

## **2019 at Bray Bowling Club**

***Author: Patrick Brosnan***

### **January**

The year opened badly for the town with a three-story building on Main Street gutted after a serious fire broke out. The blaze had started in the Florentine Bar at the ground level. The two top floors of the premises - which were occupied by a solicitor's practice - were completely destroyed, while a pharmacy located on the ground floor had extensive water damage.

In the Winter Champion of Champions, John Cheevers, representing Bray once again, hosted Paul Thomas of Leinster in the first round. The veteran international had too much firepower for our man, winning 18 – 9.

*Offaly golfer, Shane Lowry, won his first tournament in three and a half years with victory in the Abu Dhabi HSBC Championship. He sealed victory with a birdie on the par-five 18<sup>th</sup> to beat South African, Richard Sterne, by a single shot, finishing on -18 at the end of the four days.*

### **February**

The Tuesday/Thursday rollups were altered again. Fourteen ends would be played on each rink. There would be no knock-out phase so the winners would be those with the highest winning margin.

The future for the great St James's Gate club, in existence since 1928, was looking bleak. They could barely afford the high rent being asked of them by new landlords, Trinity College. This was despite the college saying that the Guinness Athletics Union "and its clubs will enjoy continued access to the facilities at preferential rates". The grounds were originally established for the benefit of Guinness workers but in recent years were sold to Guinness parent company, Diageo. Many of the Gate's best players, including some internationals, now joined other clubs. However some of the junior sides would, for the time being, continue to use the green. The club still had its bar revenue. Though some of the leavers went to CYM, nearby Crumlin received the largest group, many of whom were promised places on the first team. It would now be no surprise if the noise levels rose at Crumlin matches this season, Buddy!



*Illustration 1: Letterkenny who visited Bray in May in the IBA Cup.*

Some disappointing news was that two of our first teamers were ending their association with the club. Both Richard Neilson and Johnny Cheevers were giving priority to their golfing activities and the younger man also had a growing family to cope with. Richard had been a fantastic servant of the club for many years and the members hoped to see Johnny, at least, again sometime in the future.

A dry period in the month saw groundsman, Noel Keane, in fetching white chemical suit and face mask, applying Qualgex moss-killer to the green and surrounds. Members are prohibited from bowling on such days to give a chance for the liquid to do its work and, for a few days after, they are advised to wash their hands after playing to avoid any allergic reaction. Alan Rath remembered this happen years before to Will O' Farrell who developed a large, unpleasant rash as a result.

Bray A and B both played well in their respective Winter League sections and, by coincidence, had to face a similar nail-biting scenario going into the final Saturday of the league phase. Both lay in third position and both were at home against the team above them in second position. In Section 1, Bray A needed at least three points against Dun Laoghaire to make it to the knock-out phase. Despite being without captain, John Cheevers, they won 4-1. Bray B, in Section 2, had the harder task, needing to beat mighty St James's Gate 5-0 to make it through. Somehow Bray achieved the impossible and The Gate left empty-handed, half a point below Bray in the table! It was a victory on a par with Bray's earlier white-washing of section winners, CYM.

## **March**

So now Bray A and B journeyed to Aer Lingus for the quarter-finals. Under the wind, rain and constant aerial traffic, both were successful. Bray B overcame the challenge of Sportslink while Bray A dealt with Leinster, Smyths and all. Among many who excelled on the day were Phyllis Brett (imperious) and Dave McMahon (ruthless at number 2). The following week the two Bray sides clashed with one another in the semi-final at the same venue. Some players handled the howling wind better than others. Though some Bray B bowlers like Paddy Pegman and Niall Shelley excelled, they were destined to lose out as Bray A emerged victorious by 10 shots. In the other semi-final Dun Laoghaire A overcame the challenge of CYM A.

The Wicklow Times recognised a daughter of Bray with this story. 'A Bray nun who works in South Sudan has been awarded a prestigious honour by the US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, and US First Lady, Melania Trump. Sr Orla Treacy received the

International Women of Courage award at the US State Department in Washinton. Sr Treacy, who is a member of the Loreto Congregation, was commended for working to empower young women and girls in conflict-torn South Sudan "at great personal risk and sacrifice".'

Bray's golden girl of boxing, Katie Taylor, added a third world title to her growing collection with a technical knock-out win over Rose Volante in their lightweight unification fight at Philadelphia's Liacouras Center. In the process Taylor collected the Brazilian's WBO title, to add to her own WBA and IBF belts.

*After six second places, Willie Mullins finally broke his Cheltenham Gold Cup hoodoo. Al Boum Photo gave the Irish trainer his first victory in the race. Leading at the second-last fence, the chestnut stallion (12-1) dug deep for jockey Paul Townend, who was also winning the Gold Cup for the first time.*

*The Ireland rugby team finished third in the Six Nations championship behind Grand Slam winners, Wales, and England. It was a disappointing final campaign for coach, Joe Schmidt.*

John Cheevers took his Bray A side to the Winter League final at Dun Laoghaire Golf Club where they came up against Mick Cusack's Dun Laoghaire A. A sizeable and appreciative crowd turned up for the show-down. Whilst Mick himself was holidaying in Italy the rink he normally played on had a nightmare match as John Browne's front end of Terri McKeon and Marge O' Leary gave them a roasting. This four built up such a lead that it took the pressure off the other two Bray rinks, led by John Cheevers and Phyllis Brett, themselves both in match-winning form. The many fine bowlers from Dun Laoghaire bowled well but it was the underdogs of Bray who got there in the end, by 57 shots to 34. At the post-match dinner in the clubhouse, John Cheevers and his teammates were able to celebrate their club's first ever victory in the competition.

On the same day, in the Winter Champion of Champions, veteran Ian Gillen of CYM defeated youngster, Colm O'Brien, of CYM/Academy. Ian said afterwards that it was his experience that made the difference on a tricky rink.



*Illustration 2: Bray A, Winter League Champions, 2019.*

March was rounded off by the Wednesday League Prize-giving night. To a good

attendance, ladies captain, Marge O' Leary, was announced as the winner. (That's two in one week, Margie!) Eoghain Brady and Eddie Kelly ran one of Frank Devlin's mind-bending quizzes and Table 6 managed to keep Professor Colm Murphy out of the winners' enclosure for once. President Aidan stood up to proudly point out his table of misfits who had come in last. There was a surprising amount of cash to be given away in games. Throughout the night Eoghain did a splendid job as MC, using the opportunity to practise his Speaker of the House of Commons impression (Brexit has alot to answer for). His beautiful assistants were Eddie and Phyllis.

## April

As the season approached, warm-up matches were organised. The ladies took on CYM at home in a match unfortunately halted by rain after eight ends. An understrength Bray A played Bray B with the spoils going to the second team. In the days that followed Bray A beat Dun Laoghaire away and Railway Union at home. Bray B beat Greystones at home then lost the return friendly. (But at least you get nice cake when you play Greystones!)

Members of the club travelled to Knock BC in Belfast to return the northern club's visit of the previous year. The threatened rain stayed away as Bray won the friendly match between the sides and the trophy that the home side had put up. Afterwards the Southern folk enjoyed the hospitality laid on by their hosts. Florrie Carroll, Mick Dunne and Eddie Morley provided in-coach entertainment with their singing, with Eddie Condren acting as Master of Ceremonies.

*Cavan golfer, Leona Maguire, had her first professional win, at the Windsor Golf Classic in California. She took home the \$22,500 winner's prize after winning a deciding hole against Pajaree Anannarukarn of Thailand.*

Pat Brett was chosen as captain of the Division 1 side with Eoghain Brady as his fellow selector. Paddy Pegman led Bray B, assisted by Alan Rath and Nick Howlett. Bray C (Division 4) had the same team in charge as last season, Bob Neilson and Brendan Duffy. Owen Byrne managed Bray D in Division 5. Marge O' Leary once again captained the ladies.

As the various leagues got underway in the latter half of the month, both senior teams were beset by injury and illness. More on that later. Following a change to BLI rules, women were now permitted to play in men's matches provided they were affiliated to the BLI. In the first ever meeting between the clubs, Bray D of Division 5 lost at home to Dun Laoghaire Golf Club, a team with a nucleus of strong lady bowlers.





*Illustration 3: Bray prepare to do battle with Knock in Belfast.*

## May

Round 1 of the Sixsmith Cup delivered an all-Bray clash, with the Wally Doyle A-Listers looking to sweep aside Brendan Duffy's Wannabes. It was a hard fought match with much good bowling to excite the onlookers (cheering on the underdogs). However the class of the high earners told in the end and they shaded it by three shots over 21 ends. On the winning side Bryan Walshe turned in a model performance at lead and Pat Brett made an accomplished return to the green after recent medical adventures.

In the first round of the IBA Senior Cup Bray A welcomed Letterkenny from Donegal. They were a colourful bunch, with characters like The Big Bass, Whistler and The Bull, but could do little to withstand the silky skills of the home team. Later in the month Bray A (including quite a few from the second team) defeated Leinster in Rathmines in Round 1 of the Open Cup.

*Tragedy came to Bray with the news that local man and mountaineer, Seamus Lawless, had fallen to his death while descending from the summit of Mount Everest. On a happier note, Prince Charles and his wife, Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, came to Wicklow on their latest visit to Ireland. Among their stops was Glendalough, Kilmacurragh Gardens and Powerscourt Estate. In rugby, Leinster retained their Pro14 crown, beating Glasgow Warriors 18 - 15 in Glasgow.*

When Bray D travelled to Leinster, club history was made. It was the first time that a men's team from Bray included members of the opposite sex. No less than three ladies made their debut for the team. And they got a point for their troubles! Later on however, the ladies' section would withdraw its support for this particular team when they felt that some of the men were missing out on game time.



## June

For the opening part of the season the ladies of Division 1 had been given a mountain to climb. An injury crisis meant them usually taking to the field of play one or two short. In addition four of their first five matches were away on grass! It was little wonder that, at the beginning of June, they were propping up the table on eight points, six adrift of Blackrock above them. It was quite some comfort that there was no relegation this year.

The men's Division 1 team had also had an injury/illness crisis of their own to contend with. This had meant them raiding Bray B for players leading to a weakening of the second team. Still both were now a reasonable third from bottom in their tables. Bray C of Division 4 were doing best of all. Holding third place in the league, they were just 5.5 points behind leaders, Sportslink. Their most notable result had been an away win at Dun Laoghaire. And with the help of our newest recruits, Bray D were a respectable 7<sup>th</sup> in Division 5.

Vets 1 had had a dream start to their campaign winning all of their opening six games. They now topped the table but with a few other good sides close behind. Vets 2 found themselves in the middle of their league after a mixed opening. Vets 3 were doing better in fourth place, just 2.5 points below leaders, Dun Laoghaire.

Bray's boxing heroine, Katie Taylor, realised her dream when she defeated Belgium's Delfine Persoon in a brutal encounter at Madison Square Garden, New York. The result added the WBC title to Taylor's WBA, IBF, and WBO belts to make her the Women's Undisputed Lightweight Boxing Champion of the World. Some days later a large crowd turned out at Bray seafront to welcome their heroine home. Meanwhile Latvian-Irish rower, Sanita Puspure, won gold in the single sculls at the European Rowing Championships in



Lucerne, Switzerland.

Back to bowling and it was not a good month for cup competitions. In the IBA senior cup Bray A were well-beaten by visiting Pickie from Bangor, Co Down. In the Crumlin Cup Bray B took the high road to Meath with, for the first time, some lady bowlers in tow. Although the girls acquitted themselves well, the home side knew their unique green well enough to ensure victory. In the Shott Cup Bray C/D also went down, on Crumlin's silky sward.

*It was the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy and afterwards President Trump and entourage staged their own invasion of the Trump Doonbeg resort in County Clare.*

The annual hedge-cutting day went well despite the absence of some of its regular organisers. On a glorious morning many had a go with the trimmers but it was Eddie Condren who won first prize for his topiary skills. The workers were treated to a full Irish from the lady chefs before returning to finish their work.

Over at Northfield BC, Ayrshire Ireland won the men's international bowling series with the help of Gareth Pierpoint (2) and Stephen Millane (skip) of the BLI. Young Colm O'Brien of CYM did his country proud becoming the British Isles under-18s Champion.



*Illustration 4: The men's Crumlin Cup side with ladies for the first time.*

## July

The CEO of the National Treasury Management Agency, Conor O'Kelly, told the Dail's Public Accounts Committee that Ireland had a "mountain of debt"

*that currently stood at €205 billion, some four times higher than it was in the 2000s.*

After the men's Division 1 took a handful of players from Bray B (including captain, Paddy Pegman!) the second division side found itself struggling for players. Paddy thought he had solved the problem by selecting two ladies. However the ladies section blocked this, saying that there were enough men available to fill the gaps. This was not easily done, though after hours on the phone, the captain managed it in the end.

Vets 3 performed a rare feat in the home match against Sportslink. Towards the end of the game, Eddie Morley's side looked like losing their rink until they managed to get an 8! Bray ended up with all four points.

*England won the Cricket World Cup at Lord's in a dramatic final against New Zealand. They were captained by Eoin Morgan, a Dubliner raised in Rush, North Dublin. Earlier in the tournament the Irishman had scored a record-breaking 17 sixes in his side's match against Afghanistan. Another successful Irish sportsman was golfer, Shane Lowry, from Offaly who won his first major, the British Open, at Royal Portrush in County Antrim.*

Bray A met their match in the semi-final of the Open Cup, losing out to Dun Laoghaire in Shankill. To Bray's credit however they did win three of the four rinks.

If the weather in June had been poor for Irish bowlers it was alot kinder in July. With the season entering its final third, Vets 1 and 3, though both a bit off the pace, held second place in their leagues. Vets 2 were 7<sup>th</sup> of 9 but well clear of the danger zone. Owen Byrne's Bray D were also 7<sup>th</sup> in BLI Division 5 after a sprinkling of decent results, notably an away win at Railway Union. In Division 4, the great home, but poor away, form of Bray C kept them lodged in mid-table. Bray B of Division 2 were 8<sup>th</sup> in the table, 9.5 points above bottom-placed Clontarf. This was thanks mainly to home wins over Crumlin and Shankill. In Division 1 Bray A were sitting top of a bottom quartet separated by only 6 points. In recent weeks they had stolen all points away at bottom club, Kenilworth, and had managed a close win at home against Blackrock. In the LBLI the Bray ladies had hauled themselves up to 7<sup>th</sup> in Division 1 after good home results against Skerries and Westmanstown.

## **August**

In the Kenilworth Mixed Rinks competition the Bray quartet of Terri McKeon (1), Tommy Murphy (2). Marge O'Leary (3) and John Browne (skip) reached the final where a local Kenilworth side proved too hot to handle.

Gabriel Cahill, one of our nominated players this season, had played for all four regular men's teams (Divs 1/2/4/5) plus the three Vets sides (Divs 1/2/3). This must be a club record!

The Summer's mini-race night went off well under masterful MC and Brett son-in-law, Matt. The top three punters won cash, the winner on the night being Will McKeon after some shrewd bets late in the game. Second was Brian Walshe, with Dave McMahon coming in third. Dave also won at the (highly) extended game of high-low cards. Behind the bar Phyllis and Margie kept the drinks coming. A rowdy element was present from the men's Division 1 team but they managed to behave themselves (just).



The BLI Championships finals took place at Blackrock. Congratulations went to Richard Leonard of Crumlin for winning the senior singles (Marper) after beating Frank McCarthy of CYM. This made it a hat-trick of wins for Richie in the competition plus he was also this Summer's Champion of Champions. CYM did achieve victory in the Senior Fours (Sixsmith) when they beat Railway Union in the final. This CYM side was the same one that had only beaten John Cheevers' Bray team by a single shot in Terenure. The O'Leary Cup (sponsored by our own Roddy) also went to CYM who beat Westmanstown.

In the LBLI Championships at Crumlin, Margaret Smyth and Valerie Doherty from our neighbours, Greystones, won the Junior Pairs Championship. The star of the week however was Rosemarie Brown of Dun Laoghaire BC who won three titles. In Dun Laoghaire the Ladies Champion of Champions was Pat McDonagh of Leinster.

Bray hosted this year's Open Cup final between CYM and Dun Laoghaire. All watching enjoyed the exhibition of bowling from two top sides and the sun came out in the later stages. In the end it was the noisy men from Terenure who won it by 7 shots. The hon sec expressed the club's gratitude to our groundsman, Noel, and those volunteers who helped tidy up beforehand and helped out on the day. On Clontarf's grass the same day Meath, who use an artificial green, did very well to win the Crumlin Cup (Division 2) against grass-based Ierne.



*Illustration 5: Action from the men's Open Cup final held at Failte Park.*

The men's Monday leagues were the first to finish. When Bray C of Division 4 had lost their opening match 0-6 in Failte Park to Sportlink, little would they have suspected that it was the only time they would not win at home all season. On the other hand they secured just one victory on their travels, 1-5 at Dun Laoghaire. The team finished 6<sup>th</sup> of 9 on 46.5 points, 48% of the total possible. Our Division 5 team, after a shaky start, also proved strong at home and weak away. They did not always have the twelve men required but were lucky to be able to bolster their numbers with some strong lady members. North Kildare were their only bogey side, beating them home and away. Bray D finished 7<sup>th</sup> of 10, also on 46.5 points (43%).

The vets leagues finished the same week. No Bray team were outstanding but all three finished in respectable positions: Vets 1 were third in their table, Vets 2, fourth and Vets 3, second. Best vets club was Dun Laoghaire who won both Divisions 1 and 2.

We were pleased to see neighbours, Greystones, winning the LBLI Junior Cup when they overcame Westmanstown. Meanwhile CYM men's first team had had a great run in the IBA Senior Cup. They reached the final but were well beaten by Belmont of Belfast who also won the intermediate trophy. Greenhills of Dublin had made it as far as the semi-finals of the IBA Junior Cup.

## September

The Bray ladies finished their Division 1 campaign in early September. They ended-up 7<sup>th</sup> of 9 with 40.5 points or 36% of those available. It was not a bad result given their awful start and their oftentimes taking to the field with less than a full team. CYM, Crumlin and Dun Laoghaire claimed the top positions in that order, the same big three clubs that also dominate men's senior bowling. The Open Cup had been won by Crumlin in August.

At the IBA Championships in Ards BC Cathal Gillen of CYM won the U-25s Singles at his first attempt. Crumlin were runners-up in the senior singles (Richie Leonard) and trips.

The men's Division 2 team finished 8<sup>th</sup> out of 10 with 55.5 points or 44% of those on offer. Their place in the second tier became assured when they proved capable of seeing off the challenge of all visitors to Failte Park in the second half of the season. Bray A of Division 1 finished a respectable fifth out of eight teams. They had accumulated 38.5 points which was 39% of the maximum available. At season's end there were many Division 1 bowlers who decried all their idle Saturdays and agreed that the league needed to be enlarged. CYM had proved the dominant force in men's bowling this year. They won Divisions 1, 2 and 4 as well as lifting the Open Cup.

*In the All-Ireland Football final Dublin beat Kerry in a replay to win a record 5-in-a-row titles. In the Hurling final the previous month, Tipperary beat Kilkenny to claim their 28<sup>th</sup> title.*

The Bray BC club championship finals took place on the penultimate weekend of the month. The hon. sec. compiled this report.

"First up was the Men's Championship Final on Saturday morning where Brian Walshe had a comprehensive victory over Walter Doyle who possibly found the early start not to his liking. Saturday afternoon saw both Brian and Walter back in action with Brian taking on Patrick Brosnan in the Handicap Singles Final. Patrick was in tremendous form and claimed his first ever club singles title. Walter partnered Sean O'Mealoid to victory in the Men's 4 Bowl Pairs over Danny Heffernan and Gabriel Cahill. Saturday was a red letter day for Terri McKeon who defeated the vastly experienced Phyllis Brett in the Ladies 2 Bowl Singles Final to claim her first singles title. The Mixed Triples was won by the team of Owen Byrne, Jean Kane and Michael Egleston who triumphed over Michael O' Brien, Peg O' Toole and Colm Murphy.

"Sunday saw the Ladies Championship won by Breeda Keogh who defeated Jean Kane. Sunday also saw Theresa Martin who, in her first year in the club, partnered Phyllis Brett to victory over Pam O'Leary and Marge O'Leary (no relations) in the Ladies 2 Bowl Pairs. The Men's 2 Bowl Pairs saw Patrick Brosnan accompanied by Paddy Pegman claim his second title of the weekend by defeating Aidan Galvin and Colm Heaslip. Finally the Men's 2 Bowl Singles was won by Eoghain Brady who was too hot to handle for Alan Rath. Congrats to all concerned and a big thank you to the organisers of the buffet afterwards. Both Brian Walshe and Breeda Keogh will go on to represent the club in the Champion of Champions competition next year."



Ladies Champion 2019, Breeda Keogh,  
and Club President, Aidan Galvin.

Competition	Winners	Runners-up
Ladies' Championship	Breeda Keogh	Jean Kane
Ladies' Two-Bowl Singles	Terri McKeon	Phyllis Brett
Ladies' Two-Bowl Pairs	Phyllis Brett, Theresa Martin	Pam O'Leary, Marge O'Leary
Men's Championship	Brian Walshe	Wallter Doyle
Men's Handicap Singles	Patrick Brosnan	Brian Walshe
Men's Two-Bowl Singles	Eoghain Brady	Alan Rath
Men's Four-Bowl Pairs	Walter Doyle, Sean O'Mealoid	Peter Gough (sub: Danny Heffernan) Gabriel Cahill
Men's Two-Bowl Pairs	Paddy Pegman, Patrick Brosnan	John Dunne (sub: Aidan Galvin) Colm Heaslip
Mixed Triples	Owen Byrne, Jean Kane, Michael Egleston	John Dunne (sub: Michael O'Brien),



Competition	Winners	Runners-up
		Peg O'Toole, Niall Shelley (sub: Colm Murphy)

Saturday's games were watched by Bray's latest recruits. Eamonn Kennedy and Marcus Donohoe came to us from Dun Laoghaire and added much-needed quality to our men's first team. It was Eamonn's second stint at the club. He achieved alot for us the first time round and he was hardly in the door this time when he was organising the supply of new club jackets!

## October

As one season ends another begins. Bray entered three teams in this year's Winter League. Six selectors were involved, three men and three women. It was decided that the team that had won the competition in the spring would stay together (as Bray A) just to see how far they could go a second time round. Once again a single team from Greystones would use Failte Park for their home games. This meant that all six rinks would be in use most match days including those quirky outer ones.

During the week the Tuesday morning roll-up was as popular as ever, as also was the Wednesday morning league which would run from early October to Christmas. Numbers for this were swollen by our Winter members from Greystones, Crumlin and Railway Union. And there was also the Thursday morning roll-up for the diehards.

Building maintenance never ends and Bray's pavilion got its roof re-felted this month as did the viewing hut by the green. The following month the wooden windows and doors of the pavilion were replaced with new PVC ones and a new fire door was fitted in the bar. The members were tickled to have a front door that opens itself once you input the security code.

In the Wicklow Senior Hurling Final, Bray Emmets, ran out easy 1-19 to 1-09 winners against Glenealy in Aughrim. Bray soccer outfit, Ardmore Rovers, celebrated their 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Though without a proper home, the club still managed to run over 40 senior and underage teams for the town. Over in Japan Ireland's Rugby World Cup dream was shattered at the quarter-final stage by a rampant New Zealand. It was Joe Schmidt's last game in charge of the team. In the end South Africa won the competition.

## November

In her 15<sup>th</sup> professional fight, Bray's own Katie Taylor (33) collected another world belt as she was crowned the WBO super lightweight champion in the Manchester Arena. Her unanimous points' victory over title holder, Christina Linardatou, sees her become a two-weight world champion. The same weekend the Irish women's hockey team defeated Canada in a penalty shoot-out to qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

In 1989 Bray BC member, Sean O Mealoid, had reported *as Gaeilge* on the fall of the Berlin Wall for RTE Television. Now on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that event he went back to make another programme, "Ar ais go Berlin '89", discovering how the Germans had got on since. And highly informative it was too.



*Illustration 6: A youthful Sean O Mealoid reports from Berlin in 1989.*

At the Men's AGM Tommy Murphy was elected club captain. Bray had men's teams in four divisions during the season and there were reflections on the difficulties that captain's had had sometimes in fielding a full team. Outgoing captain, Robert McClancey, reminded us of the exceptional season it was for illness and incapacity among the men, and said members needed to play when selected. Second team captain, Paddy Pegman, spoke of the many phone calls he had to make to organise any substitutions required. John Cheevers pointed out that if the Division 2 team dropped down to Division 3 and became a junior team it would solve many selection problems as well as making more men eligible for junior BLI competition. However Robert thought this would be a retrograde step after the effort our bowlers had put into getting out of that division. Wally Doyle thought we had too many teams while Brian Walshe did not agree with ladies playing in the BLI leagues at all. Some decisions were postponed pending possible rule changes by the BLI.

Dave McMahon wondered if the men's section, and not members themselves, should decide the entrants for the BLI competitions as happens at some clubs. Newer talents like Peter Gough and Niall Shelley expressed a desire for more formal training at the senior level and Tuesday evening sessions were discussed as one possibility. Wally asked why the bar was not open more.

In October our groundsman, Noel Keane, had left us for a course in film-making at Bray Institute of Further Education. Luckily the previous incumbent, the experienced Chris Fitzgerald, was persuaded to return to us as a temporary replacement.

Some bowlers from Bray joined others from around the country at an indoor bowling tournament at The Galway Bay Hotel. While the evening socialising is important at these events, they take their sport seriously too and a team led by our own Owen Byrne were victorious.

The club's AGM was held at the end of the month. The hon sec, Frank Devlin, made his report to those in attendance. He welcomed the year's new members: Colm Clifford, John Corbett, Michael Doyle, Marcus Donahue, Eamonn Kennedy, Theresa Martin, Will McKeon and Patricia Fitzpatrick. He was generous in his praise for those members who give of

their time to the club: "I would like to thank Patrick Brosnan for all his work on the club website and also in looking after the flowers around the green. Eoghain Brady for all the texting throughout the year and his work on producing the fixtures booklet and also for his setting up of the Bray Bowling Club 'Whats App Group'. Once again this year we had a very successful club lotto that raised over €1,300. The lotto was the brainchild of Fran Neilson and, as alluded to in previous reports, it is proof that the simplest of ideas can also be the best. Thanks also to Phyllis, Marge and Eddie for organising the Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday Rollups and to Brendan Duffy for ensuring we moved to the left or the right in a seamless fashion on a Wednesday. I would also like to thank those members who organised the annual hedge cutting and to the ladies who prepared breakfast following the cutting." Then Frank went on to summarise the year's events, doling out more praise and thanks where warranted.

Tiernan Kavanagh, our hon treasurer, presented his report on the club's finances in some detail, highlighting any positive news as he went along. Our rates bill had been reduced after the hon sec, Frank Devlin, had successfully concluded a re-evaluation with Wicklow County Council. We had unlocked the last part of our sports grant and also got a €20k loan from the BLI which was funding the latest refurbishments.

The fact that work usually keeps him away from the bowling green does not diminish Tiernan's passion for his club. He was generous in his praise for those members who raise money and do much of the work: Frank (hon sec), Stephen Morris (bar manager), John Dunne (refurbishments), Phyllis Brett, Margie O' Leary and Eddie Kelly (roll-ups), the executive members, etc. Conversely he felt there were too many who did not pull their weight especially those with specialist skills that could be of use in the club. Upcoming jobs that would need addressing were the removal of the water tank that fed the defunct sprinkler system and proper lights for the pavilion meeting room.

Despite it being discussed at the previous AGM, under-use of the bar was acknowledged as still being a problem. Phyllis reminded the gathering that it was open every Friday evening. She also pointed out the lack of signage at the club that might help bring in new members. This was all the more important given that the club had spent about €1,000 on advertising in local papers during the year but to no avail.

A change was agreed to our constitution so that the men's and ladies' AGMs would take place before the club AGM so that their officers would be in place for the main event. Finally at the AGM all the club's main officers were re-elected to their incumbent positions.

## **December**

As the Christmas break arrived in the Winter League, the local teams were not best placed to go through to the knock-out phase. In Section 3 both Bray B and Greystones stood no chance of doing so. In Section 2 Bray C had a slight chance, being 8 points behind second placed Leinster. Section 1 held the most promise with the reigning champions, Bray A, in second place but with Leinster Lions and Greenhills breathing down their necks. Dun Laoghaire topped two of the sections with CYM leading the third. In the northern sections it was Meath and Skerries that were setting the pace.

Our tool-shed had, for many years, given over half its space to a water storage tank for the sprinkler system. Made obsolete by the advent of the artificial green, it was now time to free the space it was taking up. Some plumbers arrived to work on the job with Chris. They first jammed the stop-cock in place to cut off water ingress, and the natural leakage of the system soon had the tank empty. (To the surprise of some, no old bowlers were found at the bottom!) Then they used an angle grinder to cut the galvanised steel sides into manageable pieces which they could remove. Finally the water inflow was permanently



blocked. Result: in a single morning the shed space available to us had doubled. Now to fix that leaky roof!

The Friday-before-Christmas shindig brought many together for the last time this year. Christmas jumpers were much in evidence, one with lights (John Dunne) and one with bells (Peter Gough). Santa was also there (President Aidan Galvin) to distribute awards. John Reynolds (not for the first time) was announced as the winner of the Wednesday league. Theresa Martin came second, a great achievement for the novice bowler. Everybody who participated got something even if it was just a box of biscuits (still with its reduced price sticker on!) Runners-up medals were given out to those of our Vets 3 team who were present.

The Christmas quiz was given a shake-up as teams were picked by lot and people had to move around to get to the right table. Then hon sec, Frank Devlin, dressed in every three-year-old's dream Christmas ensemble, unleashed his cruellest quiz ever on the holy innocents. It ranged from Icelandic and Spanish words through space broadcasts and on to obscure American towns called "Christmas". Bamboozled by too much work for their inebriated brains, the participants were relieved to make it to the end. Once again the winning team was led by Colm Murphy, with Margaret Doyle's table as runners-up.

The evening was rounded off with some games, high-low cards and heads-'n'-tails with the winners receiving cash prizes. Thanks were due to all who helped organise things, the above-mentioned plus Phyllis Brett, Pat Crinnion, Eddie Kelly and barman, Steve Morris.



*Illustration 7: John Browne, Marcus Donohoe and John Dunne at the Christmas do.*