

Barna 1905 - 1925

"Is ag dul 0 Chasla aniar, 's me lag tuirseach de mo thriall,
I mBearna, sea d'iarr me aras,
Fuaireas sin gan mhoill, in aice leis an gcoill,
San illt a bhfasann cn6 agus airni
Pion's punch go leor, a bheas eadrainn ar ball,
Agus slainte fear a 61 tri raithe,
Siud seala ar an oighre 6g, nach scarfaidh leis go deo
Is bua churachta ag Loingseach Bhearna".

The above lines are taken from the ballad "Loingseach Bhearna" which was composed in praise of the local landlord Marcus Lynch, who in 1905 leased part of his lands to the Golf Club.

On 28th November 1638, Stephen Lynch obtained a decree in Chancery against Edmond O'Halloran of Barney, for £410-19-8 and the lands of O'Hery to be charged forthwith. The decree is supposed to have led to the transfer of the Barna Estate to the Lynchs, by whom it was possessed up to 1930.

Marcus Og Lynch was the last owner of Barna house. His son died during the Boer War and his three daughters joined the Sisters of Charity. Local story records that the Lynchs' heir was captured by the Boers and exchanged for the son of a local chief and that this youth eventually lived in Barna. He was very fond of handball and in 1905 Mr. Lynch built the ball alley for the boy's amusement. Whether this is true or not, certainly the Lynch family had a coloured man living with them. He spoke Irish fluently and was known locally as Blackeen Bhearna.

The minute book for the period 1905-1920 is missing from the club's records so that information as regards the Club in Barna is totally dependent on newspaper reports.

The following letter was published in "The Galway Express" of May 13th, 1905:

Dear Sir,

We have been approached by several of the members of the late Galway Golf Club with a view of establishing a new Golf Links.

A suitable site has been procured at Barna - about 300 yards from Gentian Hill, and a meeting will be held in Mack's Hotel on Tuesday next, the 9th inst. at 4 o'clock to consider the matter, when Larkin, the Bray Professional, will be in attendance to report as to the suitability of the site for a Golf Links. Your attendance is earnestly requested.

Yours faithfully, T.N. Redington, W. Gordon Seymour.

In response to this circular a large meeting assembled in the Royal Hotel. Col. Courtenay C.B. was called to the chair and amongst others present were: Hon. RE Dillon, Messrs Persse, Redington, Kenny, Blake, Twentyman, Roberts, Johnson, Allan, Seymour, Major

Smyth, J. Young, Commdr. Law, Capt. Robeson, M.J. Tighe, T. McDonagh, C. Moon, and Dr. Sandys.

Larkin, the Bray professional was present and stated that along with a number of gentlemen - Col. Courtney, Messrs Persse, Tighe, Seymour and Browne - he had walked over the proposed course at Marcus Lynch's land at Barna and found it everyway suitable for a nine hole links. He reported the turf as excellent; the green would be ready to play on by October. He estimated the cost and the upkeep of the course at £100 per year.

Hon. R. Dillon was then elected President, J.N. Blake Vice- President, Major R. Smyth Hon. Secretary and P.J. Murray Hon. Treasurer.

It was computed that £400 would be necessary to start the club and erect a pavilion, and it was agreed to issue £5 debentures to cover this sum. The members present contributed £350.

The annual subscription was fixed at two guineas. Ladies one guinea "on their own" and 10s 6d if their husband was a member. Family tickets, admitting all in a family were fixed at three guineas.

From that date things moved with an astonishing speed. Mrs. Hoban, the tenant, handed over the land at Ballymoneen on September 4th for the sum of £30. From then on the club leased the land from Marcus Lynch at the yearly grazing rent of £40 for twenty five years. The club was allowed to have the grazing of the land for sheep only.

The Course.

The following account of Galway Golf Club appears in "The Irish Field" July 17, 1909.

“President	The Lord Killanin.
Captain	Colonel Courtenay C.B.
Honoury Treasurer	P.J. Murray
Honoury Secretary	W.G.Seymour
Committee	The Honorable R. E. Dillon, T. Kenny, T. McDonagh, M .J. Tighe, W. A. Sandys M. D., J. Redington, T. Redington, T. Redington Roche, Major Smyth.

Historic Galway is worthy of a visit in many ways. It offers many interesting sights and is full of historical associations. The golf there is really pleasant. Then the sight of the salmon below the bridge, waiting in hundreds in a foot of water, till a flood comes to enable them to make their way up over the dam, is indeed wonderful. For nearly an hour I gazed at them, drawn up in rows like soldiers, and must confess I thought the temptations of Galway poachers must be immense. However, they are well watched.

Position of the Golf Course

Beyond Salthill, at Barna, some two and a half miles from the station, lies the course, which used to be situated on the lake, Mrs. Nolan's property. The old course was too wild and exposed altogether. Then there is the story of two players who took 21 each towards one green, and then agreed to halve the hole, as the wind was too much for them. The new course is delightfully situated in a sheltered spot, and presents a pleasant view on arrival at the neat and ornamental little clubhouse, which Mr.M.J. Tighe deserves much credit for designing Since the new club was founded, events have marched smoothly, and now under the care of Mr.W.G. Seymour, the club is truly in a flourishing condition. The only thing wanted now is a little more land, and I feel sure that the landlord, when he sees the (sic) good golf does, will meet the club in any desire it advances.

The Course.

The field of thirty acres on which the course has been laid out is situated close to Galway Bay and slopes from the south or shore side up to the north. It is diversified by two woods, which form guarding hazards for several of the greens, and one of the prettiest holes on the course or indeed on any course, the fifth is carved right through one of these woods. The ground too, is undulating that it has enabled the engineers of the course to so place their greens that they call for approaching of a greater excellence than is usually demanded on an inland course.

Just outside the comfortable clubhouse is the first tee, which offers a drive to the green lying in the hollow. Beyond the drain on the left and the danger of a hanging lie there is little difficulty.

The second hole is rendered difficult in the drive by the tendency to pull out of bounds in a wood which lies along the left of the line. The green is well-placed. Not so long ago, Mr.Jack Meldon shot snipe where the green is, which speaks well for the drainage done by the club.

The 3rd is the only really uninteresting hole on the course- a hole of 212 yds to the high ground. The fourth, called the Spion Kop, calls for a fine cleek shot to a green which is guarded by a small cliff and hill. .

The fifth is a unique hole and was specially thought out by Mr.T. Redington Roche. The shot is played through the centre of the wood from a tee 10ft higher than the green; the view of Galway Bay and the Clare Hills is superb. Well done, the shot gives much satisfaction missed, it means tribulation.

The 6th, is perhaps, the best hole, as there are two distinct ways of reaching the green. A plucky player will make for "Good Hope Bay" and thus secure an easy second to the green. The safe player will leave himself an awkward second. It is a distinctly good and pretty hole.

The 7th is long, and provided straightness is kept should be easy. The great danger is a wall running closely parallel to the left. The 8th is short and very difficult somewhat like the 10th hole at Lahinch, (Gibson course), the idea being to create a hole calling for a mashie shot with a deal of cut on it. The 9th makes a testing finish. In length 365 yds it requires a good drive to reach a plateau from whence only a perfect shot can reach the well-guarded green.

Length and Bogey of Holes

No.	Length	Bogey
1	210	4
2	205	4
3	212	4
4	135	3
5	150	3
6	250	4
7	400	5
8	100	3
9	365	4
	2027	34

It will be seen that the course is on the short side, but its well designed characteristics amply atone for this deficiency. The lies are good, the greens capital, and the problems numerous. The tees are a feature in themselves. Mahoney, from Dollymount, is the professional, and a promising young player. He holds the 18 hole record with 63, a fine performance. Mr. T.R. Roche holds the amateur record for 9 holes with 35.

Fees.

Entrance fee £3.3s; annual subscription £2.2s; ladies £1.1s. There are concessions for members living outside a certain radius. The visitors' fees are 1s per day, 5s per week.

Challenge Cups.

Valuable challenge cups for ladies and gentlemen have been presented to the club by Colonel Courtenay CoB; and Mr. James Blake, the Captain and Vice-President respectively. Galway golf is indeed pleasant. Though an inland course it lies close to the sea, and grand views of sea and mountain are obtainable. Invigorating air is always there and to the stranger there is a hearty welcome. Make a point of playing in the "Galway Week" competitions in May".

The sand and gravel used in the construction and development of the course was brought from Tra-na-gCeann and the cliff which are situated on the easterly side of Silver Strand.

The workmen were paid half a crown per day and the carmen (horse and cart) an extra half a crown. William Griffin who kept the records of wages and delivery, received 3s 4d per day. Working hours were from 8.00 a.m. to 8.00 p.m. and the men provided their own lunch.

In 1913, ninety three loads of sand were delivered to the Golf Club at a total cost of £9-6-0.

Honourable Robert Edward Dillon - President 1905 - 1908.

The Dillons were descendants of famous Anglo-Norman settlers. Sir Henry De Leon had been granted tracts of land in Longford. A descendant of his, Thomas Dillon, who had been Chief Justice of Connacht, bought Clonbrock Estate, Ahascragh, in 1576. Clonbrock House was built between 1780 - 1789. Robert Edward, 5th Lord Clonbrock, was born on May 21st 1869.

Robert was educated at Eton College where he was sent in 1882. In 1887, the year of her Jubilee, Queen Victoria visited Eton. A facsimile of a Tudor arch was put up across the road to welcome her. Four boys (English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish) dressed as trumpeters were posted there. Robin, as he was known, was chosen to represent Ireland. While he was at Eton he became interested in painting and became a good water colour artist.

His health was not good and he was unable to complete his studies to enter the diplomatic service.

He was a good sportsman - a good shot and an excellent fisherman. He read widely and was also a good gardener and knowledgeable about trees and shrubs. His main interest, which lasted all his life was in Natural History, particularly in entomology.



Hon. Robert Dillon (President 1905 -1909)

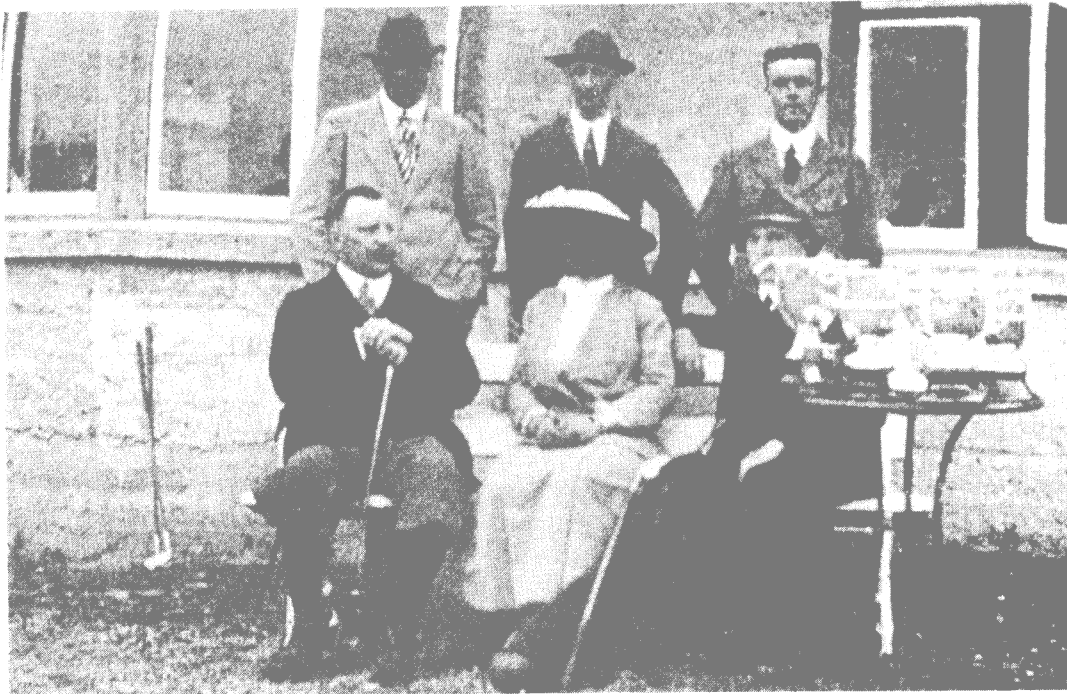


His collection of butterflies and moths is preserved in the Natural History Museum.

Many eminent naturalists visited him at Clonbrock. He was once given a special dinner by Belfast Field Club in recognition for having been instrumental in discovering one hundred different species in the various branches of Natural History. He succeeded to the title of 5th Lord Clonbrock on the death of his father in 1917. He died unmarried in 1926 and the title became extinct.

Martin, Lord Killanin - President 1909 - 1922.

Sir Martin Morris B.A., was a graduate of Trinity College. He practised as a barrister-at-law. He was appointed Senator of the Royal University of Ireland and also a Commissioner of National Education in Ireland. He was elected M.P. for Galway Borough and was appointed H.M. Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum for Co. Galway in 1918. He resigned as President of the club in 1922. He died in 1927.



Open Week - Note Club Cup on extreme right.

Mixed Foursome:

Miss M. Law and E. Law	116-40- 76
Miss M. Seymour & Capt.P. Joyce	126-30- 96
TN. Redington & Mrs. Townsend	126-28- 96

Also played Com. Law and Mrs. Palmer; W.G. Seymour and Mrs. Persse; H. Law and Miss S. Law.

Competitions:

In their first inter-club match against Tuam, Galway were heavily defeated - "The Tuam men again came down like

veritable wolves on the innocent Galway golfing fold. There is talk of organising a strong Galway team to penetrate the wilds of Tuam and lick the natives on their own heath. But previous to this it is hoped that Henry Vardon will be prevailed upon to visit Galway and give us a tip or two for triumphant Tuam" Galway Express. In the return match in Tuam Galway did not fare any better.

Tuam

Rev.Fr. Eaton	2
J.M. Meldon	0
Oswald Brown	5
J. McDonagh	2
C. Blake	6
J. O'Connell	4
Total:	<u>19</u>

Galway

J.D. Brown	0
TN. Redington	0
Major Hobbs	0
T. Kyne	0
Capt. Byrne	0
Lieut. Kinsman	0
Total:	<u>0</u>



Oswald Brown who played for Tuam became a scratch player in a very short time and was recognised as one of the best golfers in the west. In 1928 he was defeated in the final of the South of Ireland Championship by the legendary John Burke.

The monthly medal competitions were played throughout the year but undoubtedly open week held in May was the golfing and social highlight of the year. The week commenced on Sunday with a match play competition over 9 holes for the Galway Challenge Cup and continued throughout the week finishing on Saturday with an 18 holes final. On Monday the Captain's Prize (Men's Cup and Ladies' Cup) was played over 18 holes in a bogey competition.



The following day both men and ladies competed in an 18 holes stroke round for the Vice-President's prize. On Wednesday a men's open singles under handicap (limited to 22) was held. First prize value £4; second £1 (if 15 entries). A special prize of £3 for the best gross score.

Dr. W. A. Sandys, winner of the Galway Challenge Cup 1909. "The World a/Golf 1909

The ladies also had an open singles under handicap (limited to 21). First prize value £3, second value £1 (if eight entries). In May 1907, twenty five men and nine ladies " played. Thursday's competition was Mens and Ladies open foursomes, followed on Friday by an eclectic competition. The week concluded with the May medal competition and the final of the Challenge Cup. T.W. Martin (5) defeated Dr. Sandys (13) in the first final played on the Barna Links.

An Approaching and Putting competition was held on the Saturday evening of open week and also on various occasions throughout the year. Each competitor played three shots from a distance of 80 yards to a green and then proceeded to putt the three balls - the lowest of the total scores being the winner. Scoring in this competition was surprisingly low-sixes and sevens being quite common. The following humorous story appeared with the results of such a competition in June 1907:

"From the window she saw him coming up the steps. "He comes"! she exclaimed joyfully. There was a bit of ice on the top step. He slipped. Then he struck each of the other ten steps in succession. "Heavens"! she cried. "He has fozzled his approach again". In the reports there is an occasional oblique reference to the handicapping committee such as "they might apply the shears with advantage", but the most striking feature of these reports is the frequent use of the nom-de-plume. C. "Bunker", A. "Driver", S.J. "Kildare", M.J. "Mashie", R.G. "Rose" appear regularly. F.L. "Euchre" who later changed to A. "Fluker" was perhaps the most original of all.

Mr. W. I. Fogarty, winner of the Captain's Cup and Open Singles at Galway. "The World a/Golf 1910"

He won the Captain's Cup in 1909 and had his handicap reduced from 16 to 11. One wonders if his anonymity was protected at the presentation!

The final competition played on the old links at Barna was on St. Patrick's Day 1925, when Mr. Desmond Shee won Colonel Courtenay's Cup and a prize value £1 with 2 up. Mr.M. Conroy won the runners-up prize of £1 with 2 down. Dr.C O'Malley finished 3 down. There were no fewer than nineteen other competitors.

Social Events.

Open week was also an important social event in the Club. The Galway Express, "On Friday night last a very enjoyable dance was held in the Town Hall and proved a most delightful termination to a highly successful "golf week". Dancing commenced at 10 o'clock and was kept up with unflagging zeal till 5a.m. Those two necessary elements, music and floor, were both excellent, and supper provided by Mrs. Walker, was all that could be desired. The entire management of the dance was in the capable hands of Capt. Payne whose indefatigable efforts were rewarded with the most complete success". Again, during Whit week Major Hobbs and the officers of the Connaught Rangers were "At Home" to the members of the new club. There was a large and fashionable attendance. The band of the 4th Connaught Rangers attended and played the following interesting programme:

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| 1. Two Steps | La Mallchiche |
| 2. Poerture | L'Espoir a' Alsace |
| 3. Valse | Brise de Nuits |
| 4. Serenade | La Polona (sic) |
| 5. Intermezzo | Lilils |

Prior to World War I the membership had now increased to 90 men and 50 women. Male attitudes to ladies on the golf course were quite harsh in those days "If they chose to play when the male golfers are feeding or resting, no one can object. But at other times - must we say it - they are not welcome. Constitutionally and physically women are unfitted for golf" (Golf 1901)

This reactionary and dismissive attitude was not evident in the Galway club which needed all the support it could get. Mixed foursomes competitions were highly popular and ladies also participated in the inter-club matches.



The last green, Galway, "The Irish Field", 1909

Professionals,

At this time matches among the professionals had an important role in expanding the game, and had a big influence in popularising golf as a spectator sport. They were organised to publicise many of the new courses and "Were "Widely reported in newspapers. Sometimes the stakes "Were raised by individual sponsors, or by the club themselves, but it was often the professional that used his own money. Many of them had acquired a taste for gambling from their early days as caddies. Of course their main work was the making and repairing clubs for members in their small workshops which had that characteristic smell of a mixture of pitch, varnish and glue. In 1907 Keogh was appointed professional and later that year a match was arranged between him and Snowball of Portmarnock A large crowd witnessed the game and some heavy side bets were placed. On the first nine Snowball was 2 up. In the second round the local man held his own but the match ended in Snowball's favour by 2 and 1. The following day Snowball defeated McNamara of Lahinch by 3 and 1. A



strong westerly gale on both days was against a good exhibition of golf. In May 1908 a professional tournament was held. Unfortunately no results of this In 1915 the Irish champion Michael (Dyke) Moran played Lionel Munn. Irish Life, 5th August in Galway. He Won the Irish Professional Championship 1921 five times from 1909 to 1913. In 1913 he had tied for third place in the British Open at Hoylake with rounds of 76,74,89,74 (313). The event was Won by J.B. Taylor one of the "Great Triumvirate" who had a third round of 77 in the teeth of a storm and lashing rain. The 36 holes match against Mahoney, the local professional, was in aid of the Red Cross and the attendance exceeded 500. Moran who played with borrowed clubs completed the first nine in 33 to Mahoney's 34 and was 5 up after 18 holes. Mahoney played much more steadily after starting on the second 18 and after the fifth had reduced Moran's lead to 3. But Moran was holding firm in spite of the brilliant recovery of the home professional and his imperturable steadfastness soon decided the match. He had three birdies in a row and the match ended on the 12th. Moran failed to break the course record which Mahoney held with 29.

After the match Oswald Brown of Tuam and Mahoney defeated J. Meldon, the Hon. Sec and Moran by 2 and 1. It was rumoured that Moran would be engaged by Tuam

G.C. Mahony, the Galway golf professional showing his grip somewhat like Lionel Munn. Irish Life, 5th August 1921

Instead he joined the army and died in 1918 at the War Hospital Le Cateau. The "Connacht Tribune" described the swings of both professionals as follows: "He (Moran), drives almost like a catapult. There is no pause. He draws back with swift deliberation, and seems to follow through with lightning-like rapidity. He preserves a perfect balance on his finish, and the head is only half lifted, as if he were still watching the place where the ball had been. Meanwhile, the ball is floating away at a medium height from the ground in a deadly straight line. There is, perhaps more grace and ease about Mahoney's style. He pivots as it were from the hip and times his shots in a manner that can be appreciated by the dullest spectator".

In 1918 despite the political unrest a considerable crowd witnessed a competition organised by Mrs. Bodkin Mahon, Nile Lodge in which Mahoney defeated the Welsh champion Sergt. Williamson by 5 and 3. Later on Mahoney also defeated Oswald Brown in an 18 hole challenge match for a bet of £5. W. Nolan succeeded Mahoney and he was later replaced by Hanna who was the last professional in Barna.

Accounts:

The only reference to accounts from 1906 to 1920 is included in a resume of the Annual General Meeting of June 1918, which states:

"The annual report and statement of accounts were read and passed. It was stated that while there had been a loss through tillage operations last year owing to the initial expense of fencing the one acre plot laid down in potatoes, it was expected that there would be a substantial profit from the plot during the year".

The cultivation of potatoes on the course was in response to the "Tillage (Ireland) Racecourses and Golf Links Order" which stipulated that ten per cent of the area of the holding had to be tilled during the war years (1914-1918).

The notice of meeting and the balance sheet for the year ended 31st day of December 1916 (as illustrated) was posted to P.J. Boland Esq. who lived in Glenard House which is now the Ardilaun Hotel. Dr. P.J. Horan, Eyre Sq., found the document in a book which was purchased at the auction of Mr. Boland's residence.

In 1920 subscriptions were increased. Single men: three guineas, Family Ticket: four guineas. New numbers were charged an entrance fee.

Owing to the increased cost of labour the club was actually running at a loss and was now £15 in debt. It was also agreed that debenture holders could sell some of their shares and purchasers would be eligible for election to committee.

By 1923 the total membership had now reached 160 and a waiting list was being considered. Members whose handicaps exceeded 20 were not allowed to play in three or fourball matches any day after 3p.m. Indeed the high handicappers suffered financially as well! The price of a cup of tea and two buns after 3p.m. was 9d while outside these hours the price was increased to 1s 3d.



Afternoon tea outside the Clubhouse

Caddies:

The increase in membership brought with it a corresponding increase in the number of caddies. A sub-committee was formed to keep them in order and to have a shed erected to accommodate 25 caddies. Caddies coming from the town were allowed to travel free of charge during open week. The tram terminus was at the Eglington Hotel so there was still a good distance to travel to the clubhouse where they were given a free lunch. Caddies fees were 1/- for 9 holes plus 1d per hole after 9. The "Galway Express" of July 1909 published the following poem which gives the caddy's viewpoint on golf and golfers of that era:

THE WEARIN' OF THE GREEN

Oh! Paddy dear, an did you hear,
The news that's in the pubs?
Them golfers is removin,
All the shamrocks with their clubs.
The puttin grass so nately swep'
Is nowhere to be seen.
For the mischiefs in that mashie club,
That's rippin up the green.

Oh! some in coats 0' cruel red,
And some in tartan knicks.
An some wid ties 0' chaney blue,
But all o'thim wid sticks.
An'they batthers at a weenie ball,
That's lyin on the sod.
An hits it - no! they hammers it,
An digs out pounds o'clod.

They come with drivers, cleeks and spoons,
An clubs of quarest name,
An they calls a hape of sand their tay,
But it's whishky that they mane.
An thay calls the sods they're flitterin out,
Big "divots" as they fly,
For they can't spake dacent English,
Like yersilf, Paudeen an I.



Mrs. Boland, Mr. Boland, Mrs. Holmes.

The Clubhouse:

Many of the older members of to-day will remember the ornamental clubhouse which was designed by Mr. M.J. Tighe. It contained a bar, restaurant and card rooms and was a very pleasant social centre for the city and county. The quaint red roofed building was situated quite close to the present main road and was only recently demolished.

The War Years:

By all accounts the years prior to World War I were golden ones and during this period of peace and prosperity the game of golf flourished. When war broke out in 1914 its effects were felt in a particular

keen way in a garrison town like Galway as many of the club members who were military personnel would never return. Indeed, the playing of golf was to become a shameful pastime for the duration of the war. Later on during the Anglo-Irish War the small number of military officers who did play golf were heavily escorted around the course in Barna much to the annoyance of the local people. The clubhouse was attacked on a few occasions by the "boys on the run". Shots were fired through the windows and the bar and locker room were ransacked. The dismissal by the committee of two local men who worked on the course caused a good deal of local resentment.

Land agitation was at its height throughout the country. Cattle drives were common; walls were knocked and shootings became quite frequent. A cattle drive took place on the Montaigne farm near Craughwell which was owned by Mr. M. McDonagh a prominent member of the club. The tenants on the Lynch estate had discussions with the committee as regards the feasibility of increasing their holdings. In all probability, it was for the above reasons coupled with the increase in membership that the committee made the brave decision in April 1924 to purchase Colonel O'Hara's estate at Blackrock so, once again, Galway Golf Club was on the move.



In the Far West - Galway Clubhouse - "The Irish Golfer's Guide, 1910.