorded in the club's Minute Book and it soon became apparent that steps would have to be taken to improve the situation.

[A few ideas \(1909\) ▶](#)



A new order

For the first eight years of its existence the day-to-day running of the club was left exclusively in the hands of the trustees. It soon became apparent that they needed help with the workload, and on 24 June 1917 Peter Lynch chaired a Special General Meeting, during which he argued that the time had come to place the day-to-day running of club affairs in the hands of the members. It emerged that complaints had been made about the condition of the course, therefore it was decided that it would be very desirable to ask the members to elect committees to carry out the business of the club and set about improving the course. R Murdock was elected Captain and Stephen Henley was elected secretary, which set the template for the club's administration for years to come.

It would appear from the minutes that Captain Lyons was the main driving force behind the planned improvements to the course. In September he revealed details of his correspondence with the respected golf-course architect Cecil Barcroft. Two additional men were employed to speed up the improvements to the course. Change came dropping slow, however, and it was not until 22 October 1922 that the committee agreed to build four new holes at the north end of the course, bringing back into play some of the holes created by Gilroy in the late 1880s. For the convenience of members coming from Drogheda, a small pavilion was also erected at this end of the links. By December 1922 *The Irish Times* noted the considerable improvements that had been made at Laytown & Bettystown, which continued to attract large numbers of holidaymakers in the summer months:

The want of a really good links at Bettystown has always been felt by golfers staying at that popular resort during the summer and autumn months. True, the links were there for all who cared to use them but they were sadly neglected, and it did not raise the course in the esteem of the golfers when crowds of once-a-year golfers were allowed to swarm over the links and inflict irreparable damage to the turf. But recently the links were taken over by a committee, who decided on extending the course to 18 holes, and already considerable progress has been made in the laying out of the new holes. When finished, the links will run as far as the Maiden Tower, near which a second pavilion has been erected for those coming from Drogheda.

The following year an overdraft of £200 was arranged with the Hibernian Bank and a Whist Drive Dance was organised to fill the coffers of the club. In 1924 there were sufficient funds to allow for the purchase of a new horse (used to draw the gang-mower across the fairways), at a price of £4, and a second-hand lawn mower for £5-5-0.

The new links opened in 1924, with a 'bogey' of 73, under the captaincy of JR Smith. That course would remain largely unchanged until the late 1950s, when the four holes running to the Maiden's Tower, to the north of the current tenth green, were phased out. By this stage the original trustees had bought the land and leased it to the club. It had taken Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club just fifteen years to create an eighteen-hole links, and it was a testament to the foresight and determination of the founding fathers that they managed to achieve such a feat in difficult times and with the minimum of resources.

In his club memoirs, the late OT Somers described the challenges faced by those early pioneers from the villages of Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington, from the First World War until the early 1940s:

There were no public services as we know them today. No running water, no electricity or sewerage disposal or septic tanks, though telephone services were provided in 1925. The population of the three villages was probably three hundred persons. For instance, Bettystown had a winter population of 36, of which 16 were children. There were only nine houses occupied by families out of a total of about eighty houses.

From rabbits to Mrs Macken

Lack of money or modern conveniences were not the only obstacles that stood in the way of the early members of Laytown & Bettystown. Not only were the ubiquitous rabbits that infested The Burrows a constant menace to the fairways and greens, the vexed question of trespassing and the use of the rights-of-way across the links created the occasional headache for the club authorities.

The extension of the course from nine to eighteen holes led to a dispute over pathways leading to the cottages on the links. In 1929 the club went to court and claimed £50 damages for trespass from Mrs Mary Ann Macken of The Burrows, Mornington, and an injunction restraining her from repeating to trespass.

The club claimed that Mrs Macken had the use of two old passways, but according to reports in the *Drogheda Independent* and the *Meath Chronicle*, she cut through a boundary fence and made a new pass right across the (then fourteenth) green. The club tried to block her new route by putting a couple of new bunkers in her path. Not to be deterred, the audacious Mrs Macken filled the bunkers and insisted on going straight across the fairway. Apparently, attempts to settle the dispute amicably ended when she drove a pony and trap across the tennis court while a tournament was in progress. The judge eventually found in favour of the golf club and awarded nominal damages of 1 shilling and £4-4s expenses. It was a costly 'Out of Bounds' for Mrs Macken, but a mere hiccup for a club that would overcome far bigger challenges over the coming decades.

[Gathering at the clubhouse, 1921 ▶](#)







Out of bent and sand



The best golfing grasses vary in colour. They may be red, brown, blue, dark green, light green, yellow and at times even white and gray. A golf course that is consisted entirely of one shade of green would be merely ugly. There is great charm and beauty in the varying shades of colour on a golf course.

Dr Alister MacKenzie, designer of Augusta National

Money was scarce in the years before the Second World War. The vast majority of Irish people were living in the countryside, emigration was on the rise and farm labourers, including the club's greenkeeper, were earning less than 15 shillings a week. Nonetheless, spirits were high in the club, which was now firmly established after the struggles of the early years. Modern conveniences, such as electricity, mains water and toilet facilities, finally arrived in the late 1930s, though developments in maintenance came more slowly and the only horsepower available to the early greens staff was of the four-legged variety.

Robert Murphy, Tommy Rourke and Jimmy Hand acted as greenkeepers for many years before the arrival of Stephen Matthews, a former Grand National jockey, who weeded greens by hand, cut them with a push mower and rolled them with a concrete-filled sewer pipe. Rough and ready by modern standards, the greens were top-dressed occasionally with peat moss from Lyons' Bakery in Drogheda, where it had been used as bedding for the horses that pulled the vans owned by Peter Lyons, one of the club's greatest servants.

Mr Lyons, who succeeded GH Daly as president in 1928, was just one of the men who helped steer the club through those difficult years. Apart from the asset of his invaluable business acumen, he also contributed in a practical way by lending the club one of the horses used to pull his

◀ [Greenkeeper Tommy Rourke](#)

baker's vans. While the greens were invariably cut using a push mower, the fairways were attended to by a horse-drawn gang-mower, but as it took almost half-a-day to cut one fairway, the grass was always rather long. The idea of lending the horse to the club was to prove of benefit to both parties as the Lyons' Bakery horse was rested from the very hard roads and kept at the club until it had recovered on the soft going. This arrangement lasted for many years, until the club bought a pony of its own.

The corrugated-iron clubhouse, which was 40ft long and 20ft wide with a verandah at the front, remained largely unchanged until 1928 when the men's dressing room was extended by 14ft. A separate ladies' room was built in later years and the men took over their original room. Toilets and sewerage facilities came next, followed by a bicycle shed and a shelter for the caddies.

Things were changing so quickly, in fact, that the club came close to changing its name in 1931. 'County Meath Golf Club' was approved at committee level, but the members rejected the change at an AGM and attention switched to more practical improvements, such as the addition of the Tea Rooms, which was set up in the late 1930s in the building formerly occupied by Tommy Rourke.

In 1939 Peter Lyons was succeeded as President by one of the club's founding members, PJ Delany. He was proposed by Leo Callow, who paid tribute to the work he had done for the club since its inception and said that no member deserved the honour more than he did. According to the minutes, 'Mr [Stephen] Henly [secretary since 1917] seconded the remarks regarding Mr Delany's work in rendering a wilderness of bent and sand into a first class golf course'.

▼ Clubhouse exterior (1909)





‘Some might say that golf is a foreign game,’ Henly explained. ‘But Mr Delany would tell them that it was a good old Irish game and that it was played by Fionn Mac Cumhaill and Cú Chulainn long before St Andrews was ever heard of.’

Like Captain Jimmy Lyons, Paddy Delany was the living embodiment of the spirit of the club and in 1936, the year Alf Padgham won the Open at Hoylake, the *Irish Independent* praised his role in the foundation of the club and the progress made since that newspaper’s correspondent made his first visit in 1909:

Well, Mr PJ Delany, famous athlete and cricketer, set about starting golf and got Mr Pickeman to lay out nine holes. Mr Cecil Barcroft also helped and I remember having a pleasant game in 1909 with the Rev IL Morrow and Mr Delany on the roughly made Bettystown course. The object of the promoters of the new club was to provide cheap golf and cheap it was at a guinea and a half annual subscription. Cheap subscription resulted naturally in many youthful members and at no Irish club have I seen so many fine young fellows who ought to become Padghams – if they were keen enough. About 1923 a swelling membership called for 18 holes and these were duly made, and today the club is in a flourishing condition.

The writer went on to describe how he fell in with ‘PJ’ for a game of golf, meeting him at his home in Bettystown, where he had a putting green laid out in front. He used just three clubs to negotiate his way around the course – ‘a nondescript wooden one, a fearsome looking iron, and a putter that looked as if it came out of the Ark’ – and was, according to the writer, a serious competitor, despite the passage of time.

Time brought many changes in the conditioning of the course, but before the arrival of sophisticated chemical treatments the fairways at Bettystown were studded with wildflowers. According to OT Somers, the seventh and eleventh had a covering of ‘a small creeper which in the summer months had a beautiful purple flower with a beautiful scent that can still be seen in the sand hills along the shoreline.’ Former Lady Captain, Ida Delany, remembered how she once picked these flowers for the altar of the local church, but soon discovered that they faded overnight.

The *Irish Independent*’s report of 1936 described the challenge of the links before suggesting changes and improvements:

To be frank, it is rather a links for golf holiday rather than championships. With lots of money, the greens on the way out might be bettered. A certain amount of very judicious bunkering would do much to enhance the golf and curb the low scores at present so prominent. The first two holes are rather like what one meets at the Island and then gradually play becomes more open. The visitor will rejoice in the lovely lies on the flower strewn fairways. He may not putt with the masterly accuracy of a Delany but he can let himself go on those fairways. There are so many grand holes but best of all, to my mind, are from the thirteenth home. Somewhat reminiscent of those old, finishing holes across the road at Lahinch. But the wise visitor to Bettystown goes there not as if bent on super-golf. He will find simplicity in clubhouse and in course upkeep but, if he be a lover of genuine sporting golf, he will often return to a delightful place. The golf may be followed by tea at the old Neptune.

Rabbiting

The tea served by Miss Martin in the pavilion or by the proprietors of the Neptune Hotel wasn't the only thing that attracted people to the dunes of Bettystown. The rabbits that had driven Tom Gilroy to distraction more than forty years earlier were more numerous than ever.

In 1934 an alleged trespass by a Mr Hinchy of Mornington, 'in the pursuance of game', ended up in court, where the club was obliged to produce its lease and prove that it had the sporting rights over the land of the golf links and had granted 'the rabbiting' to Mr Andrew Murphy of Mornington for an annual sum of £3.

Employees of the club, such as Tommy Rourke, were also given rights to rabbit The Burrows, though they were also stopped up to 3 shillings a week from their wages for the privilege. Mornington resident Christy Reynolds, who joined the golf club late in life, recalled how his neighbours would 'lamp' rabbits at night during the war years, when there was a great demand for them as a food item and a big export trade built up with Britain:

When I was a lad, the whole area where the golf links is today was just The Burrows for us. Some people had it for pleasure and others for living. Catching rabbits was a much sought after past-time. There was no electricity in lower Mornington at the time and people would go out 'lamping' rabbits at night time, dazzling them with the light from a lamp. They'd have a good dog to catch them and then take the rabbits down to a McNallys in Dyer Street, who would clean them and export them.

In 1937 the rabbit issue had become so serious that the greenkeeper was granted permission to shoot the invaders on sight and the club advertised for a rabbit trapper. No trapper was found, however, and it was agreed to allow any local resident to trap and shoot rabbits, providing he had asked for permission first. Despite these measures the rabbits continued to multiply, honeycombing the dunes with burrows and scarring the fairways and greens on a nightly basis.

Eventually, it was Mother Nature who brought the problem under control in the 1940s and 1950s, when the viral disease myxomatosis devastated the rabbit population across Europe. At last, the eighteen-hole course that was laid out in 1923 was given some respite from the scourge of the rabbits, though it remained largely unchanged for another twenty years. Given the limitations on money and machinery, the early holes were laid out along the natural contours of the links and carefully routed to take maximum advantage of the easiest terrain.



Katie the Block and the end of an era

In 1943 the club considered buying the Northlands Hotel, which stood on a site opposite the present clubhouse (now a housing estate). Alas, the purchase never took place, though the hotel remained a home from home for the club for many years as the venue for dozens of club dances, where bands such as the Carltons or the Jacksons were hugely popular.

There are no longer any cottages on the golf links, but tales of their former occupants live on, especially those concerning Katie Reynolds, or Katie the Block as she was known to all. She lived in 'Priest's cottage', which was situated behind the present ninth green and, according to those who knew her well, always wore a bonnet and a black shawl. She had four goats – Nanny, Brassie, Brazen Face and Codger – that grazed on the golf course and caused havoc in the gardens of her neighbours. Katie's unusual nickname, 'The Block', originated with her father, due to his squat build. She was certainly no fan of golfers, whom she generally disliked without exception, calling them 'counter-jumpers' and 'mealbags'. Counter-jumpers was a derogatory reference to Drogheda shop boys, while 'mealbags' referred to the Oxford bags and white jackets they wore in the early days of the club.

Leo Boyle, a Mornington mussel fisherman and a long-standing member of the club, heard stories about Katie from his grandmother when he was a boy. He related one classic tale in the excellent local history, *From the Nanny to the Boyne* (1999).

Born in the 1850s, when Ireland was emerging from the horrors of the Great Famine, Katie lived in the cottage with her three brothers, Peter, Jack 'The Cutler' and Tommy. It was often difficult to make ends meet and one day Katie decided to sell two of her goats to a local farmer. The goats were great milkers and Katie was delighted with the sale and the farmer was also very happy with his purchase. It was not long before the farmer's

happiness faded, however. Whether it was the change of land or the new ownership, the goats were not giving milk anymore. People at the time said it was hardly the land, as their new home was only two fields away. The goats became a great talking point and as the months passed, the mystery continued. Then one morning, the farmer got up a little earlier than usual and headed out to the field where the goats were grazing. When he came in view of the animals, he was rooted to the ground in astonishment at the sight he beheld. There was Katie the Block, milking the goats, just as she had been doing every morning since the sale, some months ago.

▼ [Katie the Block's cottage](#)



Danny, the tractor and a new beginning

In 1953 the club's horse had an accident and had to be destroyed. The arrival of the tractor that replaced it would prove to be just as important as the arrival of Danny O'Brien, the club's first full-time professional, in June 1954. Club Captain ED Murdock secured O'Brien's services for £4/10 per week plus the sale of golf balls. A house was built for him and his family and the clubhouse was extended by Edward Ferris & Sons for the not inconsiderable sum of £135.

The following August the committee decided that it was absolutely necessary 'for the comfort of the golfers and the control of the course' to eliminate the four holes north of the lighthouse. In October Mr Ross' bulldozer roared into action and the new professional set about creating eighteen holes in a space once occupied by just fourteen.

Improvements in golf equipment had reduced the challenge offered by the old course. More pressing still, the increase in motor traffic that came with a more affluent Ireland, made worse by the subsequent completion of the long-awaited Bettystown-Mornington road in 1957, saw the encroachment of day-trippers at the north end of the course, where one was as likely to find one's golf ball in the middle of a family picnic as to see it sitting up invitingly on the fairway.

The new routing forced the club to close the old fourth hole and new holes were threaded through the dunes, creating a new sixth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth. By November 1957 most of this important work had been completed to such general satisfaction that O'Brien was released for six weeks to help with the reconstruction of the nine-hole course at Portumna in Galway. Nevertheless, activity continued unabated and after the reconstruction of the ladies' locker room, which

Danny O'Brien (*top*) | John and Kieran Campbell (*middle*) and Ann and Mary Campbell (*bottom*) outside summer homes on present 13th fairway, 1956 ▶



was destroyed by fire around that time, the burgeoning membership decided to go ahead with a clubhouse extension in 1960, at a cost of £1,500. Four years later it became apparent that the membership had outgrown the old building and Oisín Gray, the architect responsible for the 1960 extension, drew up plans for a new club headquarters. Drogheda FC chairman Charlie Walsh, a future treasurer and president of the Football Association of Ireland and an accountant by profession, was the driving force behind the project. Under his captaincy of 1963-4, a modern building was opened at a cost of £17,000.

The front entrance to the new clubhouse faced west and included a large, open lounge for ladies and gentlemen, a Men Only non-alcoholic bar, an office, a ladies' sitting room and a ballroom. The advent of the bar and ballroom and the attainment of a dance license were huge steps forward for the club. While these changes were not greeted with enthusiasm by a handful of the more conservative club stalwarts, the membership boomed.

On 8 February 1964 the women's pavilion caught fire and the flames spread to the adjoining home of professional, Pat O'Connor. He, his wife and children, Maureen (5), Kevin (4) and Martin (3 months), as well as his 79-year-old father and his sister Peggy O'Connor, had to climb through a window to escape the blaze at their prefabricated home. The family had just got out of the blazing building when the roof collapsed. According to newspaper reports, the O'Connors lost all their belongings in the fire; golf clubs and equipment valued at £2,000 were also destroyed. Despite this reverse, the now vibrant golf club rose to the challenge magnificently and a new era began.



▲ Clubhouse pavilion after fire, 1964

At century's end

In 1966 a young Dublin professional, Bobby Browne, representing Birr Golf Club teed up in the Irish Dunlop £1,000 Golf Tournament at Laytown & Bettystown, where Christy O'Connor Senior claimed the £200 first prize with a four-round total of 265. The tournament produced a rash of low scores, notably a closing 62 by Jimmy Martin. When 'R.J.', as he became known, joined Bettystown as the professional in 1967, the golf course began a phase of transformation that would continue for the next forty years.

Links courses are as prone to change as the surface of the sea and the new professional made it clear on his appointment that the course would need to be lengthened considerably to offer a sterner challenge to the modern golfer. It would appear that a friendly game with Donie McDonough made Bobby twice as determined to modernise and lengthen the links:

I played with Donie the day he shot 28 on the first nine in 1967 or '68 and I made the decision that day that we were not going to have that kind of ridiculous figure again. When I came here, early in 1967, I said, 'Gentlemen, we will have to upgrade the golf course.' All the holes had fictional lengths. The eleventh was supposed to be a 476-yard par-five, but when we measured the hole it was only 425 yards.

The work involved a lot more than just adding yardage to the course and the professional can recall every move, and every argument, with a smile:

The whole development of the course was done as part of our weekly work. No extra staff were taken on and the only machine that was used was a bulldozer used by Mr Leo Collier, father of Olivia Collier, who married Paddy McGuirk, the professional at Baltray.

Experiments were tried, and some failed to bear fruit, but thanks to the efforts of the various committees that worked unceasingly throughout the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, the course is now regarded as one of the best in the country. The club has also been fortunate in its choice of staff. Greenkeeper Robert Murphy was the first to arrive, before being joined by Jimmy Hand, Tommy Rourke, Stephen Mathews and, later on, Jim McGrane, Eddie McMahon, Tom Boyle, Jem Reynolds and Stephen Hoey, who was appointed Head Greenkeeper in 1987. Indoor staff arrived with the construction of the new clubhouse in 1964, when Mr and Mrs Tom Cowley came on board as club stewards, followed by Mr and Mrs Jimmy Mulhall. The caddie master became a vital cog in the smooth running of the club, beginning with Joe McCann, affectionately known as Pooh-Bah, and followed by characters such as Willie Mulligan, Tommy Heeney, Bob Walsh, Christy Dempsey and Albert Yelland.

The membership increased dramatically in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in 1972 the clubhouse was revamped and rearranged extensively under the direction of club member and architect Turlough Lynch of Drogheda, with the building work carried out by Gabriel Tully of Tully & McGuigan for £1,685.

By the late 1980s it had become clear that the club had outgrown the building again and in 1992 the clubhouse that had served the members so well during the 1970s and 1980s was razed to the ground. The ballroom was left intact, but Drogheda architect Turlough McKeivitt drew up the plans for a new building, which eventually cost £600,000 to construct. Financed by a series of levies, the funds were raised within two years by an enthusiastic membership. Laytown & Bettystown was now prepared to face the challenges of its second century, a story that is only beginning.

Early course layout

Front nine bogey: 36 / Back nine bogey: 37

Hole 1 (Bogey 4)

Played from a tee that is the present ladies' tee to a green which was in a hollow to the left of the big hill guarding the left side of the present first green. There were no bunkers and this green was subsequently lifted to the present first green.

Hole 2 (Bogey 4)

The tee was on the hill, on the sea side of the present tee, but much further forward and at the very edge of the sand dunes. The green was on the flat ground to the left of the approach to the present green.

Hole 3 (Bogey 4)

The tee was on the hill to the left of the present second green and the green was on the flat ground just across the first bunker on the present hole. There were no bunkers and the old hazard was a deep hole, right of the fairway, which has since been filled.

Hole 4 (Bogey 3)

A short hole played from a tee, the remains of which can be seen on the hill along the eighteenth fairway. The green was in a hollow to the right of the present third green. There were no bunkers, but the hills guarding the green were allowed to remain covered with rough, severely penalising the wayward tee shot.

Hole 5 (Bogey 5)

Played from a tee that was on the edge of what is now the practice ground, at the very edge of the sand hills. A slight dogleg to the right, the fairway is now the fourth and the green was on the flat area on the way down from the present seventeenth tee.

Hole 6 (Bogey 5)

Teeing off near the present ladies' fifteenth tee, the green was on a flat area near the present fifth green. The outline of a small bunker left of the green can still be seen. A ridge ran across the green at the front.

Hole 7 (Bogey 4)

Played from a tee close to the present seventh tee, there was a serious threat of going out-of-bounds on the right in Macken's Garden – a field in front of a row of four cottages which were later demolished. The hole shared the 'Double Fairway' with the fifteenth and a double green with the fourteenth.

Hole 8 (Bogey 3)

The Quarry Hole was played from what is now the ladies' tee. The green was altered in the early 1930s, placing it on the same level as the entrance to the current green. The green was surrounded by high banks, which were later moved to fill the hollow and form the green that exists today. The quarry, which was usually filled with water, was very much rougher than it is today since it was still used for gravel and stones.

Hole 9 (Bogey 4)

Played from a tee beside the present eighth green, the hole played straight down to a green next to the wire fence. It was then moved to a flat area just beyond the valley. It was finally moved to its present position in the late 1940s' with out-of-bounds in the Lighthouse Garden or Gogarty's Garden. The main hazard was the rough on either side of the fairway, but there were no bunkers.

Hole 10 (Bogey 4)

A driveable but very difficult short hole of around 200 yards. Played from a tee south of the road, close to the lighthouse wall, the hogback green was tough to hold with an approach shot.

Hole 11 (Bogey 3)

A short hole of around 150 yards, played from a tee just short of the sand hills surrounding the Maiden's Tower. The traditionally quick green sloped sharply from right to left and while there were no bunkers, it was protected in front by a shallow bank that prevented older members from running the ball on with a wooden club.

Hole 12 (Bogey 4)

Played from the hill overlooking the road toward the Lady's Finger, the plateau green was hard to hold. No bunkers.

Hole 13 (Bogey 4)

While there were no bunkers, this was one of the more difficult holes on the course. Played from a tee near the small bridge on the Tower Road, the drive was very difficult with out-of-bounds in the stream on the right and deep rough on both sides. The flat green was situated in an area later occupied by a caravan and now surrounded by rocks.

Hole 14 (Bogey 4)

Played from a tee north of the road to the sea side of the thirteenth green. The green for this hole was on the flat area short of the eleventh green. Both the fourteenth and the seventh shared a large double green. The hole also had more hazards than any other hole on the course. The waterhole on the right-hand side – formerly a pit where clay was dug to make bricks – was a danger off the tee. The rough on both sides of the fairway was very severe. The fairway was very wet due to poor drainage and had a series of ridges, created when potatoes were planted there during the First World War.

Hole 15 (Bogey 5)

One of the easier holes on the course. It was played from a tee near the ladies' tee at the present twelfth, with the green to the right of the current twelfth green.

Hole 16 (Bogey 4)

A straightforward hole to a green that was south of the present fifteenth green. The outline of the semicircular back bunker can still be seen.

Hole 17 (Bogey 4)

Played from a tee on a hillock to the side of the thirteenth fairway. The green was in a hole at the back of the present fourteenth and was always one of the worst drained greens on the course.

Hole 18 (Bogey 5)

The green was in a hollow, smaller than today, surrounded by hills. The hill on the sea side was eventually removed and the material used to raise the level of the green.





Professional pride

Golf, like the measles, should be caught young, for, if postponed to riper years, the results may be serious.
 PG Wodehouse, *A Mixed Threesome* (1922)



If a club can be judged by the quality of its professionals, then Laytown & Bettystown must consider itself one of the most fortunate in the history of Irish golf. Quite apart from the long list of club professionals who have given sterling service over the decades, Ryder Cup players, such as Des Smyth, Philip Walton and John O'Leary, and top amateurs, such as Philomena and Carol Wickham, have precious memories of the men who helped them take those first, tentative steps towards golfing greatness.

Club professionals from 1917 to 2009

1917-19	Mr O'Connor	1940-41	Mr O'Brien
1930-31	Mr McGuirk	1942	Mr W Murphy
1932	Mr J McGuirk	1954-61	Mr D O'Brien
1933-36	Mr M McGuirk	1962	Mr J McGuirk
1937	Mr T Mahon	1963-64	Mr P O'Connor
1938	Mr J Mahon	1964-67	Mr J McGuirk
1939	Mr J McGuirk	1967	Mr RJ Browne

◀ Bobby Browne (1960s)

A rare breed

In his book *The Art of Golf* (1887), Scottish philosopher and golf historian Sir Walter Simpson gave a fitting description of the plight of the poor nineteenth-century professional golfer:

The grounds on which golf is played are called links, being the barren sandy soil from which the sea has retired in recent geological times. In their natural state links are covered with long, rank bent grass and gorse. Links are too barren for cultivation: but sheep, rabbits, geese and professionals pick up a precarious livelihood on them.

Nowadays, tournament professionals play for millions of euro and many of their club counterparts run successful businesses. Yet the origins of the profession are far more humble and many social barriers had to be broken down before the professional golfer was treated as a valuable member of a club's staff. Even when the famous triumvirate of JH Taylor, James Braid and Harry Vardon inspired the formation of the Professional Golfers' Association in 1901, the golf pro was still essentially a jack-of-all-trades, practising the traditional skills that had developed hand-in-hand with the growth of the game in Scotland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Considered a servant and treated as such until well into the twentieth century, the club pro looked after greenkeeping duties, made and repaired clubs, fashioned golf balls, gave lessons, caddied and occasionally acted as a fourball partner for a club member in a big money match.

Laytown & Bettystown did not have a professional's shop when it was founded in 1909. Nor did it have a professional until 1917, according to the club's annals, when it was agreed to allow 'Mr O'Connor of Baltray to attend twice each week with an allowance of 1/6d for refreshment'. In essence, the professional made what he could from giving lessons

in exchange for the privilege of using the links, and this was the way things remained at the club until after the Second World War. Times changed, however, and following the extension of the course from nine to eighteen holes in the 1920s, the club decided to procure the services of a professional under a scheme promoted by the Golfing Union of Ireland. Baltray's Michael McGuirk crossed the Boyne in 1930 and was engaged for two summers before his cousin, John McGuirk, took over in 1932.

The professional was paid 1 shilling for a half-hour lesson and 2 shillings per hour. When Michael McGuirk returned in 1933, the committee agreed to help him maintain his competitive edge by paying £5 towards the expense of playing in that year's Irish Professional Championship at Castlerock. The following season McGuirk was employed on a salary of £1-10 per week, plus half the fees received from lessons, and was allowed just £3 expenses to play in the 1934 Irish Professional Championship at Dun Laoghaire, where the great Portmarnock professional Willie Nolan would lift the title for the only time.

▼ [Mick McGuirk and Harry Bradshaw](#)



In 1937 Tony Mahon was engaged for 30 shillings per week for May and was replaced by his brother, John, for the remainder of that season. Yet by 1938 competition for the position was hotting up and both John Mahon and John McGuirk applied for the job, with Mahon eventually securing the post at 5 shillings per week as well as the right to retain all tuition fees.

There can be no doubt about the quality of Mahon's golf, given his course record 69 at Killiney in July 1937 or the low scoring he produced in a thirty-six-hole exhibition match at Bettystown the following year. A big crowd turned out to watch him team up with his more famous brother, PJ Mahon of Royal Dublin, who was a three-time winner of the Irish Professional Championship, against County Louth's Mick McGuirk and the highly popular Nolan from Portmarnock, who shot a course record 67 over the Old Course at St Andrews in 1928.

▼ [Joyce Irwin and John McGuirk](#)



The Irish Times tells us that the morning match was halved, despite a 67 by PJ Mahon, while in the afternoon 'Nolan and McGuirk played the better golf and beat the Mahon brothers by 2 and 1'. The report added that 'Nolan was in particularly brilliant form and was round in 63'.

Nolan died just six months later at the very young age of forty-two, but his exploits and those of Jimmy Bruen and others only added to the popularity of a game that until that time had been the preserve of a privileged few. Summer golf became all the rage at Bettystown and in 1939 John McGuirk was offered the position of professional at 5 shillings per week plus all fees. He obviously drove a hard bargain because he was eventually employed at 12/6d per week until the end of August, when the tourism trade and demand for lessons would inevitably dwindle.

In 1940 Danny O'Brien applied for the position and agreed to come from Baltray in the summer months. He was retained for the 1941 season, but would not return again until he was appointed on a full-time basis in 1954. Regarded as one of the greatest teachers in Irish professional golf, O'Brien started his career as an assistant at County Louth and became the seasonal professional at Trim in 1937 and 1938, before moving briefly to Rosslare in 1939. According to his widow, Mary, the O'Briens met during the war, when Danny was working in an aircraft factory. In an interview with the *Irish Independent* in 1972 she said:

He could have had a very good job as a foreman there. But he really wanted to get back to his real love, golf. So that was his way of life as far as I was concerned, and we went to the Warminster Club in Wiltshire and I began to play a little myself. We had three small children and when they were at school age, we came back to Ireland, to Ennis, and while Danny worked teaching golf, I opened up a golf shop and sold everything from tees to No 1 woods. The young fellows today have it easy compared to when Danny was beginning, 24 years ago.

Following some summer stints at Bettystown and postings to Ennis in 1949 and Portumna in 1952, the O'Briens set up shop on home territory. In 1954 Club Captain ED Murdock informed the committee that he had secured O'Brien's services for £4-10 per week, plus the sale of golf balls. With greenkeeper Tommy Rourke recovering from a broken leg, the new professional was required to help out on the course, though he had the afternoons off in the summer for lessons and Thursday and Saturday afternoons off in winter.

A bungalow was built for him near the first tee and a telephone extension installed in his living room. Within three years he was busy creating a new course south of the road at the lighthouse – and being reprimanded on one occasion by the committee for allowing his young son to ride on the tractor during the renovations.

'We opened another shop in Bettystown when we moved there,' Mary explained. 'But this time we included tennis equipment and a snack bar – to help make ends meet.'

▼ [Bob O'Malley, Danny O'Brien and Michael Delany](#)



The creation of the new course was not the only legacy left by O'Brien during a stay at Bettystown that would last until the end of 1961, when he accepted a new job at Killiney. Promising youngsters such as John Campbell, Des and Val Smyth, Des Cleland and Declan Branigan were taking their first strides in the game and O'Brien's fame as an instructor spread far and wide.

He returned to Baltray in 1975, where he continued to guide the fortunes of Smyth, who was battling to establish a firm foothold on the European Tour. After a brief spell at Tralee, O'Brien died in London in 1981 while on holiday with his daughter. His loss was lamented by his many friends, including Paul MacWeeney of *The Irish Times*, who penned these lines of tribute:

He helped a great number of men and women to become better players and they came from far and wide to enjoy his words of wisdom and profit thereby. He never flattered them unduly but neither did he criticise harshly – he was quite simply an inspired teacher who never lost his desire to improve his pupils.

Des Smyth never found a permanent replacement for Danny O'Brien and regards him as one of golf's great instructors:

Danny was a wonderful teacher and he had a magic touch with me. Indeed, he was so good that were he alive today, I have no doubt that he would be in the top rank of golf coaches, anywhere in the world.

When O'Brien left Bettystown, the void was filled with great skill by Pat O'Connor and 'Little' John McGuirk. McGuirk was described by those who knew and loved his gentle ways as a sharp-faced, amiable man in a soft hat. His untimely death, aged fifty, occurred as he prepared to drive home from Punchestown Races in 1967.

Bobby Browne

Born in 1942, Bobby Browne grew up in the foothills of the Dublin Mountains at Edmondstown. By the time he was ten years old, he was caddying regularly at the local club for a whole cast of memorable characters, including the well-known pantomime baddie Vernon Hayden. The golfing bug bit hard and Bobby quickly decided that he wanted to make a career in the game. He joined Foxrock's Ernie Jones as an assistant in 1962 and moved across the mountain to Tibbradden, commuting to work on an NSU 'Quickie' and supplementing his wages by playing 'shilling ones' on the practice putting green with the likes of John O'Leary, his first pupil and a future Irish Open winner and European Tour star.

Extra lessons and his prowess with the putter helped him graduate from the NSU to a Moto Guzzi. He also boosted his income by looking after the young O'Leary, who had fallen in love with the game on a family holiday at Butlins, just a few miles from Laytown & Bettystown.

'I remember John's father, Willie O'Leary, used to give me a pound on Friday for looking after John,' Bobby recalled. 'He was my first ever pupil and became my caddie in assistants' championships and other events. I think I can claim some of the credit for helping him fall in love with the game.'

After a brief spell under Harry Murphy at Newlands, Bobby secured the professional's job at historic Birr in November 1965 and remained there until 1967, when a vacancy became available at Bettystown following the death of John McGuirk. 'The first thing I took out of my car here was a badminton racquet,' Bobby recalled with a gentle smile. 'Joe O'Neill and a couple of the other lads who were here at the time never let me live that one down. Who would have guessed that I would still be here more than forty years later?'

His son Seán, who would go on to assist with the running of the shop at Bettystown, was just one year old when Bobby and his wife, Carmel, rolled into the club for the first time. Carmel was expecting their second child, Robert, at the time and the family lived in a caravan next to the first tee before eventually moving to a home in Laytown.

While he had spent nearly three years at Birr, the eighty-two-mile drive from Dublin to Offaly made it difficult to keep in touch with his old friends in the metropolis, such as Howth's Johnny McGuirk. In fact, Bobby clearly recalls driving McGuirk's new car to Bettystown in those early years and watching in dismay as one of John Drew's cattle got loose and destroyed not only Justice O'Hagan's garden but also McGuirk's brand new motor. He remembers the day only too well:

It was pouring rain. And we were coming down by Justice O'Hagan's when a bullock comes dashing out and jumps on the bonnet of the car, mashing the front of it. It was brand new, with only 64 miles on the clock, but even though I slammed on the brakes, it was too late.

Seconds later, the famous Justice O'Hagan appeared through the gate of his garden, followed by five or six more cattle and says, 'Bobby, look at the state of my garden.' But Johnny says, 'Eff your garden, look at the state of my effing car.'

In the end, good sense prevailed and McGuirk succeeded in having his car repaired at the farmer's expense, though cattle continued to be a menace to the golfers until the course was enclosed completely.

Bettystown was a buzzing holiday resort in the 1960s and early 1970s, but the lack of fencing around the course made it difficult to hold on to pins and flags, which were regularly 'liberated' by holidaymakers in the early hours of the morning. This meant more work for the professional,

who was forced to fashion pins from bamboo canes and make flags by cutting up plastic cement bags. Stones from the beach were used as simple tee-markers; a child's sandcastle bucket was used as a mould for cement versions in later years.

Greenkeeping kept Bobby busy in those early years and he readily admits that the extensive changes made to every hole on the course could never have taken place had it not been for the contributions of the members and the greens staff, especially Jem Reynolds and Tom Wilde:

Jem was a genius. He cycled up here from Mornington every day and I reckon he knew more about grasses and chemicals than almost anyone else in the country at the time. He would cut his quota of nine greens with a push mower up until the late 1960s and would have built most of the greens with a wheelbarrow and pure physical force. We would spend thousands on machinery now, but it was a struggle to get a fiver at that time. Many of the members would have assisted in building greens and if we had an emergency job on, they would turn up in force to help lift and carry sods. It seems like a long time ago now.

Money was still tight in those days and the treasurer, Con Murphy, controlled the club's purse strings with an iron fist, examining expenses in forensic detail.

'I went to Lenehan's hardware in Dublin one day in the early 1970s,' Bobby explained, 'and I saw these red, aluminium signs with ILGU painted on them. So I took 18 of them at £2.50 each and the bill came into the club a few weeks later: Tee-markers, £45. Mr Murphy comes out to me with the bill and tells me that £45 is far too much for tee-markers. We had to send them back.'

[Greenkeeper Jem Reynolds ▶](#)

The lengthening and upgrading of the golf course occupied much of Bobby's time for the next twenty years, though the changes were not always welcomed. 'Some said that if the golf course was good enough for their ancestors, it should be good enough for us,' Bobby recalled. 'But they didn't know the equipment was going to change or that the ball was going to change and it was vital that we carried out those changes.'

Apart from his work redesigning Bettystown and creating other courses, such as Bearna in Galway, Bobby continued to prove his worth as a coach, a player and an administrator. His work with junior golfers, which continues to this day, made Bettystown synonymous with excellence in underage golf. But he was also an accomplished player in his own right, winning the Southern Championship at Baltray in 1975 and the Moran Cup three times, including a fourball edition alongside his opposite number





at Baltray, Paddy McGuirk. An enthusiastic competitor on the European Tour from 1962 until his final appearance at the Irish Open in Killarney in 1992, he once held more than a dozen course records in Ireland, but would be the first to admit that his putting and mental game let him down:

There were other avenues to concentrate on apart from playing. I loved teaching and I was heavily involved in improving the golf course here in Bettystown. As a player I suppose I was more accomplished as a one-round wonder. My attitude was poor, but I enjoyed seeing pupils like John O'Leary do well. The game needed characters like John. He was flamboyant and he'd always have a bit of fun.

Ironically, one of the highlights of Browne's playing career came against O'Leary in the 1976 Carroll's Irish Matchplay Championship at Tramore, when the master beat the student 3 and 2 in a first-round tie that caused a storm of controversy.

O'Leary was one of the leading players on the European Tour at that time and had only agreed to play in the event on the understanding that the draw would be seeded, guaranteeing him a reasonably stress-free first-round tie against one of the weaker players in the field. The organisers agreed and made O'Leary the top seed. But the Foxrock man almost withdrew when he discovered that he would be facing his former coach in the first round. Without the benefit of a practice round, O'Leary had problems clubbing himself properly and while he went round in level par, RJ was in inspired form and won easily. Having come to the tournament straight from a pro-am on the Channel Islands, O'Leary was incensed with the organisers, threatening never to play another event under the auspices of the Irish PGA. 'I think he was a little bit afraid of me,' Bobby chuckled. 'But it was all forgotten about soon afterwards.'

◀ Bobby Browne with Michael Hoey (British Amateur Open champion 2001)

Bobby's popularity with the members grew each year and he always gave 100 per cent, especially in events such as the Pro-Captains tournament. John Daly was captain in 1975 and for two weeks before the big event at Grange, Bobby refused to allow him to practice with any club other than a four-iron:

John would be the first to admit that he is not the greatest golfer in the world. So I hatched a cunning plan. I took him out on the range with a four-iron and every time we had a problem in the tournament, I gave him the four-iron and we were going brilliantly. In fact, we were going so well that by the time we got to the turn, an official manning the scoreboard didn't believe me when I said we had 27 and a half on the front nine. 'Bobby, you've got that wrong,' he said. 'You mean 37 and a half.' But I told him I had made no mistake. There were drinks on the ninth tee, we had a gin and tonic, and on we went.

Unfortunately, that's when it all went downhill. John didn't quite have a fresh air on the 10th tee, but he hit one right off the toe of the club and it scuttled through our legs into a big heap of nettles and we had a nine at the hole. Still, we finished third and John was so delighted to get a piece of Waterford Glass that it was just as big a thrill as winning. In fact, I won the Pro-Captains with Dick Walsh at Dundalk in 1993. Happy days indeed.

Teaching gave Bobby even more pleasure than playing mid-week money matches with Des Smyth and Declan Branigan. Indeed, his coaching of players such as Philip Walton, British Amateur champion Michael Hoey, Philomena and Carol Wickham, Oonagh Purfield, Sheena O'Brien-Kenney, Deirdre Smith, Suzanne and Jody Fanagan, and Damien McGrane is still a source of great pride.

'Bobby is a wonderful club pro,' Des Smyth said. 'He was great for the kids, great for the juniors. He had a fantastic interest in the game and he was a marvellous addition to the club.'

Hoey recalled: 'He was real old school, but a great teacher. He didn't complicate things and I'll always be grateful to him for the time and encouragement he gave me.'

Walton was just sixteen years old when he lifted Captain Con Murphy's prize in 1978, beating Val Smyth on a count back. Indeed, Laytown & Bettystown must be one of the few clubs in the world with two Ryder Cup players on the list of captain's prize-winners, following Des Smyth's victory in Derek Alwright's prize in 1970. Recalling his win years later, Walton remembers being so confident of victory that he tried, unsuccessfully, to place a hefty bet on himself with RJ:

I walked into the shop and I asked Bobby what price I was. I was 66-1 as it turned out and I remember slapping one of those old tenners down on the counter and walking away. But Bobby whistles after me, telling me I've forgotten my change. It was a pound a man, he said. I still said I wanted a tenner on it, but Bobby was having none of it.

Bobby Browne has introduced hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people to the game of golf. But he will always be remembered for his incredible contribution as Captain of the Irish Professional Golfers Association in 1971 and chairman for twenty years between 1969 and 1989; he represented the PGA of Ireland during its amalgamation with the PGA in 1984. Chairman of the Irish PGA in 2000 and captain in its centenary year of 2001, he played a major role in improving the lot of professionals and their assistants and also in setting up training schemes with ANCO. He was rewarded for his dedication in 2008 when he became the first recipient of the Irish PGA's Distinguished Service Award in a ceremony at The K Club. His wife, Carmel, sons Seán, Robert and Ciarán and daughters Annette, Elaine and Sarah know just how big a contribution he has made and they can be justifiably proud of the achievements of one of the club's most dedicated servants.





A family affair



▲ Ida Delany, Mary Delany, Anna Collins and Dorothy Collins

Sometimes the poorest man leaves his children the richest inheritance. Ruth E Renkel, author

What differentiates a golf club from a golf course is the enthusiasm and loyalty of its members. While Laytown & Bettystown might not figure on a list of the world's most famous courses, most neutral observers would agree that it is one of the most welcoming and vibrant golf clubs you will ever find.

The once sleepy villages evolved at the same time as the golf club and became a home from home for thousands of summer visitors, who flocked to the hotels and guesthouses to spend their family holidays on the strand and on the golf links, forming friendships that lasted a lifetime.

Many remember with great pride the contributions of the men and women who made the club's first 100 years such a rousing success story. Where would Laytown & Bettystown be without the Gray family? Without OT and Den Somers or Larry and Pat Flynn and their children? It certainly wouldn't be the same place had it not been for the towering influence of Sean Taylor or the sterling service rendered by the likes of Charlie Walsh or the Moores. Trying to imagine the club without the Smyths, the Branigans, the McLoughlins, the McDonoughs, the O'Briens, the Murdocks, the Callows, Henleys, Roches, Andersons or the Alwrights is like trying to imagine a play without its players.

Of course, the links land would still be the unique preserve of the rabbits had PJ Delany, Christopher Gogarty, Peter Lynch, Captain James Lyons and their friends not set about founding the club with the help of the banker and County Louth stalwart Samuel Henry Searancke 100 years ago. It is a roll-call that members past and present are very proud to be part of.

The Delany family

The Delany name is synonymous with Laytown & Bettystown and has even been immortalised in the writings of the 3rd Baron Glenavy, better known as Patrick Campbell. A journalist, humorist and television personality, Campbell regularly used farmland owned by the Delanys during the shooting season and though he doesn't mention which Delany he was writing about, it is almost certain that it was club founder PJ Delany, who played a famous whiskey-fuelled match with Campbell and an unnamed Royal Dublin professional during the inter-war years. In Campbell's telling, after a heated debate on the question of handicapping, the contestants eventually agreed to a novel system that involved taking a teaspoon of 'medicine' on every tee. Needless to say, none of the players involved could see the ball, let alone hit it, as this unusual Sunday morning round drew to a hazy conclusion.

PJ's brother, Edward, and his sons, Paddy, Eamonn and Tom, and daughters, Josie, Molly, Cathy and Nance continued the family connection with the club. All three boys played golf to a high level, while Josie gave forty-five years of unbroken committee service, running the junior competitions with admirable efficiency. According to Paddy's son, Michael, the long-serving secretary manager at neighbouring County Louth Golf Club, the younger Paddy Delany, was Laytown & Bettystown's 'Mr Golf'. As a single-figure player, he could claim to have out-scored Walker Cup players Jimmy Bruen and Jack Burke in a strokeplay curtain-raiser for the 1937 Irish Amateur Open at Royal Dublin. His brother, Tom, was a member of the side that won the Provincial Towns Cup in 1940 and obviously passed on his golfing skills to his daughter, Mary Delany, who was Lady President of the club in its centenary year.



▲ Tom, Stephen and Michael Delany
 ◀ Paddy Delany

The Lynch family

Laytown & Bettystown has produced many fine golfers over the years, but like his contemporary Den Somers, Philip Lynch is undoubtedly one of the unsung heroes of the club. Born in 1923, he was a member of the team that won the Provincial Towns Cup in 1940 and was one of the stars on the side that left Joe Carr's Sutton in its wake en route to victory in the 1947 Barton Cup.

The Lynch family has close ties with Drogheda, where Philip's grandfather, Peter, founded a successful bakery business and went on to hold the office of Mayor in 1896 and 1897. Mayor Lynch left his mark on the town, but it was his son, Peter, father of Philip, who came close to becoming a world-renowned tenor. In 1903 Peter Jnr was runner-up to a young John McCormack in the *Feis Ceoil* and had he been fortunate enough to receive the same level of patronage as McCormack, he might have gone on to grace the great opera houses of the world.

One of the club's original trustees, Peter Lynch was not present at the inaugural club meeting of 1909, though he had been instrumental in securing the 1908 lease on the links land where his grandson, Philip, would fall in love with the game. The family eventually moved to Bettystown in 1929 and the young Philip quickly made his mark as the course matured in the 1930s and 1940s.

'We moved to Strand View in the Square in Bettystown, but it was a very different place in 1929,' said Philip, who once held membership of Bettystown, Baltray and Portmarnock for the princely sum of £8 a year. A sprightly octogenarian at the start of centenary year, Philip gave the golfing bug to his sons, Kevin and Donal, who are both proud members of the club.

[Philip Lynch, 2009 \(top\) ▶](#)

[Philip's brother, Des ▶](#)



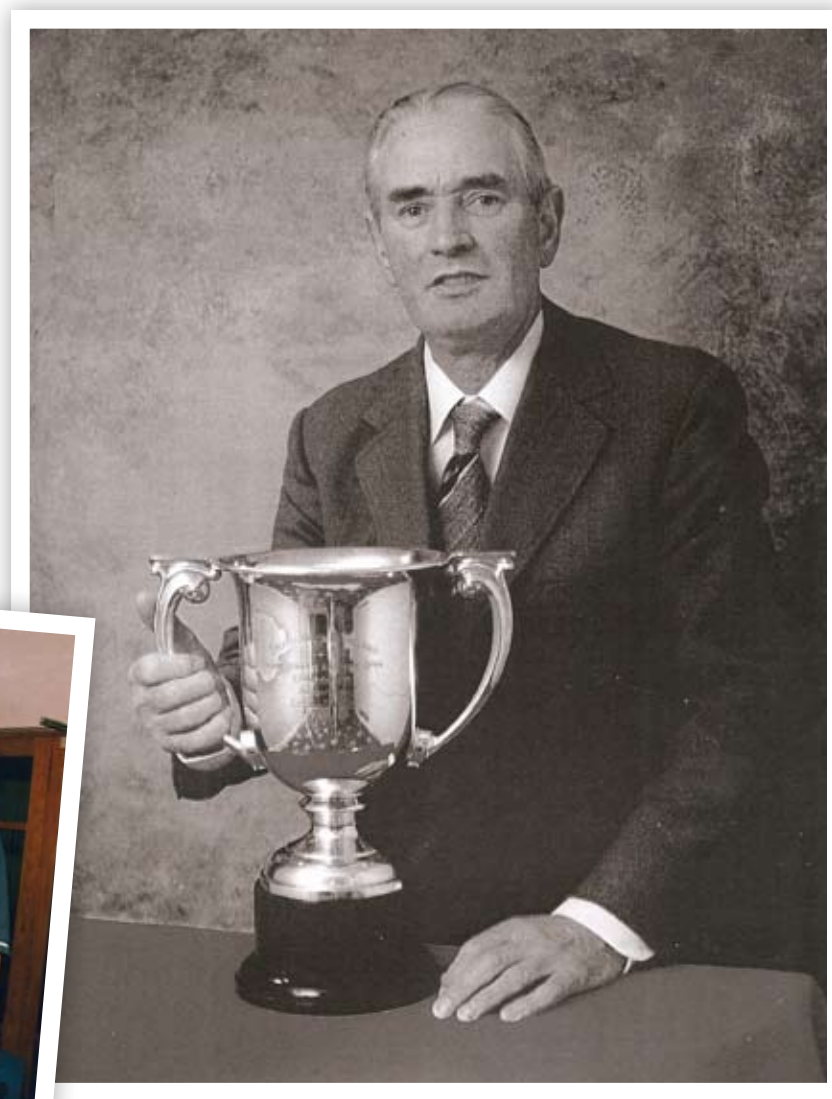
The Somers family

In looking at the families and personalities who have added so much to Laytown & Bettystown over the years, the Somers name ranks very highly. Den, who had his shop and post office in Bettystown Square, was recognised as the leading golfer in the club in the 1940s and 1950s. His father, Owen, had been treasurer in the 1920s and Den's siblings, OT and Maureen, were major club personalities. Den was a great mentor to all Junior golfers and as well as being Captain in 1948 and 1969 and President in 1979 and 1980, he won the Irish Senior Open Championship in 1977.

Den would have been delighted that his grandson, Jason, became the club's first Junior Boys Captain in 2004.

[Jason Somers receives his Junior Captain's jersey from Captain Bernard English, 2004](#) ▾

[Den Somers \(far right\)](#) ▶



The Lyons family

Mornington is famous as the village that gave the Duke of Wellington's father his title, Earl of Mornington, but it was also home to one of the great Irish seafaring families: the Lyons clan. When Captain Jimmy Lyons tired of sailing the seven seas in 1908, he returned to see his two-and-a-half-year-old son, JJ, for the first time and bought a farm at Bettystown that remains in the family to this day. Within a year of his return he had helped found the golf club and he went on to become the driving force behind the transformation of the area into a major tourism centre through the Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington Development Association. Under his stewardship, the railway station at Laytown was renamed Laytown & Bettystown in 1913.

As the son of a sea captain, Jimmy Lyons had salt water in his veins. Despite his father's pleadings, he joined his elder brother, Denis, at sea and was soon followed by his younger brother, Joe. All three became sea captains in far-flung places like Singapore, South America and Australia, with companies such as the Blue Funnel Line. Jimmy kept a meticulous log of winds and tides until his death in 1933, while Denis penned a book, *My Life at Sea*. A member of the golf club, Denis' memoirs included an account of his brother Joe's role in helping Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, escape to exile after a military coup in 1889.

Negotiating the choppy waters involved in setting up a golf club kept Captain Jimmy Lyons occupied until his death in 1934. But his son, JJ Lyons, having raised the first club flag as a six-year-old in 1909, continued the family tradition and helped put the club on a sound financial footing by organising fundraising concerts and dances at the club and at local hotels. His sister, Nancy, was also heavily involved in the running of the club; The Nancy Cup, inaugurated in 1913, was named in her honour.

As the original trustees sold their interest in the links, JJ Lyons ended up buying the entire site in 1937 for the phenomenal sum of £1,500, before leasing it back to the club. His grandson, also Jimmy Lyons, is still a dedicated member and when the centenary celebrations began with a ceremonial flag-raising ceremony in December 2008, Jimmy's thirteen-year-old son, James, performed the honours in a fitting tribute to his illustrious ancestors.



▲ Five generations of the James Lyons dynasty

The Gogarty family

One of David Gogarty's prize possessions is a photograph taken with his grandfather, Christopher Gogarty, who was a founder member of the club. David was just a small boy in short trousers at the time and while his grandfather eventually passed away at an advanced age in 1962, their poignant snapshot has captured a piece of Laytown & Bettystown history for posterity. Pictured on the old ninth green – now a hollow in the middle of the present tenth fairway – the image perfectly illustrates the radical transformation that the course has undergone during the first 100 years of its existence.

Mary Gogarty, who was captain in 1944, attended the centenary captains' reunion. A daughter of Christopher, she remembers cycling from Drogheda to play eighteen holes after her day's work at Donaghy's shoe factory, and she is still playing twice weekly at the Castle Golf Club, near her Dublin home, at ninety-three years of age.

That photograph also represents a pictorial record of the long-standing association of the Gogarty family with the golf club. Christopher Gogarty's son, Frank, was one of the great stalwarts of the club until his death in 2003, with the tradition now carried on by his son, David, grandson Mark and and great-grandsons, David and Conor O'Byrne.

The family home, a whitewashed cottage that sits in the shadow of the famous lighthouse, has worked its way into the golfing vernacular at the club, with many a wayward drive finishing out-of-bounds 'in Gogarty's garden'. Changes to the course saw the tee moved back almost 100 yards, but the advent of modern clubs and balls has led to a dramatic increase in lost balls.

'Thanks to new technology, I have hundreds of practice balls now,' David joked at the start of the centenary celebrations. 'I have been here all my life. I remember when the course ran as far as the Maiden's Tower and when there was no road along by the golf course. I remember being sent by my grandmother to ask Katie the Block for goat's milk for her tea. Katie's cottage was near the present tenth tee, originally the ninth.'

Given his family's long connection with the club, David knows what makes Laytown & Bettystown so popular with members and visitors alike: 'There are no airs and graces here. What makes it so special is the great family tradition.'

Enormous credit, then, is due to the dedicated men and women who volunteered to play their small part in the transformation of a golf course into a golf club *par excellence*. The descendants of the vast majority of the founding families are still actively involved in making it one of the best places to enjoy what golfers like to consider the greatest of all games.

- ▶ [Four generations of the Gogartys, 2002 \(top left\)](#)
- ▶ [Founding father Christopher Gogarty with grandson David Gogarty on the old 9th green in front of the lighthouse, 1949 – note the rudimentary flag stick \(bottom left\)](#)
- ▶ [Mary Gogarty, Lady Captain, 1944 \(right\)](#)







Ladies of the links



Golf is a game of coordination, rhythm and grace; women have these to a high degree. Babe Didrikson Zaharias, American Olympic medallist and Hall of Fame golfer

They say that Mary, Queen of Scots was the first woman to play golf, learning the game at an early age and then continuing her love of the sport when she moved to France to marry the Dauphin of France, François, at the age of fifteen. Historians of the game believe she played regularly with French students, called *cadets*, who were forced to carry her clubs – thus giving the world the term ‘caddie’.

When the women of Laytown & Bettystown enthusiastically took to the fairways more than three centuries later, few used caddies and none had trollies, which had yet to be invented. Nonetheless golf was an integral part of their daily lives. Maureen Taylor, an outstanding servant of the club, thought nothing of loading her clubs onto her pram and heading out for a quick game while her infant son snoozed happily beneath the covers. It became a way of life for those early pioneers of the game. Indeed, more than one current member of the club took his or her first, sedate voyage over the humps and hollows of the course in this manner and that close-knit family relationship is the very essence of the club spirit that characterised Laytown & Bettystown’s first century.

The vital role played by the women members in the development of the club during its first 100 years cannot be overstated. Yet from a purely sporting point of view, their achievements in individual and team competition, both at home and abroad, have arguably brought the club more glory than the game’s pioneers could ever have imagined.

◀ Phil Wickham

First Ladies

In his book *Women in Golf*, David L Hudson explains that Scottish fishwives played a golf tournament at Musselburgh in 1810 for a first prize of a creel and skull – a fish basket with handkerchiefs. British women formed their own golf clubs in the 1860s. The St Andrews Ladies' Club formed in 1867, and in April 1893 the distinguished player Issette Pearson organised a meeting at the Grand Hotel on London's Trafalgar Square, which led to the founding of the Ladies Golf Union (LGU) and the staging of the first British Ladies Amateur championship at Royal Lytham and St Anne's the following June. That title was claimed by Lady Margaret Scott, who would retain it at Littlestone the following year and complete a hat-trick of victories at Royal Portrush in 1895, before retiring from the game.

Ireland's connection with women's golf began long before that 1895 championship and the founding of the LGU. The presence of that rarest of species, the lady golfer, prompted a Miss CE McGee to make the pilgrimage to the Kinnegar at Holywood, County Down, in 1887 to see the wife of a Captain Wright of the Scottish Light Infantry in action. What she saw there led to the foundation, in 1892, of Ireland's oldest women's golf club, the Holywood Ladies, later Royal Belfast Ladies. In 1893 Miss McGee wrote to her counterpart at Royal Portrush to inform her of the proposed foundation of the Irish Ladies Golf Union (ILGU). The inaugural meeting of the ILGU took place on 15 December 1893 and the first Irish Ladies Championship was played at Carnalea, County Down, in 1894.

Ireland lost to England in the first Home International match at Portrush in 1895, but it wasn't long before the ladies of Laytown & Bettystown were wielding their hickory clubs on their new links course. Sadly, the earliest records of the women's section were destroyed by fire, but the club's annals show that husband-and-wife membership existed as early as 1921, when the subscription was set at 15 shillings for ladies and 1 ½ guineas for married couples.

In 1917 Mrs Leo Callow, Miss Healy and Mrs Murdock were appointed to a sub-committee to look after the needs of the growing number of lady members. Early photographs show women and young girls putting on the eighteenth green. These women played a key role in the growth of the new club, both on and off the golf course. Not only did they regularly take part in club competitions, they also made a huge contribution to the social life of the members by organising concerts, dances and tea parties.

The bonus of social occasions was all well and good, but first and foremost was the game, and for these ladies, the golfing bug bit hard. In 1927, Mary Clancy was appointed Honorary Secretary of the ladies section and the club's treasurer was authorised to pay a preliminary affiliation fee of £2-2-0 to the ILGU. On 9 December that year, nine new clubs were affiliated at the 34th Annual General Meeting of the ILGU, which was held in the Imperial Hotel in Cork. Laytown & Bettystown, Carrickfergus, Ballyclare, Youghal, Tipperary, St Anne's, Borris, Ballinrobe and Ballina joined the growing ladies game in the country, bringing the number of affiliated clubs to 129 and opening an illustrious chapter in the club's history.

Camaraderie and commitment

Between 1930 and 1960 membership of the ladies section grew slowly but steadily. Weekly competitions were held religiously in spring and summer, although there were often no more than a dozen competitors. The club had provided the ladies with their own pavilion (eventually destroyed by fire in 1964), which proved to be a huge boost, enhancing the sense of camaraderie and commitment amongst the women golfers, young and old.

Ninety-three-year-old Ida Delany (*née* Fox), Lady Captain in 1962 and a member of seventy-five years standing, remembers those important years:

Conditions were rather basic back in those early days. Of course, things improved greatly later on with the ladies pavilion and the new clubhouses that were constructed to deal with the growth in the membership. The real point to remember is that it was always a family club and young people were given great encouragement. In fact, three of my sisters were lady captains here also: Eileen (Branigan) in 1946, Maureen (Gray) in 1958 and Kathleen (Collins) in 1974.

The daughter of Richard and Mary Fox, Ida married Tom Delany, son of club founder PJ Delany. Her daughter, Mary, became Lady Captain in 1970 and Centenary Lady President in 2009. An outstanding single-figure golfer in her day, Mary reached the quarter-finals of the 1971 Irish Women's Close at Baltray, where she lost by just one hole to the eventual champion, Elaine Bradshaw. She was also a member of the side that claimed Leinster and All Ireland Senior Cup honours in 1988 and a member of the Townsend Cup-winning side of 1995.

Ida Delany had been a member of the club for more than twenty years when Aileen Regan (*née* Alwright) joined in the mid-1950s. Aileen was Lady Captain in 2000, and she recalls how her golfing career kicked off when her parents, Alice (Al) and Dick, sent her down with her older brother to enjoy the popular summer dances:

My mother was secretary here when the men won the Barton Cup in 1947. I used to come down with my brother Derek, who was captain in 1970. When I joined, the other ladies seemed a lot older than me. The Delanys were the backbone of the club in those days and Mary would become a leading light. But her auntie Josie was the main organiser back in those days. What Josie said was law. She was formidable, but she was also a lovely person and a real lady. We had a great life back then, playing golf, tennis and badminton, which became very popular.

Breda Daly had been playing tennis at the club since the 1940s, but it was Josie Delany who persuaded her to swap the tennis racquet for a set of clubs and head out onto the fairways with Sheila Walsh for a friendly three-ball. 'The tennis club was more popular among the young people in the 1940s than golf was,' Breda explains. 'I'd been playing tennis since I was eleven, but I didn't take up golf until nearly twenty years later when Josie Delany said it was time I had a go.'

Breda would go on to become Lady Captain in 1983, eight years after her husband, John, had captained the men's club, and Lady President in 2003. While she enjoyed many more days with a club in her hand, little did she know how much she would relish her role as a loyal supporter when a new generation of players burst onto the scene in the 1970s and 1980s.



▲ Ladies Committee, 1931: included are Mrs Callow, Nellie Clancy, Mrs Moonan, Mrs Chillingworth, Bessie Rooney and Mrs Lyons

Winners...



▲ Townsend Cup 2003



▲ Junior Cup 2002



▲ Junior Cup 2005



▲ Townsend Cup 1995

Sister act: the Wickham girls

There is sporting blood coursing through the Wickham veins, so the sisters Carol and Philomena were always destined for a life in sports. Their father Gerry, who played Gaelic football for Sligo's minors, was also a talented soccer player and a nephew of Joe Wickham, the General Secretary of the Football Association of Ireland for more than fifty years. The Wickham connection with Connacht stayed strong in later years when Phil, who was born in Ballyshannon, lined out regularly for the province in the interprovincial matches, while Carol represented Leinster.

Golfing success at team and individual level had been the sole preserve of the men of the club until the Wickham sisters burst onto the scene. Encouraged by their father, the girls swapped their Saturday morning Irish dancing lessons for golf tuition with Bobby Browne and soon began to capture silverware. Their mother, Betty, a future Lady Captain, was their staunchest supporter.

The sisters first saw their names in lights in 1971, when Phil took the Under-14 Monahan Cup and Carol came second to her future team-mate, Susan Taylor, in the Under-13 Hoey Cup during the club's highly popular open week for juveniles.

'A future Walker Cup or Curtis Cup player may emerge from among the budding champions who competed in the first stage of the Laytown and Bettystown open days yesterday,' ran the prophetic opening paragraph of the report in *The Irish Times*. Though neither of the Wickham girls would achieve Curtis Cup honours, the winner of the Pee-Wee Cup for Under-8 was none other than future Walker Cup and Ryder Cup star, Philip Walton from Malahide.

By the mid-1970s the sisters were making a real name for themselves. They won several Aer Lingus Leinster Schools titles with Loreto Balbriggan and went on to represent Ireland and their school as national champions in a side that also featured Susan Taylor. Carol remembers those wonderful days of childhood:



The Wickham girls, 1980 ▶

I remember going down to the club when I was eight or nine and Bobby gave us lessons on Saturday morning on the 18th fairway. I was too old to play in the Pee Wee Trophy, but the open week was a great highlight of the year and thanks to people like Paddy Delany, Mary Murphy, Larry Flynn and Josie Delany, we had a wonderful time playing in all those other competitions, such as the Hoey Cup or the Monahan Cup.

Mary Murphy, wife of Con, was a great stalwart of the club, but so was Con McLaughlin and Sean Taylor, who helped run all the junior competitions. Dad would come down to the station to meet us off the train when we finished school and we'd pop up to the club to play a quick nine holes. It was a wonderful way to grow up.

Three years older than her sister, Phil's handicap tumbled from nine to four on a memorable summer's day in 1975 when she won a juvenile event at Milltown, returned home by bus and train, and won a club competition that evening. Later that season, Phil reached the final of the Irish Girls Championship, thereby earning her junior international call-up for the Girls Internationals at Henbury, in Bristol. Things really began to take off for her in 1976, when Phil made up for her disappointment the previous season by beating Bandon's Rhona Hegarty five and three to lift the Irish Girls Championship at the Castle and became the first woman from Laytown & Bettystown to gain senior international honours. Another seven years would pass before she would represent Ireland at senior level again, but it would prove to be a historic achievement as she was joined by Carol in the Irish side that defeated England in the final of the 1983 European Women's Team Championship at Royal Waterloo in Belgium on the same weekend that the Irish men's team, inspired by former Laytown & Bettystown member Philip Walton, lifted the European Men's Team title at Chantilly. That year Carol was first reserve on the Vagliano Trophy team, which played Europe.

Carol and Philomena had met each other just once before in foursomes at interprovincial level, but when they were drawn to face each other in the second round of the 1983 Irish Women's Close Championship at Little Island, there was more than a little tension in the air. Philomena was pushing hard to regain her place in the Irish team after seven years in the wilderness, and Carol was well aware that she could seriously damage her sister's hopes of returning to the side for the European Women's Team Championship in Belgium later that summer. 'We were both conscious of what was at stake for Phil more than anything,' Carol recalls. 'It was a highly emotional game and we went out on the first tee and five selectors were there. I think our better ball was five-under par after eight holes when the selectors moved somewhere else.'

Carol won the match 3 and 2 and feared she had cost her sister dearly. 'We knew how much was at stake and I beat her on the 16th and walked off the green in tears afterwards. The upside was that we both got picked on the European team that year.

'I certainly wasn't expecting to get my first senior cap that particular year, but I was obviously chuffed,' Carol says. 'And winning the title in Brussels made it a magical week. Our mother, Betty, and our brother, Des, were there as well, which was wonderful.'

The Wickhams played their part in what was Ireland's second victory in the competition following that breakthrough win at Hermitage in 1979. With their mother and brother cheering them on, the girls joined Mary McKenna, Maureen Madill, Claire Hourihane and Eavan Higgins in helping Ireland qualify for the top flight in sixth place.

[European Champions, Ireland, in Belgium, 1983](#) ▶

Back: Eavan Higgins, Gerry Costello, Maureen Madill, Ann Heskin, Claire Hourihane, Mary McKenna. *Front:* Phil Wickham, Carol Wickham.



In the first matchplay round, Higgins dramatically chipped in from 20 yards on the first tie hole to beat Scotland's Pamela Wright and give Ireland a 4-3 win over the pre-Championship favourites. Title-holders Sweden fell to Ireland in the semi-finals, and in the final there was huge excitement as the side, captained by Ann Heskin, beat mighty England by 5 ½ matches to 1 ½. At the prize-giving ceremony, there were great celebrations and some laughter as the English side was reminded that they couldn't expect to win every time they visited Waterloo.

The seven-year period between Philomena's first cap and that win in Belgium proved to be a golden age for women's golf in the club. In September 1976 the Wickham girls teamed up with Susan Taylor to win the Smurfit Irish Girls Under-19 inter-club tournament, a trophy the club would win again in 1978 when Carol was joined by Joan Cahill and Ann McAuley at Monkstown. That 1978 season was also the year that a seventeen-year-old Carol would take another giant step in her career when she came back from two down with five to play to beat local heroine Bridget Gleeson in the final of the Irish Girls Close Championship at Killarney.

'She really was a star and they all expected her to win on her home course,' Carol remembers. 'She lived down by the 13th and it was an amazing game. I remember the girls carrying me off the eighteenth green on their shoulders afterwards.'

Leinster Senior Cup winners, 1981 ▶

Back: Phil Wickham, Mary Delany, Marie McAuley (Team Captain), Carol Wickham, Pat Eakin. *Front:* Ann McAuley, Noeline Quirke.

Irish Senior Cup winners, 1988 (opposite page) ▶

Back: Carol Wickham, Pat Eakin, Mary Delany, Tracy Eakin, Phil Wickham. *Front:* Ann McAuley, Oonagh Dillon (Lady Captain), Noeline Quirke.

Golden Age

The 1970s and 1980s will go down as one of the great eras at Laytown & Bettystown, when the club's constellation of golfing stars twinkled brightly on the domestic and international scene, thanks to the exploits of Declan Branigan and Des Smyth. But the women were not to be outdone and, building on the success of their junior days, the Wickhams backboned a senior squad that would regularly challenge for top honours for more than a decade.

In 1981, Mary Delany and the international player Pat Eakin joined the Wickhams, Marie McAuley, Ann McAuley and Noeline Quirke in the Senior Cup side and the club defied snow and freezing April conditions at the Castle to beat Woodbrook 3 ½ to 1 ½ and lift the Leinster title for the first time. This dream team was not assembled haphazardly, given that Laytown & Bettystown would host the All-Ireland finals for the first time the following month. Hopes of a first All-Ireland title were higher than ever, but after making it to the final with a 4-1 win over County Sligo, the dream faded in the decider when Maureen Madill led Royal Portrush to their twelfth victory in the event, by 5 matches to 0.



The siblings would make up for the disappointment of that defeat by lifting the Lancôme National Greensomes title that year. Carol and Noeline Quirke won it in 2000, with Philomena Rooney and Catherine Shortall taking the honours in 2006. Indeed, team play had always been a Wickham forte and while Phil won four Connacht Women's titles between 1982 and 1990, she also won the Irish Strokeplay Foursomes Championship with Woodbrook's Claire Hourihane in 1981, 1982, 1994 and 1995.

Club spirit had always been high and the ladies were never short of support as they represented the club all over Ireland in individual and team competitions. Mary Murphy, Betty Wickham, Breda Daly, Kay Clancy, Aileen Regan, Pat Flynn and Margaret Regan were regular cheerleaders and they had plenty to cheer about, too, as the club achieved its greatest success in 100 years with victory in the All Ireland Senior Cup at Birr, County Offaly, in 1988.

The first big hurdle crossed came in the Leinster semi-finals at the Island, where the club edged out a talented Grange side, featuring the likes of Mary Gorry, Sheena O'Brien-Kenney and Therese O'Reilly, 3 to 2, with two matches decided on the 18th and the other three in extra holes. That win set up a meeting with Milltown in the Leinster final, which the club won 3½ to 1½, with Noeline Quirke securing the winning point thanks to a 33ft birdie putt on the 18th against Catherine Hickey. It was only the second provincial success for the Ladies Senior Cup team since that breakthrough victory in 1981. In the intervening years the side missed just one final and were runners-up on five occasions. This time they were not to be denied the holy grail of a national title.

While the men had failed in their quest for All Ireland glory at Rosses Point six years earlier, the women grabbed their opportunity with both hands in Birr, beating Tramore 3½ to 1 in the semi-finals before completing the job in the final with a crushing victory over Malone by 4½ matches to ½. There were three survivors from the side that lost the 1981 final – the two Wickhams and Noeline Quirke – while Ann McAuley had been a reserve seven years earlier.

Tracy Eakin was following in the footsteps of her mother, Pat, and that blend of youth and experience proved to be decisive in the club's march to the title, with Noeline and Tracy remaining undefeated in the six matches they played in the competition. In fact, the final was particularly memorable for Phil Wickham, who produced one of her most important victories when she crushed the highly rated Debbie Hanna at number one to give the side a huge morale boost.





The ladies won the Leinster Senior Cup title for the third time in 1990, but the squad of Phil and Carol Wickham, Pat and Tracy Eakin, Noeline Quirke and Ann McAuley could not prevent Douglas from taking the All Ireland title at Dundalk. Unbowed by this reverse, the club won the Townsend Cup foursomes title in 1995, when Anne Cooney captained a team comprising of Mary Delany, Alice O'Neill, Susan Clark, Millie Wade, Carmel McCrink, Margaret Regan, Carol Wickham, Ann McAuley, Noeline Quirke and Patricia McAllister. The club won the Townsend Cup again in 2003 under the captaincy of Aileen Regan. The team members were Carol Wickham, Noeline Quirke, Phil O'Gorman, Barbara Cooney, Patricia McAllister, Ann McAuley, Maida McGowan, Susan Clark and Pat Eakin.

In the list of outstanding individuals to pull on a Laytown & Bettystown sweater, the Wickham sisters will undoubtedly be remembered as two of the toughest competitors the club has ever produced. They accepted winning and losing as part of the game, and while Carol was disappointed to fall to Mary McKenna in the 1989 Irish Close final at Westport, the happy memories far outweigh the bad.

Tracy Eakin continued that tradition, forging an outstanding amateur career before turning to the professional ranks and the Ladies European Tour in 1997–98. An Irish international from 1990–93, she won the Leinster and Connacht Girls titles in 1987, the inaugural Leinster Strokeplay Championship in 1992 and the Irish Strokeplay the following year. She was also a non-travelling reserve for the 1994 Curtis Cup side. Tracy has golf in her genes: her mother, Pat, was a key member of the side that won the Junior Cup in 2002 alongside Brenda Phelan, Susan Clark, Ann McAuley, Carmel McCrink and Alice O'Neill, under the management of Margaret Spellman. The club also won the Junior Cup in 2005 with Ann McAuley, Susan Clark, Orla Dywer, Marita Leech, Barbara Cooney, Alice O'Neill, Carmel McCrink, Lo Lo Smyth. Team Captain was Pat Delany.

Fittingly, Laytown & Bettystown's last major success came in the Leinster Final of the BMW Irish Mixed Foursomes in 2002. In Leinster the club beat Howth in the semi-finals and Dun Laoghaire in the final at Westmanstown. While they beat the Connacht champions, Enniscrone, by 4 ½ matches to ½ in the All Ireland semi-finals at Belvoir Park, they lost to Bandon in the final. The team comprised of Jimmy Clynch and Barbara Cooney, Alan Mullen and Olive McKee, Finbar Whelan and Louise McAuley, Michael Cormican and Phyllis Power and Seamus Ward and Avril Jenkinson, managed by Frank Allen and Anne Cooney.

In January 2003 Laytown & Bettystown saluted its first senior international when Maida McGowan, having finished as the joint leading Irish finisher in the 2002 Irish Ladies Senior Open Championship at Baltray, was chosen on the three-person Irish team captained by Mary McKenna for the Nations Cup tournament in Portugal.

Ladies' golf has become even more competitive in recent years, but still Laytown & Bettystown performs at the top level. The club qualified for the final of the 2007 Suzuki Senior Cup at Milltown and then beat Carlow Golf Club 4-1 to clinch an All-Ireland semi-final place against Royal Portrush. However, the ladies from Antrim proved to be too strong for Alison Taylor, Tracy Eakin, Carol Taylor (*née* Wickham), Phil O'Gorman (*née* Wickham) and Noeline Quirke, who lost by 3 ½ matches to 1 ½.

Having set such a high standard over the last three decades of the club's centenary, future successes are surely around the corner for those women willing to pull on the Laytown & Bettystown sweater and do battle for the honour and the glory of the club.

▼ [Irish Mixed Foursomes, Leinster Champions and All Ireland Finalists 2002](#)

Back: Pat Rooney, Pat O'Brien, Seamus Ward, Phil Rooney, Michael Cormican, Ann O'Brien, Alan Mullen, Jimmy Clynch, John Mullen, Olive McKee, Finbar Whelan. *Front:* Phyllis Power, Barbara Cooney, Avril Jenkinson, Tom Ryan (Capt.), Anne Cooney (Team Capt.), Frank Allen (Team Capt.), Helen Delany (Lady Capt.), Louise McAuley.

◀ [Tracy Eakin, Irish Open Strokeplay Champion 1993](#)







For the honour and the glory

Glory is fleeting, but obscurity is forever.
Napoleon Bonaparte



It could be argued that Laytown & Bettystown's association with team play dates as far back as 1886, when the founding members of the Dublin Club beat their counterparts from Royal Belfast on Tom Gilroy's Mornington links. Since then, the crack of gutta percha on iron has been replaced by the ping of titanium meeting urethane, but the attraction of competitive action remains as thrilling as it was in 1886.

On 18 May 1909 the club was affiliated to the Golfing Union of Ireland (GUI), along with Ballybunion, Stillorgan Park and Portadown, at a meeting held at Royal County Down. According to the records, one of the first acts of the new Laytown & Bettystown club was to head to Portmarnock for a day's golf. In the early years, however, inter-club competition was largely limited to trips across the Boyne to take on neighbours and fierce rivals, County Louth. One of the earliest recorded matches took place at Baltray in August 1911 and while the result of the 19-a-side match was a win for the visitors, the short newspaper report must surely have been written by a County Louth man! 'The visitors were most hospitably entertained and were fortunate to win by one match,' ran the piece in *The Irish Times*. 'Laytown and Bettystown won ten matches and Baltray nine.'

By 1913 the club was playing up to three matches a week, racking up wins over Trinity College, the College of Surgeons, the Finglas Club and Hermitage during a glorious summer before the Great War curtailed the number of competitions held. Fundraising efforts were top of the agenda at the club in 1914, a time when people were reluctant to play golf given that thousands were being massacred on the killing fields of France and Belgium.

◀ Our first major trophy winners took the Provincial Towns Cup 1940

Back: Paddy Cooney (Capt.), Eamon Delany, OT Somers, Charlie Murdock, Des Drew, Peter Gray, FW Payne (Hon. Sec.). *Front:* Burleigh Davis, Reggie Hammond, Tom Delany, Philip Lynch, Frank Gogarty.

The war took its toll across all sectors of society. At Chingford Golf Club, in London, twenty caddies assembled for their day's work one day in 1914 and were told there was nothing for them to do. Instead, they were offered a day's pay and railway fare if they would go to London 'to enlist in Lord Kitchener's Army'. All twenty accepted the money and eighteen were signed up for military service that day. At Laytown & Bettystown, the committee decided to do its bit for the 'National Relief Fund' by organising fundraising competitions and dances. Wounded soldiers from Dublin hospitals were entertained at the club in 1915, at a time when the active women's section continued to play golf regularly.

As the 1920s dawned, however, the club was still very much a golfing backwater, especially in the winter months. The writer of 'Irishman's Diary' in *The Irish Times* highlighted the golf course as one of the few genuinely attractive features of the area during these bleak years, adding that 'little has been done there to eke out the natural charm of the shore and hinterland'. He noted that the club buildings were simply a collection of galvanised iron shanties – a fragility that was merely emphasised by 'the few more solid erections':

At Bettystown there are a few private bathing shelters, a few tennis courts, and a rather attractive golf course, the stray shots from which disturbed me in the 'dolce far niente' [carefree idleness] of the shore side of the sand hills.

It was the women who set the ball rolling in terms of competitive golf in the 1930s, when players such as Josie Delany, Miss Leahy and Mrs Murdock formed the backbone of a highly competitive side. Things didn't begin to take off for the men's club until around 1936, when they reached the provincial final of the Leinster Junior Cup, but lost 3–2 to Rosslare at Dun Laoghaire, and then fell by four matches to one against UCD in the Barton Cup.

In 1937, Hermitage ended the men's hopes in the second round of the Barton Cup, but the ladies continued to show form in the Ladies League, beating a County Louth A team that featured the likes of Clarrie Tiernan (later Clarrie Reddan) and Jo Carbery. Later that year the ladies reached the final of the Dublin Executive ILGU competition, which was confined to Leinster Provincial Clubs, but lost to Headfort in the final at Rathfarnham when Josie Delany, J Healy, E Rooney, C Murdock and Nora Leahy made up the side. The presence of PB Delany in the 1937 Irish Amateur Open at Royal Dublin, when he shot a gross 76 off a handicap of four to earn a bye into the second round, showed that there was no shortage of talent in a club that had now been established for close to thirty years.



▲ 1934 General Committee *Back:* ML Kearney, FW Payne, Willie Greene, JA Rooney, Paddy Cooney, Peter Gray, SJ Hurley. *Front:* Leo Callow, John McGoldrick (Capt.), JT Monks, D Menzies, J McDonough.

The club reached the final of the 1937 Provincial Towns Cup at the Castle, but lost in agonising fashion when a putt on the last green of the last match gave Waterford a 5–4 win.

Despite the deaths that year of Peter Lyons, who was President from 1928 to 1934, and the long-serving Hon. Secretary Stephen Henly, a decade of team success began for the club soon afterwards, with victories in the 1940 and 1948 Provincial Towns Cup and the 1947 Barton Cup.

Victory at last

Born in the Bullring in Drogheda in January 1923, Philip Lynch moved to Bettystown when he was a six-year-old boy and never left. His grandfather ran the successful Lynch's Bakery in Drogheda, which had been a landmark in the town since the 1870s. Philip's father had been a successful singer, but he soon found that his talents lay on the links courses of Bettystown, Baltray and Portmarnock and he somehow found time to combine the anti-social timetable of the bakery with membership of all three clubs. Life was certainly simpler and less demanding than today's fast-paced world, but there were hardships to be overcome, too, as Philip recalls:

When we came out here in 1929 there were no indoor toilets and the only source of water was the pump up there opposite the amusements at McCormack's. But there was a fine golf course where I spent as much of my time as I could. I remember hearing how old Tom Gilroy started golf down there in Mornington, but had all sorts of trouble with the rabbits, as well as with local people. In fact, I remember there were about forty donkeys grazing on that part of the old course and the Mornington people used the donkeys to go to Drogheda to shop on a Saturday morning.

It was a great club back in those days and I remember men like Paddy Delany, Captain Lyons and Christy Gogarty were heavily involved. Of course, Stephen Henly, a builder, had become very involved in 1917 or so and he became secretary for a long number of years. Leo Callow, who was a coachbuilder in Westland Row [Dublin], nearly ran the club. He was one of the best organisers I ever saw. He used to arrive on a Saturday morning in a great big car – an Overland Bucket as I recall.

We had some very good players in the club in 1940 and winning the Provincial Towns Cup was the biggest achievement in our history up to that point. Tom Delany played at number one and we also had Reggie Hammond, Burleigh Davis, Frank Gogarty and Peter Gray. Myself, Tom's brother Eamonn Delany, Charlie Murdock, Des Drew and O.T. Somers made up the rest of the team and while it's a long time ago now, I think I was seventeen at the time, I still remember it clearly. The first round was against Bellinter Park, which is now called Royal Tara, and we won 5-0. We beat Dundalk playing five matches away in the second round, winning three in Dundalk and four at home.

The third round saw Laytown & Bettystown pitted against Tullamore at the Castle and *The Irish Times* reported that it was the seventh match that decided the issue, when Murdock beat F.J. Slattery on the home green. 'At the ninth it did not seem as if it would go so far as Murdock was five up,' ran the report, 'but the Tullamore player struck his best form from the turn and was only one down going to the seventeenth.'

A 5-4 victory secured a clash with Carlow in the final at the Castle on 15 August, and again Laytown ran out 5-4 winners, with Gogarty securing the winning point. For the record, the result was as follows:

TP Delany (8) bt EF Cassidy (8) 1 up

R Hammond (9) bt JA Wolfe (9) 7 & 6

P Lynch (9) bt MV Hanley (10) 5 & 4

GB Davis (9) lost to R McDonnell (10) 19th

FO Gogarty (9) bt JC Lawler (11) 2 up

P Gray (11) lost to L McDonnell (11) 2 and 1

CW Murdock (11) lost to Rev. J White (12) 1 up

D Drew (11) lost to WJ Ryan (12) 3 and 1

E Delany (12) bt K Doyle (12) 5 & 4

Given the times, celebrations were restrained in the aftermath of that momentous victory. 'None of us drank,' Philip Lynch remembers, 'and only Frank Gogarty had a bottle of stout. There was no bar in Bettystown at the time. How the club existed on just subscriptions, I'll never know!'

The Second World War left few scars on this quiet corner of Ireland, though three bombs were jettisoned by an unknown aircraft near Colpe on New Year's Day 1941. Mrs Thomas Rourke, wife of the greenkeeper at the club, told the press that she was wheeling her bicycle over Colpe Bridge when it was suddenly 'wrenched from her grasp and flung against a wall' by the force of the explosions.

The inauguration of the East of Ireland Championship in 1941 gave the better players a taste of top-class competition, and in 1945 the club was edged out in the Provincial Towns Cup by the holders: County Louth. But with Lynch and Somers improving all the time and Owen Lochrin joining the team, it became apparent that there was enough talent at the club to make a serious bid for the Barton Cup.

In the 1947 South of Ireland Championship, Lochrin reached the second round and was only beaten on the seventeenth by Jack Burke, who was making an unsuccessful bid for a seventh successive victory at Lahinch. As a dual member of Baltray and Laytown, Lochrin won the Jo Carbery Cup for the best nett in the East of Ireland Championship on two occasions, finishing joint second (as a five handicapper) behind Brennie Scannell in 1954 with a four-round aggregate of 300.

Tragically, Lochrin was one of twelve prominent Irish businessmen killed in the Staines air disaster that claimed 118 lives in June 1972. The BEA Trident was on a flight from London to Brussels when it stalled and crashed on waste ground just a few hundred yards from Staines' High Street. The accident was the worst air disaster in Britain prior to the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988.

In spite of his tragic death, Owen Lochrin is immortalised in that 1947 Barton Cup winning team photograph, after a campaign that saw the side knock out Trinity College and Joe Carr's mighty Sutton in the first two rounds. The club might not have met Sutton at all had it not been for Malahide's temporary expulsion from the GUI for changing its constitution to admit women members to the club.

Laytown & Bettystown was originally drawn to play Newlands in the first round, but with Malahide out of the equation, the draw had to be re-made and the Dublin University Golf Society was the first club to fall. Malahide was eventually readmitted to the GUI when it reversed its decision on women members and adhered to the GUI's constitution. But by that stage Laytown had sent shockwaves through the province with a 4-1 win over a Sutton side that boasted the presence of the great Joe Carr.

The side carried that momentum into later rounds, with wins over The Curragh and Grange setting up a clash with Hermitage in the decider. The first leg of the final was played at the Liffeside club on 22 June, with the visitors romping into a commanding 4-1 lead. Leading by three matches to one, Owen Lochrin helped the club to clinch a vital three-point lead for the return leg when he hit his tee shot close at the par-3 fourth to clinch a 22nd hole victory with his partner, Charlie Murdock.

The return leg was played at Laytown & Bettystown the following Wednesday. While the home side needed only two points to secure a historic victory, they won 4-1 again for an 8-2 overall victory. The players retired to the Northlands Hotel to celebrate a record-breaking day. Philip Lynch remembers it well:

Beating Sutton was a big day for the club. Joe Carr and Ray McAnally were internationals playing off scratch handicaps and they just couldn't give Den Somers and Pat Gray strokes at Bettystown. Our lads were capable of breaking 70 and par was 72 at the time. I could play to a two at Bettystown, but I was a five or six handicap anywhere else.

It was a big scalp for us and I remember that in 1947 I could do nothing wrong. If you didn't break 70 gross at Bettystown, you simply didn't win. On the first nine there, it was possible to go out in 31.

Anyway, we had such a big lead going into the home matches in the final that it was more or less a foregone conclusion. I remember we had a reception in the Northlands Hotel afterwards. Old Paddy Delany was there and he was a very proud man, I can tell you.

1947 Barton Cup winners ▶ *Back:* Pat Gray, Peter Gray, OM Lochrin, CW Murdock, PB Delany (Hon. Treas.), D Somers. *Front:* PJ Delany, JOP Roche, BV Anderson (Capt.), J Crotty, D Lynch, P Seary (Hon. Sec.).



Between the tides

The 1950s and 1960s might not have brought an avalanche of silverware to Laytown & Bettystown in terms of team play, but that twenty-year span witnessed the emergence of a new generation of players who would go on to bring the club some of its greatest moments of glory.

Owen Lochrin continued to crop up in the big championships, famously knocking out Irish Close champion Jimmy Carroll to reach the last sixteen in the 1949 West of Ireland Championship before bowing out to the great Cecil Ewing. By the end of the 1950s, players such as Derek Alwright and Donie McDonough were firmly established stars at the club, and in May 1962 they joined Den Somers, Bob O'Malley and PB Delany in the first Laytown & Bettystown team to play in the Irish Senior Cup, beating Rathfarnham 3-2 in the first round before eventually going out in round three to a Malahide side that featured Tom Craddock and Paddy Caul.

In 1963, Paddy McAuley made the side that got its revenge over Malahide in the same competition with a 4-1 win. The club was growing rapidly in size and in stature and the addition of a new clubhouse under the stewardship of captain Charlie Walsh in 1964 coincided with the arrival of new stars, such as the Smyth brothers, Val and Des, John Campbell and the inimitable Declan Branigan.

Val Smyth was certainly man of the moment at Portmarnock in May 1967, when the club once again got the better of Carr's Sutton, knocking the Dublin club out of the Irish Senior Cup in atrocious conditions. With four cards to count, the sides had finished level on 341. Everything hinged on the fifth card and, incredibly, Val's 92 gross edged out international Jimmy Carroll by one shot.

Later that year another young man made the Senior Cup side and his long-hitting prowess would make him a national celebrity in golfing circles: Jimmy Clynch.



▲ Joe Carr with Jimmy Clynch, the Hilary Golfing Society winner, 1995

The long-hitter

Laytown & Bettystown is fortunate to have produced many great champions, but before the Smyth brothers ruled the roost, before Declan Branigan, Richie McDonnell, the Moores, the Flynnns or the O'Briens, big-hitting Jimmy Clynch was the yardstick by which excellence was measured.

A native of Mornington, Clynch reckons his legendary big hitting is a by-product of rowing boats on the River Boyne during his years as a salmon fisherman. The first Laytown man to earn interprovincial honours with Leinster, he is still a ferocious competitor, as evidenced by his runner-up finish behind the former international Adrian Morrow in the 2008 Irish Seniors Amateur Open at Westport. Jimmy's multiple victories include the 1971 Waterford Scratch Cup, the 1973 South East Scratch Cup at Tramore and the 2002 BMW Leinster Mixed title.

Clynch will always be best known, however, for his legendary power off the tee – in 1980 he finished second in the amateur section of the British and Irish Long Driving Championship at Stoke Podges. Leading for most of the day with an effort of 303 yards, 1 foot, 7 inches, he was just edged out by Brian Berry of Cotswold Hill, who scored a final drive of 305 yards, 6 inches. It is interesting to note that Nick Faldo, not a player known for long-hitting, won the professional prize with a drive of 306 yards, 1 foot, 9 inches – just over a yard further than Bernhard Langer, who drove the ball 305 yards.

Clynch again made headlines for his driving prowess during the 1987 West of Ireland Championship, where he was the only player capable of reaching the fearsome 455-yard 17th in two blows in gale-force winds.

Sadly, much of the advantage that Clynch's awesome power gave him at Rosses Point was undone by very erratic putting. As a fellow competitor commented to Dermot Gilleece in *The Irish Times*: 'When he stands over a putt, his hands must be still vibrating from the whack he has given the approach shot.'

Golden years

The late 1960s and early 1970s heralded the emergence of players like Des and Val Smyth and Declan Branigan on the domestic circuit. As a raw thirteen-year-old, Des had finished second in the 1967 North Leinster Championships at Laytown & Bettystown, helped St Joseph's CBS win the inaugural Irish Schools Championship at Royal Dublin and had reached the semi-finals of the Irish Boys Championship, where Val was also beaten.

In 1969, the year Val set a course record (67) in qualifying for the South of Ireland Championship at Lahinch, Des won the Munster and Leinster Boys titles within the space of a week and then the prestigious Midland Scratch Cup at Birr, while Declan Branigan claimed the inaugural Irish Youths title at Delgany.

As a seventeen-year-old, Des was becoming something of a celebrity at the club and that reputation would only grow over the course of the following decades as he went on to make his mark on the professional game. In 1972 he won the Mullingar Scratch Cup and became the club's first Senior International player after being named on the Ireland side for the Home International matches at Troon.

A prolific winner of scratch cups, he said goodbye to the amateur game at the end of a 1973 season that saw him become the first man from Laytown & Bettystown to win a major provincial title in the West of Ireland Championship at Rosses Point. It proved to be a watershed victory for the Drogheda area and, inspired by their friend's triumph, Mark Gannon, Declan Branigan and Barry Reddan went on to lift the title over the next five years.

The 1970s had begun in impressive fashion for the club with Jimmy Clynch reaching the last sixteen of the West of Ireland Championship. In July, Val and Des Smyth played on a strong Irish Youths team that also featured John O'Leary, Leonard Owens, Mark Bloom and Roddy Carr. Val was named as first reserve on the Irish team for that year's



Home Internationals – a selection that brought disappointment for the great Joe Carr, whose twenty-three-year unbroken international run came to an end that year. While Des was capped in 1972 and 1973, Val would have to wait until 1981 to pull on the green jersey in a full international match at senior level.

It was Val who set the golf ball rolling in the Smyth family when he reached the semi-finals of the West of Ireland Championship as a raw eighteen-year-old in 1967, inspiring the likes of brother Des and Declan Branigan and Baltray's Gannon clan to redouble their efforts to beat him. Indeed, Val would go on to achieve remarkable golfing success himself, earning a string of impressive victories that would include the 1980 Mullingar Scratch Cup and the 2007 Irish Amateur Seniors Open, club victories with Laytown & Bettystown and County Louth and representative honours with Leinster and Ireland. He was denied the Irish Close title by a hair's breadth, losing to former club-mate Philip Walton of Malahide in the 1982 final at Woodbrook. Val smiles when he remembers those days:

I'm the oldest, and the wisest I might add. And I was the first to start golf in our family. It must have been 1965 when we moved into the house in Bettystown, which was originally the family's summerhouse, but was where we eventually ended up spending the winters as well. In the summer it was all about the tennis when Bettystown was a teeming holiday resort. But when the winter came around, there wasn't much to do and golf took over. I was one of the first lads to leave the club and head to Rosses Point for the West. I got to the semi-finals in 1967 and I suppose the other lads felt that if I could do it, anyone could.

◀ [Val Smyth, Irish International](#)

A winning habit

There is no doubt that the club enjoyed an embarrassment of riches for almost twenty years between 1967 and 1985, and while many of the proudest moments were achieved at individual level through the exploits of the Smyths, the Wickham sisters and Declan Branigan, there were also memorable occasions at team level.

In 1971 the club reached the Leinster finals of the Irish Senior Cup at Royal Dublin, with a side full of unheralded names at this level: Des Smyth, Declan Branigan, Jimmy Clynch and Paddy McAuley. Branigan describes what it was like for the team:

We stayed in a guesthouse opposite Royal Dublin the night before. We were to play Donabate and Malahide were playing Royal Dublin in the other match. We were having our breakfast and a guy at a table nearby was having breakfast on his own. He asked if we were playing golf that day and we said, yes. He said, 'You are in trouble, the Senior Cup finals are on.' He said he was supporting Donabate, who had Jimmy Mooney and Jimmy O'Neill and Greg Singleton, who were all Leinster players, but we were all good players that no-one knew about.

'Ah,' he said, 'we are playing a team from down the country. Bettystown or something. We'll win that easy enough.' Well, we beat Donabate 5-0, but lost to Royal Dublin. We were only kids at the time, but it was a good team.

Then in 1975, Branigan reached the final of the West. While he lost to Ian Elliott, he emerged triumphant the following year before going on to become the first Laytown & Bettystown man to win the Irish Amateur Close title.

Leinster Senior Cup winners 1982 *Back:* Tom Delany (Selector), Pat Rooney, Ray Moore, Jimmy Flynn, Val Smyth. *Front:* Frank Flynn, Declan Branigan, Michael Delany (Team Manager), Richie McDonnell, Brian Morris (Capt.). ▶

In 1977 it was Den Somers' turn to claim a little personal glory when he lifted the Irish Seniors Amateur Open title at Warrenpoint, outgunning his old East of Ireland rival, Brennie Scannell.

As the 1970s gave way to the 1980s the club had enough firepower to dream of winning some of the blue riband trophies, such as the Irish Senior Cup or the Barton Shield. In 1981 the club won the Newsam Cup with an impressive line-up of stalwarts that included Paddy Monaghan, Leo Boyle, Aidan O'Reilly, Jimmy McDonough, Eugene Corrigan, Peter Flynn, Charley McCarthy, Joe McGinn, John Taylor, Sean McCormack and Declan Flynn.

Amongst the low men there was a feeling that they could pull off a big win, following Branigan's 1981 triple crown of West, East and Irish Close titles. And the big win duly followed when the club claimed the Leinster Senior Cup in 1982.





The squad (managed by Michael Delany and selected by Tom Delany) was impressive: Declan Branigan, Pat Rooney, Ray Moore, Jimmy Flynn, Val Smyth, Frank Flynn and Richie McDonnell. But things didn't go their way in the final at Rosses Point. Four up in two matches and two up in the other two, it looked as though Laytown & Bettystown would finally claim the biggest team title in Irish golf. The internationals, Smyth and Branigan, ran out comfortable winners against Juan Fitzgerald and Vincent Nevin, respectively. Alas, Richie McDonnell lost by one hole to Jack Lynch, then Frank Flynn lost to an inspired Billy Rice on the 17th, victim of a freak accident when the head of his club came loose and the ball ended up on the beach. Everything now hinged on the final match between Ray Moore and James Carew, which went to the 19th. Both men missed the first green, but Carew got up and down for a winning par and a golden opportunity went begging. Thus Laytown & Bettystown lost 3-2 to Limerick, that club claiming the title for the third time since 1976.

The wounds of that defeat were salved the following season when the club achieved the biggest team success in its history by claiming the 1983 Barton Shield title at Royal County Down. The Leinster title came first, of course, with the club beating Malahide by one hole in the semi-finals and then Delgany by five holes in the final, which was held at Woodbrook. In the decider, Branigan and Ray Moore beat Eddie Bradshaw and Paddy Mulford by one hole, as Frank Flynn and Val Smyth beat Declan Clarke and Paddy Fitzpatrick by four holes. But it was that semi-final win over Malahide that gave Branigan huge satisfaction when he teamed up with Moore to beat Paddy Caul and the boys' international Philip Ahearne

by one hole, as Smyth and Flynn halved with Mick and Tom Craddock. Branigan put Laytown & Bettystown one up when he holed a 20-footer for a two at the 17th, before Moore holed a 40-footer at the last for an incredible half in par and overall victory. Branigan recalled:

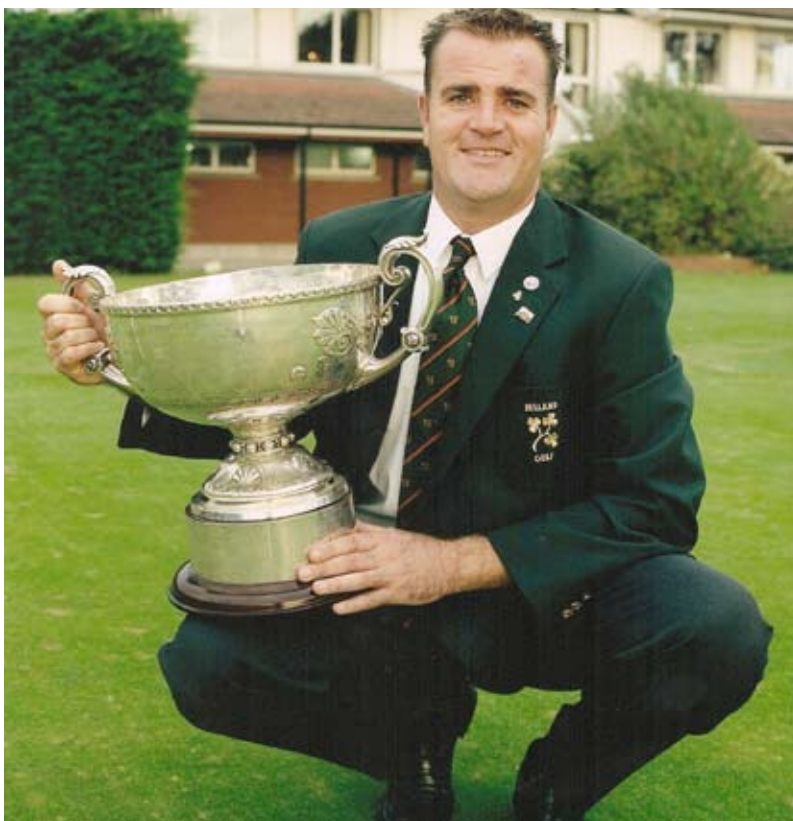
Val and Frankie had finished all square and we were one up playing the 18th. I hit a good drive up the last and Ray hit a nine iron into a flowerbed about 40 yards left of the green. I was looking for a drop and didn't get it. So I hacked the ball, and a couple of rose bushes, out on the green to about 40 feet, a good shot to get on the green. Ray holed it and I remember Paddy Caul, Lord rest him, said, 'Ah Jaysus. We didn't deserve that.' Eventually Ray says, 'But Paddy, I was aiming for that hole. It wasn't that big of an upset that it went in.'

The following September at Royal County Down, we beat County Sligo by eleven holes in the semi-finals and then beat Shandon Park decisively in the final. They had four internationals on the team, but Ray Moore and myself beat David Long and Brian Hoey by five holes and Val and Frankie Flynn lost to Neil Anderson and Michael Hoey by one hole. It was a terrible wet day, but we won it easy. We were a good team and we probably underachieved a little bit.

Frank Flynn remembers how the team was forced to return to Laytown & Bettystown to begin the celebrations rather than inside the famous Newcastle clubhouse: 'We could have gone into the clubhouse at Royal County Down, but Declan hadn't got a jacket with him, so we headed for the hills. Nobody minded in the least. It was a great day for the club.'

◀ **Barton Shield All Ireland Champions 1983** *Back:* Val Smyth, Declan Branigan, Ray Moore, Michael Delany, Tom Delany. *Front:* Frank Flynn, Des McManus (Capt.), Pat Rooney, Donie McDonough (Team Manager), Jimmy Flynn.

There would be more success for the members of that team, with Frank Flynn and Ray Moore earning senior interprovincial honours for Leinster that year. And there was still plenty more success to come for the club, with Seamus Ward and Finbar Whelan winning the Lord Mayor's Cup at Clontarf in 1992 and 1995, respectively. Furthermore, JD McGinn (2004) and Robbie Cannon (2005 and 2006) won interprovincial caps for Leinster. As a member of Greenore, McGinn had been capped for Ireland in 2002, having won the Irish Amateur Close Championship at Carlow the same year.



Greater glory was to follow in 1997, when Laytown & Bettystown secured its second All Ireland men's pennant in the Junior Cup. The team, managed by P.S. O'Neill, was made up of Jimmy Mooney, John Mullen, Finbar Whelan, Derry Alwright, Donal O'Brien, Ivor Leahy and Pat O'Brien. 'We knew we had a special panel from the beginning,' explains Donal O'Brien, who was unbeaten in nine matches throughout the campaign. 'In fact, three of our team were also playing on the side that reached the semi-finals of the Leinster Senior Cup the same year. But the whole thing nearly ended on the first morning in Trim.'

Indeed it did. In the very first match, against Black Bush, with the game tied at two matches all, Derry Alwright came from four down after nine to win his match on the 18th and keep the dream alive. After that early scare the momentum grew and wins over Headfort, Dundalk and Greenore secured qualification from the North Leinster section.

The Leinster finals were held in Baltray, ensuring a large and boisterous support for Laytown & Bettystown as the club triumphed first over Donabate, then over a highly expectant team from Royal Dublin. There was some top-notch golf played all round. John Mullen, in particular, was well under-par as he closed out one match 7 and 5, while Donal O'Brien began one match with four straight birdies and a par to be five up after five. Elm Park was the opposition in the final as Laytown & Bettystown continued its march and brought the Leinster title back across the Boyne.

By the time the All Ireland finals arrived, Laytown & Bettystown was odds-on favourite. From a qualifying handicap of five, the seven-man panel now contained a 2 handicapper, two 3 handicaps and four 4s. Along with Donal O'Brien, Jimmy Mooney carried a 100 per cent record, while Finbar Whelan hadn't been beaten since that first morning in Trim.

◀ [John McGinn, Irish International](#)

The semi-final, against County Sligo, was won relatively easily. The final was a close affair, however. Jimmy Mooney, who led brilliantly at Number One throughout the campaign, suffered his only defeat, on the 18th green. However, wins from Donal and Finbar put Laytown & Bettystown within reach of the title. The final point was secured on the 17th green, where Derry Alwright, whose father Derek had played on the first ever Laytown & Bettystown Senior Cup team in 1962, had two putts from 12 ft for the match. He needed only one, and Laytown & Bettystown had its second All Ireland pennant.

Since then, the club has continued to compete at the highest level, only losing on the last green to eventual All-Ireland champions Portmarnock in the Leinster final of the 2008 Barton Shield. Many heroes have emerged over the years, but it is fair to say that Declan Branigan and Des Smyth will always be remembered and lauded as the pick of the bunch, not just for putting a small club on the map but also for their immense contribution to Irish golf.

All Ireland Junior Cup winners 1997 ▶

Back: John Mullen, Donal O'Brien, Jimmy Mooney, Finbar Whelan, Ivor Leahy, Derry Alwright. *Front:* Brian Clarkin (Vice-Capt.), Brian Leech (Capt.), Pat O'Neill (Manager), Pat O'Brien.







Branno & Des



▲ Stars of the future, 1962

[A champion is someone who gets up when he can't.](#)

Jack Dempsey, World Heavyweight boxing champion

It has proven to be one of the truly prophetic headlines of the last fifty years: 'Golf Stars of the Future?' ran the strapline above a picture of Declan Branigan and Des Smyth, showing off their silverware and grinning happily at the camera in a pose that would become all too familiar to their rivals over the next forty years. 'I had the North Leinster Under-15s trophy and Des had the Under-12s,' Declan recalls. 'I thought the headline was a great one, considering what has happened since.'

Declan is more than four years older than Des, but their remarkable golfing careers galloped along side-by-side and brought the club more individual successes than anyone could ever have imagined on the July day when that photograph was taken. Declan would go on to win two Irish Close championships, two East of Irelands, two Wests, fifty-six Irish caps and the Willie Gill Memorial Trophy – awarded by the GUI to the country's top amateur – an unprecedented three times.

Had Des Smyth not turned professional at the end of 1973, the year he claimed the West of Ireland Championship at County Sligo, he would have added considerably to his haul of Irish caps and his growing collection of scratch cup and amateur championship titles. Instead, he went on to even greater feats on the European Tour and later on the Champions Tour in the United States. Fortunately for Irish and European golf, he stuck to his task even when the pickings were decidedly thin on the fledgling European circuit, and his two Ryder Cup appearances, eight European Tour victories and six Irish Professional Championship titles are just a few of the many highlights of a storied career.

Winning the Dunhill Cup with Eamonn Darcy and Ronan Rafferty at St. Andrews in 1988 will always hold a special place in Smyth's heart. While he might have contented himself by winning the 2001 Madeira Islands Open at the age of forty-eight years and thirty-four days to become the oldest winner in European Tour history, he set new goals for himself and in characteristic style achieved almost all of them when he turned fifty and joined the senior ranks. He won twice on the Champions Tour, a circuit he once jokingly described as 'the greatest mulligan in golf', and twice more on the European Seniors Tour, where he returned to continue his playing career in 2009.

The story of these lifelong friends and local heroes is a tribute not only to their particular brand of genius but also to the grounding and encouragement they received as youngsters at Laytown & Bettystown. Both were supremely talented golfers, but it was their cool, calculating golfing brains allied to a ferocious will to win that truly set them apart and made them champions.

Beginnings

Once Declan and Des got the golfing bug, they never shook it off. And neither could have wished for a better place to learn the game than Bettystown, which was like a big children's playground in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when holidaymakers from all over Meath and further afield came to enjoy the pleasures of the strand and the sea air. Des' father, Pat, owned a butcher's shop in West Street, but eventually moved the family out to their summer home at Bettystown. For Des, it was an idyllic upbringing:

We played golf all the time. Everybody played. The house in the square at Bettystown was no more than a drive and wedge from the second tee. We weren't traditionally a golfing family, but ended up that way because of where we lived. We lived almost on the beach and we used hit balls from a bank at the back of the house out to the sea and go and collect them. I used play off sand all the time. It's very difficult to hit a shot off hard sand. You have to catch the ball first. It's probably good for your hand-eye co-ordination. As a consequence, we were all pretty good tennis players. Ball-eye co-ordination would have started from trying to hit balls off tough sandy lies.

It was here that lifelong friendships were formed and Branigan, a man famed for having a memory that would make an elephant look absent-minded, clearly remembers his early days at the club, where he began by caddying for his father, Tom:

The daddy had a car and I would go out with him. From my house to Bettystown would be eight or nine miles. But in the summer holidays, we would cycle out from the west side of Drogheda with the clubs on our backs and play 18 holes, cycle back for our dinner as we called it and then cycle back again to play another 18 holes.



The clubhouse was a corrugated iron pavilion, nearly like a nissan hut. I remember Harry Bradshaw coming down when they showed a newsreel of him and Christy O'Connor winning the Canada Cup in Mexico in 1958. I can see him now, leaning up against one of the supports, which was pile-driven into the ground. There was a tennis court directly outside, where the car park is now. We played tennis until one or two in the day and then we played golf. Val Smyth was my great pal then because Des was nearly five years younger. Poor Des. We used to kick him out of the way, he was a little runt of six or seven with a crew-cut. He got a good few lashes.

Perhaps this is where Smyth acquired the competitive streak that would make him such a dogged competitor as a professional golfer? Before the golf got truly serious, Des recalls nothing but happy days, when a few pennies were all that was needed to scamper around the place feeling like a millionaire:

Money wasn't an issue because nobody had any. We were down to pennies. It was tremendous, especially in the summer. People would come from all over the place to spend their summer holidays and we all became great friends. It was a hub of activity. There was always something going on. There would be golf tournaments on certain days of the week and tennis tournaments on other days, which we all played.

Sean Taylor used to run the junior section. He was the main man. Danny O'Brien was the professional and then John McGuirk, of course. Then Bobby Browne appeared on the scene, what a great servant he's been. And we had Mrs Duffner and Mrs Gray, running the tennis tournaments every week. We'd all be there, a big gang of noisy kids shouting and roaring. Life was all about sport and friends. And when that all died down, you went back to school.

Young guns

Seve Ballesteros learned to play golf when one of his older brothers fashioned him a club from the head of a discarded three-iron. He would sneak onto the golf course at dawn and again at dusk to practice, but mostly taught himself to hit various shots with that one club on the beach at the Bay of Santander. Things weren't quite so tough for Branigan and Smyth, but their short game brilliance can be traced to those early days when juveniles were not allowed to use the course after six o'clock. Having been chased off on more than one occasion, they whiled away the long summer evenings by playing inventive games in the environs of the clubhouse, including impromptu games of soccer on the tennis court. For those evening golf 'games' Des used one of his Henry Cotton irons, while Declan was kitted out with a spanking new wedge his father had bought him in Clery's. 'At night, when you couldn't practice on the golf course, you had the tennis courts and the 18th green,' Declan recalls. 'And in between there was chainlink fence and we would see who could leave the ball as close to the fence as possible and still get up over it. That was where we learned all the shots that the young fellas don't have nowadays.'

It wasn't long before the boys got serious about their golf, winning cups in the eagerly awaited North Leinster Championships, making the club a standard-bearer for juvenile golf all over Ireland. But the main goal was to get their handicaps down so that they could begin to compete with the better players at the club, as Des recalls:

There was always a competitive streak in me. In those days it was dog eat dog. I am the middle brother, Val and Pat were older and Raphael and my sister Lolo were younger. Being competitive came from being down there in Bettystown, playing football and tennis and golf. You see it in kids all the time.

You give them a ball and they are at it. I remember I got my very first handicap when I was fourteen – I think it was 13 – and I was down to scratch at 16 years of age, so it only took me three years, and I was off plus one at 17.

By the time the 1960s were drawing to a close, Smyth and Branigan were two of the hottest young players in the country. In 1967, Des and his brothers, Val and Pat, helped St Joseph's CBS, Drogheda, to win the inaugural Irish Schools Championship at Royal Dublin. Later that year he reached the semi-finals of the Irish Boys Championship, and then picked up the 1969 Leinster and Munster Boys titles; Declan claimed the inaugural Irish Youths title at Delgany.

What really set Des Smyth on the road to professional golf was his form in the early 1970s, when he became one of the country's dominant players and a true scratch cup specialist. Driving a Renault 4, Smyth teamed up with Paddy McAuley and hit the scratch cup circuit with a vengeance, with Jimmy Clynch, Val and Declan joining the convoy in another



vehicle. In 1971 he won the Woodbrook Scratch Cup and followed that in 1972 by claiming an incredible eleven scratch cup wins, including those at Tullamore, Mullingar, Castletroy and Laytown & Bettystown. With the amateur scene dominated by matchplay events, the scratch cup circuit gave Smyth a taste of what he would experience on tour with card and pencil in hand. His performances soon caught the eye of the Irish selectors, and he was capped for the first time at senior level in the 1972 Home International matches at Troon:

I was knocking these things off. I was dominating [the scratch cup circuit]. That Renault 4 was a great car. You didn't have to put fuel in it. You just had to drive close to a filling station and it revved up as you went past!

The plan was to get on the Walker Cup team and things were going well when I won the West of Ireland in 1973. But then I had a car accident, hurt my shoulder and things went off.

His form evaporated and he failed to make the Walker Cup side, eventually deciding to follow in the footsteps of Laytown & Bettystown regulars, such as John O'Leary and Roddy Carr, by turning professional in October 1973. 'When Des turned professional, he wasn't that much better a golfer than the rest of us, but he had a better head,' Branigan remembers. 'He just handled situations better and he was hugely dedicated. When he was playing scratch cups, he would spend his lunch hour hitting golf balls when we would be looking for an aspirin to cure a hangover.'

It took Des six years of hard work to break through and get his first win on tour. By that stage, Declan Branigan was becoming something of a legend in the amateur game.

◀ [St Joseph's CBS Irish Schools champions, 1967](#) Johnny Gregory (teacher) with John Campbell, Des Cleland and Des, Pat and Val Smyth (all L&B members).



The irrepressible Branno

Declan Branigan has been an unmistakable figure on the Irish amateur scene since he made his big breakthrough by winning the inaugural Irish Youths Championship at Delgany in 1969. Apart from the great shock of hair and the ever-present cigarette, his most recognisable attributes have been his tenacity as a match player and his determination to speak his mind, no matter what the consequences might be.

Both qualities were there for all to see during Laytown & Bettystown's 1983 Barton Shield victory at Royal County Down, when the club took its first major national title with a four-hole win over Shandon Park. Battling not only inclement weather conditions but also a partisan Ulster crowd, Branigan teamed up with Ray Moore to clinch an emphatic five-hole win over the Internationals David Long and Brian Hoey. Ray Moore tells the story:

We started well enough and had four single putts on the first four greens. So we were one up and just coming off the fourth green when there was a voice from the crowd. 'Come on Davy, get your finger out. You are only playing a couple of pitch and putt merchants.'

Well, Branigan heard this and he was fit to be tied. 'Who said that?' he said, daring them to say it again. You could hear a pin drop. Declan doesn't like losing at all. But somebody questioning his golfing ability wasn't going to be ignored, no matter where it happened. It really did motivate him and we continued to pitch and putt and it really got to the boys. I think we knocked it round in three under par and hammered them five up.

Like his brother, Ray, Joe Moore knows better than most what made Branigan tick on the golf course, having partnered him many times: ‘Mentally, he was in a different league. Even if we were down at the turn he would find a way of saying something that would give you confidence. He had a great swing and he would point out that while the opposition might be ahead, the back nine was into the wind. He’d point out that we were better wind players and would nick back a few holes.’

Pat Rooney remembers caddying for Branigan in the Senior Cup final at Rosses Point in 1982, when he beat International Vincent Nevin 4 and 3. Four up after ten holes, he didn’t think his boss would be unduly worried about missing the eleventh green. But it turned out to be one of the key moments of the match:

I was surprised how determined he was to get that up and down for par. That was a huge lesson for me. He would still have been three up, but he didn’t want to give Vincent a sniff. If you have got a fella down, keep him down, that was Declan’s attitude. And he got up and down for his par and stayed four up. I learnt a lot from caddying for Declan over the years.

Branigan’s strength was arguably his solid, repeatable swing, which never needed much maintenance over the course of a career that brought him six championship titles and multiple scratch cup victories as well as international honours and the club championship, which he dominated and won an incredible fourteen times. However, he resisted the lure of the professional circuit when it became obvious that he might have the talent to make a living from the game. ‘I was thinking of pro golf when I was nineteen and went to UCD,’ Declan explains. ‘But there was no European Tour in 1967. Peter Alliss and Davie Thomas were playing tournaments on the Saturday and then selling golf balls on Sunday.’

Amateur golf’s gain was the GAA’s loss, for Declan was a talented footballer with Oliver Plunketts and good enough to play at minor and under-21 level for Louth before golf took over. He had his favourite corners of Ireland. Rosses Point, where he took three of his six amateur majors, is the only place he would care to live if he was forced to abandon the banks of the Boyne.

In 1975, Ian Elliott holed a 40-footer on the 18th to beat him in the final of the West of Ireland Championship. Branigan was in celebratory mood just twelve months later, however, when he beat Fermoy’s Tom Cleary 5 and 4 in Sligo to lift his first amateur major, finished second to Denis White in the East and then beat Denis O’Sullivan by two holes to lift the Irish Close at Royal Portrush and claim the Willie Gill Award for the first time.

His greatest season came in 1981, when he became the first man to win the West, East and Irish Close titles in the same season. In the West, the key victory came when he beat Tipperary’s Arthur Pierse on the 18th in the semi-finals before defeating Portmarnock’s David Conway in the final. A one-stroke win over Rupert Staunton in the East set up the possibility of completing a unique treble in the Irish Close Championship at County Sligo and Declan did not disappoint. He edged ahead of Enda McMenamin for the first time in the match when it mattered most – at the 19th.

Declan retired from the international scene at the end of the 1982 season after what he describes as ‘a clash of personalities’ with one of the selectors. While he won the Willie Gill Award for the third time in 1985, when he was beaten by Denis O’Sullivan in the Irish Close final at Westport he was recalled for what proved to be the last time in 1986 – the year he was captain at Laytown & Bettystown. It was not to be his last hurrah as a championship contender, however, as he would return to the winners’ circle in 1995 in a performance that his friend, Des Smyth, would emulate at the end of a stellar European Tour career.



▲ Irish Team, Woodhall Spa, 1981

Back row: Val Smyth, Mark Gannon, Garth McGimpsey, Desmond Rae O'Kelly (Hon. Sec.), Enda McMenamín, Arthur Pierse, John Carr.

Front row: Philip Walton, Páraic O'Rourke, Declan Branigan, Joe Carr (Non-playing Capt.), David Long, Ronan Rafferty.

Making the breakthrough

When Des set out on tour in 1974 he had no delusions of grandeur and certainly never imagined he would play 593 events before turning to the senior game. Peter Oosterhuis had led the money list the previous season with earnings of £17,455, but most were lucky to earn a few hundred pounds in a season that ran from April to September. In his first year, Des finished 208th in the money list and took home the not-too-impressive sum of £235. The following season it was £728, then in 1976 he came away with £1,348. There was no qualifying school at the time and players who weren't amongst the top sixty money-winners had to pre-qualify for events on Mondays.

A less determined man would have given up after five years of struggle, but Des stuck to the task and finally received his reward in 1979, when he eagled the 18th to beat Nick Price in the final of the Sun Alliance Match Play Championship at Fulford, finished sixteenth on the money list and qualified for the Ryder Cup matches for the first time:

I was twenty-six at the time. I had been scratching around for a few years, making no money. Until you broke into the top sixty it was always a Monday card, so you got into a few and you missed a few and drove on to the next one. It was tough [because] if you didn't get it, you were out of work for the week. And I'll tell you, the weeks were very long if the next tournament was in Portugal and the one after that was in France, driving around in a car that you couldn't afford. It was hard-going.

His breakthrough was not just a result of determination, it also came from fear:

It was fear that drove me. Fear of going back to living on a shoe string. I remember coming back on the train from Monday qualifying and you would have tears in your eyes, thinking to yourself, 'I'm going to have to get better.

I have to get better.' You weren't looking at the stars, you weren't thinking about huge careers. I decided at an early age that I wanted to be a professional golfer and to try and make a living playing the game. A big deal would be if you made enough to put a deposit on a house and get your own place.

Before his breakthrough, Des quickly learned that his game simply wasn't good enough to compete with the likes of Oosterhuis, Tony Jacklin or Brian Barnes. Hard work on the practice range was the only solution. He also used those long winter breaks to earn enough cash to finance his season:

I was coming back in those days and I was dejected. I wasn't married at that stage. Couldn't consider it unless I could support my wife and my family. So there was a period in the 1970s where I made my mind up that I had to improve.

Basically I worked very hard. I had a routine where I got up in the morning, went to the golf club at ten o'clock, practiced from 10.00 to 12.00, did thirty or forty minutes on the putting green and went home for lunch. Then I came back in the afternoon and I played a four-ball. I was lucky in those days that Bobby Browne was there, a very good player, and if the other low handicappers were free, we had four-balls.

We played for £5 and £10 with presses and byes. It amounted to £30, which was a lot of money and you hated losing. So that toughened you up. I played with Paddy McGuirk as well, he was a very good player. He had won the Carroll's, which was a big tournament and I was competing hard with Paddy.

So when you are competing with guys who have won tournaments and beating them, you know you are not far off the pace. From there it is just a matter of taking it on the tour. So that's how I gradually got better and better.

Then I went on tour and tested myself again. Back then, you couldn't do a whole season, you hadn't got the money. So I had to make money playing golf in any way I could. I played every pro-am, every Leinster Alliance where there was a possibility of making a cheque.

I remember the entertainers ran an outing called The Heads. Pat O'Donovan was the secretary. I was a young pro in a Renault 4, trying to make a living. I used to put a sheet down and say, I'll cover all bets. Whatever bet they want, I'll cover it. And they'd put down £5 or £10 and I'd go out. So I'd be under serious pressure, playing all these guys on the card. I was shooting 69s and 68s in those days and I might lose one bet. So I might make £60 or £100 back in the 1970s, which would be the equivalent of £600 or £700. That's how I sponsored myself. That's what taught me how to shoot a score.

Taking on the world

Des Smyth has no regrets in golf. At least, none that gives him sleepless nights. In a gold-plated career, studded with glittering moments, he might sometimes wish that he had played more than two Ryder Cup matches or lifted the Claret Jug or the Irish Open:

In the 1982 Open at Troon, I finished just two shots behind Tom Watson. There were moments during that championship when I felt 'hey, you can win this' and when I had the chance I made up my mind and played the shots I had to play. It didn't come off, but I gave it a go. I remember being on the 12th fairway and there's only a couple of shots off the leader at that time on minus four and I said to my caddy, I'm going for the flag from here on in. Now in hindsight it was the wrong decision because the golf course was so difficult that day from there in – pars actually would have tied me in the tournament and I was so much in control of my game. But I don't regret making the decision. I had a chance and I went for it.

Looking back, I probably should have targeted the Ryder Cup a little more. I made it twice and it never bothered me after that. Looking back, I should have made sure to make it a few more times, but it wasn't a goal. Once I had made it a few times, that was ticked off the list. I made all the teams I wanted to play on from the time I was a kid. I wanted to play on the Youths, I wanted to play for Leinster, I wanted to play for Ireland. Then I wanted to be a pro and I became a good pro. I wanted to win tournaments and I won tournaments. I definitely wanted a Ryder Cup, and I got it. So I was that type of guy. I never had a burning ambition to be number 1. I just had little goals and I ticked them off. I'd have loved to win the British Open, but that wasn't to be.

As career highlights go, that 1979 breakthrough is right up there with the best. It earned Des his first Ryder Cup cap, which ended in a disappointing 17-11 defeat at The Greenbrier in West Virginia. Paired twice with Ken Brown, he has forgiven the Scot for hardly speaking to him throughout those matches. Indeed, he turned his Ryder Cup experience into a huge positive, and soon became a serial winner. Shortly after that Ryder Cup defeat, he won the first of his six Irish Professional championships by finishing one stroke clear of David Jones in a 54-hole affair at Royal Dublin.

- ▶ [European Ryder Cup Team, The Greenbrier, West Virginia, 1979](#) *Back:* Mark James, Sandy Lyle, Nick Faldo, Peter Oosterhuis, Antonio Garrido, Bernard Gallacher. *Front:* Des Smyth, Ken Brown, Tony Jacklin, John Jacobs (Capt.), Seve Ballesteros, Brian Barnes, Michael King.



However, 1980 will arguably go down as one of his finest years, memorable for a hat-trick of wins in June that began at Gosforth Park, where he holed a 45-footer on the final green to win the Newcastle Brown '900' Open and capture his first major strokeplay title. The following week he shot rounds of 65, 67, 65 and 64 to win the Irish Professional Championship at Headfort by sixteen shots. His 261 total is just one stroke outside the European scoring record set by Kel Nagle in the Irish Hospitals Tournament at Woodbrook, in 1961.

A week later, Des won on the European Tour for the third time when he beat Brian Waites on the 6th hole of a sudden-death play-off for the Cold



Shield Greater Manchester Open at Wilmslow in Cheshire. June must be circled in red on Smyth's calendar for the following year: in that month, Des won his fourth European Tour title by edging out Bernhard Langer, Michael King and John O'Leary by two shots in the Coral Classic at Royal Portcawl. It earned him his second Ryder Cup cap at Walton Heath, where an incredible American team, featuring Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson, Lee Trevino, Larry Nelson, Hale Irwin, Raymond Floyd, Johnnie Miller, Jerry Pate, Bill Rogers, Tom Kite, Bruce Lietzke and Ben Crenshaw, ran out nine-point winners.

Another European Tour victory came in the 1983 Sanyo Open in Barcelona, but it would be another five long years before he would win on tour again, with that long-awaited victory coming just seven days after one of the greatest achievements of his career.

The 1988 Dunhill Cup at St Andrews is a milestone victory for Irish golf that arguably convinced a new generation of golfers that you could be Irish and still win at the highest level. Playing alongside Eamonn Darcy and Ronan Rafferty, Ireland beat Canada and the United States to set up a meeting with England in the semi-finals. Speaking to the press before that clash, Smyth and Darcy mixed serious moments with some great repartee. Describing the nightly team talks by the acting captain, Darcy, Des said: 'Eamonn closes each session by saying, "now, listen to me and do what you want after that".'

In the end they beat England and then saw off Greg Norman's Australia 2-1 in the final to clinch Ireland's first major professional team trophy since Harry Bradshaw and Christy O'Connor won the Canada Cup in 1958. Smyth's semi-final win over world number four Nick Faldo, by 69 shots to 70, was as dramatic as it was memorable. Faldo should have known what was in store because Smyth had always been a great match player, beating José María Olazabal in the same competition two years earlier.

The night before we played England, we sat down for a meeting. And Eamonn said, 'Right, who's going to play Faldo?' I said, 'I'll play him, Eamonn. I am playing really well. I have nothing to lose and if I get to that 17th all square, all the pressure is on him.' I stood on the 17th tee the next day and both of us were three under par. I made four, he made five. He was under serious pressure and I was enjoying every minute of it.

St Andrews was shrouded in thick fog by the time they got to the 18th. It was almost impossible to see the flag, but Des hit anyway, leaving himself a tricky 50-footer for birdie. Faldo decided it was simply impossible to play on and was jeered by onlooking students as play was suspended until the following morning. Des wasn't among the jeering crowd:

To be honest, it never crossed my mind to think anything negative about him. I was so excited and I know the kind of personality I am. When I am on go, I just want to go. That's me. Other guys are more pensive and more deliberate. If I am on go, I just go. Where's the pin? Just let me go. You have to hold me back.

Maybe that's why they were better. Maybe they were deeper and thought through things better than I did. In fairness, he made the right decision for his team. He could barely see the flag. I was a shot ahead. I was on go and I hit it 54 feet from the flag or something.

In hindsight, he made the right decision. Looking back, maybe I should have stopped. But like I said, I am always on go. Never once did I think: Jeez, the swine. Why did he do that? I just knew that I had to prepare for tomorrow because I knew one thing; if I two putt, we are going down the 19th if he makes a birdie. So it is still in my hands. As it turned out, he hit a great shot and almost holed it and it screwed back to six feet. So I knocked my putt down to four feet and he missed and I holed and that was the end of it.

Darcy is a huge admirer of Smyth's, but regards his friend's two-stroke win over Rodger Davis in the Dunhill Cup final as a bigger win than the more famous victory over Faldo. 'As a match player he was superb,' Darcy says. 'You would never have him beaten until you had shaken hands. Rodger looked like he had him beaten, two shots ahead with two to play. But Rodger hits it into the hotel on 17 and Des makes four and then Des birdies the last. That's the type of player he was.'

That win over Davis gave Des sweet revenge for his play-off defeat at the hands of the Australian in the 1986 PGA Championship at Wentworth. Indeed, he would win again the weekend after that Dunhill Cup triumph, beating Roger Chapman at the fifth play-off hole to capture the BNP Jersey Open at La Moye for his sixth European Tour win and his first for five years.

Before that, he managed to get home to Laytown & Bettystown for a brief celebration with the people closest to his golfing heart. As he turned up at the club that Sunday night, as usual, for a quiet drink, a crowd of well-wishers was waiting for him after Noeline Quirke, a member of the ladies team that had captured the Women's Senior Cup that July, used her contacts at Aer Lingus to discover his travel plans. Before heading to Jersey the following day, Des said to his fellow club members:

The importance of last Sunday's win is that it has put the icing on my professional career. I know I am a good player who can make a rewarding living from the game and I have always looked upon my tournament victories as simply business. Now, however, I have realised my ambition of doing something really worthwhile. What we did on Sunday is part of golfing history – something I can look back upon with pride, long after I have stopped competing. From now on, everything I achieve in golf will simply be a bonus.

And yet, there was more to come.



The comeback kings

Golfers lose their swings and sometimes their nerve, but the great champions never forget how to win. Smyth and Branigan pulled off two of the greatest victories of their careers when many had written them off as players.

For Declan, the great day came in the 1995 East of Ireland Championship at Baltray, when he beat Tramore's Eddie Power in a three-hole aggregate play-off to lift the title for the second time, just a few weeks before his forty-seventh birthday:

I hadn't played international golf since 1986. I genuinely hadn't hit a shot for two months before I stood on the first tee. I had a good first round, but took a triple bogey at the 15th in the second round. I came down that night to see what the draw was, had about three pints of Smithwicks and saw I was off at about nine o'clock the next day.

I went away and saw a car I didn't expect to see, parked outside The 19th. So I went in at about half ten and fell out the front door about two in the morning after drinking brandy and ginger ale. The following morning I wasn't feeling great, so I went down to the little shop in Termonfeckin to get cigarettes and the local parish priest was there and asked if I hadn't qualified. I told him I had and he said, 'What time are you off?' I told him nine o'clock, but he said, 'It's nearly five to nine.'

I told him it was only two minutes down the road and I had my golf shoes on. But I started with a snap hook and got a miracle par out of it and a miracle birdie at the second. Shot 67 and should have won it without going to a play-off.



- ▶ Declan in the bunker by the 9th green, winning East of Ireland, Baltray, 1995.
- ◀ Dunhill Cup 1988 winners, St Andrews: Eamonn Darcy, Des Smyth, Ronan Rafferty

I hadn't played thirty-six holes in a day for years and I remember saying to Barry Reddan as I went down the 11th in the evening, 'Barry, I don't know if I can play this back nine.' I was very tired and dropped three shots in the last nine holes to shoot 75 and go into extra holes. But it was mental tiredness more than anything else. Winning it came as a bigger shock to me than anything else, but nobody came at me. It was the first time I was asked to sing in public after it — and I haven't been asked to sing since!

It was the first play-off in the East since Paddy Caul beat Garth McGimpsey in 1980. But it was Branigan who prevailed as he went par-birdie-par at the first, second and ninth to lift his sixth amateur major at the grand old age of forty-six. 'Branigan's Roar' ran the headline in the *Irish Independent* the following morning, chronicling a romantic victory.

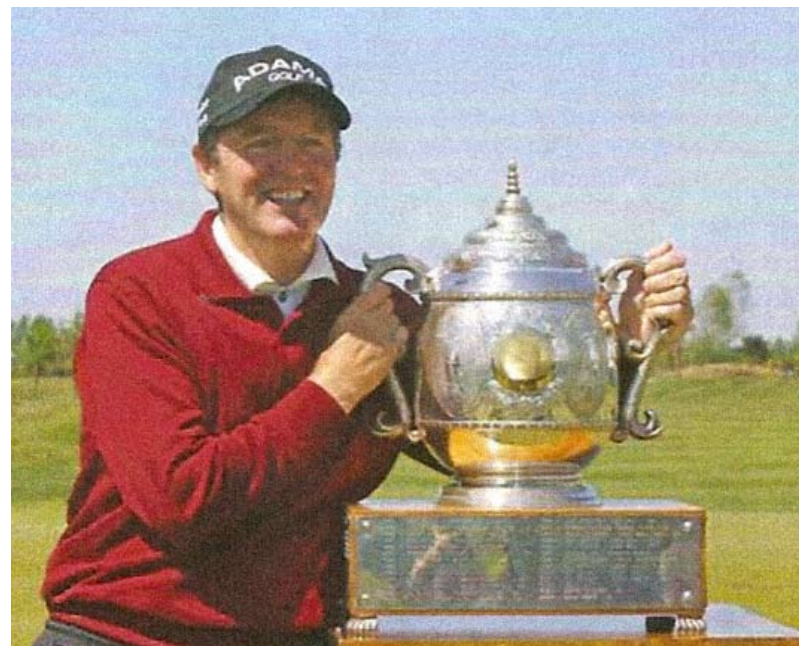
Romance plays little part in the world of professional golf, but Des Smyth's victory in the 2001 Madeira Islands Open was the stuff dreams are made of. Playing for the twenty-eighth consecutive season, he became the oldest winner in the history of the European Tour at the age of forty-eight years and thirty-four days. It was a win that provided him with a link between the main tour, and the move to a prolific second career on the seniors tours two years later.

With a final round of 66 for an 18-under-par total of 270 at Santo da Serra, Smyth gained a two-stroke victory over England's John Bickerton, which meant that he eclipsed the achievement of the previous oldest winner, Neil Coles, who was forty-eight years, twelve days when winning the Sanyo Open in 1982. Fittingly, Smyth's win came just twenty-four hours after St Patrick's Day. He was still celebrating his new-found lease of life the following July when he finished thirteenth in the Open at Royal Lytham to earn his place in the 2002 Championship at Muirfield. 'I'm absolutely ecstatic,' he said in Madeira, after collecting a relatively

modest top prize of $\text{STG}\pounds 58,000$. 'Though I had seven previous victories, apart from playing twice in the Ryder Cup, this is like an elusive dream when you haven't won for so long.'

That 2001 campaign proved to be pure gold as he also clinched the Irish Professional Championship for the sixth time by outgunning Paul McGinley down the stretch at Castlerock on Ulster's Causeway Coast. It was a win that convinced many that he could be a force in the senior game. Smyth went on to enjoy a second great career on the Champions Tour in the United States. Highly respected by his peers, he played there for six years, winning twice and accumulating \$4.4 million in prize money.

▼ [Des Smyth, winner of Liberty Mutual Legends of Golf on the US Champions Tour, 2005.](#)



The disappointment he felt after his defeat at the hands of Tom Watson in a play-off for the Senior British Open at Royal Aberdeen that season was soon forgotten when Woosnam appointed him Vice Captain for the Ryder Cup matches at The K Club, where Europe defeated the United States 18 ½ to 9 ½. He would later describe that week as one of the greatest of his life:

It was a great honour and from my perspective I enjoyed it more than I thought I would. I was apprehensive about how much we had to do, because it was a busy week. But the players were fantastic blokes and really nice people. It was a pleasure to do business with them. Now it's back to soda bread.

Des Branigan and Des Smyth have more in common than their Laytown & Bettystown roots. Their ability to disguise a ruthless competitive streak behind a laid-back façade has earned them many friends. What makes them champions is not the number of trophies they have won, but their determination to win the right way – with a smile and with a love of the game that has travelled with them since they played for fun on that children's playground that was Laytown & Bettystown so many years ago.



▲ Ryder Cup winners 2006 at The K Club: Darren Clarke, Des Smyth (Vice Capt.), Paul McGinley, Pádraig Harrington.





Welcome to the club



Just a few shots a round keep us coming back;
 what other sport offers such sudden splendour in
 exchange for so few calories of expended energy?

John Updike in *The Bliss of Golf*

(1982 US Amateur Championship annual)

Golf brings strangers together like no other sport. A stretch of grass, a few clubs and a handful of balls is all that's needed to while away a golden afternoon with a new friend. Despite its reputation as a sport for the well-heeled, golf in Ireland has always been remarkably inclusive; you are as likely to tee it up with the postman or the local cabbie as with the town solicitor or bank manager. The point was brought home to a couple of American visitors, who turned up at Lahinch looking for a game with some of the local members. 'Certainly,' said 'Brud' Slattery, the club secretary. 'I'll play with you and I'll send one of the caddies up to the village to fetch the butcher.' Mick O'Loughlin duly arrived, still wearing his bloodstained apron. His presence certainly surprised the visitors, who asked Slattery: 'Say, if the local butcher is so readily available to play golf, he sure can't make much money?' To which Brud replied: 'No, but he sure makes a lot of friends.'

Laytown & Bettystown is no different and hundreds, if not thousands, of golfers can attest to the fact that a warm welcome is always guaranteed. They have come from far and wide to try the links: the humblest of hackers and some of the greatest players the game has ever seen. A host of top events have been played here, too, one of the most memorable being the 1966 Dunlop Tournament, when Christy O'Connor Senior claimed a dramatic victory.

Christy conquers

According to estimates published in the aftermath of England's historic 1966 World Cup final win at Wembley, around 400 million people were glued to their television sets as the host nation beat West Germany 4-2 in a gripping and controversial final.

Geoff Hurst had put England 3-2 ahead in the 98th minute when his thunderbolt shot hit the crossbar and bounced down onto or near the goal line and back into play. There were some moments of indecision by Swiss referee Gottfried Dienst before he noticed that Azerbaijani linesman Tofik Bakhramov was signalling to him. Eventually, Dienst awarded a goal to England, who went on to win the game 4-2.

As debate raged the following day over Geoff Hurst's extra-time strike, the Irish golfing community was focused on an equally thrilling conclusion to the £1,000 Dunlop Tournament at Laytown & Bettystown, where Christy O'Connor Senior lifted the third of his five titles, thanks to a rather unorthodox birdie at the 18th.

Norman Drew, who was playing out of Monaghan club Rossmore at the time, was a shot clear of O'Connor with a hole to play, but racked up a seven as the Royal Dublin maestro conjured up a trademark birdie four, which owed much to a friendly rebound from local schoolteacher Michael McEvoy, to win by a shot from Jimmy Martin.

The first two rounds of the 72-hole tournament were played on Saturday and those who resisted the lure of the World Cup final saw O'Connor open with a 67 and follow it with a 66, which left him a shot clear of his former Canada Cup partner Drew and two ahead of Bangor's Ernie Jones.

THE IRISH DUNLOP (£1,000) TOURNAMENT
 AT LAYTOWN & BETTYSTOWN GOLF CLUB ON 30th and 31st JULY, 1966
 DRAW FOR SATURDAY, 30th JULY, 1966

Match No.	Starting Time		Order No.	NAME AND CLUB	Holes Not Played	Holes Not Played	TOTAL
	a.m.	p.m.					
1	8.30	12.45	1	P. FRAWLEY, Hollywood	1	4	6
			2	GUS MURPHY (A), Galway	2	3	3
2	8.57	12.52	3	BATT. MURPHY (A), Castleroy	3	3	4
			4	PATRICK SMYTH, Bray	4	4	4
3	9.44	12.50	5	H. MIDDLETON, Shandon Park	5	4	4
			6	F. CONDON, Monkstown	6	2	3
4	8.51	1.00	7	W. G. ROBERTSON, Belvoir Park	7	4	4
			8	J. BRADSHAW, Edmonstown	8	3	3
5	8.58	1.13	9	M. DOHERTY, North-West	9	3	4
			10	R. KELLY, Castlerock	10	3	3
6	9.05	1.20	11	P. P. O'BOYLE (A), Elm Park	11	4	4
			12	M. MURPHY (A), Royal Dublin	12	4	4
7	9.12	1.27	13	V. BRUCE, Dunmurry	13	4	5
			14	M. BYRNE (A), Contarf	14	4	4
8	9.19	1.34	15	C. GIBSON, Milltown	15	3	3
			16	J. P. MURPHY (A), Bangor	16	3	3
9	9.26	1.41	17	R. J. BROWNE, Berr	17	4	4
			18	P. GUNNING, Hermitage	18	3	3
10	9.33	1.48	19	T. CURTIN (A), Unattached	19	3	4
			20	J. F. MCGUIRE, Kilsenny	20	4	4
11	9.40	1.50	21	E. JONES, Bangor	21	2	6
			22	P. SKERRITT, St. Anne's	22	6	7
12	9.47	2.02	23	D. PATTERSON, Warronpoint	23		
			24	A. WHISTON (A), Dun Loughaire	24		
13	9.54	2.09	25	T. HALPIN (A), Sutton	25		
			26	J. CONDON, Athlone	26		
14	10.01	2.16	27	N. C. LYNCH, Sutton	27		
			28	D. WALLACE, Dunganon	28		

50	J. KINSELLA, Castle					
26	11.25	3.40	51	H. BRADSHAW, Portmarnock		
			52	V. STEWART, Ballycastle		
27	11.32	3.47	53	PATRICK O'CONNOR, Unattached		
			54	A. N. OTHER		

(A) - Detainee on Assistant
 Overnight leader will go out last on Sunday
 Any queries in connection with this draw should be directed to:-
 F. R. BROWNE,
 30 Kensington Road, BELFAST 5

Notes:
 1. All players should report to the Secretary, Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club, on their arrival
 2. All members of the Press will be provided with badges, etc., on their arrival at the Club.

O'Connor claimed that he could have shot 62 in the opening round had he not struggled badly on greens that had been slowed considerably by heavy overnight rain. In any event, Sutton's Nicky Lynch shaved a stroke off Pat O'Connor's course record with a second-round 65 that earned him sole possession of fourth place.

Playing in blustery conditions, there was a lot at stake for the twenty-four players who qualified for the final thirty-six holes, including an exemption into the Dunlop British Masters for the winner and vital Canada Cup qualifying points for the top finishers. But not even the most imaginative of storytellers could have dreamt up a more dramatic script for the final day.

Sunday dawned with talk of the previous day's events at Wembley, but they were soon overshadowed by some remarkable golf. Lynch's day-old course record was broken not once but three times before the tournament drew to a sensational conclusion.

Drew - the first player to play in the Walker Cup, Ryder Cup and Canada Cup (later the World Cup) - carded a course record 64 in the morning, moving a stroke clear of the field with one round to play. Paddy Skerritt, who had won the Michael Moran Memorial Cup at Laytown & Bettystown in 1965 and successfully defended it just a few months before the Dunlop Tournament, then lowered it to 63. But just fifteen minutes after Skerritt had signed his card, Rush's Jimmy Martin stormed into the clubhouse lead on 266, thanks to an unbelievable round of 62. For the record, his figures were: *Out* 4-3-3, 4-4-2, 4-3-3 (30) / *In* 4-4-4, 3-3-4, 3-3-4 (32).

Watched intently by a large gallery, Drew came to the last with a one-shot lead over O'Connor, with whom he had finished fourth in the Canada Cup at Portmarnock in 1960 and at Dorado in Puerto Rico in 1961. Just twelve months earlier, O'Connor had snatched the Dunlop

Tournament from under Drew's nose with a 3-4-4 finish at Carlow, having trailed the Ulsterman by six shots at one stage in the final round. This would prove to be an even more disappointing reverse.

While O'Connor claims he has no recollection of what happened that day, Drew remembers it all too clearly:

I took seven at the last hole and he got a four. Christy Greene told me afterwards that Christy's second shot was out of bounds. At the time I wasn't sure. So I played safe – into this big hollow with grass about four feet high! In fact, I was lucky I got a seven. I was about a foot off the fairway with my drive, but I was sitting teed up and I could have hit it with the driver again.

Christy was sitting on the right-hand side of the fairway. When he hit his second shot a crowd ran over the top of the hill and put their hands up to stop play. So that's how I know that something peculiar had happened. Christy never talked about it and I never said anything to him. The only person who said something to me was Christy Greene. Who knows what really happened? I was told to stop play until there was a decision made.

Kevin Lynch was caddying for Drew on the final day and he recalls how the Ulsterman tried to play safe, but failed. Drew takes up the story again:

So I played safe and hit a five iron because I was a shot in front. I felt I needed a five for a play-off at worst. If I had finished just a yard or so right of where I eventually finished, I would have been just short of the valley in front of the green. That rough was terrible stuff and I didn't get out first time. It took me five to get on the green and that was it.

What happened next is still debated at the club. Joe O'Neill, a member since 1956, was back in the fairway and couldn't quite see what happened around the green. He recalls: 'O'Connor hit a four-wood perfectly and I knew he would be big with that club. He could have gone out-of-bounds in my opinion, but there were a lot of people behind the green and it came back. I am not sure whether it hit the umbrella Michael McEvoy was carrying over his arm or whether he inadvertently kicked it onto the green. It was purely accidental and in any case, Drew was in terrible trouble up the left.'



▲ Christy O'Connor Senior and Norman Drew on the 2nd green

According to Eddie Farrell, O'Connor's four-wood approach struck Pat Gray in the chest, rebounded onto the apron and was then inadvertently kicked to within 12 feet of the cup by McEvoy, the principal of the national school at Laytown, who was stewarding at the time. As Drew tapped in for his seven, O'Connor two-putted for a winning birdie four to claim the first-prize cheque for £200. Despite having to settle for third place, Drew had no complaints and no doubt whatsoever that Himself was one of the greatest players to swing a club:

They talk about the distance that players hit the ball nowadays, but Christy could hit the ball 300 yards with the old wooden clubs and the old golf ball. I wonder how far he would hit it now? He was a marvellous golfer. I partnered him quite a few times. We played the Walker Cup team at Southport and Ainsdale one year and he just said, 'Hit it anywhere and I will hit it onto the green.' And he did. We gave the Walker Cup boys two up, but shot a 67 in foursomes. He was amazing.

I remember the wind was blowing at Laytown that week, but I was a good wind player because I played at Bangor and most golf was played on seaside courses. I won two North of Ireland championships and an Irish Amateur Open at Portrush, so I knew how to handle the wind. I think that even taking a seven at the last, I shot a 68 at L&B that day.

Final leader board

265	Christy O'Connor	67	66	66	66
266	Jimmy Martin	71	67	66	62
267	Norman Drew	68	67	64	68
271	Ernie Jones	72	67	69	63
273	Hugh Jackson	67	71	68	67

Boxing clever

The cream of Irish golf played in the Dunlop Tournament in 1966, but in March 1969 the ballroom was packed to capacity as it hosted some of Ireland's greatest exponents of ring craft. Promoted as a fundraiser for Julianstown Boxing Club, a 'Monster Boxing Tournament' was staged on 29 March that year, with the public paying 5, 10 or 15 shillings to see no fewer than fifteen fights, with the top three bouts featuring Olympic representatives.

The bill was topped by Jim McCourt, who had won an Olympic bronze medal at lightweight in the 1964 Tokyo Games and another bronze in the 1965 European Championships in Berlin. Boxing at light-welterweight in Bettystown as the reigning Irish senior champion, he easily out-pointed Drogheda's Freddie Collins.

Arbour Hill lightweight Eddie Treacy, the 1968 Irish Senior champion, out-pointed Immaculata's Paddy Moore, the Irish champion from 1961 to 1965. Treacy, who was also a talented golfer, had represented Ireland in the Tokyo Olympic Games and he was followed into the ring by his fellow club man Mick Dowling, who had also travelled to Japan the previous year. Dowling won eight Irish bantamweight titles in a row from 1968 to 1975, as well as two bronze medals in the European Championships. Indeed, his fight with the 1969 Irish Junior champion Terry Hanna was the highlight of the evening. Dowling had by far the better of the early stages of a ferocious tussle, but the crowd jumped to their feet when he recovered from a wobbly period in the third to nail his opponent with a series of right crosses.

‘I remember it was a very hard fight and Terry Hanna, who was from Belfast, was always a very hard opponent,’ recalls Dowling, who took a unanimous decision. ‘There were always a lot of small shows like the one held at Bettystown that night. Obviously, it was not the Albert Hall in London or the Kelvin Hall in Glasgow, which are venues you never forget. But I remember there was a great crowd in and I remember getting a very tough fight.’

The bill also featured three brothers from the local Julianstown club, who would go on to become leading figures in Irish boxing over the next forty years: the Davitts from Stamullen. Tony Davitt, now a highly respected coach with the Irish High Performance section of the Irish Amateur Boxing Association, fought at middleweight that night while his brothers, Tommy and PJ, went on to achieve great things in the toughest sport of all. Tony is proud of the fearsome Davitts:

Tommy was just a boy in the five to seven stone class that night. But he went on to represent Ireland before turning professional. He must have had over 40 fights in London. My little brother, PJ Davitt, went on to box in the Moscow Olympics and held the Irish light-welterweight title from 1983 to 1985.

The show was organised to raise funds so we could travel around the country and I remember men like Christy Nally and Vincent Thornton were heavily involved in the club. Dave Hanna was the coach. In fact, he was a manager at Butlins at the time. It was great boxing country in those days, but the boxing club in Julianstown closed shortly after that show when the parish hall was demolished to build houses.

The Davitt name is still closely connected with sport in Drogheda, with Tony’s daughter Grace serving as the first-choice goal-kicker for Ireland’s Six Nations ladies’ rugby team.

**JULIANSTOWN AMATEUR BOXING CLUB
MONSTER
BOXING TOURNAMENT
IN BETTYSTOWN GOLF CLUB**

ON
SATURDAY, 29th MARCH
COMMENCING 8 p.m.

Light Welter-weight
JIM McCOURT v **FREDDIE COLLINS**
(Drogheda B.C.) Olympic Medalist and Irish Senior Champion, 1962 (Drogheda B.C.) Irish Senior Champion, 1967

Light-weight
EDDIE TRACEY v **PADDY MOORE**
(Arthur Hill B.C.) Olympic Top and Irish Senior Champion, 1965 (Drogheda B.C.) Irish Champion '64, '65, '66, '67

Bantam-weight
MICK DOWLING v **TERRY HANNA**
(Arthur Hill B.C.) Olympic Top and Irish Senior Champion, 1962 (Drogheda B.C.) Irish Junior Champion, 1966

Feather-weight
Paul Bell v **Andy McCormack** v **T. Mahon** v **T. Davitt**
(Arthur Hill B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.)

Light Welter-weight
Tom Daly v **Joe Leonard** v **T. McGinley** v **M. Coyne**
(Arthur Hill B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.)

Light Middle-weight
John Breen v **A. Bales** v **Gerry Hanna** v **T. O'Brien**
(Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.)

Heavy-weight
Gerry Brennan v **F. Cahill** v **T. Davitt** v **M. McParland**
(Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.)

Light-weight
D. Kavanagh v **H. McAleavey** v **C. Nally** v **P. McAuley**
(Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.)

Light Welter-weight
M. Calvey v **P. Kelly** v **P. J. Davitt** v **F. Skelly**
(Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.) (Drogheda B.C.)

ADMISSION - **15/-, 10/-, 5/-**
JOIN THE JULIANSTOWN BOXING CLUB AND KEEP FIT



▲ **Newsam Cup Winners 1981** *Back:* Paddy Monaghan, Bob Keegan (Club Capt.), Leo Boyle, Aidan O'Reilly, Jimmy McDonough. *Next row:* Eugene Corrigan, Peter Flynn. *Next row:* Charlie McCarthy, Joe McGinn. *Front row:* John Taylor, Seán McCormack, Declan Flynn.

Before they were stars

The list of great players who have graced the fairways at Laytown & Bettystown is a long one. Mary McKenna captured the sixth of her eight Irish Ladies Close titles at the club when she beat Mary Kenny in the 1981 final. But the name of future Ryder Cup player and five-time European Tour winner David Feherty also stands out on the list of winners of the PGA Irish Assistants' Championship, which was played at the club from 1976 to 1989.

Playing out of Balmoral at the time, Feherty claimed the title in 1979 thanks to rounds of 70 and 76 and was succeeded as Assistants champion by well-known names, such as Peter O'Hagan, David Barton, Karl O'Donnell, Stephen Hamill and Brendan McGovern. Feherty went on to captain Ireland to victory in the 1990 Alfred Dunhill Cup and defeated Payne Stewart in the 1991 Ryder Cup at Kiawah Island.

However, the player who arguably had the greatest effect on the world golf scene was not Irish at all but a diminutive Welshman, who first rolled up in 1983 for an exhibition four-ball in what Bobby Browne describes as 'an old banger' and who went on to win two Irish Opens, the 1991 Masters and to captain the Ryder Cup team at The K Club in 2006.

Ian Woosnam is the man in question, and he also won the Order of Merit in 1987 and 1990 and topped the world rankings for fifty weeks following his Major breakthrough at Augusta. When he arrived at Laytown & Bettystown in 1983 he had just two European Tour wins to his name, but his talent was evident as he carded a course record 65 in front of a generous crowd.

'He wasn't recognised,' says Bobby Browne, who played with Des Smyth against Woosnam and Eamonn Darcy in a four-ball, better-ball match that they would lose on the final green.

[Ian Woosnam, on the 2nd green, in 1986 ▶](#)



He came in here in an old banger of a car and I remember Ian shot 65, Des and I shot 71 and Darcy had an 82. Around 700 people turned up and it was lethally dangerous.

Myself and Woosnam did a clinic on the eighteenth and he hit every shot in the book; on his knees, turning the club upside-down, left-handed, right-handed. He was fantastic. The reason I was able to work with him – and it was a million to one coincidence – was that we had both been coached by Syd Collins. When I went to Llandudno for my PGA examinations in 1964, Syd was the examiner and taught us for a week about technicalities and terms. So Ian and I would have used the same terms during the clinic and he hit every shot in the book from the shank to the top to the slice.

I remember saying to the lads: ‘This is one of the greatest swings I have ever seen in my life.’ Funnily enough, he wasn’t winning as much as he should and he told me it was because he was the world’s worst putter. So I gave him a lesson on the second green and he went straight out and shot 65.

Woosnam and Darcy were paid £750 each to tee it up that day, though Des Smyth generously waived his fee as a member of the host club. But it was no surprise that Woosnam turned up for a second exhibition match in 1986, when he partnered Robert Lee against Smyth and Declan Branigan, who was Club Captain that year. Woosnam has only good memories of his golfing time at Laytown & Bettystown:

I always loved coming to Ireland and I’ve been a great friend of Des since I got on tour in 1979. Laytown was a great spot, such a friendly club and we got some great crowds out for those exhibition matches. And I always had great respect for Des, who helped me a lot when I first came out on tour. He’s the closest I’ve probably seen on tour to an ambassador, a guy that you would almost put in the diplomatic service.

People say Des is lovely man. And he is. He’s a real gentleman. But when I was thinking about a vice captain for the Ryder Cup and was asking a few of the Irish players, the tour pros and the Irish region guys who know him so well over the years, they all said, ‘That guy, he has the killer instinct’.

Woosnam did have that killer instinct, as Pádraig Harrington found out to his cost when he lost to the Welshman in the final of the 2001 Cisco World Match Play Championship.

‘For a small man, he had one of the greatest techniques I’d ever seen,’ Bobby says. ‘He was long and he could do anything. He was the guy who could drift it across with a fade on the front nine when the wind was blowing right to left and then draw it on the back nine. He was technically brilliant for a small man. His control over the ball was amazing. The club was always travelling in the right direction and he didn’t have to work hard at it.’



The young guns

Three Leinster Boys championships were played at Laytown & Bettystown between 1975 and 1990, with John Mahony, European Tour caddie JP Fitzgerald and David Higgins emerging triumphant. Higgins would, of course, go on to earn his European Tour card, but the biggest star to emerge from the ranks on the links was the 2000 Leinster Youths champion Graeme McDowell, who finished three strokes ahead of Birr's Justin Kehoe and Balbriggan's Robert Cannon.

Cannon would go on to become a member of the club's Senior Cup team in later years and capture the 2008 Club Championship, but McDowell remembers the event as a springboard to his Walker Cup appearance in 2001 and subsequent emergence as a European Tour winner the following season and a Ryder Cup debutant in 2008:

I remember I was coming down the stretch and it was very close with Justin Kehoe. I had a great year in 2000 and the Leinster Youths at Bettystown was another boost to my confidence. I remember it was a very beautiful setting down there by the beach with some great holes, rolling in and out of the dunes and it was a really nice, picturesque golf course to play.

I remember my friend Ricky Elliott won that title in 1998 and we travelled down to Lucan in the car for his defence the following year. I played well but lost to Michael McGeedy at the fourth sudden-death hole, so I had to wait a year to see that trophy again. It was great to travel home with it from Laytown and what stands out for me from that week was how friendly everyone at the club was and how well we were treated. You could see that they really love their golf at Laytown & Bettystown. It's great golfing country down there.

- ◀ Des Smyth, Robert Lee, Bobby Browne, Declan Branigan and Ian Woosnam, 1986
- ▶ Graeme McDowell winner of Leinster Youths Championship 2000, with Captains Aileen Regan and Tommy Weir

Of course, McDowell was nearly twenty-one years of age when he lifted the Leinster Youths title in 2000. Yet many of the great Irish players took their first serious competitive steps at a far younger age in the juvenile tournaments that made Laytown & Bettystown synonymous with emerging talent.

Looking ahead

Laytown & Bettystown continued to play host to its guests in centenary year, welcoming top women golfers for the eastern section of the ILGU's Suzuki Senior Cup and Irish Senior Women's Open Strokeplay Championship, as well as the young guns for the Leinster Boys Amateur Open and the Leinster Finals of the Men's Senior Cup. Who knows what future champions will tread the links over the next 100 years? If the first century is any indication, they will keep coming back for more.







Minerals and buns

I think it's very important that we have young people involved in golf. It's not just playing golf, it's all the things that go hand-in-hand with playing the game. We can't ever get enough kids out on the golf course. Arnold Palmer



▲ Niamh O'Neill, Noeleen Morris, Kate Clark and Fiona O'Neill, 1985

Back in the early days of the North Leinster Juvenile Championships, which made Laytown & Bettystown synonymous with young people's golf, a bus full of children from a south Dublin youth club poured out into the car park. They displayed a mixture of emotions, from excitement to trepidation, as they looked around and took in their surroundings: a seaside links that was annually transformed into a children's playground during the summer holidays. To Seán Taylor and Paddy Delany, the men who founded the two-day golfing extravaganza in 1961, it quickly became obvious these children might as well have been stepping out onto the surface of the moon itself.

The vast majority of the group – entered on a whim by an enthusiastic organiser – had never set foot on a golf course in their lives. Yet Seán and Paddy never dreamt of denying them the chance to try their hand at the game that would prove to be the highlight of their day-trip away from Dublin. Who knows how many of them went on to take up the game or whether they ever became aware that they were teeing it up alongside youngsters who would go on to carve out storied careers? What mattered that day was that they were given the opportunity to try.

For those who were serious about golf, the Juvenile Championships were an important milestone. Not only did the winners of umpteen Irish amateur championships play some of their first competitive rounds at Laytown & Bettystown, many went on to play golf at the highest level in the amateur and professional ranks. Ryder Cup and World Cup players such as Des Smyth, John O'Leary and Philip Walton played some of their earliest tournaments at Laytown, as did names that are now legendary in Irish golf, such as Branigan, Carr, Craddock and Fanagan.

Played over two days, this golfing fiesta features strokeplay competitions for boys and girls, such as the four-hole Pee Wee Trophy for under-8s or the O'Kelly Cup for under-10s, as well as nine-holers such as the Trader's Cup and the L&B Cup. The Willy Hoey Cup for girls under-

12 has been won by a host of top international players, such as Carol and Philomena Wickham, Tracy Eakin, Suzanne O'Brien (*née* Fanagan), Sheena O'Brien-Kenney and Susan Gorman.

Then there is the Becton Dickenson Trophy and the under-15s Joe Carr Trophy, which for many years was recognised by the Leinster Branch of the GUI as one of the principal boys' championships in the province. Few members of Laytown & Bettystown have held office in the Leinster Branch of the GUI, but Seán Taylor, who served as a club committee member for over forty years, was a long-time delegate. There are now a myriad of under-15 boys' championships in all four provinces, but the Leinster Branch still provides the club with a replica of the Joe Carr Trophy in recognition of the club's contribution to golf in the province. It could also be interpreted as a tribute to the foresight of Taylor and Delany, who encouraged as many youngsters as possible to take up the game at a time when juniors were regarded as more of a nuisance than an asset by many Irish clubs. Roddy Carr, the son of Joe and a former Walker Cup and European Tour player, has happy memories of his time as a juvenile golfer as well as great appreciation to the older players who fostered his interest in the game:

Like Sutton, Laytown & Bettystown was ahead of the game when it came to junior golf. Your first taste of competitive action was the Pee Wee Trophy and there was always a feeling at the club that the kids were being looked after. There were the Smyths and the Gannons and the mothers were always there, looking after the troops. And this helped clubs like Laytown to equal the number of great players being produced by the traditional, big clubs.

Look at the consistent delivery of great players that came out of small clubs like Laytown & Bettystown – clubs that opened their hearts to the little kids. Out of that came the great players that would compete with the Portmarnocks and the Royal County Downs of the world. I remember playing in short pants

against the likes of Mark Gannon and they made it feel like a party. You felt important, playing a championship for under-8s... I will always remember Laytown & Bettystown with great fondness.

The second day of the highly popular Juvenile Championships features competitions for the older age groups, such as the under-19s Bettystown Cup for boys or the *Drogheda Independent Cup* for under-21 girls. The events are treated as deadly serious by the youngsters, but there was always a party atmosphere, too.

Seán Taylor's son, Denis – who would go on to marry Carol Wickham and who cherishes his Pee Wee Trophy win of 1970 as one of the highlights of his golfing career – describes the two-day event as a 'festival of golf':

It made you feel special and the year I won it, I was given a special club to use, which was a putter with a big round head. I was told it was a special club because you could use it as a driver as well as a putter. It was always a big day and when you came in from your competition, you were given a ticket and you exchanged that for a bottle of Sinalco orange – there was a Sinalco Trophy in those days – and a bun. One of the early newspaper cuttings on the events carried the headline 'Buns and Minerals at Bettystown', and that just about summed it up.



← Seán Taylor

Beginnings

In August 1932, shortly after Bob Tisdall and Dr Pat O'Callaghan won gold medals in the Los Angeles Olympic Games, the Club Captain, JA Rooney, informed the general committee that Mr Leo Smyth had kindly presented to the club a cup, to be called the Aspirants Cup, which was to be competed for annually by the high handicappers. The club would provide a replica and a box of golf balls would be divided between the runner-up and the third-place finisher. It was in this competition that many of the juniors got their first taste of competitive golf.

'That was one of the first competitions for Juniors,' recalls Philip Lynch, one of the oldest surviving members in the club's centenary year. 'Mr Smyth from Milltown put up the Cup and I remember young Joe McCann, who was in the lighthouse, won it a few times.'

As the 1930s came to an end, the villages of Laytown, Bettystown and Mornington had a population of no more than 300. Indeed, Bettystown's winter population was estimated to be thirty-six, of whom around sixteen were children. According to OT Somers' memoirs, no more than ten of the families living in the vicinity had strong connections with the club, but they kept things going in the winter months, before the summer visitors arrived to swell the numbers playing golf. Those club stalwarts were: Mrs and Mrs Tom Monks of Laytown; John McGoldrick and his nephew, Billy Miley; the Delany family – father PJ, Tom, Eamonn, Paddy, Josie, Molly and Nance; Captain Jimmy Lyons, his son Jim and daughter Nancy; Jimmy McDonough; Willow Keneghan; the Somers family – father Owen, OT, Den and Maureen; and the Drews from Mornington – Des, Dick, Bawn and Mary.

Most of the remaining members hailed from Drogheda: Mr and Mrs Joe Rooney of the Gas Works and their daughter, Evelyn; the Lochrins of the Bullring; Mr and Mrs John Daly; Maurice Collins and his family; Mr and Mrs McArdle; the Andersons – Bernard, Marie, Dot, Joan and Renee; the Grays of West Street – Pat, Peter, Jack, Eamon, Alice, Sheila.

Then came the summer visitors, unperturbed by the paraffin oil lamps or trips to the pump for water. The earliest visitors, those who owned houses in the area, arrived in May. They were club devotees such as Stephen Henly, JJ Callan, Leo Callow and Peter Lyons. Then came the families who rented houses for the entire summer, such as the Moores, the Murdocks, the Quilties and the McQuillans, followed by those who rented for a month or two. In later years former Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald, would take a house in the area, while the Neptune Hotel played host to a large numbers of visitors, many of whom took advantage of their stay to join the club on a monthly membership. 'We'd be up taking a house called *St John's* on the links road,' Roddy Carr recalls. 'You'd go out on the course in the morning and keep going round and round and round. It was where all the kids were, so you just went out with your pals or played tennis. It was a very, very happy place.'

As the 1960s and 1970s rolled in, the number of summer visitors swelled. These were the days before summer holidays on the Continent, when a trip 30 miles down the road to a nice beach was an annual highlight. The ladies International Dr Gerry Costello and her family, the Fanagans and the O'Brien-Kenneys were all regular summer holidaymakers for many years.



‘Laytown & Bettystown is where it all started really,’ says Suzanne Fanagan, who would go on to become a distinguished player, winning the Irish Ladies Close title in 1997 and representing Great Britain and Ireland in the 2000 Curtis Cup. ‘The big highlight of the summer was the Pee Wee, which was at the end of July. The first year I played, Jody finished in a tie for first and ended up playing a few extra holes against Michael Kearney, as far as I recall. And Jody won, only to discover later on that he was disqualified because he was a few days too old to take part in the Pee Wee. I was playing in the same competition and because of that I got my first ever medal. He was disqualified and I got moved up to third!’

The under-8s taking part in the Pee Wee Trophy would play just four holes, starting halfway down the first and playing to the first green before moving halfway down the second to play that hole. Every year a hole is cut on the third fairway to make a short par 3 and the children played from there to the third green, then headed back to the clubhouse. Pat Rooney won the first Pee Wee championship, in 1964. ‘I had won the same competition the previous year,’ Pat remembers, ‘but at the time there was no Pee Wee Trophy, so I was given a choice between a James Bond gun and a bow and arrow.’ Kevin O’Brien became the first and only person to win it three times, between 1989 and 1991.

Prize winning day, 1961 Included are Declan Collins, Maurice Collins, Rowan Collins, Paul Mathews, Stephen Connolly, Dorothy Moore, Peter O’Brien, Brian Mathews, Declan Branigan, Tom Walsh, Brian O’Brien-Kenney, Desmond Cleland, Kevin Lynch, John Taylor, Alan Lynch, Roddy Carr and Donal Lynch ▶

From the cuttings

Denis Taylor has a great love for the North Leinster Juvenile Championships and the families that made Bettystown their summer home for many years:

We called them the July crowd and the August crowd. The O’Brien-Kenneys owned three houses across the road from the club and Sheena would come down with her mother Judy, and Rhona Fanagan would bring her family and of course there was Dr Gerry Costello and the Trappes, who used to stay in Bettystown Square. Over the years we had some great players come down to



play – John O’Leary, Paddy O’Boyle, Paddy McGuirk. I remember Des Smyth winning the Aspirants Cup and the Bettystown Cup and Declan Branigan winning as well.

Denis fondly remembers young Philip Walton and his father, Joe, as they escaped winter golf on the sodden fairways of Malahide’s nine-hole course to play links golf. Walton, of course, would go on to hole the winning point for Europe in the 1995 Ryder Cup at Oak Hill. He was a member of Laytown & Bettystown for many years and caused a sensation by winning the Captain’s Prize as a mere sixteen-year-old in 1978. Yet the national newspapers had already heard of young Walton, and many others, through their exploits at Laytown & Bettystown in August.

On 26 July 1961 *The Irish Times* reported that ‘there was an entry of over 80 for the boys’ and girls’ competitions confined to the North Leinster Clubs (with certain invitees from Sutton and Foxrock).’ The winner of the under-10 section was Laytown & Bettystown’s K. O’Brien, while the under-11s went to Paddy McGuirk, now the professional at County Louth. David Kinsella, who went on to become the professional at Castle in Dublin, was the winner of the Joe Carr Trophy that year.

In 1967 the sixth running of the championships attracted a record entry, but Des Smyth could only finish second in the Joe Carr Trophy, shooting a 79 to a 75 by the winner and ‘expending nine of those shots at the 18th’. Interestingly, Des’ future wife, Vicki Reddan, was second in the Hoey Cup for girls under-13 that year and would feature regularly amongst the prize-winners.

Reddan wasn’t the only illustrious golfing name to take part. In 1974 *The Irish Times* reported that Malahide’s Tony Dunne and a twelve-year-old Philip Walton had made quite a day of it. They began by finishing first and second, respectively, in the Joe Carr Trophy before dashing back to Malahide to play for their club in the Smurfit Trophy, a handicap inter-club foursomes for under-19s, and again they came out on top. Walton showed his potential by shooting a 77 that day as Pat Rooney won the Bettystown Cup with a 74. Eleven years later the Joe Carr Trophy ended up in Walton hands once again when Philip’s nephew, Brendan, emerged triumphant.



Juniors, 1962 ▶



Junior Days

While the open days provided an opportunity for players from other clubs to compete in Laytown & Bettystown and for the club's juniors to test themselves against the best, the Junior Committees ensured that this would not be a once-a-year occurrence. For many years junior competitions have been run once a week throughout the school holidays, led by a long list of people, including Josie Delany, Myrtle Lee, Seán Taylor, Pat O'Brien, Dermot Reynolds, Susan Clark, Millie Wade, Eveleen Higgins and Jack McGowan. Pat O'Brien's son, Alan, describes those days:

The Tuesday competitions, as they were when I was young, were a major event for me from the time I was about nine. I can remember standing on the junior tee with about twenty other people waiting for my turn to go. There was always an enormous sense of pressure with so many people watching and you were just hoping that you would hit a good one that would get a gasp from those around you.

We would play in them every week and even though there were prizes, the aim was always to get your handicap down low enough so that you could then play in the competitions off the red tees. From there it was a progression to the green tees and a senior handicap. I was playing in them up to the age of eighteen when I was still trying, and usually failing, to get my handicap down to get into the Boys Championships.

The Junior Matchplay Championship for the Seán Taylor Trophy was played throughout the summer, with separate competitions for boys and girls under-15. This gave the juniors the chance to go head-to-head with no handicaps. The inaugural event was won by Alan Wade.

◀ **Trophy winners include three future Internationals:** Jody Fanagan (*front left*), Suzie Fanagan (*middle left*) and Carol Wickham (*middle right*)

At the end of every summer a special competition was held for junior members. There was an Aspirants Cup for both the boys and the girls, which was awarded to the player with the lowest nett score. In later years the boys would also play for the Des Smyth Trophy, awarded for the lowest gross score. 'The standard in the Des Smyth Trophy was often very high,' says the 1995 winner, Peter Curran. 'And there was the added thrill of receiving the trophy from Des himself.' Indeed, there are numerous photos in the clubhouse documenting these days and showing some very young faces, who would go on to represent the club in the senior ranks.

The juniors were also encouraged to participate in events in other clubs, both individually and in teams. Minibuses were sent to places such as Royal Tara, Howth, Greenore and Balbriggan, amongst others, often with great success. The Squire Ennis Trophy was secured just once, in Balbriggan in 1978, with a team featuring Kevin Garvey as its star player.

The Open Day in Baltray was always a major opportunity for Laytown & Bettystown's juniors to showcase their talents against their closest rivals. That rivalry was formalised in 1987 when Billy Furey presented the Boyne Trophy, a matchplay competition for boys under-15. Donal O'Brien recalls the bittersweet nature of the event:

Even at that age I was very proud to represent the club and we already knew all the faces we would meet on the other side. But in my first year on the team we suffered an 11-1 humiliation with only Essie Lyons salvaging some pride for our side. The next two years alternated between both sides but in my final year we managed to inflict a 10-0 whitewash and I made a speech at the presentation. I could not resist telling them that it was sweet revenge for the disaster of three years before.

Sixteen-year-old junior Frankie Flynn wins the 1975 Captain's Prize ▶
Bobby Browne, John Daly (Capt.), Seán Taylor, Con Murphy (Hon. Sec.)

Other notable team achievements included reaching the Leinster semi-finals of the Fred Daly in 1996. The greatest achievement, however, came in 1995 when Donal O'Brien, John Curran, Jimmy Mooney Jnr and John Blood Jnr captured the Smurfit Irish Junior Foursomes, with manager Pat O'Brien ably assisted by David Fitzgibbon. 'We had been knocking on the door for a number of years before it finally happened,' recalls team manager Pat O'Brien. 'Donal and Jimmy had come close before on a team with Alan Wade and Fergus O'Donohue and as this was Jimmy's last year under-18, it was his last chance to win it.'





It was not an easy win to secure. When the draw came out that year a strange thing happened – Laytown & Bettystown was drawn on the wrong side, which meant that the opening matches would be played against South Leinster opposition. Team manager Pat was there through thick and thin:

We had to travel to Arklow, for one match, which meant we had to stay down there the night before. Then on the day itself we were well up in both matches after nine holes, but the pace of play was very slow because we were out in the middle of a competition. Their manager asked me should we call them in off the course as the match was already over as a contest. As we had gone so far to play it, I told him to leave them out there. I regretted my decision as they made a comeback on the back nine and we eventually scraped through by the skin of our teeth on the nineteenth, where John Curran was the hero, hitting the flag with a five iron.

After a win at home against Wexford in the quarter-finals and a hard-fought victory over the Castle in the semis, the final was set up against Tullamore. The venue was Headfort, where what was a tight match for most of the way finally swung in Bettystown's favour at the end. Seán Taylor was ill in hospital at the time and having helped guide young players, such as Pat Rooney, Frank Flynn and Kevin Garvey, to victory in the same competition in 1974, he was more than interested in the

outcome. 'The day we won we had intended to go to the hospital to see Seán,' explains Pat, 'But the presentation went on so late that we waited until the following morning to go in and present him with the trophy. He was absolutely delighted.'

The All Ireland finals were held in August in Mullingar, where things did not go according to plan from the off.

'I was woken up by a noise in the middle of the night,' recalls John Blood. 'We had no idea what it was and when I turned on the light we realised that there were bats flying about the room. Panic ensued, where we were running about the place trying to get them out. Needless to say that after the episode was over, I didn't sleep again for the night.' John Curran also remembers the incident. 'The lady who owned the place assured us that it had never happened before and seemed to doubt our story. But I still have an image of Fitzer [David Fitzgibbon] standing on the bed in his boxers trying to wave the bats out the window.'

◀ Bobby's class on the 18th fairway, 1978

▶ 1988 Group includes *Back row:* Sian Doyle, Mary Smith, David Hall, John O'Brien, Niall Lynch, Penny (Andrea) McElhinney. *Second from back:* Stephen Delany, Ronan Sheridan, Joanne McElhinney. *Middle row:* Cormac Reynolds, Patrick Furey, Conor Sheridan. *Second from front:* Kevin Branigan, Colin Delany, Donal O'Brien, Adam Hall, Niall Armstrong, Conor O'Brien, Thomas Somers. *Front row:* Peter Curran, John Curran, Eoin Reynolds, Gary Lynch, Lisa Delany, Rory McMahon, Neil Branigan, Alan O'Brien.



The team was beaten in the finals on the last green by a jubilant Oughterard. However, they did manage to salvage some pride by winning the third place play-off in the afternoon.

As well as playing on the junior teams, a big effort was made by the management and the players of the Senior Cup teams to help the juniors on their way, as Jimmy Mooney Jnr recalls:

There was a wonderful tradition of the juniors caddying for the Senior Cup players. I remember Donal and myself caddying for Declan Branigan and Ray Moore at the Leinster finals of the Barton Shield one year when we were very young. It was a wonderful experience and something that wasn't available to juniors in most clubs. The lads really looked after us well and we learned a lot about the game. Just a few years later the two of us were actually playing Senior Cup and Barton Shield with Ray and Declan and again we had the young lads on the bags to make them feel involved.



The girls, too, had great success in team championships. Beginning in 1976 they won both the Leinster and All Ireland Jefferson Smurfit Girls Championship three years in a row. Carol Wickham, Ann McAuley, Susan Taylor, Phil Wickham and Joan Cahill played. Moira Cassidy signed on in 1977 when the team was extended to four people, with Mary Graham serving as a sub. For all that, Joan Cahill was a somewhat reluctant enthusiast:

It was funny because at the beginning I wasn't that into it. My brother was golf-mad, but I didn't have too much interest. But my mother told me that seeing as I had a set of clubs, I would be sorry if I didn't give it a go. And of course she was right because after I started, I enjoyed it immensely. We spent three straight summers playing golf non-stop and we got to travel to different places around the country to play in finals. I remember the ladies, like Mary Kealy and Eveleen Higgins, being so good to us and they brought us to all these different places. It was a wonderful way to spend the summer.

The Smurfit wasn't the only victory the girls had in this winning era. In 1977 the team of Carol Wickham, Moira Cassidy and Joan Cahill won the Aer Lingus Golf Foundation Irish Schools Championship for Loreto Balbriggan. 'Because the competition was sponsored by Aer Lingus,' says Joan, 'we were flown to England to compete in the finals against the regional winners from across Britain. And as we were representing Ireland, we were given Irish badges for our school jumpers. I remember my brother Paul being so jealous that I was given one of those.'

In 1983 the Girls Smurfit Championship came back to Laytown & Bettystown once again. On that occasion the team was made up of Marie McDonough, Suzanne Eakin and a thirteen-year-old Tracy Eakin; the team manager was the Eakins' mother, Pat.

◀ [The All Ireland winning Smurfit Team of 1977](#): Joan Cahill, Ann McAuley, Pat Smith (Lady Capt.), Carol Wickham, Moira Cassidy and Mary Graham.

Along with team victories, many individuals distinguished themselves in juvenile events throughout the country on behalf of the club. Donal O'Brien enjoyed an impressive under-age career, winning numerous events, including the Golf Foundation Irish Regional Qualifiers three times, in under-13 and under-15, and going on to represent Ireland at the finals in England. His most important victory came in 1994 when he captured the Irish Boys Under-16 Close Championship in Nenagh. Donal also played on the Leinster Boys Team for two years, in 1994 and 1995.

Jason Somers came close to securing a Boys Championship when he reached the final of the 2004 Connacht Boys, before losing narrowly to Andrew Pitcher of the Island. Jason went on to represent the club in both Senior Cup and Barton Shield before going on to pursue a career in the paid ranks of the Professional Golfers Association, and has said he will always be grateful for the opportunities he received in the Junior section of Laytown & Bettystown. In 1995 Connacht almost proved fruitful for Jimmy Mooney Jnr, too, when he led after two rounds before succumbing to his playing partner, Alan Murray. Michael Sweeney brought home the Leinster Under-15 Championship in the Island in 1997, and many others represented the club with distinction in Boys' golf, including Raphael Smyth, who won the prestigious Midland Boys Championship in 1970 and also represented Leinster Youths in 1972.

As with the team laurels, so too for the individual girls, who also provided many memorable golfing moments for the club. Phil Wickham won the Irish Girls' Championship in 1976, having been beaten in the final the previous year. Her sister Carol brought home the same trophy in 1978. Tracy Eakin was also a beaten finalist in the same competition in 1986,

[Irish Junior Foursomes, Leinster Champions 1995 ▶](#)

Back: Pat O'Brien (Manager), John Curran, Jack Sheridan (Capt.), Donal O'Brien, David Fitzgibbon (Assistant Manager). *Front:* Jimmy Mooney, John Blood.

losing out to Deirdre Mahon of Roscommon. Hilary Power won the Irish Girls' Under-15 Championship in Athlone in 1997 and went on to represent Ireland in the Golf Foundation finals at Patshull Park, Shropshire, later that year.

Those days are remembered fondly by everyone involved and Val Sweeney, Michael's father, is no exception:

They were great days. We followed the lads everywhere to watch them play. I remember being above at a match in the orchard in Beaverstown and thinking how wonderful it was. They were driven mad by golf. It was all they did. I'd have Michael down here first thing every morning and I'd be bringing him home last thing at night. But you wouldn't take that time back for the world.

Not for the world – I think it's safe to say that all former juvenile golfers would agree.







Flora & Fauna *by Michael Gunn*



You're only here for a short visit. Don't hurry, don't worry.
And be sure to smell the flowers along the way. American golfer
Walter Hagen (1892-1969), winner of eleven major titles

The area of the Mornington/Bettystown links is a goldmine of natural features, with a whole host of species of plants, insects, birds and even wild animals. It is the gem of the links courses in Ireland, a fact that is best appreciated when standing on the seventh tee on a summer's evening. From there, one can only marvel at the expanse of sky arching across to embrace the horizon, the cirrus clouds stretched out and tinged orange/pink by the sun and the marram grass on the dunes bending graciously in acknowledgment of the fine views. We, the club members, are very fortunate to have such a beautiful course on which to play. Of course, low handicap golfers may never experience the full extent of this natural beauty due to their unfortunate habit of keeping the ball on the fairways! So next time you're having a bad day on the course, enjoy the beauty of the place and keep an eye out for the natural phenomenon described here.

◀ [View of 8th hole](#)

▼ [Pictured on the course](#) *From left: Male Skylark, Starling, Song thrush*

The dune system used to be called The Burrows, thanks to the number of rabbit burrows criss-crossing the sand dunes and hills. As described earlier, rabbits presented a particular problem for the club founders, and populations of rabbits were 'farmed' on the links. Now there is a lesser number of rabbits, thankfully, and 'families' of foxes may inhabit the links also.

As well as Gulls, other species of birds that are commonly seen on the dunes and links are Blackcap, Blue Tit, Hooded Crow, House Martin, Meadow Pippit, Oystercatcher, Pied Wagtail, Reed Bunting, Rook, Song thrush and Starling. Occasionally at eveningtime Kestrel may be seen. Relatively rare species are also found on the links. At least two colonies of Sand Martin can be seen regularly in summertime, associated with their distinctive nest holes in sand banks.

The most important bird species on the links is the Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*). This bird is commonly seen on the ground, and then flying almost vertically to soar over the links. Some players have been known to complain about being disturbed by the birds' singing, but they would do well to remember that the lark has long been a symbol of happiness and good fortune. Join with the poet Shelley and call, 'Hail to thee, blithe



spirit! Skylarks are finding it increasingly difficult to survive throughout Ireland, with numbers decreasing alarmingly over the past three decades. For this reason their survival on Laytown & Bettystown golf links is very important.

The chemical and biological properties of the alkaline dune system at Mornington/Bettystown make it a wonderful habitat for plants. While marram grass is the dominant and main binding grass in the dunes, smaller plants are more common on the links. Flowering plants are obviously not a feature of the fairways, however the plant population of the rough and the dunes is very colourful in spring and summer. Examples of the wild plants that may be seen are Bird's-foot-trefoil, Buttercup, Cowslip, Gorse, Kidney Vetch, Lady's Bedstraw, Pyramidal Orchid, Sun Spurge, Viola Tricolor, Vipers Bluegloss, White Campion, Whitethorn and Yellow Rattle.

Some plants have a close relationship with animal species that inhabit the dune and links system, such as the Pyramidal Orchid and the Five Spot Burnet Moth. One very exciting presence on the links is the Mediterranean Sand Snail (*Theba pisana*), which appears to have a predilection for Kidney Vetch plants, particularly during very warm weather. A native of the Mediterranean, this snail is very rare in this part of the world. In fact, the

local dunes are the only area in Ireland where this snail is found. So, Laytown & Bettystown golf club has a claim to naturalist fame. One of the interesting features of *Theba pisana*, which is hermaphroditic, is that it makes and uses love darts. While this might sound very romantic, it is in fact a hard, sharp dart that the snail shoots into its desired mate during a courtship ritual. So be careful out there – you never know what might be going on underfoot.

These wonderful natural attributes have endured thousands of years and hopefully will still be there for the next generation of golfers. The club has already received the prestigious Ellison Award from An Taisce in recognition of restoration work close to a dune beside the fourth fairway. Every club member can do his or her part by being mindful of the wonderful array of neighbours with whom we share the links. In that way, we can all contribute to preserving the natural heritage of the links and the dune system, allowing the golfing community to enjoy all their links has to offer.

[Michael Gunn](#) has been a 'promising' member of Laytown & Bettystown golf club for a number of years, an independent scientific advisor to the European Commission and Secretary of the Boyne Valley Branch of Birdwatch Ireland and has conducted long-term studies of coastal dynamics on the Mornington/Bettystown coastline.





- ▶ *Clockwise from top*
 - Sand Martin nest holes
 - Five-spot Burnet Moth
 - Skylark nest
 - Black Cap by 10th hole
 - Mediterranean Sand Snail



- ◀ *From left*
 - Marram grass
 - Bent grass
 - Cowslip
 - Viola Tricolor



Love game: tennis whites and tees



Tennis is more than just a sport. It's an art, like the ballet. Bill Tilden (1893–1953), first American to win the Wimbledon men's singles title.

First serve

According to Tom Higgins' erudite *History of Irish Tennis*, Laytown & Bettystown Lawn Tennis Club was founded in 1907 under the auspices of a Mr Fitzpatrick, and with just one grass court. That was two years before the founding of the golf club and a year before the setting up of the Irish Lawn Tennis Association in 1908. Whatever happened to the original tennis club, it is certain that tennis was played at the golf club from the beginning.

A rough-and-ready grass court was available to members and visitors from the earliest days, and by 1914 Nancy Delany was established as secretary, organising fundraisers and tennis dances for the members and summer visitors, who used the three grass courts in existence by that time. Those grass courts were eventually replaced by hard courts, and in 1967 a pavilion was built to accommodate the burgeoning membership. As the golf club celebrated its centenary year, the tennis club had five floodlit, all-weather courts, which was a far cry from the halcyon days of the 1950s and 1960s when car headlights were used to illuminate the concluding hostilities to many a nailbiting Sunday tournament in the pre-tiebreak era.

It is no exaggeration to say that the world's most popular racquet sports gave hundreds of young people countless hours of fun in the post-war years. Thankfully, there were plenty of adults willing to give them a helping hand.

Wonderful women

Laytown & Bettystown won the Provincial Towns Cup in 1956 and 1966 and no one would disagree with the assertion that those successes would never have come about had it not been for the sheer dedication and enthusiasm of people such as Dermot Reilly, Joan Duffner and Maureen Gray, who ran the weekly Thursday tournament for children for nearly thirty years between 1950 and 1977. 'They were very fine examples of wonderful women,' says Eleanor McFadden (*née* O'Neill), one of Ireland's best players and undoubtedly the greatest tennis player to emerge from the club's youth system. 'They would promote what was good always. These women were goodness personified. They were the old nobility of rural Ireland and they did the hard work with a smile. Mrs Duffner was so cheery and terrific and Mrs Gray was just the same. They were the embodiment of all that is rich and decent in country life.'

Though they had only three courts at their disposal, Mrs Duffner and Mrs Gray often catered for 100 children in one session and from this cradle of talent emerged many well-known figures, including Roswitha Duffner, Lorraine Quinn, Anne Gray, Barbara and Gladys Flynn, Finnuala Ryan, Anne Kierans and Stella Smyth. Entire families donned their tennis whites – the Drews, Delanys, Littles and Leeches to name but a few.

'Mrs Duffner would always have a huge handbag with her,' recalls John Drew, who was a member of the 1966 Provincial Towns Cup – winning side alongside Eddie Farrell, Vincent Foley, Michael Delany, Pauline Drew, Helen Drew, Anne Gray and Ann-Marie O'Neill. 'They walked down to the club and did all the draws for those junior tournaments on Thursdays. They were wonderful ladies.'

◀ Five youthful tennis players who distinguished themselves in the Irish Championships in Fitzwilliam in 1952. *From left:* Eddie Dunne, Derek Little, Roswitha Duffner, Valerie Reilly and Eleanor O'Neill.

Just as the club's East of Ireland Juvenile Championship became a catalyst for junior golf in the region, the North East Leinster Junior Open Championship did the same for tennis. Driven by Dermot Reilly, Captain of the winning Provincial Towns Cup side in 1956, the tournament was further enhanced by the efforts of Mrs Duffner and Mrs Gray.

The golden age lasted from the 1950s to mid-1960s and the memories of those summer days are still fresh in the memory of John Drew, who was one of the leading players at the time. The club entered the Dublin Leagues in 1963, winning Class 4 that year and eventually getting as far as the Class 2 semi-finals, losing to Sutton. John remembers it fondly:

There were some fabulous matches in the 1950s and 1960s when the final of the Sunday tournament took place on what we called the Centre Court. It was reserved for senior players and finals and when matches finished in darkness, which was a regular occurrence, car headlights would be used to light the courts. I can clearly remember one particular match where Donie Stewart and Toss McCullen were playing Harry Walsh and Harry Sheridan and there was a bet on it. It finished in the headlights at ten o'clock. In fact, there was so much money lost that an individual got into his car and was never seen again.



Tennis mania usually hits Ireland for two weeks a year, when Wimbledon is in full swing. At Bettystown, it was a year-round passion, according to another tennis stalwart, Hughie Leech:

These were the days when Lew Hoad and Ken Rosewall were the big heroes for the tennis fraternity. Racquets were strunged with catgut and you knew you had reached the pinnacle when you got a Dunlop Maxply racquet, which could cost you as much as £5 at Boland's in Dublin, and the Dunlop Green Flash tennis shoes. Men wore long whites and the kids wore shorts. Most of us played golf as well, but I reckon I must have spent hundreds of hours on the tennis courts.

Des Smyth was one of us and he wasn't just a good golfer, he was an exceptionally good tennis player, too. And he depended on the five shillings he was going to win every Thursday in the junior tennis tournament organised by Mrs Duffner and Mrs Gray. Regardless of who he was picked to play with, he would win. If he got a real woodener, a girl who could hardly hold a racquet, he got her to stay out of the way and would fly around the court hitting all the shots. I remember Mrs Duffner saying one day, 'Desmond Smyth! You have no manners.' But Des didn't give a damn, he got his five bob and the girl got her money, too. It was a great way to meet the fairer sex.

Des Smyth would go on to achieve great things as a professional golfer, but there were stars on the tennis courts, too, with Roswitha Duffner a Leinster and Irish Junior champion in her day. Anne Gray won the Leinster Under-15 title and Patricia O'Brien, the daughter of the club's golf professional, Danny O'Brien, finished runner-up in the Irish Under-18s. However, one player stood head and shoulders above the rest and her story is a credit to the ethos of the club, where young people have always been encouraged to learn about life through sport.

'Paste the Kid'

In his 1955 *Irish Times* column, 'The Skipper' wondered why Ireland had such a low status in international tennis when a small, seaside club could produce such a wealth of talent with the minimum of resources. It was the year the club installed three new hard courts and players from Laytown & Bettystown cleaned up in the Irish Junior Championships at Fitzwilliam, taking three titles. Eleanor O'Neill won the Irish Under-15 championship, Eddie Dunne and Derek Little the Boys' Handicap Doubles and Valerie Reilly and Roswitha Duffner the Girls' Handicap Doubles. 'If one small club in a seaside club can do all this,' The Skipper wrote, 'surely others could follow suit.'

Eleanor O'Neill wasn't just another teenage tennis terror from a seaside town, she was an exceptional player and would go on to win the Irish Open girls title three years in a row from 1956 and become the first junior to lift the Maunsell Trophy as Ireland's leading female player in 1958. As Ireland's undisputed number one, it was a trophy she would lift again in 1960, 1961, 1962 and 1968. She savoured many highlights in a storied career that would see her grace the grass courts of Wimbledon, the clay of Roland Garros and the cement courts of the West Side Tennis Club in Forest Hills, New York, venue for the US Open championship before it moved to Flushing Meadows in 1978.

The killer instinct that Des Smyth showed as a sportsman could plainly be seen in Eleanor at an early age, though as a person who regards sport as an educational tool, she would be horrified by the description.

The year before her 1955 Fitzwilliam breakthrough, she was paired with the wife of an international in the women's doubles at the Co. Wicklow Championships in Bray. According to The Skipper, she was mildly amused when, just before starting her first round match, she heard one opponent whisper to her partner, 'Paste the kid'.

'No advice could have been more wildly astray,' explained the writer, who went on to describe how 'the kid' ran rings around her own partner on the court, retrieving passing shots from the tramlines, darting here and there and generally playing the leader's role. By the time they reached the latter stages of the tournament, young Eleanor was heard to hiss at her partner, 'Paste the redhead'. They lost the decider, but there was no doubt in the writer's mind why Eleanor O'Neill could come from Bettystown to win an Irish championship. She would go on to play on the World Circuit and become one of Ireland's first female coaches.

Eleanor's story

When I was eleven, my father said he did not want us going to the local picture house, as it was called then, and he asked my mother to buy two racquets for myself and my brother. In my family, to involve oneself in sport was healthy and my father was looking after our moral development. The picture house was in Laytown and we would have paid four pence to sit on the front bench, but my father put a stop to that pretty quickly.

My mother was Delia Moclair from Co. Mayo and my father was Hugh O'Neill from Monaghan. My mother was a Domestic Science teacher and she would have seen the wisdom of what my father said. She was a keen sports person herself. She played golf off an 11 handicap, never used woods, and played a lot of golf with the Delanys and all the other founder members. We lived at the end of a beautiful Victorian terrace, looking out on the sea. It was a tall house with a gable end and I spent a lot of time playing against that wall.

So I went to Bettystown and Mrs Duffner and Mrs Gray were the two women who stuck it out and held weekly tournaments for children on a Thursday. It was a dream place to be reared.

The older members came along and I remember Mr Joe Callan, who was a Golden Gloves American boxer, took me under his wing. He would collect me from school in Drogheda and my mother would arrange that he would bring me to Bettystown to play tennis and then he would be invited to our house for tea.

He always said I didn't have the killer instinct and had to go when the bell rang. I personally didn't want to have the killer instinct. I didn't like the cut and thrust and the ruthlessness of players. I felt, and I still feel, that it upsets one's spiritual and moral development to be taught to be a killer when we are small.

We are not born to be killers, we are born to enjoy life and live life. The person who disproves that theory of being a killer would be Bjorn Borg, who is so gentle. He won Wimbledon five times. A steely resolve and wanting to win is not necessarily 'killer'. It gives a lack of balance and to be good at any game you need a lot of balance, a cultural balance.

Eleanor was sent to Elm Park in Dublin for weekly lessons and, under orders from her father, she always stopped off at the Savoy Hotel in O'Connell Street for a meal.

I'd sit at the table with the heavy linen tablecloths and pay 4/6, which was quite a lot of money, for lunch. My father insisted that I had to have good food because he hadn't eaten properly when he was a child.

This regime paid handsome dividends in terms of results and Eleanor would go on to make her Junior Wimbledon debut in 1956. In 1961 she pre-qualified, with Geraldine Houlihan, in Leeds as they became the first Irish women since the Second World War to play in the Wimbledon Championship proper. 'Everyone thought it was wonderful to play at Wimbledon, but I never thought it was wonderful when I never won a first round match,' she recalls with a smile. 'I did win various rounds in the Plate.'

In 1964 she played in the US Open mixed doubles in New York and enjoyed one of her finest hours. Partnered by Ecuador's Eduardo Zuleta, they beat the future Wimbledon champion Virginia Wade and her partner, Graham Stilwell, 6-2, 6-1 to reach the quarter-finals. Alas, they lost in straight sets to Dennis Ralston and majestic Brazilian Maria Bueno, who was world number one at the time and the winner of nineteen Grand Slam titles in a glittering career that included three Wimbledon singles and four US Open crowns.

While her collaboration with Sr Zuleta did not bear fruit on that occasion, her doubles partnership with the great Dr Geraldine Barniville (*née* Houlihan) was one of the most enduring in Irish tennis. Affectionately known as the 'Terrible Twins', they shared a Dublin city flat and travelled to tournaments on Ms Houlihan's scooter. With Susan Minford, they were members of the first Irish team to play in the Federation Cup, the women's equivalent of the Davis Cup, in 1964.

All in all, not bad going for a kid from small seaside club on the east coast of Ireland. No doubt Mrs Gray and Mrs Duffner were suitably proud of Eleanor's achievements.

[Towns Cup winners, 1956: John O'Kane, Toss McCullen, Derek Little, John McConville, Donal Stuart, Matt Bruton, Pauline Brady, Eleanor O'Neill, Ida Delany, Roswitha Duffner, Valerie Reilly and Mary Williamson.](#) ▶



A social affair



Frame thy mind to mirth and merriment, which bars
a thousand harms, and lengthens life.

William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*

Groucho Marx once said he would refuse to join any club that would accept him as a member. He also said: ‘Wives are people who feel they don’t dance enough.’ It’s safe to say that he might have changed his mind on the merits of clubs like Laytown & Bettystown, where singing, dancing and generally having fun have been a century-long tradition.

Music and dance have been an integral part of the club since the first committee hired a piano for the summer season and held regular social nights in the no-frills clubhouse to raise much-needed funds. That tradition continued down through the years, with whist drives and concerts a frequent occurrence. In fact, the annual dinner dance was a hugely popular affair and even merited coverage in the national press. In January 1932 *The Irish Times* reported on the ‘Gay Bettystown Affair’ in Drogheda, when 180 guests enjoyed an exhibition of ballroom dancing by Miss Evelyn Fagan and Mr J O’Connor. In August 1939 the *Irish Independent* carried a piece headlined, ‘Golfers Make Merry’, which outlined the festivities at the Northlands Hotel, MC’d by Leo Callow. It appeared, rather incongruously, alongside a report of the memorial mass held for President Arthur Griffith and General Michael Collins.

Fancy dress was hugely popular, especially during the 1940s when the Northlands Hotel, opposite the club, was the venue for dozens of dances to the sounds of groups such as The Carltons and Pat Jackson and The Mountaineers.

A flavour of the post-war era was captured by Garrett Fox in his popular *Meath Chronicle* column, 'My Royal Meath Album', in 1981, in which he chronicled the retirement of Pat Gray and the sale of Gray's Cycle and Motor Works on West Street, where his brothers James, Frank and Jack were assisted from time to time by other members of the family, such as Claire, Peter, Maisie, Alice, Eamon and Sheila. Pat recalled the days when there were just four cars in Drogheda, the roller-skating fundraisers held in the Whitworth Hall and the golf club. James Gray Snr and his entire family joined Laytown & Bettystown and Peter and Pat were members of the 1947 Barton Cup-winning side. According to Pat, the other members of the side were Charlie Murdock, Owen Lochrin, Philip Lynch, Den Somers, Tom Delany, Joe Roche and Ernie Murdock.

He remembered Ben Dunne of Dunnes Stores fame, recalling him as a young apprentice at Anderson's drapery shop in West Street, who went to a dance in Bettystown and finished up making the journey home clinging to the outside of a Model-T Ford. Apparently, his pals had left without him, so young Benny, as he was known, jumped on the running board of the car and had to be revived with a Baby Power after a freezing 5-mile trip home.

This sense of fun was the first thing that Bobby Browne noticed when he was appointed the club's professional:

The dances and concerts were fantastic. Then there was badminton. And rings was a huge thing. Anyone who stuck his head in the door of the bar was roped in for a game. 'Browne, put your tanner in', someone would shout. There would be ten on one team and ten on the other. Den Somers had one team and Larry Flynn had the other team, one bob here and ten bob there and after a couple of games you put a few bob in your pocket.



I remember Barney Anderson as President of the club claiming presidential prerogative and he was allowed to go a foot forward. If he got any kind of a score, it was a bonus. Anyone who came in, regardless of gender, got on a team. Mickey Regan was good and so was Danny Black. It was a great fun place to be.

The formal captain's dinner was regularly held in the Neptune Hotel, while the tennis 'hops' grew hugely in popularity over the years. The 1960s–70s were memorable for fancy-dress nights and dances by The Roadrunners, a group consisting of Michael and Phil McLoughlin, John and Leontia Somers, and Bob Berney. But perhaps the best-loved of all the social activities was the annual Christmas concert, which began in the mid-1980s.

'We had a sing-song the year we were beaten in the Senior Cup final in Sligo in 1982,' says Tom Delany, who played guitar. 'So we formed a group called Par Five – myself and Ben Bailey on guitar, Bob O'Malley, my brother Michael on piano and Ray Moore.'



In the following years the idea of holding a Christmas variety concert in the badminton hall caught the imagination of club members. Sketches were written, songs and parodies created and a legend was born. Tom had a front-row view of proceedings:

Every section of the club got involved. The mickey was taken out of absolutely everyone. There was a barber-shop quartet of Paddy Holden, John Moore, Bob O'Malley and Paddy Sharkey. There were Irish stories. Anybody who could do a turn, did a turn and the quality was good because everybody had to rehearse properly. Michael McLoughlin was the real driving force behind the whole enterprise. He was wonderful.

We hired costumes and had a proper stage with curtains and microphones. The works. The first run was a matinee for the children. Pat Rooney did impressions of Tommy Cooper and the newsreader Maurice O'Doherty, and along with the songs and sketches these shows left a huge impression.

Michael Delany was largely responsible for writing most of the very funny parodies and sketches. Declan Branigan and Des Smyth got a terrible slagging in one such parody concerning the seventeen green. It was called Branigan's Hole, which was sung to the tune of 'Lannigan's Ball'. I think Declan is over it by now.

Badminton club members were very involved in these Christmas concerts, including Pauline McLoughlin, Brenda Phelan, Marian McKenna, Doreen Leahy, Grace Morris, Pauline Farrell, Derry O'Reilly and many others.

The spirit of those days still endures and it has helped Laytown & Bettystown emerge from its first century of existence as one of Ireland's leading clubs, not just for its sporting achievements but for the community spirit that has made the dream a reality.







A year to remember



James Lyons raises the flag

Let us celebrate the occasion with wine and sweet words.
Titus Maccius Plautus, Roman playwright

Golf club memories are so much more than great victories. Nevertheless, centenary year will be remembered not only for the commemorative acts but also for the club's unprecedented successes on the golf course – a sweet way to see out the first 100 years.

Victory on home turf in the Leinster finals of the men's Senior Cup was one of the sporting highlights of a year filled with great moments. The best moment of all was undoubtedly provided by Robbie Cannon, who became the first player from the club to win the historic South of Ireland Amateur Championship at Lahinch, and was rewarded for his great play when he was capped for Ireland in the Home International matches at Hillside.

Seventeen-year-old Stephen Barry played on the winning Leinster side in the Boys Interprovincial Championship, while the ladies Senior Cup team reached the All-Ireland semi-finals at Mount Wolseley and Phil O'Gorman was selected for Ireland in the Senior Ladies' European Team Championship at Dún Laoghaire and again in the Senior Women's Home Internationals at Newport in Wales. She was also a protagonist in one of the many important events held in Laytown & Bettystown during the season. Following the club's victory in the Leinster Senior Cup and a highly successful staging of the Leinster Under-18 Boys Amateur Open Championship, Phil finished second, behind the Canadian Alison Murdoch, in the Irish Senior Women's Open.

That tournament was one of the final acts of a busy centenary year that began with an historical re-enactment of the club's foundation. But golf still took pride of place and the mass exodus to Tullamore and Mount Wolseley, to see the men's and ladies' Senior Cup teams in the National Finals was a perfect example of the club spirit that buoys the members through good days and bad on the course.

Senior service

It would have gone down as the club's greatest achievement, but the blue riband of domestic team golf, the Irish Senior Cup, proved elusive once more when Frank Flynn's charges bravely fell 3-2 to Galway after a titanic All Ireland semi-final tussle at Tullamore.

Galway's Damien Glynn held off the combative Russell Durnin with a brave birdie at the 19th in the decisive match, bringing a brilliant campaign to a sad end for Stephen Barry, Paul Browne, Robbie Cannon, Russell Durnin, John McGinn, Joe Moore, Donal O'Brien and Pádraig Rafferty. It is a measure of the quality of the Senior Men's side that they beat County Meath, County Louth, Ardee and Dundalk to emerge from provincial qualifying in Dundalk, and then saw off Portmarnock and Mullingar before defeating the eventual Barton Shield champions, Kilkenny, in the Leinster final. Captain Frank Flynn, who was assisted by Gerry Wickham was disappointed but not defeated:

Back Row: D Fuller (Sponsor), Joe Moore, John McGinn, Stephen Barry, Pádraig Rafferty, Donal O'Brien, Paul Browne.
Front Row: Russell Durnin, Robbie Cannon, MI O'Connor (Asst. Mgr.), Owen Kenny (Club Capt.), Frankie Flynn (Mgr.), Gerry Wickham (Asst. Mgr.)

It just wasn't to be. Gerry and I spent twelve months chatting golf and looking at players upside-down and inside-out. To come so close and come up just short in the National Finals was very disappointing, but the future is bright. Last year we got to the Leinster finals of the Barton Shield. This year we won the Senior Cup in Leinster and reached the All Ireland finals. It is a nice progression and I think we will be up there for the next four or five years. It bodes well for the future.



The generation game

On 7 December 2008 the club staged a historical re-enactment of the foundation followed by the raising of the centenary flag by a fifth-generation member of one of the founding families. Dressed in period costume, the descendants of members of the founding Lyons, Delany, Gogarty and Lynch families visited the Drogheda offices of auctioneers RB Daly & Sons in Laurence Street for a dramatic re-enactment of the foundation, which took place in those premises on 8 March 1909.

They returned to the club by horse-drawn carriage for the raising of the centenary flag by thirteen-year-old James Lyons. The great-great-grandson of founder member Captain Jimmy Lyons, James was watched by the club's oldest members, ninety-three-year-old Ida Delany and ninety-seven-year-old Con McLaughlin, who were club captains in 1962. James was also following in the footsteps of his great-grandfather, who had raised the club's first flag as a six-year-old 100 years earlier. With the clubhouse packed to capacity for this memorable event, Stephen Delany, Jimmy McDonough and Anne Delany gave the members an entertaining account of the club's history.

This page, from top ▶

[The Lourdes Brass Band set the mood](#)
[Marlene Delany, Moira Bailey and Ann O'Brien](#)
[Delany, Gogarty, Lynch and Lyons](#)

Opposite page ▶

[Re-enactment revellers in Laurence Street](#)





Fireworks and fairways

The centenary year was heralded with great fanfare on New Year's Eve. In fact, the prize-giving ceremony for the nine-hole team event held on the day drew such a large crowd that the clubhouse had to be evacuated for safety reasons.

A ceremonial drive-in saw captains Owen Kenny and Carol Wickham hit off in period costume under floodlights from the tennis courts, which was followed by a spectacular fireworks display and a New Year's Eve ball.

On 7 February the formal captains' drive-in was attended by representatives of Bandon, Douglas and Thurles clubs, which were also celebrating their centenary years. A photo-call for all past captains was also held, followed by a reception, music and dancing.

Many other less formal events were held during the year, including some highly popular quiz nights and presentations for the centenary gold medals struck for the occasion. Hand-made by Bernard English in Drogheda, there were sixteen medals awarded in total: six for senior men, six for senior women and four for juniors.

The highlight of the social calendar was the Centenary Ball, which was held on 20 June in City North Hotel. A black tie occasion, it was attended by 350 members and guests, as well as representatives from the Irish Ladies Golf Union and the Golfing Union of Ireland. The evening was a huge success, with the best part being an hour-long photographic and video montage of times past, compiled by Willie McDonough with the assistance of Michael McLoughlin.

['Old Tom Morris and Young Tom Morris' – Mick Regan and Bobby Browne](#) ▶





Clockwise from top
Captains All: Anthony Smith 1967,
Mary Gogarty 1944, Con McLaughlin 1962
and Ida Delany 1962.
Captain's Drive-in: Carol Wickham
and Owen Kenny
Vieva Campbell, Lady President 1997-8





Centenary Ball, Clockwise from top

Top left: Bobby Browne, Ben Bailey, JP McDonough and Jimmy Lee

Top right: Gaye English, Margaret Smith, Alice O'Neill, Veronica Branigan, Bridie Durnin and Millie Wade.

Social Committee *Back row:* Ann O'Brien, Stephen Delany, Anne Delany, Ben Bailey, Pat Rooney and Pauline McLoughlin' *Front:* Ita Kelleher, Tom Delany, Mary Fergus and Noeleen Morris

Great year for the ladies

Women's golf shone brightly in centenary year, with the Senior Cup team, under the management of Maida McGowan and Aileen Regan, reaching the All-Ireland semi-finals at Mount Wolseley in August. Having battled through a field of twenty teams to reach the East District finals at the club, the ladies lost to County Louth 4-1 in the final, but still claimed one of the three wildcard places for the All Ireland quarter-finals.

Drawn against Roscommon in the last eight, the ladies romped to an impressive 4-1 win, with Alison Taylor, Carol Wickham and Tracy Eakin securing wins in the top three matches and Phil O'Gorman and Barbara Cooney called in. Alas, they fell to eventual champions Kilkenny in the last four by 4½ matches to ½. Eileen Rose Power and current International Mary Dowling notched victories over Alison Taylor and Carol Wickham in the top order. Orla Dunphy and Anne Smee completed the victory, while Phil O'Gorman was about to reply for Bettystown when she was called in from the 17th fairway with a two-hole advantage.

Ladies Senior Cup Team ▶

Back row: Ann McAuley, Alison Taylor, Tracy Eakin, Noeline Quirke, Phil O'Gorman, Patricia McAllister, Barbara Cooney.

Front row: Aileen Regan (Manager), Carol Wickham, Maida McGowan (Manager).

[Approaching the 7th green in the Leinster final ▶](#)



When Robbie met Bobby

He was just a teenager when he hiked two miles from Laytown railway station with his clubs on his back to take lessons from Bobby Browne. Little did Robbie Cannon know then that nearly fourteen years after he first made that trek, he would win his first amateur major and his first Irish cap in the space of a month. In an age dominated by full-time amateurs, Robbie's victory in the South of Ireland Amateur Championship at Lahinch at the age of thirty was an outstanding achievement for player and club. Not only did he become the first player from Laytown & Bettystown to etch his name on that famous old trophy, he was also the first member of the club to win a major men's amateur championship since Declan Branigan's famous triple crown of 1981.

While he played most of his club golf with Balbriggan, Robbie knew Bettystown well through his connection with Bobby Browne, and he jumped at the chance to join when Ray Moore suggested that playing more links golf over the winter months might help his game:

I had been going down to Bettystown since I was sixteen to get lessons from Bobby. I used to get the train from Balbriggan and walk the two miles up the road with my clubs on my back. Bobby definitely played a big part in my early development as a player and I will always be grateful to him. He is a fantastic teacher because he can spot anything in your swing. I had made the Leinster team in 2001, but I didn't feel like I was achieving my full potential in the championships. It was Ray Moore who suggested that I might like to come to the club and it was huge for me to be able to play links golf all year round. Without a doubt, the move to Bettystown played a huge part in winning the South and making the Irish team.

Robbie beat Cork's Gary O'Flaherty by 4 and 3 in the final of the South and his performance was so impressive that the Irish selectors had no hesitation in calling him up for the Home International matches at Hillside in September. It was not a memorable week for the Irish team, but Cannon played his part, winning 2 points: 'To win a championship and play for Ireland were huge ambitions of mine. It was a great thrill to pull on that green sweater and represent my country. To do it in Bettystown's centenary year made it all the sweeter.'

A second century

One hundred years after a coterie of local enthusiasts turned what was once the preserve of rabbits into a small piece of golfing heaven, Laytown & Bettystown continues to thrive. Yes, the villages that give the club its name have been transformed beyond all recognition by the relentless passing of the years, but at the clubhouse the same pride and spirit continue to buoy the members and mark this place as something special. Were they to return today, the founding families might struggle to recognise much more than the outline of the dunes and the sliver of silver strand that connects the Nanny to the Boyne, but no doubt their hearts would rise as they approached the links and saw the members and their children golfing away happily on a course they carved from a wilderness of 'bent and sand'. Community spirit has helped Laytown & Bettystown to grow from a seasonal club for local enthusiasts and holidaymakers into one of the most vibrant clubs in the country. All of the members, past and present, have done their part to ensure that the true legacy of the founding fathers is still being honoured and passed on, and long may that be so.

[Robbie Cannon with his South of Ireland trophy \(left\) ▶](#)

[Driving off at the 7th \(top right\) ▶](#)

[Russell Durnin in the Leinster final \(bottom right\) ▶](#)





Men's Committee *Back:* Arthur Mullan, Joe O'Toole, Paul Browne, Bernard O'Reilly, Pat O'Brien, Richard Whelan and Declan Flynn. *Front:* Peter Whelan, Owen Kenny, Noel McGoldrick. Absent: Michael O'Connor.

At your service: Richard, Albert, Helen and Rowan.

Ladies Committee *Back:* Aileen Regan, Marie McLoughlin, Margaret Smith, Lorraine Lynch, Ita Kelleher, Rita O'Connor, and Irene McManus. *Front:* Mary Delany, Carol Wickham, Helen Cremin and Rita Long. Absent: Pat Stokes, Kathleen Delaney.

Greenkeeping Staff (with mowers dating from 1909 to 2009): Stephen Hoey (Head Keeper), Patrick McGivney, Eamon Reynolds, Colin Sweeney, Dariusz Sarna, David Collier.



Centenary Committee *Back*: Aileen Regan, Helen Cremin, Hughie Leech, Alice O'Neill, Pat O'Brien, Anne Cooney, Tom Delany, Michael Breheny, Eamon Cooney, Rita Long and Richard Whelan. *Front*: Owen Kenny, Carol Wickham, Brian Clarkin (Chairperson), Pat Delany.

Laytown & Bettystown Council *Back*: Russell Durnin, Joe O'Toole, Noeline Quirke, Pat O'Brien, Peter Whelan, Anne Delany, Oliver O'Sullivan, Richard Whelan and Eamon Cooney. *Front*: Helen Cremin, Owen Kenny, Carol Wickham and Noel McGoldrick.

History Committee 2009: JP McDonough, Colm Browne, Jack McGowan, Anne Delany and Denis Taylor.





The honour list



Past Lady Captains and Presidents *Front row:* Mary Gogarty, Ida Delany, Pat Flynn, Ursula Hoey, Josie Smyth, Joan Lenehan, Mary Delany (Lady Centenary President), Carol Wickham (Lady Centenary Captain), Rita Long, Pat Smyth, Blauna Delany, Mary Collins, Vieva Campbell. *Middle row:* Breda Daly, Phil O'Gorman, Margaret O'Neill, Eveleen Higgins, Kathleen Alwright, Joan Tully, Florence Greene, Pauline Simpson, Doreen Leahy, Alice O'Neill, Margaret Spellman, Pat Delany, Pat Eakin, Grace Morris, Myrtle Lee, Marie McAuley, Olive MacMahon. *Back row:* Hazel Lee, Adri Berney, Olive McKee, Ita Collins, Helen Delany, Oonagh Dillon, Mary Kealy, Aileen Regan, Irene McManus, Aylish Graham, Mary McElhinney, Sheila Molloy, Anne Cooney.



Past Captains and Presidents *Front row:* Eugene Corrigan, Tommy Weir, John Daly, Con McLaughlin, Owen Kenny, Anthony Smith, Joe Costello, Jack Sheridan, Tim Murray, Jimmy Clynch, Joe Cremin. *Middle row:* Colm Browne, Tom Reid, Liam Clarke, Bernard English, Tom Delany, John Riordan, Paddy McAuley, Dermot Reynolds, Donal Branigan, Brian Clarkin, Stephen Kavanagh. *Back row:* Tom Ryan, Michael McLoughlin, Paddy Holden, Declan Branigan, Dick Walsh, John Moore, Richard Whelan, Jimmy McDonough, Ray Moore, Tom Lynch, Pat O'Brien, Michael Breheny.

Captains 1909–2009

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1909	P Tallan	1938	JF Hynes	1967	PA Smith	1996	Michael McLoughlin
1910	J Markey	1939	P Gray	1968	JP McDonough	1997	Brian Leech
1911	J Markey	1940	PL Cooney	1969	DB Somers	1998	Brian Clarkin
1912	PJ Delany	1941	PL Cooney	1970	DF Alwright	1999	Stephen Kavanagh
1913	PJ Delany	1942	R McCabe	1971	P McLoughlin	2000	Tommy Weir
1914	PJ Delany	1943	OM Lochrin	1972	P McLoughlin	2001	Jimmy Clynch
1915	PJ Delany	1944	C Crinion	1973	PB Bellew	2002	TP Ryan
1916	PJ Delany	1945	D Drew	1974	MT Donnelly	2003	Joe Costello
1917	R Murdock	1946	BV Anderson	1975	J Daly	2004	Bernard English
1918	LJ Callan	1947	BV Anderson	1976	TJ Murray	2005	Ray Moore
1919	S Nicholl	1948	DB Somers	1977	TJ Lynch	2006	Eugene Corrigan
1920	PL Lynch	1949	PB Delany	1978	C Murphy	2007	Tom Reid
1921	PJ Delany	1950	P Gray	1979	PF Holden	2008	Richard Whelan
1922	J McGoldrick	1951	CW Murdock	1980	PJ Sharkey	2009	Owen Kenny
1923	J McDonough	1952	BF Mullen	1981	RJ Keegan		
1924	JR Smith	1953	RA Deane	1982	BN Morris		
1925	EJ Keogh	1954	ED Murdock	1983	DP McManus		
1926	A Munroe	1955	D Hayes	1984	S Taylor		
1927	SJ Henley	1956	BF Mullen	1985	HA McDonough		
1928	W Green	1957	OT Somers	1986	D Branigan		
1929	JJ Lyons	1958	JOP Roche	1987	TD Delany		
1930	M Collins	1959	E Delany	1988	PA O'Brien		
1931	JA Rooney	1960	E Delany	1989	J Riordan		
1932	JA Rooney	1961	PJ McPhilemy	1990	Dr J Cremin		
1933	JT Monk	1962	C McLoughlin	1991	MP Breheny		
1934	J McGoldrick	1963	CH Walsh	1992	Donal Branigan		
1935	T Delany	1964	CH Walsh	1993	Dick Walsh		
1936	SJ Henley	1965	PB Delany	1994	John Moore		
1937	CW Murdock	1966	LF Flynn	1995	Jack Sheridan		



▲ Breda (1983) and John Daly (1975)

Lady Captains 1930-2009

1930	Mrs JA Rooney	1959	Miss M McDonough
1931	Mrs JA Rooney	1960	Miss P Roche
1932	Mrs J Healy	1961	Mrs C Crinion
1933	Mrs S Henley	1962	Mrs TP Delany
1934	Miss E Murdock	1963	Mrs P Gray
1935	Mrs CW Murdock	1964	Mrs PB Delany
1936	Miss J Delany	1965	Miss E McDonough
1937	Miss A Wall	1966	Mrs S Taylor
1938	Mrs N Leahy	1967	Mrs D O'Neill
1939	Mrs J Hardy	1968	Miss M Black
1940	Mrs T Monk	1969	Mrs K O'Brien-Kenney
1941	Miss K Fox	1970	Miss MP Delany
1942	Mrs T Jones	1971	Mrs M Farrell
1943	Miss M Delany	1972	Mrs P McLoughlin
1944	Mrs M Gogarty	1973	Mrs LF Flynn
1945	Mrs D Drew	1974	Mrs S Collins
1946	Mrs LF Branigan	1975	Mrs C Murphy
1947	Miss M McCullough	1976	Mrs TJ Lynch
1948	Mrs BT Matthews	1977	Miss PM Smith
1949	Miss M Delany	1978	Miss Mary P Kealy
1950	Mrs CW Murdock	1979	Mrs M Williamson
1951	Mrs P Connolly	1980	Mrs WR Lee
1952	Mrs WP Lappin	1981	Mrs GE Clancy
1953	Mrs RA Drew	1982	Mrs B Wickham
1954	Mrs I Macalester	1983	Mrs J Daly
1955	Miss J Delany	1984	Mrs DA Collins
1956	Miss G McNamara	1985	Mrs J Smyth
1957	Mrs F Hoey	1986	Mrs Joan Tully
1958	Mrs P Gray	1987	Mrs Hazel Lee

1988	Mrs O Dillon
1989	Mrs M McElhinney
1990	Mrs D Leahy
1991	Eveleen Higgins
1992	Phil Wickham
1993	Mrs Pauline Simpson
1994	Mrs Margaret O'Neill
1995	Kathleen Alwright
1996	Mrs Pat Delany
1997	Mrs Grace Morris
1998	Florence Greene
1999	Mrs Irene McManus
2000	Mrs Aileen Regan
2001	Mrs Margaret Spellman
2002	Mrs Helen Delany
2003	Mrs Adri Berney
2004	Mrs Pat Eakin
2005	Mrs Olive McMahon
2006	Alice O'Neill
2007	Anne Cooney
2008	Mrs Rita Long
2009	Carol Wickham

Junior Captains 2004-09

2004	Jason Somers Sally Rooney
2005	David Kelleher Lauren McBride Fields
2006	Alan Cremin Aimee Wickham
2007	Ross Cullinane Kerry Cahill
2008	Tadhg McHugh Sorcha Hughes
2009	Niall Yelverton Aveen Rooney



▲ Junior Captains 2009

Presidents 1910–2009

1910	GH Daly	1987–8	C Murphy
1928–34	P Lyons	1989–90	PJ McAuley
1938–47	PJ Delany	1991–2	Seán Taylor
1963–4	TP Delany	1993–4	John Riordan
1965–6	BV Anderson	1995–6	Colm Browne
1967–8	C Crinion	1997–8	TJ Lynch
1969–70	E Delany	1999–2000	Dick Walsh
1971–2	P Gray	2001–2	Dermot Reynolds
1973–4	PB Delany	2003	Brian Morris
1975–6	OT Somers	2004	John Moore
1977–8	C McLaughlin	2005	Joe Cremin
1979–80	DB Somers	2006	Michael Breheny
1981–2	T Dwyer	2007	Brian Clarkin
1983–4	LF Flynn	2008	Liam Clarke
1985–6	JP McDonough	2009	Des Smyth

Lady Presidents 1975–2009

1975–7	Miss Josie Delany	2000	Mrs Josie Smyth
1978–80	Miss Anna Wall	2001	Mrs Myrtle Lee
1981–3	Mrs Blauna Delany	2002	Mrs Mary Collins
1984–6	Mrs Stella Crinion	2003	Mrs Breda Daly
1987–8	Mrs Mary Murphy	2004	Patricia Smyth
1989–90	Mrs May Farrell	2005	Mrs Sheila Molloy
1991–2	Mrs Marie McAuley	2006	Mrs Olive McKee
1993–4	Mrs Bawn Drew	2007	Mrs Pat Flynn
1995–6	Mrs Maureen Taylor	2008	Mrs Joan Lenehan
1997–8	Mrs Vievea Campbell	2009	Mary Delany
1999	Mrs Aylish Graham		

Club Champions 1966–2009

1966	DF Alwright	1988	Declan Branigan
1967	FR McNulty	1989	Declan Branigan
1968	DF Alwright	1990	Pat O'Brien
1969	FR McNulty	1991	Joe Moore
1970	Jimmy Clynych	1992	Ray Moore
1971	Des Smyth	1993	Ray Moore
1972	Declan Branigan	1994	Final not played
1973	Declan Branigan	1995	Donal O'Brien
1974	Declan Branigan	1996	Ray Moore
1975	Declan Branigan	1997	Ray Moore
1976	Jimmy Clynych	1998	Joe Moore
1977	Declan Branigan	1999	Derry Alwright
1978	Declan Branigan	2000	Pat O'Brien
1979	Declan Branigan	2001	Frank Flynn
1980	Declan Branigan	2002	Donal O'Brien
1981	Declan Branigan	2003	Donal O'Brien
1982	Frank Flynn	2004	Jason Somers
1983	PJ Leech	2005	Pat O'Brien
1984	Declan Branigan	2006	Donal O'Brien
1985	Declan Branigan	2007	John McGinn
1986	Declan Branigan	2008	Robbie Cannon
1987	Declan Branigan	2009	John McGinn

Captain's Prize Winners

1957	Tom Delany	1984	W Courtney
1958	Tom Finglas	1985	Dick Walsh
1959	Cathal Campbell	1986	H Stanley
1960	Jimmy McDonough	1987	Kieran Reynolds
1961	Pat Leech	1988	Noel Hatch
1962	Bob O'Malley	1989	Tommy Weir
1963	Paddy Whyte	1990	Des McManus
1964	Des Lynch	1991	Kevin Garvey
1965	Val Sweeney	1992	Paddy Traynor
1966	Con McLaughlin	1993	Niall Cronin
1967	Debbie McNulty	1994	Paul Griffin
1968	Brian O'Brien-Kenney	1995	Eamon Garvey
1969	Jim Cluskey	1996	Martin Behan
1970	Des Smyth	1997	Brian Clarkin
1971	Tony Smith	1998	Eugene Corrigan
1972	AP Hayes	1999	TP Ryan
1973	Paddy Whyte	2000	Tommy Reilly
1974	John Moore	2001	Brian Clarkin
1975	Frank Flynn	2002	Tom Reid
1976	Val Smyth	2003	Val Rock
1977	Peter Meehan	2004	Brendan Connolly
1978	Philip Walton	2005	George Durnin
1979	Des McManus	2006	Dermot Keegan
1980	Hugo McDonough	2007	Russell Durnin
1981	Donie O'Regan	2008	Patrick Murphy
1982	Pat O'Neill	2009	Fergal Reynolds
1983	Dick Walsh		

Lady Captain's Prize Winners

2000	Olive Nolan
2001	Noeline Quirke
2002	Ita Kelleher
2003	Alice O'Neill
2004	Adri Berney
2005	Anne Delany
2006	Noeline Quirke
2007	Catherine Shortall
2008	Millie Wade
2009	Joan Smith



▲ Joan Smith receives her prize

Ladies' Prizes in Centenary year

CENTENARY GOLD MEDALS

Mary Cant
Catherine Shortall
Deirdre Daly
Triona Mee
Maida McGowan
Alice O'Neill

LADY CAPTAIN'S PRIZE

Joan Smith

LADY PRESIDENT'S PRIZE

Millie Wade

CAPTAIN'S PRIZE TO LADIES

Marie McAuley

PRESIDENT'S PRIZE TO LADIES

Marita Leech

PROFESSIONAL'S PRIZE

Olive Maxwell

GOLFER OF THE YEAR

Carol Wickham

PETER LYONS CUP

Millie Wade

MORNINGTON CUP

Triona Mee

NEPTUNE CUP

Margaret Smith

ILGU PENDANT

Anne Cooney

PGA TANKARD

Gaye English

JOSEPHINE CONNOLLY TROPHY

Anne Delany

WICKHAM TROPHY

Pat Rooney and Aven Rooney

Men's Prizes in Centenary year

CENTENARY GOLD MEDALS

Michael McLoughlin
John Mullen
Paul Griffen
Conor Sheridan
Joe Costello
Mark Gogarty

CAPTAIN'S PRIZE

Fergal Reynolds

PRESIDENT'S PRIZE

Kevin Rooney

PROFESSIONAL'S PRIZE

Harry Barry

CLUB MATCHPLAY CHAMPIONSHIP

John McGinn

GOLFER OF THE YEAR

Michael Clarke

DELANY CUP

Alan Costello

NANCY CUP

Jim Maguire

PETER LYONS CUP

Alan Mullen

PETER LYONS SHIELD

John McGinn

MCDONNELL CUP

Dave Kelly

PGA TANKARD

Bernard Molloy

SENIOR SCRATCH CUP

Russell Durnin

CLUB FOURSOMES

Frank Flynn and Ivan Feran

CLUB FOURBALL

Jimmy Clynch and Chris Black

TOMMY DWYER CUP

Michael McLoughlin

Fergal Reynolds
receives his
Captain's prize with
his father, Dermot ▶



Junior's Prizes in Centenary year

CENTENARY MEDALS

Nicola Stokes
Clodagh Cant
Tadhg McHugh
Conor Falvey

UNDER-19 MATCHPLAY

Aveen Rooney
Aaron Stack

UNDER-15 MATCHPLAY

Seán Taylor Trophies
Rachel Taylor
David Foy

WICKHAM CUP (UNDER-19)

Naomi Phillips

DES SMYTH TROPHY (UNDER-19)

Stephen Barry

ASPIRANTS CUP (UNDER-15)

Aoife Phillips
Rory O'Gorman

CAPTAINS PRIZES TO JUNIORS

Rachel Taylor (Under-19)
Nicholas Collins (Under-19)
Ellie Metcalfe (Under-15)

PEE WEE CUP (UNDER-8)

Annroi Collins

O'KELLY CUP (UNDER-10)

Ellen O'Gorman

HOEY CUP (UNDER-13)

Rachel Taylor

MONAHAN CUP (UNDER-16)

Clodagh Cant



From top ▶

Stephen Barry – Leinster Boys Interprovincial
and Des Smyth Trophy winner

New centenary year members

Included are Meadhbh McGann, Bebhinn King, Iseabail Rioch, Megan Dunne, Hannah O'Reilly, Sara Fee, Mark Savage, Hugh Egleston, Nathan McGuinness, Tom Reilly, Eleanor Metcalfe, Christine O'Flynn, Stephen Kierans, Joshua Cormican, Luke Cormican, Tadhg Rock, Alan King, Ruairi O'Grady, Conor O'Byrne, Philip DuMoulin, Rory Hennessy, Patrick Harley, Fionn Renandin, Luke Mooney, Ciarán McArdle, Adam Lynch, with Junior Captains Aveen and Niall.



Roll call

Members list 2009



▲ Ben Bailey and Mickey Leech

Full Members

A

Rosemary Allen
Frank Allen
Marie Allen
Charlie Allen
Derry Alwright
Kathleen Alwright
John Andrews
Charlie Armstrong
Pauline Atkinson

B

Conall Bailey
Ben Bailey
Seamus Banim
William Barron
Bernard Barry
Harry P Barry
William Barry
Eddie Battersby
Martin Behan
Ann Bellew
Cyril Bellew
Tom Benson
Paul Bermingham
Adri Berney
Robert Berney
Chris Black
Shaun Black
Vincent Black
Danny Black
John Blood
John Blood Jr
Aedan Bowden
Michael Bowden
Kevin Bowers
Fraser Boyd
Leo Boyle
Rodney Boyle

Arnold Brady
Charlie Brady
Veronica Branigan
Donal Branigan
Neil Branigan
Stephen Branigan
Paul Brassil
Michael Breheny
Conor Breheny
Joe Brett
Bart Broderick
Paul Browne
Leontia Browne
Colm Browne
Brian Browning
Michael Bruton
Mary Burke
Brendan Burke
Raymond Burke
Thomas Butterly
John G Byrne
Michael Byrne
Patsy Byrne
Robert Byrne

C

Joan Cahill
Michael Callaghan
Gerard Campbell
John Campbell
Vieva Campbell
Robbie Cannon
Thomas Cannon
Mary Cant
Hugh Carey
Brian Carey
John Carey
Joseph Carley
Paul Carlos

Evelyn Carolan
John Carolan
John X Carolan
Jane Carolan
John Carpenter
John Carpenter Jr
Bernard Carroll
Colette Carroll
Paddy Carroll
Thomas Carson
Gerard Carter
Robert Carter
Patrick Casey
Donal Casey
Phil Cashion
Peter Cassidy
Martin Clark
Susan Clark
Jennifer Clark
Liam Clarke
Peter Clarke
Jason Clarke
Michael A Clarke
Edward Clarke
Brian Clarkin
Deborah Cleary
Gerard Cleary
Eric Clinton
Tony Cluskey
Gary Clynch
James Clynch
Betty Cody
Pat Collins
Maureen Collins
Bryan Collins
Joseph Collins
Mary Collins
Michael Conlon
Brendan Connolly

Full Members (continued)

Pat Connor
 Eamon Cooney
 Anne Cooney
 Colin Cooney
 Ivor Cooney
 Michael Cormican
 Eugene Corrigan
 Joe Costello
 Alan Costello
 Jean Coulter
 Margaret Cowan
 Ernest Cowan
 Michael Cox
 Eilish Craig
 Michael Craig
 Jim Craven
 Joseph Cremin
 Helen Cremin
 Rhona Cremin
 Hugh Crilly
 Brian Crinion
 Charles Crinion
 Frank Crinion
 Josephine Crinion
 Kieran Crinion
 Niall Cronin
 Patsy Crosby
 Richard Culhane
 Mark Cummins
 Shane Cummins
 Martin Curran
 Joan Curran
 John Curran
 Peter Curran
 Gerry Curran
 Chris Curtis

D
 Deirdre Daly
 John Daly
 Pat Daly
 Breda Daly
 John Daly
 Patrick Davis
 Michael Deasy
 Joseph Delaney
 Kathleen Delaney
 Daniel Delaney
 Patrick Delaney
 Patricia Delany
 Ann E Delany
 Anne Delany
 Helen Delany
 Sandra Delany
 Stephen Delany
 Mary Delany
 Michael Delany
 Niall Delany
 Blauna Delany
 Ida Delany
 Tom Delany
 Bertie Dillon
 Barry Doak
 Richard Doggett
 Denis Doherty
 Pat Dolan
 Seamus Dolan
 Oliver Doonan
 Brian Dowdall
 Josefa Downey
 Paul Downey
 Peter Downey
 Matt Downey
 Daniel Doyle
 Donie Doyle
 Des Drew

John Drew
 Fergus Dunne
 Jimmy Dunne
 Noel Dunne
 Paul Dunne
 John Dunphy
 George Durnin
 Fergus Durnin
 Nicky Durnin
 Russell Durnin
 Trevor Durnin
 Victor Dwyer
 Margo Dwyer
 John Dyas

E
 Stewart Eakin
 Tracy Eakin
 Joe Egan
 Conor Egleston
 Gaye English
 Bernard English
 Joseph English
 Mark English

F
 Karl Fagan
 Peter Farrell
 Edward Farrell
 Liz Farrell
 Pat Farrell
 Paul Farrell
 Martin Farrelly
 Mary Fergus
 Patrick Finegan
 John Finnegan
 John Finnerty
 Gary Finnerty
 David Fitzgibbon

Tim Flanagan
 Richard Flood
 Noel Flynn
 Jimmy Flynn
 Frank Flynn
 Peter Flynn
 Raymond Flynn
 Patricia Flynn
 Declan Flynn
 Celeste Fusciardi

G
 Anthony Garvey
 Eamonn Garvey
 Paul Garvey
 David Geraghty
 PJ Geraghty
 Joseph Gibney
 Michael Gibney
 John Gillard
 Jane Gillen
 Peter Gillen
 Terry Gilmartin
 Chrisopher Gilmore
 David Gogarty
 Mark Gogarty
 Tim Goggin
 Vincent Gormley
 Kieran Gough
 Ray Gough
 Edward Graham
 Patrick Grant
 Laurence Grant
 Eamonn Gray
 Florence Greene
 John Greene
 Jim Griffin
 Paul Griffin
 Gerard Grogan

H
 David Hall
 Don Hammond
 Dessie Hand
 Barry Hanley
 Gary Harrison
 John Hart
 Noel Hatch
 Dick Heaslip
 Patrick Heavey
 David Heeran
 Eveleen Higgins
 Breda Hoey
 Liam Hogan
 Sean Holcroft
 Eugene Holland
 Hugh Holt
 Chris Hughes
 Gay Hughes
 Declan Hughes
 Paul Hughes
 Eddie Huston
 Ann Hynes
 David Hynes

J
 Avril Jenkinson
 Tom Jenkinson

K
 Paul Kane
 Stephen Kavanagh
 Declan Keegan
 Dermot Keegan
 Declan Keehan
 Declan Kelleher
 Conor Kellett
 Oliver Kelly
 Ruth Kelly

Cathal Kelly
 David Kelly
 Joe Kelly
 Stephen Kelly
 Owen Kenny
 Peter Keogh
 Tom Keogh
 Jim Kermath
 Larry KIELTY
 Gerry Kierans
 Padraic Kierans
 Hugh King
 Patrick Kinsella
 Kurt Kyck

L
 Fiona Lappin
 Desmond Lappin
 Brian Laverty
 Ronan Laverty
 Raymond Lawless
 Hilary Lawson
 Doreen Leahy
 Ivor Leahy
 Pat Leahy
 James Lee
 James Lee
 John Lee
 Myrtle Lee
 Hugh Leech
 Marita Leech
 Graeme Leech
 John Joe Leech
 Michael Leech
 Judith Leetch
 Joan Lenehan
 Rita Long
 Conor Long
 Dermot Long

Full Members (continued)

John Lumsden
Seamus Lynch
Kevin Lynch
Mary Lynch
Lorraine Lynch
Nuala Lynch
David Lynch
Peter A Lynch
Patricia Lynn
Oliver Lynn
Charlotte Lyons
Eamonn Lyons
Esmond Lyons
James John Lyons

M

Olive MacMahon
James MacMahon
Declan MacMahon

Ronan MacFadden
James MacFarlane
Kathryn MacQuillan
Moira MacQuillan
Jim Maguire
Thomas Maguire
Paddy Maguire
Liam Maher
Hilda Maher
Michael Maher
Tony Martin
Peter Martin
Noel Martyn
John Masterson
Michael Matthews
Olive Maxwell
Matthew Maxwell
Michael McAlarney
Patricia McAllister

Michael McAndrew
Jim McArdle
Ann McAuley
Louise McAuley
Patrick McAuley
Marie McAuley
PJ McAuley
Jack McAvinue
Michael McCarthy
Carmel McCrink
Goroid McCrink
Aine McDonough
James McDonough
William McDonough
Donie McDonough
JP McDonough
Josie McDonough
Peter McElearney
Peter McGeough

Eoin McGinn
John McGinn
Noel McGoldrick
Maida McGowan
Jack McGowan
Robert McGrath
Tommy McGuinness
Pat McHugh
Larry McInerney
Peter McInerney
Vera McKay
Olive McKee
Donal McKenna
Aidan McKeown
Darragh McLeer
Patrick McLoughlin
Michael McLoughlin
Phil McLoughlin
Bernard McMahan
Irene McManus
Rosemary McNamara
Paul McNamee
Joe McNiff
Barry McQuillan
Michael McQuillan
Patrick McQuillan
Thomas McQuillan
Miriam Meagher
Denis Meagher
Trina Mee
Michael Mee
Peter Meehan
Patrick J Meehan
Michael Metcalfe
Anthony Milne
Niamh Mitchell
Anthony Mitchell
Joe Mohan
Bernard Molloy

Eugene Molloy
Gerard Molloy
Richard Molloy
Colm Moloney
Patrick Monaghan
Kieran Mongan
James Mooney
Jimmy Mooney Jr
Michael Mooney
Kathleen Moore
Maria Moore
Joe Moore
Ray Moore
Raymond Moore Jr
Raymond Moran
Brendan Morgan
Noeleen Morris
Brian Morris Jr
Bernadette Mullan
Arthur Mullan
Arthur Mullan Jr
Alan Mullen
John Mullen
Frank Mulligan
Liam Mulligan
Anna Mulroy
John Mulvaney
Patrick Murphy
Denis Murphy
Jonathan Murphy
Ted Murphy
Tim Murray
Ann Murray
Desmond Murray

N

Audrey Nelson
Brian Nolan
Martin Nolan

O

James D O'Brien
Maureen O'Brien
Alan O'Brien
Bill O'Brien
Conor O'Brien
Donagh O'Brien
Donal O'Brien
John O'Brien
Niall O'Brien
Paul V O'Brien
Tony O'Brien
Pat O'Brien
Vincent O'Brien
Paddy O'Byrne
Aidan O'Byrne
Daragh O'Byrne
Seosamh O'Coigligh
Anthony O'Connell
Noel O'Connor
Donal O'Connor
Michael O'Connor
Maurice O'Connor
Fergus O'Donohoe
Marc O'Dwyer
Rory O'Gorman
Ken O'Hanrahan
Peter O'Hara
Robert O'Malley
Margaret O'Neill
Alice O'Neill
David O'Neill
Pat S O'Neill
Joe O'Neill



▲ The McAuleys: Ann, Paddy, Marie, Pat and Louise

Full Members (continued)

Joseph O'Reilly
 John P O'Reilly
 Maura O'Reilly
 Bernard O'Reilly
 Hugh O'Reilly
 John O'Reilly
 Michael O'Reilly
 Angela O'Sullivan
 Thomas O'Sullivan
 Oliver O'Sullivan
 Rory O'Sullivan
 Joe O'Toole
 Seamus O'Toole

P

Michael Pentony
 Patrick Pentony
 Sharon Phelan
 Nicky A Phelan
 Peter Phillips
 Alan Phillips
 Liz Pickett
 Roger Pickett
 Alan Piper
 Paddy Plunkett
 Geraldine Power
 Hilary Power
 Michael Power
 Edmond T Power
 Vincent Prone

Q

Cathal Quigley
 Noel Quinn
 Noeline Quirke

R

Pádraig Rafferty
 Martin Regan
 Aileen Regan
 Michael E Regan
 Thomas Reid
 PJ Reilly
 Paul Reilly
 Tommy Reilly
 Christy Reynolds
 Dermot Reynolds
 Brian Reynolds
 Colin Reynolds
 Cormac Reynolds
 David Reynolds
 Fergal Reynolds
 Michael Reynolds
 Jane Richardson
 Phillip Richardson
 John Riordan
 Melanie Roche
 Colm Rochford
 Val Rock
 Conor Rock
 Pat Rooney
 Phil Rooney
 Stephen Rooney
 Kevin Rooney
 Graham Russell
 Grace Ryan
 Joe Ryan
 Nicholas Ryan
 Tom P Ryan

S

Noel Savage
 Pat Scanlan
 Richard Schmidt
 Tara Semple
 Jack Sheridan
 Cian Sheridan
 Conor Sheridan
 Ronan Sheridan
 Catherine Shortall
 Fred Shuter
 AP Sinnott
 John Skelly
 Michael Smith
 Joan Smith
 Margaret Smith
 Antoin Smith
 Donal Smith
 Jim Smith
 Kevin Smith
 Pat J Smith
 Paul Smith
 Ronan Smith
 Declan Smyth
 Val Smyth
 Pat Smyth
 Kevin Somers
 Thomas Somers
 Margaret Spellman
 Kieran Spellman
 Pat Stokes
 Maurice Stokes
 Jean Strong
 Gordon Strong
 Ronald Strong
 Ian Sweeney
 Val Sweeney

T

Brian Taylor
 Denis Taylor
 Alison Taylor
 Mary Thomas
 Joe Thomas
 Liam Thornton
 Edward Tiernan
 Freddie Tiernan
 Robert Tiernan
 Richard Tierney
 Gary Tierney
 Victor Timon
 Declan Tobin
 Paddy J Traynor
 Kevin Traynor
 Stephen Traynor
 Vincent Traynor
 Judith Troy
 John Troy
 Phil Tuite
 Eddie Tuite
 Joan Tully
 Tom Tuohy

W

Pat Wade
 Millie Wade
 Gary Wade
 Tony Wall
 Brendan Wall
 John Walsh
 Dymrna Walsh
 Conor Walsh
 Frank Walsh
 Oliver Walsh
 Richard Walsh
 Frank Ward
 Paul Ward

Seamus Ward
 Tommy Waters
 Robert Watson
 Tommy Weir
 Tony Weldon
 Finbar Whelan
 Peter Whelan
 Richard Whelan
 Joan Whyte
 Brendan Whyte
 John Whyte
 Gerry Wickham
 Ann Wickham
 Des Wickham
 Kevin Wickham
 Thomas Wickham
 Jack Williams
 Rory Williams
 Tony Williams
 Eugene Winters
 Gregg Woods
 Louis Woods

[Marita and
 Hughie Leech ▶](#)

[Pat Flynn and
 Jack Williams ▶](#)



Five-day Members

Hugh Adams
 Jack Bayle
 Paddy Bedford
 Neil Berney
 Ann Black
 Siobhan Bowden
 Brendan Brady
 Jeanette Brady
 Patricia Broderick
 Kathleen Byrne
 Josephine Cannon
 Declan Carey
 Dermot Carey
 John F Carolan
 Sonya Carr
 Paula Carson
 Berna Carthy
 Barbara Clarke
 Gerard Clegg
 Niall Collins
 Patrick J Collins
 Anne Cooney
 Lorraine Cooney
 Betty Corbett
 Andy Cosgrove
 William Courtney
 Eleanor Cummins
 Ciarán Curran
 Lily Davis
 Noel Dinsmore
 John Doherty
 Brian Dolan
 Mary Dorman
 Jacinta Duffy
 Grainne Dunne
 Lorraine Dunphy
 Breda Dwyer
 Enda Farrelly
 Michael Finnegan

Colm Gallagher
 Adrienne Gallen
 Jim Garvey
 Betty Gilsean
 Fergus Grimes
 Eleanor Grimes
 Catherine Hall
 Declan Healy
 Dan Heery
 Dan Hickey
 Majella Hilliard
 Mary Hoey
 Catherine Holland
 Brendan Hyland
 Jackie Irwin
 Charlie James
 Alan Jordan
 Paul Kavanagh
 Gary Kelly
 Patrick Kelly
 Patrick Kelly
 Eileen Kelly
 Jean Kelly
 Monica Kermath
 Wesley Killoran
 Phoebe Leonard
 Michael Levins
 Lena Levins
 Patrick Lynch
 Stephen N Lynch
 Linda MacFarlane
 Miriam MacQuillan
 Sean Maguire
 Jennifer Maher
 Jim Martin
 Gary McAuslan
 Jack McCabe
 Brendan McEntee
 Karen McGann

Philomena McGoldrick
 Eric McGovern
 Sinéad McGuigan
 Mike McKee
 Aaron McKenna
 David McKenna
 Emmet McKenna
 Orla McKenna
 Emer McMahan
 Nichola McMullen
 Geraldine Meegan
 Lucy Miley
 Martin Molloy
 Peter Monahan
 Aisling Monahan
 Brian Moroney
 Tracy Mullan
 Mark Mullen
 Angela Munster
 Gerard Murphy
 Michael Murphy
 Mary Murphy
 Brendan Murray
 Alan Nevin
 Gregory Nolan
 Michael O'Brien
 Dymphna O'Brien
 Simon O'Connor
 Geoff O'Donoghue
 John O'Donoghue
 Dolores O'Donoghue
 Sean O'Dwyer
 Tom O'Flynn
 Annelies O'Flynn
 Brian O'Grady
 Ena O'Hare
 George O'Keeffe
 Tony O'Keeffe
 Conor O'Neill

Mark O'Neill
 Seamus O'Reilly
 Joan Pentony
 Louise Phillips
 Geraldine Pigott
 Jason Piper
 John Power
 Nigel Power
 Rory Reilly
 Rosaleen Reilly
 Martin Reynolds
 John Rioch

Samantha Rioch
 Scott Robertson
 Margaret Robinson
 Donal Rock
 Sharon Rogers
 Sadie Rooney
 Marie Savage
 Carmel Schmidt
 James Smith
 Vincent Smith
 Aileen Smith
 Regina Smith

Des St Ledger
 Robbie Sweeney
 David Tallon
 Tom Tallon
 Carmel Troy
 David Vaughan
 Brian Walsh
 David Walsh
 Sean Walshe
 Seamus Watters
 Brigid Weir
 Anne Yelverton



▲ The 'Comforts' Group, founded 1968 (all members of L&B)
 Back row: John Carey, Owen Kenny, Mick Byrne, Hugh Carey, Martin Nolan, John Hart, John Greene, John Gilard, Joe O'Reilly, Richard Whelan, Ted Power, Phil Cashion, Tony O'Connell, Fred Shuter, Liam Clarke, Pat O'Connell, Aidan O'Byrne and Pat Kinsella. Front row: Peter Farrell, Paddy O'Byrne, John Lumsden, John O'Reilly and Dick Hynes.

Intermediate Members

Niall Black
 Vivienne Branigan
 Eric Clinton Jr
 Barbara Cooney
 Julie Craig
 Alan Cremin
 Bari Crinion
 Ross Cullinane
 Maurice Cunningham
 Philip Duff
 Susan Dwyer
 Ivan Feran
 Frank Gough
 John Gough
 Shane Griffin
 Emmet Hickey
 David Kelleher
 Paul Kelleher
 Paraic Kelly
 John Levins
 Robert Maxwell
 Catherine McAuley
 Lauren McBride-Fields
 Tadhg McHugh
 James Meehan

DJ O'Brien
 Kevin O'Brien
 Geoffrey O'Donoghue
 Alexandra O'Reilly
 Donal O'Sullivan
 Lorcan O'Sullivan
 David O'Toole
 Edmond Power
 Eamonn Reynolds
 Laura Rooney
 Sally Rooney
 David Rossiter
 Ciaran S Smith
 Daire Smith
 David Smith
 Michael Sweeney
 Stephen Watson
 Aimee Wickham

Junior Members

Stephen Barry
 Kirstie Barry
 Ethan Bradley
 Hugh Brett
 Naomi Broderick
 Robert Browne
 Kerry Cahill
 Clodagh Cant
 Aisling Cant
 Zara Carpenter
 Sadhbh Carson
 Darren Carthy
 Scott Carthy
 Erica Carthy
 Hannah Clark
 Sophie Clark
 Denis Collins
 Eoghan Collins
 Nicholas Collins
 George Cooney
 Elizabeth Cooney
 Dara Corbett

Joshua Cormican
 Luke Cormican
 Michael Cummins
 Eamon Doggett
 Fiachra Doherty
 Aibhne Doherty
 Alan DuMoulin
 Philip DuMoulin
 Sean Dunne
 Megan Dunne
 Naoise Dunne
 Jonathan Dunphy
 Ben Dunphy
 Mark Dwyer
 Richard Dwyer
 Ciara Dwyer
 Hugh Egleston
 Niamh Egleston
 Conor Falvey
 Mark Farrelly
 Helen Fee
 Sara Fee
 David Foy
 Conor Gates
 James Gillen
 Alexandra Grimes
 Darragh Hanratty
 Kilian Hanratty
 Sean Hargadon
 PJ Harley
 Rory Hennessy
 Michael Hennessy
 Cathal Hilliard
 Cillian Hilliard
 Conor Hoey
 Senan Hughes
 Caoimhe Hughes
 Sorcha Hughes
 Susan Kelleher

Conor Kierans
 Stephen Kierans
 Ailbhe Kilcoyne
 Alan King
 Bebhinn King
 Niall Lappin
 David Levins
 Adam Lynch
 James Lyons
 Mark Maxwell
 Ciarán McArdle
 Patrick McDonough
 Mark McGann
 Meadhbh McGann
 Nathan McGuinness
 Donal Meagher
 Rebecca Meagher
 Rachel Meagher
 Thomas Meehan
 Sam Messayeh
 Eleanor Metcalfe
 Joseph Molloy
 Luke Mooney
 Declan Moore
 Alan Morris
 Eoin Moynihan
 Paul Mulligan
 Ciaran O'Brien
 Conor O'Byrne
 David O'Byrne
 Eoghan O'Coighligh
 Christine O'Flynn
 Rory O'Gorman
 Ruairí O'Grady
 Conor O'Keeffe
 Aaron O'Meara
 Hannah O'Reilly
 Aoife Phillips
 Lara Phillips

Naomi Phillips
 Jennifer Power
 Colm Prone
 Darragh Prone
 Tom Reilly
 Fionn Renandin
 Hugh Reynolds
 Cillian Rice
 Brendan Rice
 Grainne Rice
 Charles Rioch
 Iseabail Rioch
 Darragh Rock
 Táidgh Rock
 Shaun Rooney
 Eimear Rooney
 Aven Rooney
 Mark Savage
 Hannah Scott
 Patrick Shortall
 Cormac Smith
 Cian Smith
 Ciarán P Smith
 Jillian Smith
 Karl Somers
 Anthony Somers
 Aaron Stack
 Nicola Stokes
 Conor Taylor
 Rachel Taylor
 Conor Whelan
 Eoin Wickham
 Niall Yelverton
 Cara Yelverton



▲ Jimmy Mooney Snr
 ▲ Mary McElhinney

Lady Associate Members

Moira Bailey
 Joan Barrett
 Maeve Brady
 Joan Breheny
 Carmel Browne
 Jess Clarkin
 Betty Clynch
 Madge Cooke
 Margaret Curran
 Marlene Delany
 Elma Delany
 Rosarie Dillon
 Oonagh Dillon
 Catherine Doran-Murphy
 Clare Drew
 Pauline Drew
 Christine Dunne

Bridie Durmin
 Pat Eakin
 Pauline Farrell
 Geraldine Flynn
 Marian Gallacher
 Aylish Graham
 Elizabeth Greene
 Geraldine Hall
 Una Hatch
 Ailish Hughes
 Eilish Hughes
 Patricia Karellas
 Mary Kealy
 Angela Keegan
 Eileen Keegan
 Ita Kelleher
 Hilary Kelly

Karina Keogh
 Kitty King
 Nanette Kinsella
 Hazel Lee
 Toni Leech
 Anne McCulloch
 Siobhan McElearney
 Mary McElhinney
 Miriam McEnteggart
 Marion McKenna
 Marie McLoughlin
 Pauline McLoughlin
 Margaret McQuillan
 Eileen Meehan
 Sheila Molloy
 Grace Morris
 Breda Murray

Sheila Murray
 Olive Nolan
 Ann O'Brien
 Anne O'Brien
 Moira O'Byrne
 Rita O'Connor
 Christina O'Reilly
 Grace O'Shaughnessy
 Katherina Pettit
 Brenda Phelan
 Betty Power
 Phyllis Power
 Margaret Regan
 Ursula Riordan
 Noleen Rock
 Aileen Rooney
 Patricia Rooney

Bridie Sharkey
 Maeve Sheridan
 Pauline Simpson
 Josie Smyth
 Lolo Smyth
 Marie Thompson
 Eimear Towell
 Kitty Waters
 Marie Weldon
 Clare Woods
 Lila Young



▲ Ann Murray, Liam Maher and Hilda Maher
 ◆ Gerry Wickham, Grace Morris, Alice O'Neill, Pat Flynn, Bobby Browne and Noeline Quirke

Pavilion Members

Ann Brown	Frances Flemming	Marie Mackin
Vincent Browne	Frankie Flemming	Peter Mahon
Jude Burke	John Flynn	Terry Martin
Gabriella Burke	Madeline Freestone	Bernard McDonagh
Patrick Burke	William Furey	Bernie McDonnell
Peter Carberry	Gretta Glavin	Ray McElhinney
Michael Clarke	Marian Gormley	Joanne McElhinney
Brian Colgan	Desmond Hackett	John McGuinness
Doris Colgan	William Hanrahan	Mona McMahan
Ann Collins	Cyril Harbison	Liam Mooney
Harry Connolly	PJ Harley	Margaret Mooney
Pauline Connolly	Janet Hegarty	Joe Moore
Kitty Cox	John Hensey	John Moore
Fiona Coyle	Jim Hickey	John CJ Moore
Val Cromwell	Derek Holcroft	Vincent Moore
Danny Crowley	Catherine Hughes	Kieran Murphy
Owen Devine	Paul Hughes	John Murphy
Brian Diamond	Christopher Keeley	Judy O'Brien
Geraldine Doyle	Maureen Keeley	David O'Connor
Breige Dunleavy	Robert Kelly	Fredrick O'Connor
Patsi Dunne	Laurence Lawless	John O'Neill
John Fincham	Tom Leahy	Aidan O'Reilly
Carol Fitzpatrick	Gillian Lenehan	Sylvester Roche
Timothy Fitzpatrick	Shealagh Lynch	Gerard Roche

Honorary Members

Declan Branigan
 Patrick Buckley
 Gerard Campbell
 Eamonn Darcy
 Colm Dillon
 Patrick Holden
 Louis Kelly
 Michael Lynch
 Philip Lynch
 TJ Lynch
 Con McLaughlin
 Phil O'Gorman
 Ronan Rafferty
 Tom Ryan
 James Smith
 Michael Smith
 Des Smyth
 Carol Wickham
 Ian Woosnam

Phyllis Roche
 Ann Ryan
 Vincent Smith
 Frank Stack
 Jean Stout
 Veronica Tarpey
 Edward Thornton
 Leo Tolan
 Mary Tolan
 Ann Traynor
 Gabriel Tully
 Declan Vaughney
 Joan Ward
 B Watson
 Gerry Watson
 Anne Whearty
 Albert Yelland

Overseas Members

Kevin Branigan
 Rory Carolan
 Hugh Coulter
 Charlie Crinion
 Tony Crinion
 Adrienne Daly
 Joe Daly
 Donal Lynch
 Eoin Lynn
 John Lynn
 Niall McDonough
 Andrea McElhinney
 Pat O'Donohoe
 Fiona O'Neill
 Murna O'Neill
 Paul O'Neill
 Rita O'Reilly
 Gerry Power
 Peter Smith
 Alan Wade
 Mark Ward
 Fiona Wickham
 Oliver Woods



◀ Catherine Shortall, Dympna Walsh, Deirdre Daly, Marie McLoughlin, Margaret Spellman, Rita Long, Rita O'Connor, Catherine McQuillan, Irene McManus and Alice O'Neill

A final word...

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7 Whitethorn Walk,
Carragee Downs,
Dun Laoghaire,
Co. Dublin.
16-9-'09.

Dear Eamon,

I became a member
of Laytown, Bettystown G.C. in the year 1967.
I have lived in the Dun Laoghaire
Co Dublin Area for over 50 yrs, so the
question asked was why L.B. G.C.,
I enjoyed Links Golf, and I considered
my club one of the best.

I clocked up over 250,000
Miles, travelling from my Home to play
Golf every weekend. I am 79 yrs old in
October, I will continue playing as long as
possible, owing to some health problems.

Yours Faithfully
Dick Tierney.

Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club would like to
thank the following organisations and individuals
for their contribution to this book:

Golfing Union of Ireland
Irish Ladies Golf Union
Professional Golfers Association
Irish Independent
The Irish Times
Drogheda Independent
Meath Chronicle
L&B History Committee
Kieran Campbell
Pat Cashman
Jason Clarke
Tony Davitt
Tom French
Dermot Gilleece
Dr Michael Gunn
Pádraig Harrington
Paul Hughes
Adrian Mitchell (IMG)
Alan O'Brien
Teresa Reynolds
Raphael Smith
Katie Troughton (IMG)
Dick Walsh
Mark Wehrly
Jimmy Weldon
Jack Williams