



100TH ANNIVERSARY



ENNIS GOLF CLUB'S CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Ennis Golf Club is celebrating its centenary this year and an extensive programme of events has been organised. Club captains Brendan Colton and Eileen Corry and club president Noel Pyne will oversee what promises to be a very special year. **Sports editor Seamus Hayes** met with members of the committee including last year's captain John Finn who is preparing an updated club history



■ Ennis Golf Club officers, from left, Noel Pyne, president, Brendan Colton, captain, Eileen Corry, lady captain and Mike Butler, honorary secretary.

Photograph by John Kelly

Bringing success to the club

OVER the years, the Ennis Golf Club has produced its share of international and inter provincial players who have brought many trophies to the town. People like Vincent Nevin, Valerie Hassett, Tricia Mangan and Noel Pyne are just some of the golfers who won a series of top honours.

Vincent Nevin played for Ireland on 67 occasions between 1961 and 1973. He won four major championships; the Irish Close in 1969, the West of Ireland title in 1972 and was twice a winner of the South of Ireland title, 1976 and 1978, played at Lahinch.

Valerie Hassett was an Irish senior international in 2003, '04 and '05. She won the Irish Seniors Close Stroke Play Championship on five occasions and the Irish Senior Open Strokeplay title twice. She was runner up in the British Senior Strokeplay in 1996, '97, '98 and '99, she won the title in 2006. She was the US Open senior finalist in 1998. She has been Munster and Connacht champion and has won the Cork, Lahinch and Mallow scratch cups as well as numerous other titles.

Tricia Mangan has won the Irish ladies title for the past two seasons. She has been a member of the Curtis Cup Team, a member of the Irish team for the home internationals and the World Team Championships. She was a member of the winning Great Britain and Irish Vagliano Team. She was a member of the Irish team for the home internationals and the European Team Championships. She has won the Munster ladies title, the Cork Scratch Cup and the Irish intermediate title.

Pat Lyons, a South of Ireland finalist in 1985, played for Ireland a year later in 1986.

Des Torrens, an outstanding sportsman in the 1930s, played rugby for Ireland in 1938 and 1939 and he also played golf for Munster in both of those years. He was a beaten finalist in the South of Ireland in 1937.

Noel Pyne, the current club president,



■ Ennis were All-Ireland Mixed Foursomes Champions in 1985. Back (left to right) Des Mahon, Michael Vaughan, Brian Gilligan, John Madden (club captain), TJ Murphy, representing the sponsors, Noel Gilligan, Bernard Hoey (team manager), Sean Brennan, Noel Pyne, Ray Hennessy; Front (left to right) Ann O'Sullivan, Bridget Hoey, Vera Madden, Emmanuel McMahon (team manager), Mary Fanning, Noreen Doohan and Ann Roche.

captained Munster to successive inter provincial championships and he was a senior international in 2004.

Paddy Bugler won the South of Ireland title in 1954 when he beat Tony Mahon from Monkstown in the final.

Donal Kenny, a member of a well known Ennis golfing family, was a regular on the Munster team from 1980 to 1987, playing 35 times.

Ray Hennessy played for Munster in 1984 and he was a youth international in 1982.

Ronan Gilligan (1979), **Brian Gilligan** (1985 and '86) and **John Hoey** (1987) were Boy internationals.

Onagh Fitzpatrick was a member of the Munster senior cup team with Cork Golf club in 1963, and with Douglas in 1964 to 1970. She won the Irish Senior Cup with Douglas in 1967 and 1968.

She was Munster Junior Champion in 1960 and Munster Senior Champion in 1969. She was a member of the winning Munster team in 1980.

Maura McNicholas played Munster Senior Cup (1993 and 2005) and Munster Junior Cup (1987) with Ennis. She was Leinster junior champion in 1988. She won the inter provincial title with Munster in 2003 and was on the Munster team in 2006.

Pamela Murphy was on the Munster interprovincial team in 2004 to 2006 and she was a member of the Ennis team which won the Munster Senior Cup title in 2005. She was the Leinster and Munster champion in 1997 and the Connacht champion in 1998. She was a junior inter provincial player from 1993 to 1998 and an Irish international in the same period.

Sarah Cunningham played on the Irish team for the girls home internationals and for the European Young Masters. She was a member of the Munster girls team last year and was also on the Ennis Senior Cup team. She played in the Irish Close and the British girls open championships. She won the Leinster girls title last year.

Team successes

IN team golf Ennis won the national mixed foursomes title in 1985, the only national pennant won by the club.

Ennis were Munster mixed foursomes champions in 1976, 1077, 1078, 1984 and 1985.

The Munster Barton shield was won by the club team in 1964 while Ennis won the Munster junior cup title in 1971 and the Munster Jimmy Bruen

MORE golf clubs were founded in Ireland in the 1890s than during any other decade since and Ennis was among those 103 clubs. The club does not have any records from earlier than 1915 but outside sources have helped to fill in the blanks.

The Sportsman's Holiday Guide 1898/9 gives 1897 as the institution date for Ennis Golf Club, but there seems that there was no club in existence for the subsequent 10 years. The Irish Golfers Guide 1914 gives 1907 as the institution date for the club. It reports that there was a membership of 90 on the nine hole course that measured 2,500 yards. The subscription rate for ladies and men was 10 shillings.

It was not unusual that a club could be formed, then disappear for a few years only to reappear a few years later.

What is known for sure is that by October 1915 Ennis Golf Club was functioning as any normal golf club would. It had a president, captain and committee and there is a list of 145 members. The club kept a meticulous set of accounts, receipts and expenditure. There are audited accounts from September 30, 1917 when HJ Johnston from Victoria Terrace was the club treasurer.

The annual general meeting for 1918 was held at 3.30pm on Thursday, October 24 at the Pavilion. A professional was employed to give lessons and even in those early days sand was being spread on the course, just as now. In 1916 the 20 tons of sand cost five pounds, twelve and tuppence.

Notable events from the 1920s include the ban on tennis at the present 18th green area and the major extension of the clubhouse in 1926 costing £536 pounds.

The major figure in the club up to his death in 1935 was Alexander Knox. He was president from 1924 and club treasurer from 1919. He is honoured by the club each year when the premier matchplay singles competition is the Knox Cup.

1934 saw further investment in the clubhouse. Extending the course to 18 holes was very much in the minds of the members in the 1930s but the asking price for Moloney's land across the road was beyond the club, just yet.

World War II impacted on the club which escaped having to set aside acreage for



■ Work in progress on the development of the new 8th fairway in 1949. Pictured from left are Rev J Hogan, Bishop J Rodgers, Rev T Maxwell, AR Swaine, K Jennings, G McMahon and D Fitzpatrick.

compulsory tillage. Rationing had a far greater impact. Supplies of golf balls and whiskey were the two major curses of the decade, and these shortages lasted until the end of 1948.

One can judge what the priorities of the members were when reading of the dearth of balls and the whiskey drought. In June 1942, the secretary was instructed to do all in his power to obtain a supplier of whiskey, as the present suppliers had not treated the club very fairly. In 1944 Messrs Knox were written to complaining that the club was not being fairly treated regarding supplies of whiskey. The drought continued after the war and on June 14, 1946 the secretary was instructed to write a stiff letter to Knox's and insist that the ration should be supplied. By 1948 members' needs had changed from quantity to quality. The captain, Mr G McMahon, was to meet Des Torrens from Knox's with a view to getting better quality whiskey. Certainly, the nineteenth hole seems to have been as natural a part of the game as it is now.

The dearth of golf balls was so acute that it almost brought playing to a stand still. In April 1944 there were only 56 balls in stock. In January 1942 members were allowed one ball per fortnight, which the secretary and treasurer were in charge of. The course at this time was covered in dense rough and caddies made a few bob from a black market trade in lost balls. They also rejuvenated battered old spuds by giving them a shiny coat of paint. The scarcity continued

into 1943. In May 1943, the committee decided to give one ball to each competitor in the Knox Cup. The Ladies were given three dozen Blue Flash Balls, "to ration them out as they wished". By April 1947, the situation had improved but balls were still being rationed. There were 23 dozen in stock in February 1948.

One of the major developments in the Club's history was the purchase of Moloney's land in 1949. This led to the construction of what became known as the bottom nine. According to members, "it is well on high impossible for us, the inheritors of their dream, to imagine the obstacles that the members of 1949 had to overcome in order to create the carpet of green that is now that portion of the course across the road." The work was completed by 1952 when Ennis became an 18 hole course. The leap from nine holes to 18 holes put a lot of pressure on the club for the rest of the 1950s and by 1959 there were mutterings of discontent. Some members felt that the new land should be sold because of the difficulty of finding new members.

As Ireland became more affluent more people turned to golf as a pastime. By the early 1970s membership figures had bulged and the need for more land became a critical issue. Seven acres were purchased and the present 10th and 11th holes were built in the early 80s. Throughout the 80s and early 90s a growing body of opinion among the members argued that Ennis Golf Club should relocate to a different site in order to accommodate the growing membership safely. After a major debate the membership decided not to relocate. By the end of the 1990s there were various problems in the club. The course was unplayable for long periods during the year due to the poor drainage and the clubhouse was in poor repair and not able to meet the demands of the membership.

Important changes

THE wet course was a torment for many years and it was a regular occurrence to find that the course was closed following heavy rainfall.

In the past few years these conditions have changed for the good following the carrying out of a major drainage and sanding programme on the course three years ago. As a result, the course is playable almost all year round, the exception being when there is

heavy frost.

New tee boxes were built in 2004 and 2005 and a new irrigation system was installed in 2006 and the result is that members can now enjoy all year round golf in improved conditions.

After much debate, it was decided to leave the clubhouse that had been home to the members since its reconstruction in 1969 and, in December 1998, the present clubhouse was opened to members.

The 1993 season will be especially remembered by members of the club as this was the year that gender equality was introduced. Lady members became full members in that year which meant that they could now attend annual general meetings and have full voting rights. The previous occasion in which ladies had attended the annual general meeting was in 1945.

Knox cup

THE Knox cup was first presented in 1916 and it is played for annually by the men in matchplay format.

The first winner was Knox's nephew, JA Torrens and he again won the title in 1919. Torrens was the club captain in 1922 and his son Des, who was a well known rugby international, was Ennis captain in 1951. The cup commemorates Alexander Knox, the first president of Ennis Golf club, a position he held from 1925 to 1934. Such a lengthy tenancy as President was by no means strange in those days but soon after a rule was introduced which specified that the President should spend no more than two years in office.

Membership

IN 1947 Ennis had 219 members at the annual subscription of £2.60. Becoming a member wasn't easy and this was the situation with all clubs and members had to be balloted to decide whether applications for membership could be accepted. This was the case until 1955 after which ballooning of members is no longer mentioned in committee minutes.

Last caddy master

IN the mid 50s another of the old customs disappeared. The last caddy master, John Curley, resigned in December 1952 and he was not replaced. In the thirties and forties members had to use a caddy and the fee for nine holes was one shilling, 12 old pence of which 3 went



■ Alexander Knox, founder and first president of Ennis Golf Club.

Club investments top €2million

IN the past decade, Ennis golf club has invested €2.75 million in the provision of a new clubhouse (€1.5m) and on course development and machinery (€1.25m). This has resulted in a course that is playable all year round.

Currently the club has a membership of 1,400, made up of 1,000 adults and 400 juniors. It is a very active membership with huge entries for all competitions through-

out each season.

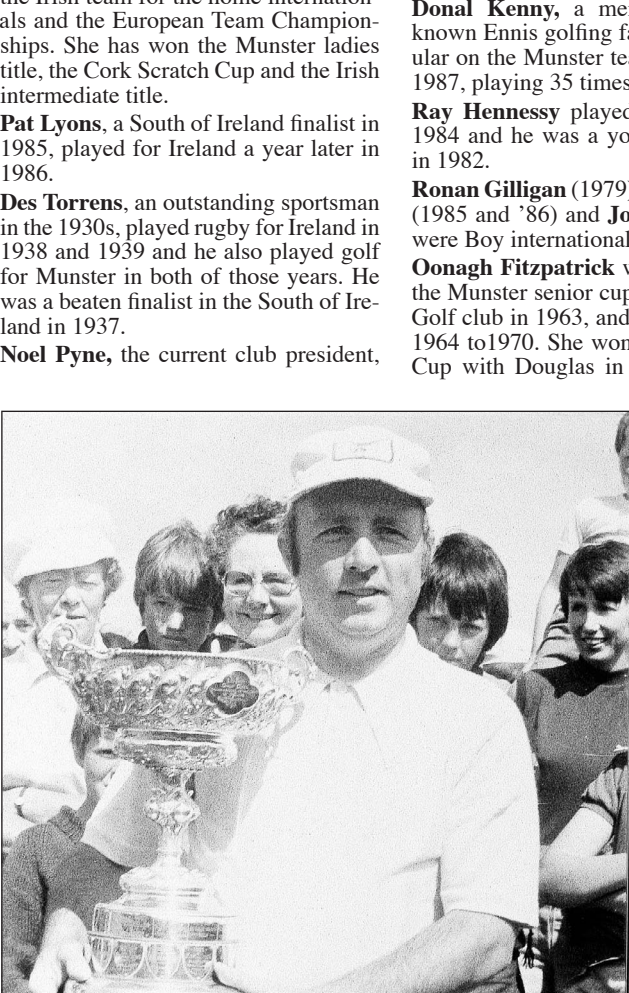
Centenary events

THE club will host a number of major golf events during the centenary year including the following:

May 13 - Senior Scratch Cup
June 12 - Special Olympics Munster Championship
July 2 to 8 - Centenary Year Members

Week

July 9 to 12 - Munster Girls Championship 2007
July 18-20 Munster Boys Amateur Open Championships
July 26 to August 6 - Open Week
September 9 to 12 - Irish Senior Ladies Open Championship
November 23 - Centenary Ball



■ (Left) Ennis man Vincent Nevin who played for Ireland on 67 occasions and won the South of Ireland title twice. ■ Tricia Mangan, Irish ladies champion for the past two years.