

Bray Bowling Club: 2017 Season Summary

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While Bray B did not qualify for the knockout stages of the 2016/2017 **winter league**, Bray A made it as far as the quarter-finals in Skerries. There an under-strength team were well-beaten by a powerful Dun Laoghaire A side, 62-17. Dun Laoghaire later went on to win the trophy.

In March veteran bowlers, John Brown and Eddie Morley, made a **welcome return** to the club after spells away with illness and caring for others. Distinguished member, Richard Neilson, also came back from his "retirement" to join the first team.

Under club captain, Dave McMahon, **preparations for the new season** were taken quite seriously. Both the men and women bowlers availed of coaching sessions led by a mix of our own and outside coaches. Bray A played Bray B in a "local derby" with victory going to the Division 1 lads. Pre-season friendlies were arranged: Bray A v Dun Laoghaire, Shankill v Bray ladies, Bray B v Greystones. Greystones v Bray A + B, Bray A v Blackrock. Donaghadee from Co. Down also dropped in on their pre-season tour.

Here's how the summer season went for the various teams.

Division 1, Bray A, Captain Dave McMahon. The new captain was not afraid to make his mark. Promising new bowlers such as Peter Gough and Eddie Condren were given their chance. Peter hung on to his place in the side while Eddie continued to play senior bowling with the second team. Bray's results were the usual mix of good and not-so-good. In July they were surprisingly beaten at home by bottom club, Railway Union, making for a slightly nervous end to the season. They made up for that result in part the following week by stealing 2.5 points at difficult Meath. The team lost skip, Eamonn Kennedy, due to a falling-out caused by a communications breakdown over a re-scheduled Vets 1 match. The ship held steady and relegation was never really a possibility. In their last match of the season, skips Tommy Cahill and Pat Brett were moved to the front of the rink and the team enjoyed a good 5-2 home win over Dun Laoghaire. They finished the season 7th out of 10 in the league with 52 points (41% of the points available). Last season they were 5th with 58 points.

Division 2, Bray B, Captain Robert MacClancy. The standard is high in the second division and once again the team had to battle for their place. The loss of good men like John Reynolds and Alan Rath for long periods did not help and on a few occasions there were only just enough players to field a team. When the first team has holes to fill it looks to the second team for those players. To make matters worse the second team tries to restrict its borrowing of players from lower teams lest they become ineligible to play for the lower team. On successive weekends in June, 11 members were unavailable in the combined first and second team group thus straining the system to breaking point.

In the early part of the season Bray beat Shankill on their ground. Then in July they took them on in Bray in a decisive relegation battle. Dave Meaney's rink scooped a miraculous 6 shots in the last end to win the shot count and a vital 5 points. Later that month Bray beat Westmanstown at home 6-1, the match points being decided by a single shot in Bray's favour. In the penultimate round of matches neither Bray (gaining 1 point on a heavy lerne green) nor Shankill got much but the latter ran out of road and were relegated. Bray were safe for another season. A core of experienced players combined with a strong fighting spirit had kept them up. They finished with a flourish beating St James's Gate 5-2 at home. They end up 9th out of 10 in the table on 40 points (35% of the points available). A close run thing. Last season they were 7th with 55.5 points.

Division 4, Bray C, Captain Brian Dodd, Vice-Captain Bob Neilson. As for Bray B they sometimes had difficulty fielding a full team and once had to give a walkover to their opponents. Here is how the campaign went in the captain's own words. "We did well in this, the most difficult of divisions. Throughout the season the team was competitive. We were in the top three of the league for most of the season. We won more matches than last year and, critically, got more rink points. We finished 15 points off the winners, last year it was 31. This year the Division 4 team used 30 players compared to 24 last year. During the season all players who were eligible to play Division 4 were selected. Some declined selection." Bray C finished 7th out of 9 with 45.5 points (47% of the points available). Last season they were 8th with 41 points.

Division 6, Bray D, Captain Damien Gallanagh. Under their novice captain Bray had a good season, topping the table a number of times. They eventually finished runners-up out of 5 in the table on 33.5 points (52% of the points available – the highest percentage of any Bray team). Last season they were 3rd of 3 with 9.5 points. Since the winners, Crumlin, already have a side in Division 5, Bray would be promoted if only the club had the personnel to field 6 rinks on a Monday night (Div 4 plus Div 5).

Vets: Bray 1 finished Division 1 in 5th place, a spot below last season. Bray 2 Captain, Mick Dunne, had to contend with many of his regulars being unavailable at times and rinks were changing all the time. They did well to finish 6th out of 9 in Division 2 with 21 points and look forward to having a more settled side next year. 2017 was the first time that Bray entered a side in Division 3 and an inexperienced team did themselves proud by finishing 2nd out of 8. For the match away to CYM Bray fell into the old "toilet trap". Michael Egglestone was attending to a call of nature when his lift (the jag) pulled out of Failte Park. Remaining calm he summoned his wife in the car and, with only a vague knowledge of where CYM might be, they managed to get there before kick-off.

In **LBLI** Division 1 Bray had an average season. They ended up 7th out of 10 in the table on 57.5 points (46% of the points available). Last season they were 6th with 60 points.

For the first time in a while Bray ladies entered a team in the Saturday League. They finished a respectable 6th out of 10 in the table on 16 points (44% of the points available).

It was not a year for **cup** success at the club. In May Pickie of Bangor, Co Down travelled to Failte Park to knock the men out of the IBA Senior Cup. In the same month Meath ended their interest in the Open Cup (Division 1) in Trim. Neither did the second team fare any better in the Crumlin Cup, being beaten at home by Dun Laoghaire in round 1. We were barred from the Shott Cup after having given a walk-over the previous year. The ladies did not even get to bowl in the Open Challenge Cup. A mix-up over the number of rinks to be played led to them giving a walk-over to Kenilworth.

In the **club competitions** Christy McEvoy is the new men's champion and, for good measure, he was also victorious in the men's handicap. Breeda Keogh went one better in landing the women's championship, the 2-bowl singles and the mixed triples (with John Dunne and Martin Delaney). Now Christy and Breeda will go on to represent Bray in the Champion of Champions competitions. We cannot leave this subject without mentioning Roddy O'Leary's partner in the men's 2-bowl pairs, Billy Kane. In spite of continuing poor health Billy played like a first division lead in every round and they almost made it to the final.



2017 club champions, Breeda Keogh and Christy McEvoy, receive their trophies from club president, Pat Brett.

Outside of competition Bray hosted a touring party from Florida in June. There was a match and afterwards a meal and a sing-song. In July we said goodbye to our wonderful groundsman of several years, Chris Fitzgerald. His enthusiastic replacement is Noel Keane. Our August barbecue was organised by the ladies' section. Having taken care of everything else they could do nothing about the weather. The remnants of Hurricane Gert ensured that very little bowling happened but in spite of this there was a good attendance, the food went down well before all retired to the bar for a sing-song.

A first for the club, and great honour, is the election of **Fran Neilson** to the presidency of the IWBA. This year the same lady also initiated a lotto competition at Bray which brought in over a thousand euro to the club. Other good sources of **income** were the Winter League and rollups, Roddy's Horse & Jockey night and, of course, the bar. At the November AGM we were reminded by hon. treasurer, Tiernan Kavanagh, of all Stephen Morris's behind-the-scenes tasks required to keep the drink flowing. A few of 2017's other hard-working volunteers worth mentioning are Owen Byrne and sisters, Marge O'Leary and Phyllis Brett, and there are more besides.

Bray BC now has a very active membership of 62 men and 20 ladies. New members this year are Eddie Condren, Niall Shelley, Dick Fowler, Tommy Quinn and Terri McKeon. Niall achieved fame when, as a Bohemians midfielder, he scored the winning goal in the 1976 FAI cup final against Drogheda. In Wintertime our numbers are further swollen by friends from Greystones and Crumlin BCs who come to join us on our all-weather green.

For more information see www.braybc.ie.