

2023 at Bray Bowling Club

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Winter

The awards evening postponed from the previous month took place on the first Friday of the year in the clubhouse. As the drinks flowed President Dunne and Secretary Shelley presented trophies to the winning captains of Vets 1, Vets 3, Shott Cup and Division 5. Those players that were present also received their medals. A photographer from the Bray People dropped by to immortalise the event.

The club's Winter membership from Greystones (marshalled by Fergus O' Brien) took over the green on Monday afternoons for their own rollup.

Frank Devlin attended his first IBA meeting in Belfast as president of the BLI.

Owen Byrne organised the club's acquisition of a teak trophy cabinet to house our silverware, old and new, which he had got polished.



Illustration 1: Bray's new trophy cabinet.

Niall Shelley was once again the club's representative in the All Weather Bowling Association (AWBA) champion-of-champions. After winning his first match at home to Sportslink's Will Tormey, 18-5, he next faced Darren Richards of CYM in Leinster. Niall made a slow start and, despite a great fightback, he went down 18-14.

Some of our Winter League bowlers struggled on the Kenilworth green. Though the carpet was fairly new there were too many unpredictable runs for visitors to deal with. The home players sympathised, explaining that the club had been waiting two years for the surface to be stretched.



Illustration 2: Failte Park early on a wintry morning.

Spring

In preparation for the upcoming unfurling of the flag in Bray, many members came along on the first Thursday in March to clean-up the ditches and the areas around the green. They got good work done on the cold dry morning and were rewarded with soup and sandwiches by Theresa Martin. A few weeks later another battalion was mustered to paint the outdoor wooden seats under the beady eye of professional, Marcus Donohoe. The blue seats around the green - which John Nolan pointed out had been there when he was a lad some fifty years earlier - received their umpteenth coat of paint.

The Winter League group stages ended with two of the club's three teams bowing out. Bray A finished third of six in a tough group and Bray C finished fourth in theirs. Bray B advanced as one of the best two runners-up, helped by 4-1 victories in their final two matches. In the quarter-final they played Leinster Lions A at Sportslink. Despite a great performance from Bernie Tracey (skip) and John Gilliland (lead) the Lions went ahead when it mattered and won the tie by 14 shots. Before leaving this topic mention should be

made of the fine substitutes from Greystones that all three Bray teams were able to call upon when needed.

On a historic day for Irish bowling both the BLI and LBLI met in separate but simultaneous meetings to vote on a proposed merger. Both organisations passed the motion and the Irish Lawn Bowls Association was born. Bray's Frank Devlin would now be its first president as per the BLI rota. The full merger would not complete until 2024.

Just two of the Bray gang went to the Spring indoor bowls tournament in the Galway Bay Hotel, Tommy Murphy and Frankie Byrne.

Owen Byrne was behind the creation of a remembrance area for deceased members. The overgrown flower bed on the green's west side was chosen. It measured 7m x 2m approximately. A plaque was attached to the wall with appropriate wording. Owen, Patrick Brosnan and Chris Fitzgerald dug and weeded the soil in preparation. Some plants were retained but many new ones needed to be brought in. Patrick took on this task.



Illustration 3: Some of the Failte Park clean-up crew.

In North Kildare the Winter league final was won by CYM A who defeated Leinster Lions A.

It was the Terenure club's second win in four years and the academy's first ever final. The new AWBA champion-of-champions was Clontarf's Kevin Marshall who defeated Michael Keegan of Blackrock.

Under our English coach, Andy Farrell, the Ireland rugby team beat England at Lansdowne Road to claim the Six Nations grand slam. The next day, the under-20s repeated the same trick in Cork.

All teams were now fully mixed but in practice what had been men's teams were still mostly male and women's teams, mostly female.

The previous year Bray ladies had needed to use men to bolster their numbers. This year some clubs such as Crumlin and Leinster vetoed that practice. Unable then to find a complete first division squad, Bray were forced to drop down to the second division where only three rinks were required. (Some of the same people that had objected to the use of men now bemoaned the reduction in Division 1 teams!) Bray had graced the top tier with their formidable presence since 1989.

The ladies were allowed use junior male bowlers in Division 2. They also had a team in Division 5 (Saturday, 1 rink)

Saturday Division 1 and Division 2 and Wednesday Division 1 were considered the senior leagues. Men and women could move freely between them apart from registered players moving down. The other leagues were junior status.

Wally Doyle and Niall Shelley divided the male bowlers into squads. The men had teams in Divisions 1 (captain: Dave McMahon), 2 (Paddy Pegman), 4 (Gabriel Cahill) and 6 (Theresa Martin). The Division 1 and 2 teams each had a pool of players to choose from in order to reduce "raiding" of the second team by the first.

Bray had a team in each of the four veterans divisions with at least one lady per team. Westmanstown entered six teams which was a record.

The nominated players for the season were Pat Crinnion and Gabriel Cahill.

Internal unrest at Dun Laoghaire led to some of the club's best players leaving for pastures new. Bray took in good bowlers like Mark Byrne, Paul Crowe and John Tracey. Rosie and Roy Brown went to Blackrock. Derek Brown joined son, Mark, at CYM. Mark Byrne was actually the Dun Laoghaire club's champion when he left, an honour his father had held many years earlier.

The Unfurling of the Flag for the new Irish Lawn Bowls Association (ILBA) took place on a bright but windy April afternoon. As the new flag blew Bray's Frank Devlin became the new president and Anne O'Herlihy, vice-president. Afterwards Bray took on an ILB selection over six rinks. Given the occasion the ILB were the "home team" and Bray the "away team". A celebratory dinner was held that evening at Bray Golf Club with Blackrock's Charlie Lynch acting as MC. The food and drink was fine and the speeches short. As per LBLI practice (but not BLI) the association, rather than the club, footed the bill. Bray's new treasurer was already earning his corn!



Illustration 4: First ever unfurling of the ILB flag.

Spare a thought for Fiona Minogue setting out on her bowling career. Set to make her competitive debut in Saturday's Division 5 game against Leinster in Fáilte Park, the match was called off due to rain. She did get to bowl the following week, away at Greystones. The going there has a reputation for being heavy anyway and it certainly was this time. It had rained the day before, and the green, which had just been sanded, was also watered before the match. Despite this the newcomer surprised all by being able to fire her bowls beyond the jack. Gaining some confidence from the experience she was all set for Game 3 but opponents, Clontarf, did not show up and Bray took a walk-over.

With the finals to be held in Bray, many of the club's bowlers entered ILB championships, senior and junior. Some notable dramas took place. In a senior pairs match at Blackrock, Tommy Cahill and Mark Hughes, seemingly dead and buried at 14-2 down, gambled on short jacks to mount a furious comeback and take the tie. In the junior singles Will McKeon went out to North Kildare's superb Greg Burns whom many felt should really have been playing in the senior competition. In the junior trips John Gilliland, Alan Hopkins and Will McKeon travelled all the way to Dungarvan, Co Waterford, to play an ICICYMA trio and were agonisingly put out on the last end by the opposing skip.

In Division 1 Tommy Cahill's rink took a dreadful pasting at Dun Laoghaire. Tommy was so depressed over it he asked to change rinks!

Jean Kane's family donated a viewing bench in her memory. It was presented on a pleasant Friday evening to an appreciative gathering. The inscription on it ended with "Simply the best." The singer, Tina Turner, who had a big hit with the song of that name had herself passed away only two days earlier.

This year the men's senior inter-association series was held on the two greens of Belmont BC in Belfast. The winner was the Northern Ireland Private Greens Bowling League with the ILB finishing fourth out of four.

Fighting as a professional for the first time on Irish soil, Bray's Katie Taylor

failed in her attempt to take the super lightweight world title off Liverpool's Chantelle Cameron at the 3Arena. The loss ended the Irish woman's unbeaten professional record as her opponent edged a close encounter. Taylor however still remained the undisputed lightweight champion of the world.

In rugby's Champions Cup final Ronan O'Gara's La Rochelle came from behind to defeat Leinster for the second year in a row.



Summer

A convoy of cars ferried Bray to their IBA Senior Cup match against Donaghadee, Co. Down. The travellers could not mistake the significance of the many union flags and loyalist colours they passed as they approached their destination. The hosts' green, metres from the sea, looked fabulous in the blazing sunshine. The grass was a mite long and the going heavy. The home side ran out convincing winners though Chris Fenton's rink won and Wally Doyle's came close. Donaghadee had several young bowlers including the British Isles Under-25s champion and senior international, Cameron Gaw, who was on great form.

Afterwards it was back to the Meadowbank Social Club in the town for drinks and a curry. It had been a historic occasion, the first time ever that ladies had played for Bray in any IBA competition. Terri McKeon and Bernie Tracey had done the honours. Due to some

archaic rule the girls were not allowed in the front door of the social club, like the men, but had to use the rear entrance. Terri objected to this and, in a show of support, the entire Bray team went in the back way with the ladies.

Finally we will draw a veil over the car whose GPS went haywire on the trip home and that ended up traversing the backroads of County Down for far too long!



Illustration 5: The Bray team in Donaghadee for the IBA Senior Cup.

Michael O'Brien, who had been suffering with his heart, passed away quite suddenly. A retired solicitor, he was a club trustee as well as an experienced senior bowler. With a keen intelligence and razor-sharp wit he was always good company and was greatly missed by the membership.

Captain Dave McMahon had difficulty forming a team for Bray's Open Cup match away to Crumlin and had to concede the tie. He did not wish to assemble a very weak side that would be swept aside by the Crumlin machine. He felt it would be easier on clubs if cup matches were played *in place* of league fixtures and not both on the same weekend.

There was friction in Blackrock when Bray fulfilled their Division 1 league fixture there one

scorching Saturday. No names will be mentioned but trouble arose on a particular rink regarding disregard for the rules around possession of the rink and the position of bowlers when someone is on the mat. Complaints were made, words exchanged and the captains called in. The atmosphere on that rink remained soured for the remainder of the match.

When Wally Doyle took his Vets 1 team to play a match at Leinster they encountered a famous face. Actor Colm Meaney and colleagues were using the hall next to the green to rehearse for a play. Though the game was punctuated by occasional bursts of impassioned dialogue, that did not stop the visitors from leaving with three of the four points going.

In the British Isles Championships at Northfield, Ayr, Ireland men won gold in the fours (a quartet from Bangor) and the trips.

Twenty years after their foundation Rosslare BC got a new artificial surface. It was a 4-rink bowling green and measured 25 x 40 metres in size. It had been built to World Bowling Standards. The synthetic carpet had an expected life of 20 years. The Project cost €191,000 in total and the work took 8 months to complete.
(Information: www.southeastradio.ie)

Cavan's Leona Maguire carded a sensational eight-under-par 64 to win the Meijer LPGA Classic in Michigan, reeling off four birdies and an eagle in her final six holes to clinch her second Tour success.

Half-way through the season the men's Division 1 team lay in a somewhat disappointing sixth place in the table. In contrast their Division 2 counterparts (Saturday) were enjoying a much better season than the previous year and lay second, though some distance behind Crumlin. Division 4 also sat in second place below near neighbours, Greystones, who had a healthy lead.

The ladies of Division 2 (Wednesday) were top of the table with 9 games left. If they won promotion would they have the personnel to return to the top tier?

Both novice teams - Division 6 (Wednesday) and Division 5 (Saturday) – sat comfortably in mid-table.

At the half-way mark Vets 3 were the most successful of the four vets teams, leading their league by a slender half point. Vets 1 and 4 held third place in theirs while Vets 3 lay third from bottom.



Illustration 6: Alan Squire of Dun Laoghaire and Tommy Cahill of Bray guide their bowlers' efforts in a Division 1 match. Photo courtesy of Peter Vandermeersch.

In the men's champion-of-champions competition, Bray's Niall Shelley defeated two opponents before going out in the quarter-final to Joe Fitzsimons of Meath. The latter went on to win the title when he beat Darren Richards of CYM in the final. Our lady champion did not enter the ladies' competition which was won by Loreto Farrell of North Kildare who defeated Ierne's Patricia Ryan in the final

Our viewing hut got a much needed facelift with a double coat of brown paint. The good elves who did the work were Pat and Bernie Tracey and Terri McKeon. A few weeks later an even larger gang, under John Dunne's leadership, painted the inside as well as the equipment hut. Wally Doyle painted the ladies changing room and Terri McKeon refreshed the flower bed at the club entrance and the hanging baskets above it.

On a visit to Bray with Leinster, Paul Smyth told us that our carpet manufacturers, Dales, recommend always bowling at right angles to the seams and never in line with them. Clubs routinely ignore this guidance in order to spread footfall more evenly on their greens.

At the Women's World Cup in Australia Ireland while enjoying mass support went out in the group stage. They lost narrowly to the hosts and Canada before drawing with Nigeria.

Marcus Donohoe gave coaching lessons to bowling novices on Sunday mornings. Eoghain Brady organised an open day on which many members of the public tried out the game.

With Frank Devlin president of the ILB, the championship finals began in Fáilte Park on the last Monday in July. Of the many Bray members who had entered the competitions, five had made it in to three semi-finals. They were the Boyd Cup (men's senior pairs): Marcus Donohue and John Cheevers; the WW Robinson Cup (ladies junior pairs): Theresa Martin

and Patricia Fitzgerald; and the McKeon Cup (ladies junior singles): Theresa Martin.

The club had been spruced-up in the weeks leading up to the event and looked well. It was now handed over to the ILB. Although the green's white settings were the official ILB ones, the organisation left it up to the club to decide which set to go with. Greenkeeper, Pat Crinnion, settled on red, in both directions.

Bowlers/teams were designated either white (home) or red (away). They put appropriate colour markings on their bowls to reflect which they were. In a singles match when an end was finished the marker (whilst walking to the other end) would hold up the number of cards of the appropriate colour to indicate shots scored. Bray club members sat by the scoreboards and changed them after each end.

Given the wretched Summer the country was having, the weather was not too bad. The crowds were sizeable and consisted mostly of bowlers and relatives there to support their teams. The umpires and markers looked imposing in their new black uniforms and wide-brimmed hats.

The bowling was of a high standard. Of the Bray competitors only Theresa Martin made it to a final, in the McKeon Cup. Although the local girl led for most of the match her tenacious opponent, Mona McCormack of Sportslink, overtook her at the end and won by a single shot.



Illustration 7: Crumlin and Blackrock do battle in the mens' Senior Fours championship semi-final.

Val Kerrigan of CYM and Pat Tallon of Kenilworth passed away within a week of each other. Walter Doyle remembered a bowling trip to the North of Ireland in Val's company. They and some others went for a drink and decided afterwards to make the long, straight walk up to Stormont Castle. When they reached the imposing building they found it closed

to visitors. Val banged on the door anyway, demanding entrance. They were lucky not be arrested.

John Cheevers remembered Pat Tallon thus. "Our sport has lost another great man in the game. Gave so much to both Kenilworth and the BLI in general. Will be sadly missed."

At the IWBA championships in Ballymena Bowling Club, Sarah Kelly of Crumlin won the Ladies National Singles Championship. Thus she kept the Hall-Thompson Cup in the Kelly family as her mother Noleen was the outgoing champion.

Pat Brett remembered back to entering a mixed rinks tournament some years earlier. As well as himself at skip, there was his wife, Phyllis at 3, her sister, Margie O'Leary (or "Daisy" as Pat called her) at 2, and Danny Heffernan at lead. It was a strong group and they managed to win the competition. On behalf of his team, Pat accepted the winning prize money, €150 for each of them in four envelopes. He gave one envelope to Phyllis, one to Danny and put one for himself in his back pocket. Then he opened Margie's envelope, took out €50 and handed it to her. He said sadly, "I'm afraid Daisy didn't play as well as the rest of us." All those present looked at him aghast. They didn't know what a joker he was!

Men's captain, Dave McMahon, arranged a drill session where any member could come along to practise on differently configured heads. Every bowler had two bowls and there was a different drill on each rink. Many turned up and enjoyed the challenges available. Dave's assistants for the two-hour session were Wally Doyle, Chris Fenton and Brendan Duffy. More sessions were organised during subsequent weeks. Bowlers of all levels turned up to test their skills. With mixed results!

The following are most of the drills practised.

- Draw to a short jack just in front of the ditch.
- Knock a jack positioned between two bowls into the ditch.
- Come into four "opposition" bowls in front, and to one side, of the jack. End up holding shot.
- Draw to a jack a short distance behind an "opposition" bowl.
- Draw to a medium jack.
- Without hitting bowls either side, and in front of, the jack, take the jack back to a waiting bowl.
- Passing between two bowls to one side first, draw to a medium jack.
- Draw to a short jack a metre from the side of the rink.
- Knock a short jack that is two metres from the ditch into the ditch. If you achieve this with your first bowl draw your second bowl as near as you can to the ditch.
- Draw both bowls to a short jack.
- Use line of three bowls to come onto the jack. Avoid bowls on other side.
- Draw your bowls over a sideways mat and into the ditch with ditch weight.
- Avoiding your own bowls around the jack, knock out opposition bowl behind, and to left of, the jack.



Illustration 8: Chris and Renée Fenton in Dun Laoghaire for a summer vets match.

Autumn

Financially the club was indebted to the ILB and still operating hand-to-mouth. To save money it was decided to discontinue the broadband and TV in the bar.

The regular leagues had all finished by early September. Neither Saturday senior team endured a relegation battle but, after difficult run-ins, they were disappointed with their final positions. The first team suffered somewhat by not being able to take players from the second but this approach had been agreed at the start of the season. Teams from Crumlin won both leagues. Bray's Division 4 Monday side had a good season, finishing second behind Greystones.

Division 2 Wednesday, mostly ladies, had the best season of all. They won their league by four points from Clontarf. It was exactly 35 years since the club had won the Junior League before -1988 under Captain Pam O' Leary. The Sunday after clinching the title the same team also took the Junior Challenge Cup (played over two rinks) by beating Clontarf again in a close final at Herbert Park. It was the first time that this cup and this league/cup double had come to Bray. For their efforts the club got to display the Bessie Sharp Memorial Trophy and Junior Challenge League Cup for the year.

Division 1 Wednesday was taken by CYM.

Two of the Bray ladies, Theresa Martin and Patricia Fitzgerald, were selected for the junior inter-association panel. The three team (ILB, NIWPGL and NIWBA), four rink competition was held at Ward Park BC, Bangor, Co. Down, Our girls played in both matches, Patricia at lead and Theresa at 3 then skip. The ILB came in runners-up.



Illustration 9: Patricia Fitzgerald and Theresa Martin at the Junior Inter-Association tournament in Bangor.

The Ireland Under-25 team was bolstered by Amy Caruth (Crumlin), Isabel Larrigan (Crumlin) and Isobel Ruby Nolan (Blackrock) for the International Series played in Llandrindod Wells, Wales. Colm O'Brien (CYM) made the IBA Junior International team played on the same date at the same venue.

The veterans leagues finished at the end of September. Bray had a team in each of the four divisions. In the first division Wally Doyle's squad handed back their crown when they finished fifth out of ten. In a tough second division, Paddy Pegman's team ended up in seventh place out of eleven. Better news for Dave McMahon's squad in the third division; they ended the season in third spot just 2.5 points behind winners, Blackrock. We could boast one winner however - the Vets 4 team, led by Mick Dunne, took the title with a grand total of 65.5 points.

Afterwards Mick rewarded himself with a long holiday in Australia. After visiting the west coast he and his wife ended up in Melbourne, Victoria. Whilst there Mick bowled at Mornington Bowls Club. This club is a vast enterprise with three grass greens and one artificial. Rollups can take most of the day with a break for lunch.

The club championships had been going since June and now reached their climax. Competitions were mixed apart from the men's and ladies' championships. The mixed triples was not played this year.

The finals took place on a wet Saturday, beautiful Sunday and overcast Monday. As the rain came down the ever-improving John Gilliland beat Niall Shelley in the handicap. The pairs matches that day had to be cancelled. Sunday saw Niall in action twice. The morning

saw him beating Chris Fenton in the two-bowl singles but later he lost out to Eoghain Brady in the exciting finale of a see-saw men's championship final. The ladies' final was delayed due to a health problem with one of the contenders. When it was played a fortnight later, Betty Keogh emerged victorious after a close match with Terri McKeon..

Full club championship results:

Ladies' Championship. Winner: Betty Keogh; runner-up: Terri McKeon.

Men's Championship. Winner: Eoghain Brady; runner-up: Niall Shelley.

Two-Bowl Singles (Mixed). Winner: Niall Shelley; runner-up: Chris Fenton.

Handicap Singles (Mixed). Winner: John Gilliland; runner-up: Niall Shelley.

Two-Bowl Pairs (Mixed). Winners: John Cheevers, Patsy Campbell; runners-up: Marcus Donohoe, John Tracey.

Four-Bowl Pairs (Mixed). Winners: Walter Doyle, Pat Crinnion; runners-up: Niall Shelley, Ger Minogue .



Illustration 10: Mick Dunne goes bowling in Victoria, Australia.

It was all change for the winter as Irish Lawn Bowls took over from the All-Weather Bowling Association. In an initiative by league secretary Pat Wall (and against some opposition) the Winter League became a five division affair with promotion and relegation for the winners and losers. The regional approach was gone and your opponents could be anywhere in the Dublin region. Matches were held on Saturday mornings and Bray shared Fáihte Park with one Blackrock team. Bray had three teams: A in Division 1, B in Division 4 and C in Division 5. The AWBA's format of previous years had appealed to all and the average bowler was not happy with the new system but what could they do?

A Winter Vets league was also introduced which ran on Wednesday mornings. Four

divisions were in operation and again Bray entered three teams: A in Division 1, B in Division 3 and C in Division 4. The Greystones vets team shared the Bray green for the duration.

When the men's senior inter-association panel for 2024 was selected it included ten players from Crumlin, nine from CYM and seven from Blackrock. Speaking of The Rock, Isobel Ruby Nolan was selected for upcoming under-18's, under-25's and senior tournaments. Her late grandmother, Phillis, would have been looking down with considerable pride.

Mark Hughes (with help from Alan Hopkins and Theresa Martin) organised a singles challenge ladder for the club. Initially entrants would be ranked according to their previous season's achievements. Anyone could then challenge someone up to five places above them to a match. If he/she won they would move up to that person's place on the ladder. The competition would run until the end of March '24.

Andy Farrell's strong Irish side exited the Rugby World Cup in France in a close quarter-final against New Zealand. The latter were beaten by South Africa in the final.

At the club AGM in December hon sec, Niall Shelley, and president, John Dunne, paid tribute to all the volunteer work done at the club over the year. There was particular praise regarding the ILB championship finals which were run in a very efficient and friendly manner.

The hon treasurer, Pat Tracey, made his report on the club finances. While our main source of income was members' subscriptions, he pointed out the value of Winter membership subscriptions and how they paid the bills in the off-season. The club was fortunate in that the ILB paid the cost of staging their own championship finals in Fáilte Park. The club bar did well in that week too. Marcus Donohoe was thanked for securing shirt sponsorship from Stillorgan Decor. The health of our finances had enabled us to repay a chunk of our outstanding ILB loan. With the help of local TD, Steven Matthews, Ciaran O' Brien and others were in the process of applying for a government sports grant to refurbish the dressing rooms.

Regarding other matters, John Cheevers had to resign as our ILB rep as the meetings were being moved to Saturday afternoons which clashed with senior bowling matches. This change was due to the ladies' aversion to night-time travel. The old topic of insurance came up. Bowlers were reminded that non-members had to sign in if using the bar. And while the club's insurance covered people travelling to and from matches, it did not cover people's kit if left in the pavilion and not the changing rooms.

A Bray bowler who must remain nameless had an interesting journey to a Winter League match at Herbert Park one Saturday morning. Spotted speeding by a Garda camera team in Cabinteely he was pulled over. When the folks in blue noticed that his tax disc was out of date he assured them that that was only because he had forgotten to display the new one on his windscreen. It is an offence to drive without displaying a current tax disc and they told him they were going to impound the car. He asked if they could wait until after his match but they weren't interested. So he asked them if they could give him a lift to Herbert Park. Their reply to that is unprintable!

Our man phoned a teammate who rushed to collect him. Though they arrived at the match late they weren't the latest there. That honour went to a Crumlin contingent of Leinster Lions that had merrily arrived at Fáilte Park, Bray, realised their mistake and had to hotfoot it to Dublin 4.

That evening our now car-less bowler mounted his electric scooter and trundled off to Shankill Garda station. There he showed them his up-to-date tax disc and driving licence, paid his €160 speeding fine plus the car seizure costs. In return he was handed a release form for the vehicle as well as three penalty points on his licence for the next three years. The following day he trundled down the N11 to Kellys Towing & Breakdown Service of Kilmacanogue and collected his car. All-in-all it had been a chastening and expensive experience for someone who had been planning a few restful days in Belfast with relatives.

The ILB prize-giving dinner took place in Greenhills on a Saturday evening in November (@ €30 euro a head). The association's president, Frank Devlin of Bray BC, presided over an enjoyable evening attended by a whopping 21 members from his own club as well as many others. Bray accepted three winners' trophies, for the ladies junior league and cup double and Vets 4 as well as runners-up for Monday Division 4 and the ladies junior singles (Theresa Martin). Sarah Kelly of Crumlin was named Bowler of the Year.



Illustration 11: ILB President Frank Devlin presents the Bessie Sharp Trophy (Div 2 Wed) to Betty Keogh (Bray BC).

Once again a group of Bray bowlers went to Galway to enjoy some indoor bowling.

An Inclusion Day was held at Bray Bowling Club for able and disabled members of the community that might be interested. Attendees had an enjoyable day, with coaching from Ian McClure and Chris Mulholland from the North and Peter Knight and Mags McNevin from Dublin. The helpers included Eamonn Carruth, and Nicholas and Paul Smyth. By the end of the session some very encouraging heads were being built and all participants felt they had a good understanding of the game.

There was a good turnout at Bray men's AGM where Frank Devlin was given the chance

to speak as the ILB president. He talked about the amount of travelling involved to the North of Ireland and the insights those meetings gave him into how things work at the top level. Down south there had been much work done on the amalgamation of the BLI and LBLI. This did not happen without friction and two officers had left, the league secretary and childrens' officer. Webmaster Mike Brophy was also stepping down as he had been ten years in the job. Regarding the Winter competitions, many had been unhappy with the ending of the regional approach to the league and the consequent increase in journey times to away matches. There was also controversy over the preponderance of international bowlers on Leinster Lions teams.

John Cheevers filled the one vacancy on the executive committee. In the Any Other Business part of the meeting Ger Minogue pointed out the anti-democratic attitude of some bowlers when they had failed to respect the election of Dave McMahon the previous year as men's captain.

This year there were two candidates for the post, Dave again and Marcus Donohoe.

It was Marcus that spoke first to the assembled group. He mentioned the great painting job done by a team of members under his organisation. If he became captain he said he would do the following: create a team of selectors; foster teamwork on the green; build camaraderie and a spirit of encouragement among the players; fill the deficits in leadership, discussion and delegation; hold drills at the start of the season not the end; pick teams in February to play pre-season friendlies; rotate players after poor performances; coach the newer bowlers.

When Marcus had finished Dave stood to address the members. Though more softly spoken than his rival he was equally passionate. He pointed out that people had done what he had asked of them during his year's tenure. He spoke a lot about the Wednesday Division 6 side, how it was successful and demonstrated the club's welcome of new players. He wondered why other clubs often put out senior skips on this team but Bray did not. He would give the side priority to help bring on new bowlers. On an unhappy note he felt that a sitting captain should not be opposed (like he was) after just one year in office. But whoever it was that did get elected should have the support of all the members.

When the votes were counted Dave McMahon retained his captaincy by 26 votes to 18.

Katie Taylor created one of the best nights in Irish boxing history as she defeated undisputed super-lightweight champion, Chantelle Cameron, with a stunning performance at the 3Arena. The Bray fighter defied expectations with a tactical masterclass, punishing Cameron's aggressiveness and using her trademark flurry combinations and counter-punches.



Illustration 12: Theresa in the haze.

Winter

In the ILB Winter League many members of grass green clubs paid winter membership fees to synthetic green clubs and participated as part of a team under the name of their parent or their winter club. Others who did not pay membership fees paid a green fee to the winter club each time they rolled up or played a match there. These arrangements between host clubs and guest clubs were a matter entirely for the clubs involved and had nothing to do with the ILB.

As the AWBA agreed to transfer their funds to the ILB the latter agreed that there would be no entry fees for any club or team for this year's Winter League.

When the ILB received complaints that some clubs were charging visiting teams €5 per person the ILB Management Committee felt this practice was unwarranted and should not continue.

Money and long journeys aside, the new competitions were being keenly contested. (And few bowlers will forget the Saturday in December when they had to play as Storm Elin made her entrance.) Going into the Christmas break, Bray sides were leading Saturday Divisions 1 and 5 while another was joint top of Vets 3 on Wednesdays.

Ciarán O' Brien, Pat Crinnion and others organised a Christmas roll-up for a Thursday morning in December. Twelve teams slugged it out over six rinks but by two o' clock only Niall Shelley's outfit was still standing. They each won a cash prize for their efforts while Wally Doyle's runners-up made off with four bottles of champagne. A raffle ensured that many others went home with wine or chocolates. Theresa Martin laid on a great spread of

sandwiches for after and John Dunne, the mulled wine.

The Christmas do happened the following Friday evening. ILB medal winners received their honours before Frank Devlin's table quiz competed with alcoholic beverages for available brain cells!

At the end of the year the Bray Sea Life aquarium closed down for financial reasons after 25 years in operation. Located on the seafront it had entertained tourists with a large variety of sea creatures, including sharks, ray, octopi and fish.