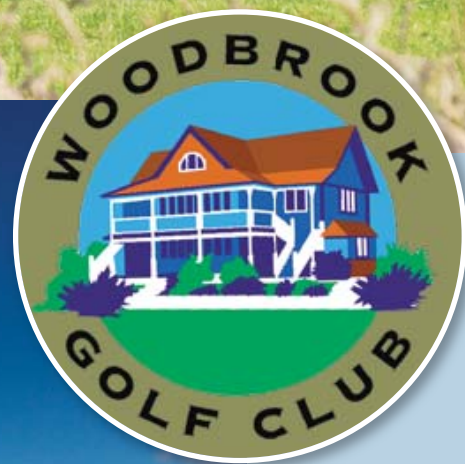


*Between the hills and the sea,  
a distinguished tradition in Irish Golf*







# Woodbrook's rich sporting history

## *Iconic venue has hosted legends of cricket and golf*

At a time when Irish golf is riding the crest of a wave, following nine Major Championship victories in the space of a decade, and Irish cricket marked its elevation to Full Membership of the ICC in June 2017 with a match against the West Indies at Stormont in September, it is fascinating to reflect on the origins and celebrated history of these two sporting codes in Ireland and, more specifically, at Woodbrook.

The origins of cricket in Ireland can be traced back to 1792 when matches between the Military and Gentlemen of Ireland took place in the Phoenix Park, where the sport continues to prosper in one of the world's longest established cricket clubs.

By the mid 1850s the game had grown considerably and become quite structured in this country. Indeed, the first team to represent Ireland comprehensively beat England in 1855.

The origins of golf in Ireland are less clear. It is believed that a form of 'goff', as it was known then, was played on what is now the seafront in Bray as early as 1762, and that the game was played by officers based at the Curragh Camp from the late 1850s forward on a course designed by Scotsman John Gourlay. But what is clear is that golf was already well established in this country, with 28 courses in existence, prior to the formation of the Golfing Union of Ireland in October 1891.



Woodbrook Cricket Club Ground

### CRICKET AT WOODBROOK

Cricket was first played at Woodbrook in the 1870s and it served as a top-class venue for a host of international matches between 1907 and 1912.

The origins of golf at Woodbrook date back to 1921, when a nine-hole golf course was created on the lands by Sir Stanley Cochrane. Initially it served as a private facility where Sir Stanley entertained and played golf with his friends. It was fitting that he was elected club President when Woodbrook Golf Club became affiliated to the Golfing Union of Ireland in 1926. He held that honour until his death in 1949 at the age of 77.

Sir Stanley Cochrane was, first and foremost, passionate about cricket and a wonderful visionary. He fulfilled his wish to create a magnificent cricket venue at Woodbrook, featuring a stylish pavilion along with an indoor school for winter practice. And, of course, there was a railway stop close by that enabled and encouraged spectators to travel directly to the ground.

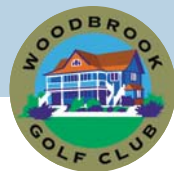
The facilities prompted Ernest Ensor, an English born Irish cricketer, to remark in P.F. (Plum) Warner's tome 'Imperial Cricket' in 1912: "It was a ground equipped so admirably that it was perfectly suited for a Test match. The wicket was true and fast and the very heavy roller made the surface like that of the Oval in fine weather."

Woodbrook Cricket Club Ground, as it was known, staged five first-class cricket encounters and a number of other prestigious matches between 1907 and 1912.

The first full Test match was between Ireland and Yorkshire in early May 1907.



Sir Stanley Cochrane



Woodbrook's Cricket Pavilion



*Woodbrook Cricket Club Ground, as it was known, staged five first-class cricket encounters and a number of other prestigious matches between 1907 and 1912.*

There was a two-year gap to the next first-class match between SH Cochrane's XI and the touring Australians, which took place on 17th September 1909.

In July 1912, two matches took place three days apart which pitted the touring South Africans against Woodbrook Club & Ground and then against a full Irish team. And, a couple of months later, on 12th September, an English XI took on the Australians at Woodbrook.

The English side, spearheaded by C.B. Fry, also included such luminaries as Jack Hobbs, W. Rhodes and SF Barnes. Indeed, eight of the English XI had played Test cricket and the other three were 1st Class players. Two of these - H. Wilkinson and A. Baker - came from Wicklow.

Woodbrook also staged several other special cricket matches during the period July 1907 to April 1911, but these were not Test status. These included a match between SH Cochrane's XI and the touring South Africans in August 1907.

An advertisement appeared in the Irish Times announcing that match. It stated, 'Three days of cricket will be played at Woodbrook, Bray on Thursday, Friday and Saturday August 8th, 9th and 10th between The South Africans and Mr. Cochrane's XI. And Military Bands will attend.'

For the record, South Africa won by an innings and 66 runs.

Cricket gatherings at Woodbrook were wonderful sporting and social events. Other matches that took place between July 1907 and April 1911 featured Woodbrook Club & Ground against University of Pennsylvania, Cambridge University, the Germantown club from Philadelphia, the touring Indians and various County teams, including Leicester Ivanhoe, Hampshire, Nottinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.

However, cricket's appeal and popularity in Ireland was on the wane. It suffered a huge setback in the early 1900s when the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) introduced Rule 27, commonly known as 'The Ban', which forbade members from playing or attending 'foreign' games, specifically cricket, hockey, rugby and soccer. This ban was not lifted until 1971, when it was removed from the Constitution at the GAA's Annual Congress.

*Continued...*

#### THE FIVE FIRST-CLASS CRICKET MATCHES PLAYED AT WOODBROOK CRICKET CLUB GROUND

2nd May 1907  
Ireland v Yorkshire

17th September 1909  
SH Cochrane's XI v Australia

22nd July 1912  
Woodbrook Club and Ground v  
South Africa

25th July 1912  
Ireland v South Africa

12th September 1912  
CB Fry's XI v Australia







Woodbrook during the Carrolls International in 1969

## GOLF AT WOODBROOK

Around the time when cricket was becoming a victim of politics in this country in the early 1900s, golf was flourishing and becoming an increasingly popular sport across the four provinces of Ireland.

The Golfing Union of Ireland was founded in 1891, at which point there were already almost thirty golf courses in operation.

There was a significant increase in the number of Golf Clubs formed in the thirty-year period between the foundation of the GUI and 1921. One of these was Woodbrook, which joined the fray in 1921 and became affiliated to the GUI in 1926.

Golf was already an established leisure pursuit in Co. Wicklow by that stage. Five golf clubs were formed in the 'Garden County' before Woodbrook's arrival...Woodenbridge (1884), Greystones (1895), Bray (1897), Wicklow (1904) and Delgany (1908).

Other clubs, relatively close by, that were formed prior to Woodbrook included Foxrock (1893), Carrickmines (1900), Killiney (1903), Dun Laoghaire (1910), Grange (1910) and Castle (1913).

Indeed, Irish golf experienced a boom period between 1900 and 1922. According to the GUI's 2017 Official Yearbook, over seventy Golf Clubs were founded pre-1900. This figure more than doubled between 1900 and 1922 with over eighty new clubs coming into existence during that period.

Woodbrook soon became an established part of Irish golfing life and the club has gone from strength to strength over the years. It is, of course, synonymous with tournament golf in Ireland, particularly the period between 1957 and 1975, when the club hosted many prestigious international events.

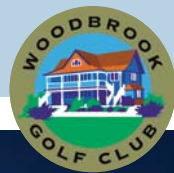
Major General Felix Cronin, Quartermaster General in the Irish Army, was a key figure in the launch of the glorious era of professional golf at Woodbrook. His wife was Kitty Kiernan, who had earlier been fiancée of Michael Collins. It was during Cronin's term as club captain in 1957 that Woodbrook hosted its first professional tournament, a two-day event sponsored by Hennessy Brandy, which was won by Christy O'Connor Snr.

With the club's Centenary in 2026 looming large on the horizon, many personalities, events, stories and traditions will be fondly remembered and celebrated in the times ahead.

Woodbrook's place in sporting folklore is assured. It may be more than a century since its glory days as a cricket venue, but the pavilion-style clubhouse and cricket bell hanging in the bar are delightful reminders of Woodbrook's rich sporting heritage.

And whenever Woodbrook's proud history is the subject of review or topic of conversation, two great sporting institutions – cricket and golf – will always be inextricably linked.





# Woodbrook's Origins

by M.P. O'Kane

*Cricket, opera and  
days of wine and roses*

*A golf club born with  
a silver spoon*



When looking back into the distant past to try and conjure up what life was like in those bygone years, or at the shape of the landscape when our ancestors walked the earth, there are often very old pictures or maps and drawings available to guide our thinking. But when this material is missing and cannot be found, the next best thing is to have to hand the work of another writer in the intervening years.

And so, when it comes to looking back over 75 years in the life of Woodbrook Golf Club, how valuable it is to be able to draw on the excellent 'History of Woodbrook' compiled by the writer Paul MacWeeney in 1976 to mark the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the Club.

When Woodbrook first came into existence in the early part of the last century, it was due largely to the effort and funding of a wealthy family, in this case, the Cochranes, and existing Members who may know little or nothing about that family will nevertheless be familiar with the Cantrell & Cochrane mineral company which was the source of that wealth.

At that time many wealthy families in the country, and particularly in the North of Ireland, built golf courses for the amusement of themselves and their friends, but few of these survived when the families died out or moved on. The estates were sold and the plough turned the land to more productive purposes, especially during the Great War.

Sir Stanley Cochrane's passion was for the game of cricket and he established an excellent ground on his estate, complete with elegant pavilion.

*Continued...*





The cricket weeks at Woodbrook were splendid occasions in the sporting calendar, with visits from such illustrious sides as the Australians, the South Africans, Indians, and Yorkshire to play against a home team that included some eminent professionals.

When the cricket ended, Sir Stanley was urged by scratch golfer and friend Brian Brooke-Alder to construct a golf course, using the cricket pavilion as a changing room, with drinks and meals served in the splendid Cochrane house. Sir Stanley formed a golf club and nine holes were opened to play by 1921, which three years later was expanded to eighteen holes.

At that time members were invited to join and play for the princely sum of four guineas a year.

It is interesting to recall some of the people named in the first Register of Members, many of whom were household names in the business, sporting and professional life of the City. Among them were: Dr. Josh Pim, Ireland's Wimbledon singles tennis champion; Dr. Bethel Solomons, rugby international and world famous gynaecologist; Cecil Barcroft, the leading golf course architect of the period; Michael Byrne, the eminent racing journalist, the first Lord Glenavy, and people like Jim Hamilton, Christopher Tighe, Herbert Phillipson and M.J. Purtill, all still fondly remembered by the older members of the club.

When Stanley Cochrane decided to take up residence in England, he left behind a flourishing club of which he had been the

proprietor for five years. At that stage, it made the transition to an open club in 1926 with affiliation to the Golfing Union of Ireland (GUI).

In that first year, Christopher S. Tighe and his wife Josephine, who had been ardent members for the previous three years, became Captain and Lady Captain. The membership that year was quite impressive - 25 Original, 330 Ordinary, 50 Lady Associates and 26 Country - a total of 431.

It was fitting that Sir Stanley was elected as first President, an honour that he held until his death in 1949 at the age of 77. Woodbrook owes its very existence and its development in those early years to this generous and eccentric patron, sportsman and, believe it or not, opera singer. In relation to the latter, it is interesting to recall that he staged lavish operatic performances at Woodbrook in the early part of the Twentieth Century in an auditorium, which he originally intended for an indoor cricket ground! The famous Quinlan Opera Company made several appearances at Woodbrook Opera House and among the people who sang there, and were guests for the duration at Woodbrook House, was the world-renowned Nellie Melba.

During the captaincy of the late Jim Hamilton in 1939 there was a brief revival of the great operatic tradition of Woodbrook. Jim was one of the original members of the club and to mark his year a match was arranged with the Cork club, Muskerry. The Captain had a special treat for the hosts and their visitors, however, when he organised a musical evening at which they were entertained by the famous London Opera Company.

# Tournament Golf...

## ...at Woodbrook

In this article **MICHAEL F. WALSH** recalls several highlights during the period from the late 1950s to the mid 1970s when Woodbrook hosted many prestigious tournaments and greeted a host of golfing legends.



Christy O'Connor Snr, a serial winner at Woodbrook, pictured with the legendary Lee Trevino.

It's hard to imagine now perhaps, especially for our "younger" members and those who've joined the club recently, that when professional golf was beginning its odyssey to where it is today, its major staging post in Ireland for the best part of eighteen years was Woodbrook Golf Club.

As the 1950s drew to a close, golf as a spectator sport was in its infancy. Christy O'Connor and Harry Bradshaw were Ireland's favourite golfing sons and 'Himself', as Christy was known, was certainly the Tiger Woods of his day in Ireland.

Present members would have difficulty visualising 25,000 spectators on Woodbrook's course, a tented village out by the putting green, traffic jams at the end of the driveway. That was the reality back in the sixties and early seventies. Christy O'Connor was a serial tournament winner at Woodbrook in the course of his illustrious career.

It was hardly what Lord Windlesham envisaged when, as head of the Hennessy Brandy family in Ireland, he put up 500 guineas for a two-day professional event in Woodbrook in May 1957. Christy O'Connor won this tournament, the first of its kind.

Such was the response from the golfing public, however, that the PGA in England, on being approached by Charles Dalton to stage an Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes Tournament, readily agreed when informed that the prize fund was £5,000 - the largest at that time.

English golfers Bernard Hunt and Frank Jowie tied and shared top prize in the inaugural Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes Tournament in 1958.

*Continued...*





'All Nations Come to Woodbrook' was the headline in the *Sunday Independent* and so it was. Peter Thomson, five times winner of the British Open, took part in the event, as did the great Gary Player. Many great names of the day from the U.K., Ireland and further afield graced the fairways at Woodbrook.

The following year (1959), Max Faulkner - Open champion at Royal Portrush in 1951 - celebrated a fine victory at Woodbrook.

The tournament was a huge success and it seemed that most of Dublin had taken the day off work to watch Christy O'Connor Snr beat

Ken Bousfield in a play-off on a Monday in 1960, scoring a 63 in front of a record crowd. Australian Kel Nagle won in 1961, with a 24-under-par score for 72 holes, a European Tournament record that stood for almost 30 years.

Peter Alliss shot a 62 in 1962, the then course record, but it wasn't good enough. Christy O'Connor Snr beat the legendary Bob Charles by one stroke for the top prize.

The response of the membership to this new development in

their club was terrific and they performed every aspect of running a major golf tournament enthusiastically and very ably. Volunteers were everywhere and all the local clubs provided members who acted as stewards. Dan O'Connell recalled some of the fun in his witty article 'Tournament Proletarians' (which appeared in the club's 75th Anniversary souvenir magazine in 2001).

The Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes event had truly captured the imagination of the golfing public.

However, they felt they had brought the event so far and they dropped golf

sponsorship in favour of horse racing in 1962.

P.J. Carroll & Co., makers of Sweet Afton and Carrolls No1 cigarettes, took over the mantle in 1963 and brought tournament golf in Ireland to a new level.

"The Centrepiece of the Irish Golfing Season, the Carrolls Sweet Afton International, one of the greatest tournaments ever staged in this country", said the *Irish Independent*. This clearly showed how the media of the day felt about this latest development in Irish golf. It was everything P.J. Carroll & Co. had envisaged...huge galleries every day, a multi-national field, and Bernard Hunt winning by two shots from Neil Coles.

It was even better in 1964. Christy O'Connor came to the fore on the Sunday, generating huge galleries in the process and culminating in a play-off against the great Roberto De Vincenzo. Urged on by a huge and wildly partisan crowd, O'Connor won at the second tie hole. Woodbrook and the assembled media had never witnessed such sights before.

In 1965 Carrolls took the tournament to Little Island in Cork, where Neil Coles won, and the following year to Royal Dublin, where Christy O'Connor - playing on his home course and finishing eagle, birdie, eagle - won again. The appeal and accessibility of Woodbrook attracted Carrolls back in 1967 and the tournament stayed here until the revival of the Irish Open in 1975.

The Carrolls International became a true international event with huge prize money for the time, attracting the best golfers in Europe and beyond to Ireland and to Woodbrook.

Christy O'Connor maintained his incredible tournament record at Woodbrook when winning the Carrolls International in 1967, with his last victory in this event coming in 1972.

Fellow Irishman Jimmy Martin made his mark, recording a wonderful and very popular win in 1968, finishing two shots ahead of Brian Barnes. By 1969 the prize fund had gone up to £10,000 and Ronnie Shade took home the first prize of £2,000, beating the then 20-year-old Bernard Gallacher by two shots.

The following year Brian Huggett was an impressive winner. He won by seven shots with Christy O'Connor in second place.





*P.J. Carroll & Co., makers of Sweet Afton and Carrolls No1 cigarettes, took over the mantle in 1963 and brought tournament golf in Ireland to a new level.*

Neil Coles, a regular visitor to Woodbrook, won the 1971 Carrolls event, and Christy Snr was triumphant again in 1972.

Pat McGuirk who was and still is, the club professional at the Co. Louth Golf Club in Baltray, created a real media event in 1973 when he led the Carrolls International from start to finish. Arriving in Woodbrook as a complete outsider with just £11 in winnings that year, he stormed through the field and finished with two eagles and two birdies over the last seven holes to take the title and the first prize of £2,500.

Another great winner of the time was Bernard Gallacher in 1974. He started his final round with an eight at the first hole but then shot ten birdies over the last fifteen holes to win by three from Jack Newton of Australia.

In 1975, Carrolls re-launched the Irish Open Golf Championship that had lapsed. It proved to be a master marketing stroke. With a £25,000 prize fund, the largest of the day, it gave the tournament even greater international prestige, wonderful TV and media coverage and was in many ways Woodbrook's finest hour. Tom Watson, fresh from winning the British Open, took part but the week belonged to Christy O'Connor Jnr, who produced a pulsating performance.

After 1975, Carrolls, seeking a different type of course, went northside to the wonderful links of Portmarnock and there they stayed.

Woodbrook had had its years of fame. The course and the club had grown to the challenge but then there came a time for tournament golf to move on.

The Irish Professional Championship was staged at Woodbrook on six occasions between 1977 and 1991. Winners of the title at Woodbrook included tour players David Jones (1981), David Feherty (1982), Liam Higgins (1983), Des Smyth (1990) and Philip Walton (1991).

For rising Malahide star Walton, it was a neat double as he was crowned Irish Amateur Close champion at Woodbrook in 1982.

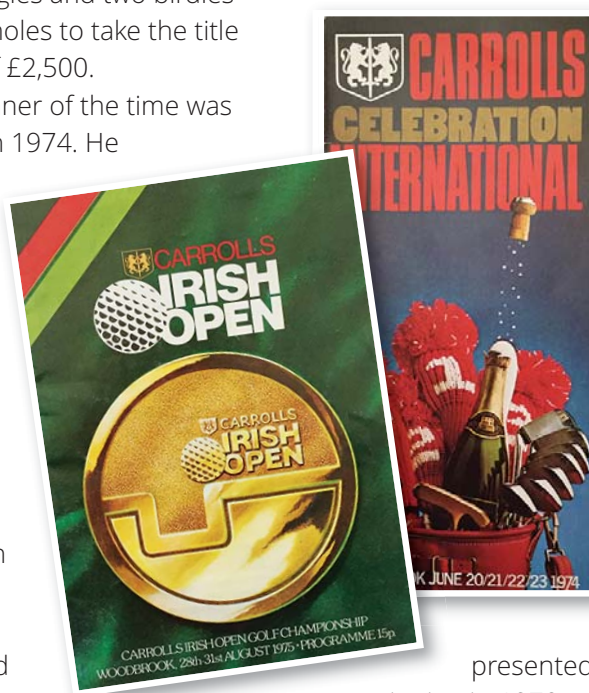
The AIB Seniors Tour event arrived in 1998, to the new, greatly enhanced course. This provided present members with a taste of what it had been like all those years ago. It was a truly nostalgic occasion, as much for the members and those who came to watch, as it was for the players themselves. "It's wonderful to be back here again," Brian Huggett told the Captain Pat Dunphy as he was

presented with a picture of himself winning in 1970.

Giants of that era, Tony Jacklin and Brian Barnes, even autographed their pictures on the wall as they reminisced on their previous visits to the club.

It was wonderful to see them all - if only to get a fleeting glimpse again of those who took part in the club's glory years in the sixties and seventies.

In more recent times Woodbrook staged the prestigious Irish Senior Women's Open on two occasions, with Alison Murdoch winning in 2005 and Vicki Thomas taking the title the following year.



Inset: The souvenir programmes for the Carrolls Irish Open in 1975 and the Carrolls Celebration International in 1974



# Just when you thought it was safe to cross



Think of Woodbrook and one immediately thinks of the famous railway line that bisects the golf course and adds a dash of spice to the tee-shot on the famous 18th hole. If there was a camera on that tee it would have lost track of the number of players who have had to reload over the years. Indeed, Aussie Ian Stanley hit two balls onto the railway line and ran-up a nine on Woodbrook's closing hole when leading the 1975 Irish Open.

It would be fascinating to research how many golf courses worldwide have a railway line running alongside. It's not unusual in the British Isles, where it's a feature of several courses on the Open Championship rota..

Four classic examples of British courses featuring a railway line, all in Scotland, are...

The 2018 Open Championship venue, **Carnoustie** (where Padraig Harrington won his first major title in 2007) is situated along the railway line between Dundee and Arbroath.

Lovely **Western Gales** is set between railway and sea with magnificent views out to Arran and Ailsa Craig.

The 11th hole at **Royal Troon**, aptly named 'Railway', lies right next to a railway line with a blind drive over a sea of gorse.

And famous **Prestwick**, host venue of The Open Championship on twenty-four occasions, lies just south of Troon on the Glasgow to Ayr line, with Prestwick railway station just a flick of a wedge from the 1st tee.

Woodbrook is also similar in this respect to **Royal Adelaide Golf Club**, which dates back to 1892. The Grange to Adelaide train line runs through the middle of the course, including right by the clubhouse and opening hole.

The following article concerning Woodbrook's railway links was penned by **SEAN McDERMOTT** and appeared in the club's 75th anniversary souvenir magazine in 2001.

**W**oodbrook has always been affected in one way or another by railways and trains that have been running through it and alongside it since it first became a golf club, and if you look on the seaward side of the existing track, there are still remains of the gulleys that scarred the course before the ravages of the Irish Sea washed most of them away.

And, of course, the latest development in the relationship between course and railway is that where a few short years ago we had level crossings and the shrill blast of diesel engines and the DART, now we have underpasses that allow us to ignore these intrusions. More importantly, these tunnels also allow us for the first time to use ride-on buggies, in perfect safety.

The 1910 Ordnance Survey Maps show the railway running along what was then the coastline on a section of line opened in 1854 by the Dublin and Wicklow Railway Co. In 1912, because of erosion, it became necessary to move the line inland to its present position, dissecting the Cochrane lands, and giving rise to the level crossings.

This movement and other works between Killiney and Bray were completed in 1915 at a cost of £66,688-12s-8d.

There were several agreements between the railway company and the Cochranes and also with the golf club about these crossings, the most recent being in 1997 when the club had a licence to use the two crossings at the 4th and 17th greens.



*Few will recall an era in the 1950s when the old steam engines stopped at Woodbrook to allow members from far flung places like Glenageary, Dalkey and Dun Laoghaire, to get off to play golf, and ferry them home again late in the evening.*

The first mention of underpasses came in 1999, and although a lot of members thought it was pie in the sky at that stage, meetings were held with Iarnród Éireann's engineers and drawings were produced. The then Captain, Tom Murray, appointed a sub-committee to handle the whole business - C. McIntyre, David Cantrell, Michael Darcy, Maurice O'Sullivan and myself in the Chair.

It may be of interest to some members who used to dash across the line rather than wait for the DART to pass, that the railway company carried out a risk analysis on all 2,400 level crossings on the system and the one at the 4th hole in Woodbrook was the third most dangerous in the country!

We have got so used to them now that it's hard to believe that the work on the main tunnel at the 4th was started just over a year ago, April 2000, and by August it was ready for use. The smaller one at the 17th was built in October and ready for use in the New Year.

Since then most of the landscaping has been completed and a drainage scheme to solve the flooding problem has now been undertaken.

It seems to be generally recognised that the tunnels are a great improvement for the course, primarily for safety reasons, and also because it allows the use of buggies. The fact that there was so little interference with the golf and that so many of our concerns were addressed, is a tribute to Iarnród Éireann's professional team and to the contractors, to whom we have reason to be grateful.

#### **NEXT STOP WOODBROOK...**

Many members who attended the Carrolls professional tournaments in the 1960s and

1970s will remember the trains stopping at Woodbrook to allow spectators to alight at the course to see what were the premier golf events in these islands at the time.

But few will recall an era in the 1950s when the old steam engines stopped at Woodbrook to allow members from far flung places like Glenageary, Dalkey and Dun Laoghaire, to get off to play golf, and ferry them home again late in the evening.

"At that time, of course, very few people enjoyed the luxury of a motor car," Harry Broderick told me.

"But I lived beside the railway station at Glenageary and it suited me to travel by train. When I purchased my ticket, I had to inform the Guard on the train that I wanted him to stop at the golf course, and he duly obliged."

Every Thursday Harry played in a fourball with Ned Flanagan, Dinny Clarke and Peter Farrell, all now deceased. All travelled by train from Dalkey.

"When we finished our game of golf, had a game of snooker and a few jars, somebody was detailed to flick a switch at the bar, which activated a red light by the railway beside the 4th green. At that time, the snooker room was situated in the present lounge area with a lovely big open fireplace which radiated heat and threw a warm glow all around the room."

The last train left Bray at 11 p.m. and when the driver saw the red light, he put on the brakes.

Harry says the fourball got some strange looks from irate passengers on their way home late at night, as they peered into the darkness at shadowy figures approaching, dragging heavy golf bags into the narrow carriages, holding up the train in the middle of nowhere!

Out went the red light and on went the last train bringing its regular complement of happy golfers' home in comfort.





# Peter McEvoy's vision enhances a timeless classic



By **DECLAN O'DONOGHUE**  
Editor, Backspin

**W**oodbrook is a glorious golfing venue. It is part of the fabric of Irish golf, a club steeped in history and renowned for its warm and welcoming embrace.

For members, old and new, there is the privilege of being part of a vibrant club with a celebrated past and ambitious

outlook, while visiting golfers and societies return time and time again to enjoy the club's hospitality and magnificent facilities.

Woodbrook is, of course, synonymous with top class international golf down the years.

A round of golf on this captivating clifftop course provides an opportunity to walk in the footsteps of many great champions, and for those familiar with the club down the years each visit serves as a delightful trip down memory lane.

Golfers of a certain vintage, this scribe

included, who grew-up in the magical Palmer/Nicklaus/Player/Trevino era, will retain fond memories of many thrilling events in Irish golf during the 1960s and early 1970s when Woodbrook was the epicentre of much of the action.

Spectator interest in golf exploded in Ireland at the time with the Carrolls tournaments drawing massive crowds to Woodbrook on ten occasions between 1963 and 1974.

The Carrolls tournaments and the revived Irish Open in 1975 attracted many of the biggest names in golf to Woodbrook.

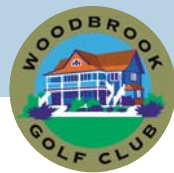
Yet it was an amateur, Walker Cup player Tom Craddock, who produced one of the most amazing rounds in tournament play at Woodbrook. On 11th August 1967, Tom equalled the world record when he recorded five 2s (four birdies and an eagle) in one round of golf during the Carrolls International. He eagled the 340-yards 2nd hole and reeled-off birdies at the four par 3s (8th, 10th, 13th and 17th) in a four-under-par round of 70.

Of course, few appreciated and mastered the nuances of the course better than Christy O'Connor Snr. He produced several top-class



Peter McEvoy





performances at Woodbrook, including his thrilling play-off victory over the great Roberto De Vincenzo in the Carrolls event in 1964.

Ten years later Ryder Cup player Bernard Gallacher triumphed at Woodbrook in the most dramatic circumstances. He had an untidy 8 at the first hole in the final round but bounced back with ten birdies over the closing fifteen holes to outgun Aussie Jack Newton.

Woodbrook was also the scene of many wonderful Pro-Celebrity events. They brought a whole host of show business and sporting icons to these shores to raise funds for charity, including the likes of Bing Crosby, Val Doonican, Sean Connery, Ronnie Corbett, Harry Secombe, Henry Cooper, Bruce Forsyth, top jockey Geoff Lewis and soccer legend Bobby Charlton.

Woodbrook retains the charm and character of those halcyon days and it has embraced change seamlessly. The club has invested heavily in a course and clubhouse refurbishment programme in recent times, and the transformation is remarkable. It has earned

Woodbrook many new admirers and enhanced its appeal to members, visitors and event organisers.

During the 1990s the club set about revamping the course with a view to keeping pace with a gear shift in the industry, influenced by huge advances in equipment technology.

Engaging Peter McEvoy to implement the course design changes was an inspired decision.

McEvoy brings wonderful vision, and the experiences gained from a remarkable career as a top flight amateur golfer, to his design work.

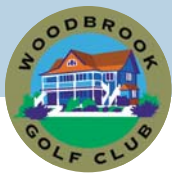
He was twice winner of the British Amateur Championship, a five-time Walker Cup player and low amateur in The Open Championship twice in the late 1970s. And, in 1978, he became the first British amateur golfer to make the halfway cut in The Masters at Augusta.

McEvoy's work at Woodbrook has enhanced the course in so many ways and brought greater definition to a wonderful golfing canvas.

*Continued...*







Among the new features that greeted Europe's top Senior Tour players when Woodbrook staged the 1998 Irish Seniors Open were slick new sand-based, bent grass greens built to USGA specifications.

Peter McEvoy returns on a regular basis to cast his eye over the course. He is thrilled with the transformation and on a recent visit gave his overall impressions.

"There is just something about Woodbrook. Great golf clubs are about more than just a fine course, beautiful buildings and efficient service. They have an almost tangible personality. This sense of character is reflected in many aspects and facets of a club. In this regard Woodbrook Golf Club scores very highly," he opined.



McEvoy delights in the strong sense of history that prevails at Woodbrook. He observes, "On the walls are many photos of great players who have played in prestigious events at Woodbrook over the years, along with honours boards that capture the sense of evolution that has been guided by men and women of golf since the club was founded in 1926.

And yet Woodbrook is contemporary and up to date in its thinking and actions. When I was first invited to the club many years ago this mindset was the first thing I noticed and it has not changed since", he says.

He added, "On recent visits I have been asked not only about the course but about aspects of team golf, junior development and a myriad of other golf related matters. The club

cares about every aspect of the game and this enhances the ambience of the club hugely and so positively."

Expanding on his thoughts, Peter McEvoy said, "Woodbrook has a wonderful golf course. It is a course of great contrast and, like the club itself, it continues to evolve. On the one hand, it has the raw beauty that is afforded only to clubs by the sea and the elements that accompany this physical location. Yet the contrast between standing on the 10th tee and 18th green is remarkable. On the 10th tee a player is exposed to the elements, sea breezes and wild fescue. On the 18th green one experiences a mature parkland setting close to the comfort of the clubhouse with its landscaped gardens and fine hardwoods".

McEvoy added, "The course can have two personalities. It can be set-up to be as tough as necessary to challenge the very best players. However, played off forward tees on a gentle summer evening, it can be a very benign place to play a few holes.

I find the whole atmosphere at Woodbrook most encouraging. It is because the club never stops thinking, never stops trying to improve. Can we improve the bunkering? Can we improve a couple of the tees? Should the rough be grown in a few out of play areas to enhance the aesthetics? It really is an invigorating environment. It is a club that I am proud to be associated with."

A strong endorsement, indeed, from a hugely respected figure in the world of golf.

Indeed, Woodbrook enjoys a magnificent setting with beautiful scenery in every direction.

A thrilling championship course that's easy on the legs and so pleasing to the eye, impressive clubhouse facilities and keen green fee rates combine to create a very appealing package for event organisers and visitors.

It is a very popular venue for casual fourballs, golf days and group outings, while a busy calendar of events provides plenty of other opportunities for visiting golfers to savour the club's charms.

It is also an excellent venue for special events, functions and family celebrations as Woodbrook's legendary hospitality is matched by excellent catering services.



# Woodbrook Winners

**W**oodbrook was Ireland's premier tournament venue from the time it hosted the first Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes event in 1958 until it staged the revived Irish Open, sponsored by Carrolls, in 1975.

Christy O'Connor Snr remains the most prolific winner of premier events staged at Woodbrook over the years. He thrilled massive galleries with outstanding performances on many occasions and signed-off in style in 1972, at the age of 47, when he celebrated his final Woodbrook victory by holing a 30-foot birdie putt on the last hole for a closing 67 and a four-shot victory in the Carrolls International.

His nephew, Christy Jnr, took centre stage when the revived Irish Open was staged at Woodbrook amid great excitement in 1975. Junior posted rounds of 66+70+69+70 to win the £5,000 top prize by a single shot from Scot Harry Bannerman. The chasing pack included Eamonn Darcy, Peter Butler and double Major winner Tony Jacklin.

Indeed, O'Connor Jnr outclassed a star-studded field, which also included reigning Open champion Tom Watson, the legendary Bob Charles, American Ryder Cup player JC Snead, and Bob Murphy, who was in the spotlight following a 3rd place finish in the US Open that summer.

Woodbrook has also been a happy hunting ground for three-time European Tour winner Philip Walton, hero of Europe's epic victory in the 1995 Ryder Cup at Oak Hill Country Club in New York.

Walton won the Irish Amateur Close title at Woodbrook in 1982, in between two outstanding Walker Cup appearances (1981 & 1983). He completed an impressive Woodbrook

double by returning to win the Irish PGA title in 1991, the year after he scored his breakthrough victory on the European Tour in the French Open.

In addition to Christy O'Connor Snr, Christy O'Connor Jnr and Philip Walton, other Ryder Cup players who have won professional tournaments at Woodbrook include Max Faulkner, Bernard Hunt, Jimmy Martin, Brian Huggett, Neil Coles, Bernard Gallacher, David Feherty and Des Smyth.

Another golfing legend, Laura Davies, triumphed at Woodbrook in the Ford Ladies Golf Challenge in October 1993. A sizzling performance, highlighted by a course record 66, enabled her to upstage a 117-strong field, which included rising Swedish star Annika Sorenstam (who was crowned Ladies European Tour Rookie of the Year at the end of that season) 1987 British Women's Open champion Alison Nicholas, and French Solheim Cup player Marie-Laure de Lorenzi.

Laura Davies was a huge attraction on her visit to Woodbrook in 1993. The following year she had the distinction of winning on five different tours in the one calendar year (America, Europe, Asia, Japan and Australia).



Philip Walton

## PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

**Irish Hennessy Professional Tournament (36-holes)**  
1957 – Christy O'Connor Snr

**Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes Tournament**

1958 – Bernard Hunt  
and Frank Jowie (tied)  
1959 – Max Faulkner  
1960 – Christy O'Connor Snr  
1961 – Kel Nagle  
1962 – Christy O'Connor Snr

**Carrolls Sweet Afton Tournament**

1963 – Bernard Hunt  
1964 – Christy O'Connor Snr

**Carrolls International**

1967 – Christy O'Connor Snr  
1968 – Jimmy Martin  
1969 – Ronnie Shade  
1970 – Brian Huggett  
1971 – Neil Coles  
1972 – Christy O'Connor Snr  
1973 – Paddy McGuirk

**Carrolls Celebration International**

1974 – Bernard Gallacher

**Carrolls Irish Open Championship**

1975 – Christy O'Connor Jnr

**Irish PGA Championship**

1977 – Paddy Skerrett  
1981 – David Jones  
1982 – David Feherty  
1983 – Liam Higgins  
1990 – Des Smyth  
1991 – Philip Walton

**Ford Ladies Golf Challenge**

1993 – Laura Davies

**Irish Seniors Open Championship**

1998 – Joe McDermott

## AMATEUR EVENTS

**Irish Seniors Amateur Open**

1975 – S.A. O'Connor

**Irish Amateur Close Championship**

1982 – Philip Walton

**Irish Senior Women's Open**

2005 – Alison Murdoch  
2006 – Vicki Thomas



# Follow in famous footsteps

Many golfing legends have graced Woodbrook's fairways in professional tournaments down the years, including the following ten British Open champions...

## **FRED DALY – Open champion 1947**

*Born 11th October 1911. Died 18th November 1990*

Portrush born Fred Daly made history in 1947 by becoming the first Irishman to win a Major Championship with his stunning victory in The Open Championship at Royal Liverpool (Hoylake).

Daly remained the only Irishman from either side of the border to win a Major title for fifty years, until Pádraig Harrington won the Claret Jug at Carnoustie in 2007.

And Daly was the only golfer from Northern Ireland to win a Major until Graeme McDowell won the US Open in 2010.

Fred Daly was a member of the GB&I Ryder Cup team on four occasions and signed-off in style at Wentworth in 1953. He partnered fellow Irishman Harry Bradshaw to a 1-hole foursomes victory over the legendary Cary Middlecoff & Walter Burkemo, and the following day Daly steamrolled Ted Kroll by 9 & 7 in singles combat.

## **BOBBY LOCKE**

### **– Open champion 1949, 1950, 1952, 1957**

*Born 20th November 1917. Died 9th March 1987.*

Arthur D'Arcy "Bobby" Locke was the son of Northern Irish emigrants to South Africa.

He was a highly rated amateur playing off plus-four by the age of 18. He proceeded to win the South African Boys, Amateur and Open Championships. He went on to become a dominant figure in the game and won the first of his four Open Championship titles when he beat Harry Bradshaw in a play-off at Royal St. George's in 1949.

He won the Claret Jug again in 1950, 1952 and 1957 (when he denied Peter Thomson an incredible fourth Open Championship in a row).

## **MAX FAULKNER**

### **– Open champion 1951**

*Born 29th July 1916. Died 26th February 2005.*  
One of the most flamboyant golfing

personalities of his generation, with an extrovert nature and dashing dress sense, Max Faulkner won The Open Championship at Royal Portrush in 1951.

The next British golfer to win the Claret Jug was Tony Jacklin in 1969.

Faulkner served in the RAF during the Second World War and played very little golf during that period. He made up for lost time when he commenced his tournament career in 1946, shortly after the War. He forged a reputation as a superb ball striker and went on to win 16 regular tournaments in Europe, including the 1959 Irish Hospitals' Trust Tournament at Woodbrook.

He scored a remarkable victory in the 1968 Portuguese Open at the age of 52.

## **KEL NAGLE – Open champion 1960**

*Born 21st December 1920. Died 29th January 2015.*

Kel Nagle, one of golf's quiet men, became one of Australia's greatest golfers.

Powerfully built and fiercely determined, he chalked-up over sixty victories on the PGA Tour of Australasia and seventeen other tournament victories worldwide during a glorious career.

He produced arguably his finest performance at the age of 39, in 1960, in the Centenary Open Championship at St. Andrews. He described his 9-iron approach shot to within three-feet of the last hole as "the best shot of my life". He narrowly beat Arnold Palmer, the reigning Masters and US Open champion, who was chasing the third leg of the Grand Slam.

The following year, Nagle won the 1961 Irish Hospitals' Tournament at Woodbrook. His 24-under-par tally of 260 strokes for 72-holes set a new European Tour record that stood for almost 30 years.

## **BOB CHARLES – Open champion 1963**

*Born 14th March 1936.*

Bob Charles turned professional in 1960 and served notice of his class with several top-quality performances, including a close call at





Woodbrook in 1962 when he was narrowly beaten by Christy O'Connor Snr in the Irish Hospitals' Sweepstakes tournament.

The following year (1963) he became the first left-handed player to win on the PGA Tour when he won the Houston Classic.

And, of course, it got better that season. He also became the first left-handed golfer to win a Major Championship when he won the British Open at Royal Lytham & St. Anne's.

He posted rounds of 68+72+66+71 to force a play-off with Phil Rodgers. The 36-hole decider was billed as a duel between the 'Master of the Putter' (Charles) and the 'Master of the Wedge' (Rodgers). Charles won comfortably to take his place at golf's top table.

#### **PETER THOMSON**

**– Open champion 1954, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1965**

*Born 23rd August 1929.*

The gifted Australian took part in the inaugural Irish Hospitals' Trust Sweepstake Tournament at Woodbrook in 1958. He was a huge draw as a multiple Open champion.

He made his debut in The Open at Royal Portrush in 1951 and established himself as a magnificent links golfer.

Thomson won The Open Championship five times. He claimed the first and last of these victories at Royal Birkdale in 1954 and 1965 respectively. He triumphed in the first live televised Open Championship at St. Andrews in 1955, and his other Claret Jug successes came at Royal Liverpool (Hoylake) in 1956 and at Royal Lytham & St. Annes in 1958.

#### **GARY PLAYER**

**– Open champion 1959, 1968, 1974**

*Born 1st November 1935*

Gary Player is one of the most accomplished personalities in the

history of golf. He amassed nine Major Championship wins between 1959 and 1978 and scored 165 tournament victories on six continents over six decades.

Like Peter Thomson, he took part in the inaugural Irish Hospitals' Trust Sweepstake Tournament at Woodbrook in 1958. Irish galleries got a glimpse of an extraordinary talent who was about to explode onto the world stage.

The following year (1959) he recorded his first Major triumph in The Open at Muirfield at the age of 23.

Remarkably, he completed the career Grand Slam within the short space of six years with follow-up Major victories in the 1961 Masters, 1962 PGA and 1965 US Open. He became only the third golfer in history to win all four Majors.

#### **ROBERTO DE VICENZO**

**– Open champion 1967**

*Born 14th April 1923. Died 1st June 2017.*

The stylish Argentinian golfer won more than 230 tournaments worldwide during his career, including The Open Championship at Hoylake in 1967, when he held off last round charges from Jack Nicklaus and Gary Player.

Roberto had a wonderful record in The Open. He was runner-up in 1950 and finished 3rd six times.

He was a gentleman of the fairways and loved making new friends on his travels. This endeared him to fans wherever he played, including Woodbrook, where he was runner-up to Christy O'Connor Snr in the 1964 Carrolls Tournament.

#### **TONY JACKLIN**

**– Open champion 1969**

*Born 7th July 1944.*

The Englishman enjoyed a stellar career with two Major Championship victories.

In 1969, he ended an 18-year British drought in the Majors when

he won The Open at Royal Lytham & St. Annes.

The following year, at Hazeltine National, he became the first British winner of the US Open since Ted Ray in 1920. He won by seven shots.

Jacklin was a potent force in the game during the 1968-1975 period and he was a big draw on visits to Woodbrook. He finished 5th in the Irish Open in 1975 and returned for the AIB Irish Seniors Professional Championship in 1998.

#### **TOM WATSON – Open champion 1975, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1983**

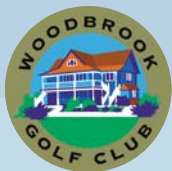
*Born 4th September 1949.*

Tom Watson is one of the most iconic figures in golf. He scored 71 professional career wins, including a haul of eight Major titles.

He won The Open Championship five times between 1975 and 1983, triumphed twice in The Masters at Augusta and scored one of the most dramatic victories in US Open history with his magnificent chip-in on the 71st hole at Pebble Beach in 1972.

Watson played in the revived Irish Open at Woodbrook in 1975 a month after he won the first of his five Open Championships at Carnoustie. Huge crowds flocked to see the Open champion in action on Irish soil but he was unable to keep pace with Christy O'Connor Jnr and finished 13th.





# WOODBROOK DIARY

A miscellany  
of historic  
and exciting  
happenings  
and events  
down the  
years



Christy O'Connor Jnr

**1907** - The first of five Test cricket matches took place at Woodbrook Club and Ground on 2nd May, featuring Ireland v Yorkshire.

**1912** - Test cricket concludes at Woodbrook Club and Ground with the visit of Australia for a match against C.B. Fry's XI.

**1921** - Sir Stanley Cochrane formed a golf club and nine holes were opened for play at Woodbrook.

**1924** - The course was expanded to 18-holes

**1926** - Woodbrook Golf Club became affiliated to the Golfing Union of Ireland.

Sir Stanley Cochrane was elected the club's President, an honour he held until his death in 1949 at the age of 77.

Also in 1926, the club appointed its first professional, Pat O'Connor, who served for 42-years until 1968.

**1957** - Woodbrook hosted its first professional event - the Irish Hennessy Tournament, which was won by Christy O'Connor Snr.

**1969** - Woodbrook's ladies won the prestigious All Ireland Senior Cup, defeating Douglas in the final. Team members included Barbara Hyland (Captain), Ann Byrne, Harriet Kissane, Ann Moriarty, Colette Dowdall, Mrs. F. Blair, Mrs. S. Carroll and Mrs. L. O'Reilly.

**1974** - The Golf Club's present 99-year clubhouse and course lease was signed on 8th November 1974.

Woodbrook won the Barton Shield with, arguably, one of the best club teams in the history of Irish inter-club golf...Pat Mulcare, Liam MacNamara, Tony Heverin, Dan Kennedy and Niall O'Farrell.

**1975** - Woodbrook hosted the revived Irish Open Golf Championship, sponsored by Carrolls and won by Christy O'Connor Jnr.

Also in 1975, Pat Mulcare brought great distinction to the club when he was selected as a member of the GB&I Walker Cup team against the USA at St. Andrews.

Mulcare famously beat Dick Siderowf in the opening day singles and partnered Scot Ian Hutcheon to a foursomes victory on day two against Siderowf and Jerry Pate. Pate went on to win the US Open the following year as a Tour rookie.

**1976** - Woodbrook celebrated its 50th anniversary and the club broke fresh ground, following the introduction of Equal Status legislation, when Mary Louise Colbert became the first lady to be elected an Ordinary Member of the club.

**1984** - Woodbrook's Claire Dowling (Hourihane) made the first of four Curtis Cup appearances against the USA. She was also selected on the GB&I team in 1986, 1988 and 1992.

**1986** - Woodbrook won the Barton Shield. The team was John L. Hughes, Gerry O'Connor, Paddy Lewis, Jimmy Mooney, Liam MacNamara (team captain). Daryl Burrowes was club captain.

**1989** - Remarkably four holes-in-one were recorded in one day in the singles competition for Chris Dodd's Vice Captain's Prize. For the record, they were scored by Michael Spellman (2nd - 5 wood), Sean Damery (9th - 8 iron), Kieran Murphy (9th - 7 iron) and Kevin Byrne (13th - 4 iron).

**1995** - At a Committee Meeting in January 1995 the idea was raised of major improvements to the clubhouse and golf course.

It was proposed that the golf course would be redesigned to restore it to Championship status, and the clubhouse was earmarked for major renovations to enhance its character and facilities.

At an AGM in September of that year, approval was given for plans to proceed, with Peter McEvoy appointed as course architect.

**2001** - The 75th Anniversary of Woodbrook GC.

**2006** - Billy Kinsella, a member of one of Ireland's great golfing dynasties, bade farewell to club life when he retired as PGA professional at Woodbrook Golf Club, a position he held for 43 years.

**2026** - The Centenary of Woodbrook Golf Club.

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