

# ANOTHER NEW GOLF COURSE FOR WEST

What a phenomenal growth the past few years have seen in golf in the west of Ireland! One can count four courses that have been completed or are under construction and last Saturday one of them, Oughterard, had its first major Society outing.

So it was as good an occasion as any to take a look over the now completed front nine holes and assess just what kind of challenge they are—bearing in mind that the construction of golf courses is, after a certain point, largely in the hands of "Mother Nature."

This is one of the major problems that all golf course builders face: the fact that it takes time (measured in years) for greens

to get that close-knit carpet of grass that makes putting thoroughly enjoyable.

Despite this the greens in Oughterard have come on extremely well, even if they have not yet got that density of grass that time alone will bring. They are working on this with the acknowledged green experts from Bingley.

## SITUATION

The course itself is ideally situated in an area where golf is bound to provide the ideal addition to the other tourist amenities that nature has provided—the best fishing in Europe and some of the country's most beautiful scenery.

Quite an attractive sweep of this green, well-wooded countryside with distant hills and azure skies can be seen along the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth holes and I had the delight of seeing a curlew on the eighth.

For the inveterate and hardened golfer this may sound far removed from the deathly, white-knuckled struggle that so many golf games have become today. But wasn't it Walter Hagen who said something about the game couldn't be enjoyed unless one had time to stop and sniff the flowers.

The powers that be have set out in Oughterard to build a course that is not a "tiger"—one on which the



Mr. Pat Goggin, Secretary of the Oughterard Golf Club.

average holiday golfer will be able to enjoy his game without having to hit the ball like Jack Nicklaus.

They now have this, but the "recipe" is to be laced with some "spice" in the near future with extensive bunkering and the planting of trees which will turn Oughterard into quite a stiff test.

One thing which may not have been considered but which would go a long way towards satisfying the fanatic single-figure player and the holiday golfer alike would be back tees which would make the course longer. On the 130-plus acres to be covered by the 18-hole course there should be plenty of room for this. Players would then have an option.

## "NO PUDDING"

The present nine holes starts with the now accepted straight-forward par four, though at 416 yards and with the prevailing wind against it is "no pudding." Even a good drive on Saturday needed a three-wood follow up, with a dangerous-looking area of rough just off the green to the left to catch any touch of a hook.

The second is, I believe, a hole that is likely to be changed when the second nine are built. It is a par three with the green fairly well sited in a corner but with an almost blind shot from the tee, which is not recommended in present day golf architecture.

Third hole in Oughterard is a reasonably straight-forward par four of 342 yards. On the left side of the fairway are two trees, but it's a pity

corner itself with the temptation to "cut" it heightened by the flag fluttering rather defenceless looking in the distance. Two balls lost among the trees convinced me otherwise.

Across "the road" is the 203 yards par three fifth which is one of the best holes on the course. The green itself is quite narrow with markings for bunkers on the "easy side," the right. On the left someone had the wit to leave a huge boulder a few yards off the green, making a unique obstruction and adding character to the hole.

The sixth and seventh are fairly straightforward par fours of 344 and 315 yards, and then comes the eighth which at 501 yards against

the prevailing wind is a "two shotter" for only the scratchmen. Again the area at the right and left front is laid out for deep sand and grass bunkers.

The ninth at 392 yards could be a hole with real promise. From the tee there is a wall along the left of the wide fairway with two trees guarding the right hand side. By letting the rough out of the left or right this could be turned into one devil of a dog leg. Again the unique kidney-shaped green is laid out for a huge bunker on the right cutting into the green.

At the moment, dealing with the course on an overall basis, it is a little flat, but with some good bunkering and lots of trees—and I am assured these will be

provided—the course holds promise as an extremely good and enjoyable test.

It should certainly prove a tremendous boost to the facilities available in Oughterard for the tourist business, and with Eddie Hackett coming in on the provision

of the second nine and overall bunkering, should be quite an attraction for this extremely beautiful area.

## CLUBHOUSE

With regard to clubhouse facilities, the Oughterard Club is extremely fortunate in having the existing delightful cut-stone buildings to work on. It has been decided to work on the existing buildings, preserving them as far as possible and adding one storey to one section.

At the moment this courtyard of buildings has a beautiful old world atmosphere which money or architects could not create.

## RESULTS

The following are the results of the Rotarians Outing on Saturday: Men's: 1st, John Silke (Galway Golf Club); 2nd, T. St. J. Barry (Oughterard Golf Club); 3rd, Professor D. Larkin (Oughterard Golf Club); Best 1st nine, J. Mahon (Galway Golf Club); Best 2nd nine, R. Connellan (County Sligo); Best visitor, Sean Doyle (County Sligo); Sealed Prize, Des. McNally.

Ladies: 1st, Mrs. Sal Lawlor (Galway Golf Club); 2nd, Mrs. Ann Kelly (Galway Golf Club); 3rd, Mrs. Mona Holland (Galway Golf Club); 4th, Mrs. Marie Garrett (Galway Golf Club).



Joe Herbert studies the lie of the ball on the first green.

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Mr. Tom Barry, Captain of the Oughterard Golf Club.

they don't come more into play. With the green banked at the back and sloping towards the front the major difficulty here is clubbing the approach shot.

The fourth is one that stuck in my memory. It is a 354 yards dog-leg par four. The corner of the dog leg has a grove of trees and a boundary wall.

Deceptive part of this hole is the



Brendan Sheil putting on the first green at Oughterard.

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