

## 2022 at Bray Bowling Club

*Author: Patrick Brosnan*

### Winter

Work on the new bar patio continued. Some holes had to be drilled in the boundary wall to facilitate drainage. Four members kindly sponsored decorative wooden barrels. Bar manager, Owen Byrne, purchased three beer-garden tables (with seating) which he and John Dunne painted in the yellow, white and blue of the club.

Niall Shelley was Bray's winter champion-of-champions representative and he was drawn at home against Dun Laoghaire veteran, Anto Grey. The visitor made a strong start but at 1-12 down, the Bray man mounted a ferocious comeback which brought him to a 16-14 lead. At this stage it was a dog-fight. On the final end Anto was holding the shot that would have given him victory. When Niall fired he ended up with bowl and jack in the ditch and holding shot. Then with his final bowl he drew for a second shot and victory. Final score: Bray 18 – 17 Dun Laoghaire.



*Illustration 1: Niall Shelley (blue cap) Vs Anto Grey.*

During the pandemic many clubs, including Bray, had seen an increase in new members. As a result the BLI arranged a series of Sunday morning challenge matches for the novices, two in February and two in March. Each game involved three trips rinks with two bowls per player. John Cheevers organised the Bray teams. The four clubs that Bray played host to were Dun Laoghaire, Crumlin, Westmanstown and CYM.

As well as Herbert Park, Kenilworth had also laid a new carpet (by Dales). It had not been stretched when Bray B played there in the Winter League so was somewhat heavy and, in patches, unpredictable. Nonetheless the visitors left victorious.

At the end of the group stage, John Cheevers' Bray A, with mixed results, came in a creditable third place out of six in their section. Frank Devlin's Bray B however topped their group, having won most of their matches. Niall Shelley progressed to the champion-of-champion semi-final by beating Clontarf's Kevin Marshall in Bray.

The high skills of Crumlin's Sarah Kelly were recognised when she was named to compete in the 2022 European Championships in Ayr, Scotland. Richard Leonard and Shane Leonard made it into the 2022/23 Irish Men's High Performance Squad.

*Cavan's Leona Maguire became the first golfer from Ireland to win an LPGA tournament – the LPGA Drive On Championship held in Fort Myers, Florida.*

*With the dominant Omicron variant of Covid-19 being milder than previous ones, the government relaxed many restrictions and society returned to near normal functioning.*

After the pandemic it was sad to see that some of the older bowlers had not returned to the club. Ill-health and lockdowns had taken their toll. Their replacements had big shoes to fill.

## **Spring**

In the Winter League Champion-of-Champions semi-final at Dun Laoghaire, Bray's Niall Shelley lost a hard-fought match by just two shots (18-16) to Peter McArdle of Greenhills. Niall's friend, Peter Gough, had marked all three of his matchers.

In their Winter League quarter-final, Bray B beat Skerries at Greenhills, greatly helped by a storming performance from Tommy Cahill's rink. In the semi-final however, the Seasideers could not overcome Dun Laoghaire in Leinster for whom Mark Brown was in scintillating form.

The AWBA finals were held in Failte Park, Bray. The club had never looked better after groundsman Chris was finished preparing the green and surrounds, while our painters – Owen Byrne, Ger Minogue, Eddie Condren and John Dunne – turned the patio walls from grey to white then enhanced them with a wooden planter full of flowers.

The games themselves were watched by a large crowd drawn by the glorious Spring sunshine. In the team final, Dun Laoghaire proved too strong for Meath, running out winners by 9 shots. The new AWBA champion-of-champions was Greenhills' youngster, Peter McArdle, who secured an 18-9 triumph over Peter Byrne of Herbert Park. The bar was open all day while the catering was expertly handled by the ladies section.



*Illustration 2: Meath v Dun Laoghaire in the Winter League final.*

One of the the best Irish lady bowlers ever, Phillis Nolan of Blackrock BC, passed away. A Bray lady, she had begun bowling at her local club before moving with husband Phillip to Blackrock BC. On her retirement in 2015 her club presented her with a plaque that listed her many achievements. It shows 33 major championship wins (in World Bowls, British Isles, IWBA and Atlantic Rim), 40 LBLI championships, 44 tournament titles and 54 international appearances for Ireland (1976 - 1999). In addition she had helped Blackrock win the LBLI Division 1 countless times including a staggering 26-in-a-row run from 1983

to 2008.

The only outdoor club in Connacht, Sligo Lawn Bowls Club, had been in operation since 2016. Since then the club thrived, with new members joining every year. A sports grant helped secure the premises with CCTV and a high boundary fence. The shipping container that had originally served as a makeshift clubhouse was replaced by a proper pavilion.



*Illustration 3: Sligo Bowling Club.*

A Friday night get-together was held in the bar to award prizes for the Wednesday League with Phyllis Brett coming first (again). One of Frank's demonic quizzes also helped to entertain the twenty odd attendants.

Patrick Brosnan made his "Bray Bowling Club, A History" available on Amazon.co.uk, either as a paperback (236 pages, £17) or a Kindle download (£4). Fortunately he, as author, could get them much cheaper (less than €9). He ordered some for sale to club members at a price of €10 per book which gave over a euro royalty per book to the club (nothing for himself). He was pleasantly surprised by the interest shown and had to quickly order more.

The door to the outside ladies toilet had been getting stuck resulting sometimes in cries for help from inside! A dynamic trio of Dave Meaney, John Dunne and Ger Minogue sorted it out one afternoon so ladies could once again pay a visit without fear of incarceration.

With the clocks having gone forward the green was open again from 10.30. Bray A (men's Division 1) played friendlies against CYM and Bray B (Division 2). The latter also had a friendly on the grass of Greystones. So early in the season, this was heavy and uneven but good training. It was a shame that this was the only Bray team that had that experience, such is the gulf between bowling on an artificial surface and grass.

On his return from Spain, Eoghain Brady organised the typesetting, printing and proof-reading of the Members' Handbook for 2022. It contained all the fixtures for the season and contact details of members, new and old.

CYM held the BLI presidency for the year, and Roddy O'Leary, John Cheevers and Frank Devlin from Bray attended the unfurling of the flag in Terenure. Afterwards they enjoyed a game of bowls and dinner. Later in the week Bray A (men's Division 1) played a friendly against CYM in Bray.

In the first post-pandemic Summer season the Bray men fielded teams in Divisions 1, 2 (Saturday, four rinks) 4 and 5 (Monday, three rinks) plus a team in each vets division (Thursday, two rinks) where a fourth tier had been added. Bray's two nominated players were Pat Crinnion and Brendan Duffy. The latter also reached an honourable milestone, becoming a blood donor for the 150<sup>th</sup> time.

In the club's first junior BLI championship match in a number of years it was a case of hard luck to Will McKeon who lost out in a great match in the Nassau Cup singles to Pat Linnane from North Kildare.



*Illustration 4: The Patio Team: Ger Minogue, Eddie Condren, John Dunne and Owen Byrne.*

One afternoon Ger Minogue thought he would practise his jack-throwing so he took out the box of jacks to do so. After a while an elderly lady called in through the fence, "why are you practising with small balls?" Ger went over to explain. However she turned out to be ex-ladies' captain, Ena Mooney. She knew what a jack was but was confused by the scattershot pattern that Ger had managed to create!

The ladies took their usual place in Division 1 (Wednesday, four rinks). Their season kicked off with a trip to Westmanstown. It was a historic occasion, the first time any men had played in an LBLI League match for Bray. Michael Doyle and Michael Dunne did the honours. Any team could now field members of the opposite sex. They just had to be affiliated with that association.

One May evening Alan Rath's senior foursome from Bray turned up on deadline day at Blackrock for their BLI Sixsmith match. It was pretty quiet there so they rang their own club secretary for confirmation of the fixture. He rang the Blackrock club secretary. Both checked the BLI website and saw that the deadline was later in the month and the venue was actually Bray. As they were there anyway, the lads paid €2 each and had a roll-up.

It turned out that they had got their instructions from a fellow member in the Ardmore Bar the previous Saturday evening. This man had been fooled by the inexplicable use of American dates on the BLI website. The error of venue can only be explained by the effects of the alcohol consumed on the night! The moral of the story: alcohol and match planning do not mix very well!

The bowling authorities cancelled matches and organised an open weekend across all clubs in an effort to recruit more players. During a Friday afternoon and all-day Saturday, volunteers in Bray were on hand to teach about 15 people the game.

When a Bray men's team turned out for a Division 1 game at Crumlin it contained women for the first time ever. Terri McKeon and Theresa Martin helped the side gain two useful

away points in the bright D12 sunshine.

In the men's senior Inter-association competition the BLI came third. The winners were the Northern Ireland Private Greens Bowling League.

*Rachael Blackmore, riding Henry de Bromhead's 3-1 favourite "A Plus Tard", became the first woman to land the Cheltenham Gold Cup. In rugby Ireland won the triple crown but came second in the championship to France.*

*Irish boxer, Katie Taylor, made history on April 30 when she fought Puerto Rico's Amanda Serrano in the first female bout to headline at Madison Square Garden. The Bray girl won a narrow victory but only after surviving a ferocious onslaught in the middle of the bout.*

*Amy Broadhurst (Dundalk) and Lisa O'Rourke (Castlerea) wrote their names into the history books of Irish boxing when they both secured gold medals at the Women's World Championships in Istanbul.*



*Illustration 5: The first ladies ever to play for Bray in BLI Division 1, Terri McKeon and Theresa Martin.*

## Summer

Half of all competitive matches are played on the other team's ground. The drivers who traditionally ferried bowlers to and from their destinations, usually for no charge, were the unsung heroes of any club. With war in Ukraine pushing up the price of oil, motoring costs rose in tandem. By informal agreement each member would now offer €5 to their driver for the service provided. He or she need not accept the money but most did.

In the IBA Senior Cup Bray were drawn away at Donaghadee, County Down, but had to give a walk-over due to difficulty mustering a team.

On a damp Thursday morning the club members, clad in blazers and bowling gear, bade farewell to Brian Walshe who had passed away days earlier after a long illness. As well as being a great bowler in the lead position, Brian always made time to help new members find their feet. He also worked hard maintaining club facilities and would often be seen in the Summer with a paintbrush in hand. A true gentleman, Brian was 79 when he passed.

Eoghain Brady's run in the Senior Singles (Marper) cup came to an end on a warm Summer evening in Bray. A slick Gareth Pierpoint of CYM never let our man settle into his game and made off with the spoils. Brendan Adamson's campaign in the junior competition also finished on the same night. Still the novice had done very well in getting as far as he did.

Alan Hopkins continued his rapid progress through the ranks, making his debut for the Division 1 side in Blackrock. His was Bray's only winning rink.

Covid Omicron variants were still doing their mischief and some bowling matches had to be postponed as a result.

At the half-way stage in the men's Division 1 season Bray A occupied a comfortable fifth spot out of ten teams. CYM A were on top holding off the challenge of Crumlin. In Division 2 results had not gone Bray B's way and they had to do better during the remainder of the season if they were to avoid relegation.

Captain Colm Heaslip lamented the difficulty sometimes of getting a team together. If someone could not make the Division 1 side then a replacement would be taken from Colm's team. He might then have to make numerous phone calls to fill the gap. He felt it would be better if the Division 1 and 2 teams were actually selected at the same time to better coordinate the process, perhaps also naming a pool of shared substitutes.

CYM were strong enough to put out two teams in Division 1. A historic day in June saw them do battle in a Division 1 league match for the first time in 35 years. The A team took all seven points.

At the half-way point in their season (and with a little help from their gentleman substitutes) the ladies team occupied an excellent third place in Division 1. The men's junior teams, bolstered by some experienced bowlers, were also faring well. Bray C of Division 4 lay third while in Division 5 Bray D were second, just two points behind Westmanstown.

The draws for the Bray club championships took place on a Thursday evening before an appreciative audience in the bar.

Owen Byrne's run in the Junior Singles (Nassau) Cup came to an end in Bray at the hands of Kenilworth's Iman Bangoli. The great run of Will McKeon and Alan Hopkins in the junior pairs continued with another fine win in Greystones. They were now in the semi-finals. In the ladies senior singles Theresa Martin went out in the semi-final to Crumlin international, Sarah Kelly. To get that far had been a fantastic achievement for the Bray woman.

The Champion-of-champions took place in the first half of July in Dun Laoghaire. Bray's

Betty Keogh went out in the quarter-finals to Rita Saunders. The Dun Laoghaire woman later lost in the final to Shankill's Ann Wainwright. Things went much better for our male champion. Eoghain Brady got to the final where he faced Peter Taaffe of Skerries. The Bray bowler won well with a score of 21-13. The last time the club had won the trophy was 2005 (Wally Doyle).

A week later he put his €250 winnings towards a celebration in the club bar!



*Illustration 6: Eoghain Brady receives his champion-of-champions trophy from DLBC President, Ian Flood.*

At bowling's European Championships in Northfield, Ayr, Ireland won both the men's and women's trips as well as the men's singles.

Dave Meaney and partner installed a keypad-controlled gate to control access to the changing rooms and rear of the premises.

The BLI finals were held at CYM. In a first for the organisation some of the matches were streamed live on Youtube. In the junior pairs (Tyler Cup) semi-final, Bray's Will McKeon and Alan Hopkins were not quite on their best form and went down to a dynamic duo playing on their home turf.

Ireland experienced a week-long heatwave which left some bowlers hot and bothered.

When sales of "Bray Bowling Club, A History" had run down among members, Owen Byrne took some for the bar which now became the official outlet. Patrick Brosnan advertised the work to the wider bowling community on the club's facebook page. He also donated a hardback copy to Bray library.

Adrian Flaherty joined the club sometime during the pandemic. He enjoyed the camaraderie of the group and the individual friendships that he formed. He did not have the same intellectual capacity as the average bowler and would never match their achievements on the green. Still and all, with support from Eoghain Brady and others, he played in roll-ups and the occasional competitive match. No one enjoyed the game more than he. Unlike most he certainly felt no pressure when on the mat!

*Ireland won their first ever rugby tour in New Zealand against the All-Blacks. In the first hurling All-Ireland final to be staged in July Limerick made it three-in-a-row against a fighting Kilkenny side. In the football Kerry overcame Galway to bring the Sam Maguire cup "home" to the kingdom.*

*in their final at the European Rowing Championships in Munich Ireland's lightweight double sculls crew of Paul O'Donovan and Fintan McCarthy cruised to victory.*

*Thanks to war in Ukraine and its consequences Ireland and the world was experiencing high inflation especially in energy prices.*

## **Autumn**

After a dry summer September brought back our rain and, with it, the climax of the bowling season. The ladies Division 1 was the first to finish. With the regular help of their male subs they finished fifth out of eight, garnering 46% of the points on offer. Crumlin were the champions. CYM came second but did win the Open Cup.

In Bray a number of experienced male bowlers opted to play in midweek this year rather than senior bowls on a Saturday. This they were perfectly entitled to do. It strengthened the junior sides but weakened the Division 2 (B) team which was caught between this, on the one hand, and on the other, providing substitutes to the Division 1 (A) team when needed substitutes. However in the closing stages of the campaign Bray A did lend some players to Bray B to help them in their battle against relegation.

It was an interesting final weekend for the two sides. The Division 1 team, untroubled by fears of relegation, played their postponed home match against Crumlin on a very wet Sunday. Bray battled hard but the Dublin 12 all-stars got the 5-2 victory they needed to clinch the league title by just half a point ahead of CYM. Earlier Crumlin had also won the Open Cup final (against CYM) to make them double winners. Bray finished 6<sup>th</sup> in the division on 55.5. points, 44% of the total points on offer. Railway Union were relegated.

Things were more exciting for Bray B where the top two sides played the bottom two. Bray lay second from bottom, three points above CYM. On a sunny Autumn day they played host to an all-conquering Meath side but got nothing for their efforts. Luckily for the Seasideers, CYM also got nothing in their game at Crumlin. Meath were confirmed as champions with Crumlin, runners-up. CYM were relegated while Bray survived the trap-door. Earlier Meath had also won the Crumlin Cup to make them double winners. Bray finished in 9<sup>th</sup> position with 37.5 points, 30% of those on offer.

In the junior leagues Bray C came seventh in Division 4. It was in the last round of Division 5 matches that Bray D won the division by a slim 1.5 points ahead of Westmanstown. For the second time ever the Victor Cassoni Cup returned to its Bray home. The club also made the final of the Shott Cup in North Kildare and were victorious over CYM in an exciting game. It had been exactly forty years since the club had won this trophy and this was their second time doing so.





Vets 1 and 3 were victorious too in their leagues and a celebratory fry-up was served to all before their last round of matches. As it happened, both these games were against second-placed Dun Laoghaire in Bray. Thanks were owed to John Dunne, his wife, Eamonn Kennedy and others for making the breakfast happen. Bray came third in Vets Division 2 and seventh in Division 4.

In the IBA Senior Cup Crumlin lost their semi-final narrowly to the eventual winners, Old Bleach.

The LBLI had success in the IWBA championships in Cookstown BC. Crumlin's Noeleen Kelly took the senior singles cup for her first time and a CYM quintet, the senior fours (Cora Hamill; Marian Lynch; Georgina Morrissey; Pauline Murray). Amy Carruth (Crumlin) and Sophie McIntyre (Limavaddy) became the under-25s Irish Pairs Champions. Later in the year Amy also won silver in the fours at the BIIBC Mixed U19 Championships at Ballybrakes Community Indoor BC, Ballymoney, Co Antrim.

In the IBA championships at Bangor BC, Kenilworth's Adel Bangoli won the under-18s title.

It was a momentous time for ICICYMA-Garryduff BC of Cork. Fifty years after being laid, their green was dug up so it could be replaced by a new one.

After much excitement in the earlier rounds, Club Championship weekend finally arrived. However controversy erupted before a bowl was thrown. The competition committee had arranged new (purple) settings for the occasion. On learning of this some bowlers argued for the senior settings to be used instead like in previous years. This, they said, would facilitate a higher standard of bowling. Committee members countered by pointing out "the level playing field" that the new settings would create for all. The debate was brought to an

end only when the committee threatened to resign if they were overruled. The new settings stood.

Here is Secretary Frank's report of the matches themselves.

"The club championship finals took place last weekend and the weather God's looked kindly on all the finalists. There was a very good attendance over the course of the two days. On Saturday we had some thrilling matches with two of them going down to the wire. In the Ladies 2 Bowl Singles Marge O'Leary showed all her experience by defeating Theresa Martin 21/20 in an absolute thriller. In the Mixed Trips the team of Frank Byrne/Terri McKeon/Marcus Donohue had a 15/14 win over Ger Minogue/Ann Downhams/Eamonn Kennedy. Peter Gough retained his 2 Bowl Singles title defeating Patrick Brosnan 21/14 and in the Men's 4 Bowl Pairs Niall Shelley and Ger Hollingsworth overcame Walter Doyle and Shane Martin.

"Sunday saw 5 finals taking place and, in the morning session, John Dunne defeated his mentor Walter Doyle in the handicap singles. In the Ladies 2 Bowl Pairs Theresa Martin/Marge O'Leary defeated Patsy Campbell/Terri McKeon. This was Theresa's third win on the trot in this competition. The Men's 2 Bowl Pairs saw Eoghain Brady/Brendan Duffy overcome Roddy O'Leary/Ewen Cronin where everything hinged on the last bowls from Eoghain and Roddy. The afternoon saw the blue riband finals of both the Ladies and Gents Championships. Phyllis Brett and Breeda Keogh served up a thriller in the ladies final and Phyllis overturned a large deficit to claim yet another Ladies Championship. In the Men's final Niall Shelley claimed a first title when defeating Patrick Brosnan. Both Niall and Phyllis will represent Bray in the Champion of Champions competition next year. There is no pressure on Niall but Bray are the defending champions !!!



***Men's champion Niall Shelley,  
club president Aidan Galvin,  
ladies' champion Phyllis Brett.***

"A big thank you goes to the organisers for all their great work and for having a direct line to Met Eireann in Millibar Mansions. A period of reflection will now follow until the commencement of the Winter League on 15th October."

Full club championship results:

Ladies' Championship. Winner: Phyllis Brett; runner-up: Breeda Keogh.

Ladies' Two-Bowl Singles. Winner: Margie O'Leary; runner-up: Theresa Martin.

Ladies' Two-Bowl Pairs. Winners: Margie O'Leary, Theresa Martin; runners-up: Terri McKeon, Patsy Campbell.

Men's Championship. Winner: Niall Shelley; runner-up: Patrick Brosnan.

Men's Handicap Singles. Winner: John Dunne; runner-up: Walter Doyle.

Men's Two-Bowl Singles. Winner: Peter Gough; runner-up: Patrick Brosnan.

Men's Four-Bowl Pairs. Winners: Niall Shelley, Ger Hollingsworth; runners-up: Walter Doyle, Shane Martin.

Men's Two-Bowl Pairs. Winners: Eoghain Brady, Brendan Duffy; runners-up: Roddy O'Leary, Ewan Cronin.

Mixed Triples. Winners: Marcus Donohoe, Terri McKeon, Frankie Byrne; runners-up: Eamonn Kennedy, Ann Downhams, Ger Minogue.

October brought some sad news with the passing of Club great, Tony Murphy, following a long illness, bravely borne. In his heyday Tony won 3 BLI senior championships including the 2006 pairs title with his son, James.



*BLI Dinner 2022: Danny Heffernan, Niall Shelley, Frank Devlin (hon sec), John Cheevers (BLI rep), Roddy O'Leary, Peter Gough, Alan Hopkins, Owen Byrne (Capt. Shott Cup/Div 5).*

*Trophies: Victor Cassoni Cup (Div 5), Westmanstown Cup (Vets 3), Shott Cup (Div 4/5 Cup), Veterans Trophy (Vets 1, front).*

The Wednesday league, again organised by Phyllis Brett and Eddie Kelly, got off to a promising start with plenty of Greystones colleagues turning up to try their luck on our all-weather surface. Phyllis and John Browne were the winning skips on what became a glorious Autumn morning.

The club entered three teams into the 22/23 Winter League and three selectors, Marcus Donohoe, Eamonn Kennedy and Niall Shelley, came together to pick the squads. Each squad had eight registered players plus a pool to source the remainder from. A rule change this year meant that only those teams that topped their group tables in February would go through to the knock-out stages (plus the best two runners-up). With this in mind, the "Bray A" team was, on paper, stronger than the others to give the club a chance of success in the competition. Mind you the other two teams were keen to show that they were really the best!

A practice match was held for the Winter League players and great skill was on show in the perfect bowling weather. One rink, which shall remain nameless, gave up an eight, only moments before church bells tolled! Who said God lacked a sense of humour?

It was made known to the bowling community that the BLI and LBLI had been in discussion regarding a merger which would result in fully mixed competitions in 2023. A majority of the LBLI membership had shown themselves to be in favour of this and now the BLI members were asked for their opinions. A general meeting was held at the club to discuss the matter. It was chaired by President Aidan Galvin and hon secretary Frank Devlin. The discussion centred on the draft rules for the new structure of competitions. There would be Saturday, Wednesday, Evening and Vets leagues, open to both sexes. The championship competitions for men and women would remain as they were to facilitate the winners going forward to the Northern Ireland/British Isles competitions.

There was a feeling in the group that smaller clubs like Bray would be at a disadvantage due to (a) the increase in the number of registered players required and (b) the fact that playing three matches for a team rendered the bowler ineligible for other teams. The traditionally female Wednesday team would be particularly hard hit as the senior men would be tied to the Saturday league. On the other hand, Men's Division 2 captain, Colm Heaslip, welcomed the increase in registered players for his team as he felt it would give them more stability. The secretary was keen to allow teams to vary the time of matches if they so wished although old hand, Tommy Murphy, pointed out that some bowlers work on Saturday mornings so the 2.30 start time suited them.

The hon secretary did his best to summarise people's issues which he would put before the merger committee.

Bray Central, the new shopping centre on Main Street, finally opened albeit for just a single restaurant. More businesses and a cinema would follow.

Tommy Cahill celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2022 and over 50 years bowling for Bray. For most of this time, including this year, he was a Division 1 stalwart. Surely a force of nature!

Ireland men and women travelled to Australia to play test matches at Broadbeach and Musgrave Hill. It was part of the preparation towards next year's World Championships in the Gold Coast. While there the Irish also played Malta. In the World Champion-of-Champions singles event in Wellington, NZ, Gary McCloy of Portrush BC won bronze.



*Illustration 7: Australia v Ireland.*

The club's first AGM since the Coronavirus outbreak was well attended. The members learned that a crisis had been averted due to a lack of nominations to replace outgoing officers. No one was willing to step into the honorary secretary role when Frank Devlin moved onto becoming the BLI president. The trustees had been alerted and the club came close to getting legal advice around its inability to participate in the BLI. Luckily however two members had stepped forward to fill the gaps so crisis averted.

The hon sec's report, covering the club's progress from 2020 to 2022, was read to the gathering. As usual this was clear and comprehensive. Among other things, those who had joined the club since 2019 were welcomed: Brendan Adamson, Philip Breidin, Liam Collins, Michael Condren, Ewan Cronin, Roisin Doherty, Ann Downhams, Anne Doyle, Ritchie Doyle, Adrian Flaherty, Chris Fenton, John Gilliland, Alan Hopkins, Angie Hollingsworth, Ger Hollingsworth, Mark Hughes, Shane Martin, John McGrath, Ciaran O'Brien, Niall Shelley.

The honorary treasurer, Tiernan Kavanagh, was also outgoing but no one had yet come forward to take his place. In a bid to encourage people to come forward he outlined how the role worked and the simple yet robust accounting system used by the club.

Then, after passing around his handouts, Tiernan made his report for 2020 to 2022. The income and expenditure for each year were detailed. They reflected the Coronavirus downturn followed by the recovery. Items of income included BLI loans, private loans and Covid-19 Support grants. Eamonn Kennedy had been instrumental in acquiring the latter for the club. The bar figures were in good health under Owen Byrne's stewardship.

The AGM had no motions to consider and the president claimed his address had already

been covered by the secretary!

Niall Shelley was elected honorary secretary unopposed and John Dunne replaced Aidan Galvin as club president. The outgoing secretary, Frank Devlin, had been doing what is a demanding job conscientiously and well for eight years. Bray's loss would be the BLI's gain when he became their president. Aidan had been a no-nonsense operator with a ready sense of humour. He had a fine speaking voice and always knew the right words to say. He made the job look easy but few would do it as well as he.

During Any-Other-Business at the end of the meeting Macus Donohoe thanked the club for helping him to get his senior coaching qualification. He also pointed out how sometimes ill-informed coaching by members could hamper the progress of novice bowlers. The next matter raised became a spirited debate about the appropriate green settings for club finals weekend. Some felt custom and practice should be followed by using the men's senior settings while others were happy that new settings, that favoured no one, had been used. Finally John Cheevers mentioned a proposal he had put to the BLI: that both teams could be allowed to practise before a match (in the opposite direction to the game that followed). This would help away players loosen up after a possibly long journey. Terri McKeon pointed out that they could do this anyway with appropriate exercises.

As usual in November a group from Bray went off to the Galway Bay Hotel for a few days to eat, drink and play bowling indoors. Teams were picked by lot and, at the end of the week, the glory went to Bernie Tracey from the victorious fours team.

*Ireland had a successful World Rowing Championships 2022 at Racice in the Czech Republic. They managed two golds (Katie O'Brien in the Women's Single Sculls, Paul O'Donovan and Fintan McCarthy in the men's lightweight doubles) and two bronzes (Aoife Casey and Mags Cremen in the lightweight doubles, Sanita Puspure and Zoe Hyde in the double sculls).*

*In the Women's European Boxing Championships in Montenegro Kellie Harrington (lightweight), Amy Broadhurst (light-welterweight) and Aoife O'Rourke (middleweight) all took top honours on a brilliant final day for Irish boxing that also saw Caitlin Fryers and Christina Desmond pick up silver medals. Meanwhile at Wembley Arena in London Katie Taylor recorded a unanimous-decision victory over Argentinian, Karen Carabajal, to remain the undisputed lightweight champion of the world.*

*Ireland got their first world champion in gymnastics when Rhys McClenaghan won gold on the pommel horse at the FIG World Artistic Gymnastics Championships in Liverpool.*

*Rory McIlroy won the DP World Tour Championship in Dubai.*



*Illustration 8: "Winter Sun on The Rinks" by John McGrath.*

## **Winter**

The men's AGM was held on a freezing December evening. The group of 42 members was chaired by the new president, John Dunne, and new secretary, Niall Shelley. The pair of Owen Byrne and Marcus Donohoe became the men's representatives on the Executive Committee. The two people that had put their names forward for the men's captaincy took it in turn to say what they would do in the role. Dave McMahon, who had been captain once before, wanted to promote skills development, recruitment of young people and a supportive culture at the club. John Cheevers, an ex-captain of Greystones, said he would be captain for, and available to, all the men not just the first team. He would also emphasise the forthcoming BLI championships, the finals of which would be held in Bray, and he mentioned his interest in developing new bowlers. Both candidates were articulate and sincere. The secret vote that subsequently took place gave victory, by a narrow margin, to Dave McMahon.

In Any Other Business, Tommy Murphy complained about the tendency of jacks to be abandoned in the ditch after rollups or to otherwise go missing. Another problem raised was the inappropriate footwear brought by some visiting bowlers that would damage the club's expensive playing surface. There was a consensus that these people should be refused permission to play, something our team captains were perfectly entitled to do. Walter Doyle urged as many as possible to train for, and enter, the 2023 BLI championships given that the finals were to be held in Bray. Before the meeting closed Niall presented John with his club president's chain of office.

Jean Kane passed away after a short stay in hospital. She was one of our finest bowlers and made the first of her twelve international appearances in 2012. Over the years she won the senior LBLI pairs, trips and fours. She was also an IWBA trips champion and British Isles trips runner-up. More important than this was the great affection with which she was held by her club colleagues and their sadness at her passing. There were people from many bowling clubs at Jean's funeral and Bowls International reproduced her own club's Facebook tribute in their magazine.

A big freeze descended on Europe which clobbered pre-Christmas bowling. Winter League matches were postponed and the Bray green was closed for a week.

At the half-way point in the Winter League group phase the Bray teams had had mixed fortunes. In Section 3 Brendan Duffy's Bray C lay fifth and were not in contention for the knockout stage. Though Dave McMahan's Bray B of Section 2 lay in fourth place they were still only three and a half points behind leaders, Greenhills B. Eamonn Kennedy's Bray A were doing well too, lying second in Section 1, just four and a half points behind leaders, Dun Laoghaire A, and with a game in hand.



*Illustration 9: Bray ladies enjoy their Christmas do.*