

2018 at Bray Bowling Club

Author: Patrick Brosnan

The 2017/18 Winter League saw the number of ends played reduced from 16 to 14. In Section 1, Bray A (Captain: Mick Dunne) led the table for much of the season. In a cliff-hanger final day Greenhills A beat them 5-0 in Greenhills leaving them in third place out of six, half a point adrift of Blacrock A. In Section 3. Bray B (Captain: Dave McMahon) were never in contention for the knock-out rounds but still finished a respectable third of six. Though not participating, Bray did host two of the quarter-finals.

Greystones' loss was Bray's gain when father and son, John and Johnny Cheevers, joined us. International youngster, Sean Keegan, also left Greystones for Crumlin. John Cheevers represented his new club in the Winter Champion of Champions but was knocked out in the quarter-final by Johnnie Dixon in Meath. John said it was so cold that he could not feel his fingers!

Roll-up time was brought forward to 10.30am from 11 though this increased the possibility of playing on frost which is not good for the green. The club's Wednesday League was won by Bryon Dancer with runner-up, novice bowler, Mick O' Reilly.



Illustration 1: Some of the Wednesday Rollup crew.

Aer Lingus had to depart Division 1 due to a shortage of senior players. As a result the great Wally Doyle finally returned to Bray BC. Like the Cheevers, he would go straight into the first team.

As February rolled into March Ireland was hit a double blow by the "Beast from the East" and Storm Emma. Even before the snow came, shops sold out of bread. Schools, offices and certainly bowling greens shut down for the

duration.

Opening Day for the club was the 25th March. The following Saturday, Bray A (BLI Div 1) played Bray B (BLI Div 2) for some pre-season practise. Other friendlies followed including Bray A v Blackrock and Railway Union and Bray B travelling to Greystones. On Tuesday 17th April Bray welcomed Knock Bowling Club from East Belfast for a friendly game and some refreshments.



Illustration 2: Some of our visitors from Knock BC, Belfast.

In a great honour for the club, Fran Neilson was president of the IWBA in 2018. The Unfurling of the Flag ceremony took place at the club on Tuesday 10th April. Despite the damp weather, Fran's family and bowling colleagues were there for her big day. Later the Wicklow Times had this to say.

"Fran Neilson, a member of Bray Bowling Club, celebrated recently with her club the great honour of her appointment as President of the Irish Women's Bowling Association (IWBA) by hosting the Unfurling of the Flag ceremony in the club situated at Failte Park, Bray. This was a huge honour for her club and for Wicklow as it is the first time for both to host the Presidency. Later this year the club will also host the National Championships when players from the three Northern Associations compete against the Ladies Bowling League of Ireland players.

"The IWBA was formed in 1947 and is the National Governing Body for the sport of women's bowls in Ireland. Fran, who has been a member of Bray Bowling Club for over 30 years, has held many positions in her club, being Ladies Captain many times, Executive Committee member, and Club Secretary before advancing to the Dublin-based bowling Association, the Ladies Bowling League of Ireland, as Hon League Secretary and Hon

Secretary for over 12 years. In 2016 she was made an Honorary Member of the association in recognition of her service."



Illustration 3: Unfurling the Flag.

Rules are there to be changed and promotion/relegation for all LBLI leagues was suspended for 1 year (to be reviewed end 2018). The problem here was shortage of members in clubs and not enough entries for Division 2 in the previous few years which made it impossible to operate. The McMaster Cup format also changed again. It had already been reduced from four rinks (16 players) to three (12 players) but now would require only 10 players who would play four matches - singles, pairs, trips and a fours. Bray did not enter a team this year.

The men also had changes to deal with. BLI Rule 13 was altered to say that if a non-registered player appeared in 5 matches in Divisions 1/2 he was then ineligible to play in Divisions 4/5. The previous limit had been 8. (Cup matches do not count.) Also Division 1/2/3 and BLI Cup matches would be 18 ends, all other league matches, including vets, 16.

The various leagues got underway in the latter part of April. Fortunes were mixed with Division 6 being interesting for a number of reasons. Bray D's opening match was away to Greenhills where new man Pat Crinnion actually made his playing debut in the skip role! After this there was a historic first visit of any Bray team to North Kildare on the latter's

new artificial green. The surface was not what you would expect for a new one. It was as heavy as grass due, the hosts informed us, to it needing stretching. It also had more than its fair share of quirky lines as settings were never changed. Bray won both rinks with Liam Quinn outstanding at lead. Despite novice status, the North Kildare team certainly gave Bray a run for their money and could have won it with a bit of luck. Due to a shortage of players they were allowed to use female substitutes.

Away from bowling, Bray's own Katie Taylor captured a second world title belt in Brooklyn by dethroning long reigning IBF champion, Victoria Bustos, and successfully defending her WBA title in the process. The win saw Taylor at the half way point of her goal to capture all four World title belts with the WBC and WBO still in the hands of lightweight rivals, Delfine Persoon and Rose Volante. Along with Katie, Bray also has the 16-year old Daina Moorehouse from the Heatherwood estate on the Boghall Road. The light-flyweight from Enniskerry boxing club won the European Youth Gold medal in Italy in April. Unfortunately she failed to get among the medals in the World Youth competition in Hungary in the Summer.



Illustration 4: Gabriel Cahill in action for Bray at Ballywalter.

In the IBA Intermediate Cup, Manos from Crete took Bray B in his bus all the way to the seaside town of Ballywalter, Co. Down. The weather was glorious and the green superb but the southerners were well beaten by a better team. John Cheevers' rink came closest for Bray, only losing their lead on the last end. Ballywalter is a multi-sport club and a soccer match was on nearby. The hosts were hospitable, wining and dining us before letting us go. Singing on the way home was led by Mick Dunne and Eddie Morley. Congratulations to Ballywalter who went on to lift the cup.

In a passionately-fought referendum, the eighth amendment to the constitution was repealed in May, paving the way for more widespread

abortion in Ireland.

In round 1 of the Shott Cup (for the men's lower divisions), Bray narrowly saw off the challenge of CYM with Pat Tracey's rink holding their nerve in the final end to secure the few shots needed. Bray now had the dubious pleasure of visiting Sportslink of Santry in the next round a fortnight later. Sportslink, always strong at home, won that one despite Seanie Shortt's victorious rink.

The country enjoyed a mediterranean Summer that year. June brought blazing sunshine and little rain. In rugby, Ireland claimed their first tour victory in Australia since 1979. Earlier in the year Leinster had won a fantastic double of European Champions Cup and Guinness Pro-14.

At the half-way stage in the season the Bray ladies (captain: Pam O' Leary) sat comfortably in mid-table of Division 1 and the Saturday team (Liz McCarthy) were 3rd. In BLI Divisions 1 (Dave McMahon), 2 (Robert McClancy) and 6 (Dave McMahon then Owen Byrne) the men were also in mid-table. The second team had been strengthened by the return to the club of the experienced Dave Matthews after a spell at Railway Union. The Division 4 side (Bob Neilson & Brendan Duffy) were lower down but still well clear of trouble. Remarkably all three vets divisions were topped by Bray teams. Division 6 suffers neither promotion nor relegation and due to the Aer Lingus situation there was no relegation this year from Division 1 either.

Sunday July 8th saw the Ladies Division 1 team involved in a titanic Round 1 LBLI Cup game at home to Crumlin. The game finished level at the end of the regulation 18 ends. After the playing of an extra end, victory went to the visitors by 1 shot.

The lovely Summer continued into July but brought with it a drought. The plants at the club now needed more than the occasional watering. A camping fire near Bray Head got out of control and raged for two days. The wind blew its cloud of ash and smoke over the town so that the men's Division 2 home match against Clontarf had to be postponed.

Mid-July featured an overdue assault on the Griselinia hedge around the club, organised by Brian Walshe. Hedge-cutting equipment was hired and the results varied from Mick Dunne's neat trim on one side to Tommy Murphy's no-nonsense No.1 buzz-cut on the other. Many members were there to tidy-up the cuttings including some of the female persuasion. Brian's car provided the transport for branch removal. There were over 50 pieces of litter collected from in or beneath the far hedge. A communal spirit was much in evidence throughout proceedings. The workers later sat down to a splendid full Irish breakfast served up by the lady members.

Towards the end of July the ladies Saturday team were dismissed from the competition for fielding one too many registered players (three).

In the men's Open Cup Bray A went out in the semi-final to Leinster. Bray B, having "lent" some of their best players to the senior side, went out at the same stage of the Crumlin Cup to an in-form CYM team. In the Shott Cup the Bray juniors met their end in round 2 away at Sportslink.

Sparks flew with the men's Division 4 team when one of their registered players was rendered ineligible due to being selected for too many senior games. Joint captains, Bob Neilson and Brendan Duffy, resigned as a result and Dave McMahon had to take over for the season's end.

The vets leagues all finished in August. Vets 1 won their league with a match to spare.

Victory was celebrated by joint captains, Dave McMahon and Michael O'Brien. Mick Dunne's Vets 2 finished a respectable third in the table although they had been hoping for better. Vets 3 picked up their first silverware ever when they won their league on the last day by drawing away at Greystones. Ger Minogue, whose first captaincy this was, generally refrained from picking himself in favour of "better players".



Irish hockey made unlikely headlines when the World Cup in London featured the first Ireland team to reach a world cup final in a field sport. They lost to The Netherlands and came home with silver medals. On the same day Paul and Gary O'Donovan claimed a silver medal in the Lightweight Double Sculls at the European Championships in Glasgow with Norway taking the gold.

The real sports news that week however was the magnificent performance of the Bray quartet of Christy Mc Evoy, Betty Keogh, Breeda Keogh and Tony Murphy in reaching the final of the Kenilworth Mixed Rinks Tournament.

After some delay due to the collapse of the UK's Carillion plc, Bray got two new schools on the old golf course grounds, Ravenswell Primary School and Colaiste Raithin Irish College. Meanwhile in the centre of town work commenced on the new Florentine Centre to provide new shops, restaurants, a cinema and parking for the citizens of Bray.

Congratulations were due to Phyllis Brett and Breeda Keogh, part of the LBLI team at the annual inter-association series in Belfast. Both Bray ladies skipped as the LBLI finished second in the competition.

On foot of an invitation to attend the World Meeting of Families, Pope Francis arrived in Ireland in August for a historic two-day visit. At the end of a mass in the Phoenix Park he asked for forgiveness for clerical sexual abuse.

Teenager Rhys McClenaghan won gymnastics gold for Ireland in the pommel horse at European Championships. The 19-year-old from Newtownards became the first Irish gymnast to win a European medal, after recording a personal best score of 15.3 at the SSE Hydro to finish clear of the eight-man field.

The first weekend of September was most significant for the club. Mary Fogarty, writing in the Bray People had this to say: "Two days of bowling in the sunshine took place at Bray Lawn Bowling Club recently, for the Irish Women's Bowling Association annual championships. The President of the IWBA for 2018 is Fran Nielson from Bray, and the championships are always held in the club of the president. The IWBA is the parent body for one association in the south (LBLI) and three in Northern Ireland (NIWBA, PTWBA and NIWPLG). Each of those associations runs their own competitions during the year, and their champions compete in the all-Ireland event. While the Bray club didn't have any competitors in this event, the Ladies Bowling League of Ireland won three of the five titles. Mother and daughter team Sarah and Noeleen Kelly from Crumlin won the pairs, and later the fours, with two of their club colleagues. The atmosphere was fantastic throughout both days. People travelled in large numbers from Northern Ireland to participate in and support the championships. At one stage on the Saturday, around 140 people were gathered around the rink. Many of the visitors brought their own chairs, to relax and enjoy the spectacle. The Bray Ladies Committee did the catering. There was tea and coffee on tap, plenty of sandwiches, and other refreshments. One of the competitors spoke after the prize giving to thank the Bray club for their hospitality and very warm welcome. It was a great honour and pleasure for the club to host 50 of the country's leading female bowlers."

Well done to all the members who had the green and its surrounds in great shape. The many visitors were fulsome in their praise of the facilities and the hospitality provided. And those winning LBLI teams were from Crumlin and CYM.



Illustration 5: Peg O' Toole, Breeda Keogh, Betty Keogh, vice president IWBA Valerie Irwin, president Bray Bowling Club Aidan Galvin, president IWBA Fran Neilson, Rose Walshe, Florrie Carroll and Phyllis Brett.

September saw the regular leagues end, with the men's Division 1 side finishing in 7th position with 36.5 points, 33% of the total available. Bray B of Division 2 happily avoided a relegation dog-fight this year, finishing in 6th place (57 pts/45%). In Division 4 Bray C also came 6th (45.5 pts/47%). The Division 6 lads fared best in getting second spot (37.4 pts/39%) - well done to non-playing captain Owen Byrne and his merry band of bowlers. In the LBLI the ladies also came in 6th on 50 points, 45% of the total available.

In a clean sweep of the top men's trophies, CYM won Divisions 1 and 2, the Open and Crumlin cups, a great achievement that shows the strength in depth at that club. Greenhills won both Divisions 4 and 6. The LBLI had its own super team. As well as winning the Open Challenge Cup, Crumlin knocked CYM off their Division 1 champions perch.

The World Rowing Championships in Bulgaria brought double delight to Ireland. Gary and Paul O'Donovan, went one better than their European Championships exploits by taking the gold medal in the men's lightweight double sculls. And Sanita Puspure won the gold medal too as she blew away the field in the women's single sculls final. After years of disappointments, missing out on medals at major championships, this was a huge moment for the Cork oarswoman.

Meanwhile Amy Wall won first place at the WAKO world kickboxing championships in Jesolo, Italy. The Bray kickboxer fought tough competition in Russia's Anna Sezonova to win first place in the full contact junior girls under 60 kg category.

September 22/23 saw drama aplenty at the club championship finals that took place that

weekend. Two singles matches got underway beneath the Saturday morning drizzle. There was something of an upset in the ladies 2-bowl when Terrie McKeon beat the holder and more experienced Breeda Keogh. In the men's handicap, Patrick Brosnan looked like repeating the trick against Brian Walshe but the veteran gradually imposed himself on the game and eventually cruised to victory. The day dried up by the afternoon for the mixed triples final featuring John Reynolds, Jean Kane and Gabriel Cahill against John Dunne, Terrie McKeon and Patrick Brosnan. (Several members had reached more than one final.) The appreciative crowd were treated to a tight match with neither team able to build a clear lead over the other. That all changed in the penultimate end when international bowler, Jean Kane, played a super shot to dislodge her opponents' bowl, leaving only her own team's bowls in the head. There was now a 6-shot gap between the teams, too much for John Dunne's side to come back from.

A cold, sunny Sunday morning was the backdrop for the men's 4-bowl pairs final with John Dunne and Aidan Galvin playing the club's longest-serving player, Tommy Cahill, and one of it's newest, Niall Shelley. Niall had just got off a plane from Portugal in the wee hours of the morning but those Bohemians lads are made of stern stuff and he was ready for the fight from the off. However it was the pairing of Dunne/Galvin that was to prevail in a good match. The final afternoon was a busy one with three matches kicking off at 2.30pm. In the men's two bowl singles, Niall Shelley had to overcome any tiredness he might have felt to face the new handicap champion, Brian Walshe. In a close match the new man made Brian work hard but by the end the veteran had claimed his second title of the weekend. Still it is a fantastic achievement by Niall to reach two club finals despite having less than a year's bowling experience. The ladies two bowl pairs pitted Terrie McKeon and Liz McCarthy against the more experienced pairing of Betty Keogh and Marge O'Leary. Experience won out in this case with Keogh/O'Leary winning by a comfortable margin. Credit to Terrie who had reached three club finals (and won one) whilst still a relative newcomer. The men's 2- bowl pairs saw Colm Heaslip and Aidan Galvin take on rising star, Peter Gough, and Nick Howlett. On paper this was a hard one to call but in the event Gough and Howlett won it comfortably. Peter is also quite new to the game but has made rapid progress this year.

The final two matches were the most prestigious: the men's and women's (singles) championship finals. Current trophy holders, Breeda Keogh and Christy McEvoy, would take on Peg O'Toole and John Dunne respectively. In her match Peg went on a ferocious tear from the off. Using short jacks she got to within a single shot of victory before Breeda even got on the scoreboard. Then Breeda used long jacks to claw her way back into the game. However she had left herself too much work to do and it took only one good end from Peg to clinch victory 21-9. In the men's match, Christy and John shadowed one another's scores for a long time until Christy gradually pulled away with his clinical draw shots. He retained his crown with a 21-11 score.

At the awards ceremony, club president, Aidan Galvin, thanked Roddy O' Leary and Owen Byrne for organising the competitions. He praised the Ladies' section for their work in providing meals and refreshments. The umpires were also recognised for their officiating of the singles matches.

Competition	Winners	Runners-up
Ladies' Championship	Peg O' Toole	Breeda Keogh
Ladies' Two-Bowl Singles	Terri McKeon	Breeda Keogh
Ladies' Two-Bowl Pairs	Betty Keogh, Marge O'Leary	Terrie McKeon, Liz McCarthy
Men's Championship	Christy McEvoy	John Dunne

Competition	Winners	Runners-up
Men's Handicap Singles	Brian Walshe	Patrick Brosnan
Men's Two-Bowl Singles	Brian Walshe	Niall Shelley
Men's Four-Bowl Pairs	John Dunne, Aidan Galvin	Tommy Cahill, Niall Shelley
Men's Two-Bowl Pairs	Peter Gough, Nick Howlett	Colm Heaslip, Aidan Galvin
Mixed Triples	John Reynolds, Jean Kane, Gabriel Cahill	John Dunne, Terrie McKeon, Patrick Brosnan



Illustration 6: Peg O' Toole (2018 Ladies Champion) and Breeda Keogh (runner-up). Club president Aidan Galvin, Christy McEvoy (2018 Men's Champion) and John Dunne (runner-up).

With the Summer season over, the various roll-ups started again. The Thursday event was given a new dimension as people swapped position on the rink every few ends to widen their experience. Maurice McCabe from Crumlin was the first person at Bray BC to use a laser measure to help decide a bowls count. You never know - it might catch on!

The Winter League kicked off in October. Burnt ends were no longer legal - if the jack left the rink it would be replaced two metres from the ditch. Two new teams were welcomed – North Kildare and DLGC. Bray entered two teams and this time Greystones were able to field one of their own which played their home matches in Bray. For the first time there was an "Academy" side, made up of very young people from different clubs. They played their home games at Kenilworth BC. Neither Bray side bowled on the opening day due to torrential rain. The matches were postponed to mid-December just when Storm Deirdre came along, causing them to be cancelled for a second time.

In politics President Michael D. Higgins was re-elected to a second term despite having previously promised to serve only one.

The club's AGM was held on a Thursday evening in November. The reports of the secretary, Frank Devlin, and treasurer, Tiernan Kavanagh, were most enlightening.

The club had a good year financially. "We changed Solicitor during the year and as a result we made a substantial saving when getting our Bar Licence renewed. We also submitted

an application to the Wicklow County Council Valuation Office for a reduction in our annual rates bill and it was successful [50% saving]. We are also in the final stages of negotiation with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport in relation to the payment of the final instalment of €3,000 towards the cost of the recent refurbishment of the club's premises. In this regard a special word of thanks is due to Eoghain Brady for his patience in dealing with the offices of the state. We recently received a loan of €20,000 from the BLI for further refurbishment works."

The club lotto had brought in a healthy €1,300 and a warm thanks were given to those behind it, Fran Neilson and Betty Keogh. Fran also received high praise for her successful term as IWBA president and she, in turn, expressed her deep gratitude for the support of all members especially her ladies' section.

The secretary had concerns for the coming season: "In relation to leagues and players for 2019 the club will have to seriously look at what [men's] leagues we enter and what players we register. We would hope to be in a position to enter a team in Division 5 of the BLI. This would see us using 24 players on a Monday night. There is no doubt that fielding a team in Division 5 would be very beneficial in the long run ... The various captain's experienced great difficulties at different times of the season in actually getting enough players to play. To this end I would ask members to complete the sheet in the men's changing room in relation to their availability/plans for 2019 ... Once again I must raise the question of the club's continued participation in the IBA Cups. I feel that the appetite is not there as members do not wish to travel to the North of Ireland if required to do so. If we enter a competition we have to take the rough with the smooth."

In response to a question from Brian Dodd, the treasurer said the bar was roughly breaking even which was great for a small club. Stephen Morris was once again praised for his tireless work managing it. Tommy Murphy pointed out how underused the facility was and an animated discussion ensued on how the club could get more out of it. More bartenders would need to be trained. A social committee would be formed under Mick Dunne to organise events though it was acknowledged that members had not been very supportive of such events in the past. Pat Brett contrasted today with a previous age when members patronised the bar regularly especially after bowling matches. For better or worse this behaviour had faded with the tightening of the drink-driving laws.

Re-elected to their offices for another year were president, Aidan Galvin, honorary secretary, Frank Devlin, and honorary treasurer, Tiernan Kavanagh.

We were reminded of our new joiners this year: John Cheevers (Snr), John Cheevers(Jnr), Pat Crinnion, Sean Gilmour, Aidan King and Sean O' Mealoid. Of course Wally Doyle was a welcome rejoinder!

Finally, at the AGM, there was a unanimous vote to make Seanie Shortt an honorary member of the club for his services down through the years. A popular choice.

The men's section AGM took place a week later. The captain was unable to attend due to both illness and family bereavement. Robert McClancy was elected new captain for the coming year. He was also unable to attend but, on his behalf, club president, Aidan Galvin, said that he intended to run affairs like a company CEO; he would delegate tasks to appropriate people and meet them regularly to discuss any issues. One of his first tasks would be to oversee the naming of selectors by the men's section. John Dunne and Brendan Duffy were elected to both the executive and men's section. Roddy O'Leary was re-elected as our BLI delegate. These decisions notwithstanding, the president made the point that not enough members were willing to volunteer for these positions.

Roddy informed us that the BLI had formed a Youth Development Committee to encourage young people to take up the sport. They were getting assistance in this from their Northern

Ireland colleagues. He also warned that the 6th Division might be scrapped.

The recent surge of new recruits made possible a discussion on the feasibility of fielding both a Division 4 and 5 team on Monday evenings. When Rule 13 came up (players who play five matches in Divs 1 and 2 cannot then play in Divs 4 and 5), Roddy explained that it was an attempt to stop clubs overly boosting their Monday teams with senior players. Another problem was players taking more than one holiday during the Summer. Anyway the first step would be for members to indicate which days they would be available to play on.

Another discussion took place around whether or not Bray should enter one of the IBA cups. Some members were enthusiastic but some of the more experienced members had had enough of the long trips north. Coleraine was mentioned as an example of a particularly long haul.

At the women's AGM, Fran Neilson was elected ladies' captain for the following year.

In Rugby Ireland beat the New Zealand All-blacks at home for the first time ever. In a thrilling match, Ulster's Jacob Stockdale got the game's only try with a skillful solo effort. By contrast soccer manager, Martin O'Neill, and his assistant, Roy Keane, parted company with the Republic of Ireland. The team had not won a competitive game in 2018 and were relegated from Uefa Nations League Group B4. The two were quickly replaced by Mick McCarthy in his second go at the job. Dundalk manager, Stephen Kenny, would manage the Ireland under-21s before replacing McCarthy in the senior position in 2020. Meanwhile in India Dubliner, Kellie Harrington, won a gold medal in the lightweight division at the AIBA Women's World Boxing Championships following victory over Thailand's Sudaporn Seesondee.

Phyllis Brett and team won first prize at the Hodson Bay Hotel indoor bowling competition in Athlone.

There was a notable Winter League scalp for Bray B in November. A star-studded and unbeaten CYM visited Failte Park but, after three tight rinks, they left with nothing. The Bray skips were Peg O' Toole, Alan Rath and Breeda Keogh.

The year at the club was rounded off by the Christmas do in mid-December. As well as Frank's fiendish quiz, medals were handed out to the Division 6 runners-up and the victorious Vets I and III. The winner of the Wednesday Morning League was announced as Phyllis Brett.



Illustration 7: Rose Walshe jealously guards the refreshments at the club trips final in September.

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