

History of Shannon Golf Club 1966 – 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the support and work put into writing this history by Mick Quinlan, a man who happened to be at the first ever meeting of the Club and still continues to engross himself in its affairs.

I wish to thank Paddy O'Rourke for his contribution and memories and the many other members who assisted me and contributed to this history and shared the ir memories with me.

Any history of Shannon Golf Club would not be complete without mentioning the development of Shannon Airport.

In the mid 1930's the Irish Government decided to pursue a campaign to establish Ireland as the European location for Trans - Atlantic air travel by sea or land planes. The shortest distance across the Atlantic was from Newfoundland to Ireland.

After a survey of several sites in 1935 Shannon was chosen as the future sea and land base. Foynes would be used as an interim seaplane base. The land was wet and marshy and relatively flat. Parts of it were subject to tidal flooding.

A huge network of drains was dug and a pump house was provided to pump the water into the river Shannon. Large embankments were built to protect the land from the tides. An artificial lake was created to provide the sea plane base. This is the semi-circular area behind the Great Southern Hotel, between Knockbeg Point and Dernish Island (where the oil tanker jetty is located). As it happened the sea plane base was never used. While Shannon Airport was being prepared Foynes served as the base for seaplanes.

The development of land planes accelerated during the war years and by the time Shannon was ready the days of the seaplane was drawing to a close.

Rock and stones for the embankments were extracted from Reidys quarry, the remains of which are evident on the left of the 8th fairway. The rock was transported in steel buggies running on a track from the quarry to the embankments. Those with an eye for topography can still see where the track crossed the 8th fairway.

The land on which the Golf Course was built is an area of about 150 acres between runway 06/24 (the jet runway) and the foreshore. Between the Golf Course and the foreshore there is a large area known as the Lagoon, which is a marshy area on the landside of the embankment. The Airport Authority controls water levels in this area by pumping the water out into the river Shannon.

The 17th and part of the 18th holes border the river directly and the Golf Club has provided some fortifications to stem the tides. Yet today Spring tides accompanied by a strong south-westerly can inundate parts of the 16th, 17th and 18th holes.

Ireland in the 1950's was in a very bad economic state, in fact about 50% of the young people emigrated either to England or America. However, from the late 50's onwards, the country was blessed to have a very dynamic Minister for Industry and Commerce in the person of Sean Lemass who gathered a team around him that slowly started turning the country around.

We were very fortunate to have one of those pioneers in the Shannon Region in the form of Mr. Brendan O'Regan from Sixmilebridge.

Mr. O'Regan was the dynamo for this region, and he was in the very unique position of having no Board of Directors to report to - reporting directly to the Minister for Industry and Commerce. He was first recruited as a catering manager in Foynes, Co. Limerick where the seaplanes landed. The first Trans-Atlantic commercial plane landed in Shannon Airport in 1945. Mr O'Regan was also appointed Catering Manager at Shannon.

The following is a brief synopsis of his noteworthy achievements. He set up the first ever Duty Free Airport in the world, the first Mail Order Division, The Duty Free Industrial Estate in conjunction with the Shannon Free Airport Development Company. He got a new town started from a greenfield site, and started the Castle Tours and Banqueting. He was a big supporter of the Golf Club and presented the first trophy to the ladies The Fort Henry Trophy. His interest and support of the Golf Club continued right throughout his career in Aer Rianta, Shannon Development Company and other business interests. Shannon Free Airport Development Company was the agency entrusted in developing the Industrial Estate and combined with the Airport the Mid-West Region became a thriving hub.

Television became a reality in the early sixties, and in those days golf was not a mainstream sport so Golf Clubs (and Shannon was no exception) rented out videos of golf matches to show in the Clubhouse. Most of these films were known as "Shell Wonderful World of Golf". At that time the legendary Arnold Palmer was promoting the game of golf in America and at about the same time along came Jack Nicklaus and the South African Gary Player. There were many others, but these three in particular brought golf to a wider audience, and television companies saw the potential. This exposure did no harm to the young

and developing Shannon Golf Club, in fact as we can see later on Shannon was able to attract to the Pro-Am the international superstars of the day.

The germ of an idea

Dr William Flynn was appointed Shannon Airport Medical Officer in 1947. He lived in 'Balbridie', the large white house near the Central Tower. He was a keen golfer and travelled regularly to Lahinch or Ennis to enjoy a four ball. In the early years the only residents of Drumgeely, Tullyglass and Ballycasey would have been a few local farmers.

All was to change, however, with the establishment of the Shannon Free Airport Development Company. The Industrial Estate was established, foreign companies set up and an influx of workers arrived. The Drumgeely flats were built and shortly afterwards the Drumgeely houses.

These events were the trigger for Dr Flynn to start a campaign to establish a Golf Club in Shannon.

Workers began to arrive in Shannon to work in the new industries, which were being established. Other than some rooms at the airport hostels, the Drumgeely flats were the only available accommodation. The only sporting facilities were the tennis courts at the airport and at Drumgeely Hill.

Dr Flynn would have been well acquainted with the leaders of Shannon Free Airport Development Company, the Airport Management and the Heads of the new industries. From these contacts he gathered support for his ideas of establishing a golf course at the airport.

His first task was to persuade the Airport Manager to make the land available. The parcel of land was approximately 150 acres of which about 120 acres were leased as conacre to a local farmer. The remainder was subject to flooding and covered in reeds. A series of letters in the years 1964-1966 between Dr Flynn, the Airport Manager and Shannon Free Airport Development Company reveal

- How the Airport Manager got the Departments of Industry and Commerce and Transport Power to agree in principle to make the land available subject to there being no loss of income to the Departments
- How Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCO) agreed to lease the lands from the Government Departments at a rent equal to the farmers rent £620 per annum.
- How the Shannon Free Airport Development Company agreed to re-lease the land to the Golf Club at a nominal rent of £52 p.a.
- How SFADCO stipulated that the proposed course be an 18 hole course of "Championship Standard" and be designed by a reputable Golf Course architectural firm
- How SFADCO subsequently agreed "to help in the creation of the course with the golf course architect and the landscape contractor"
- How in September 1965 Dr Flynn had
 - "promises of support from 48 persons resident in Drumgeely who have agreed to pay an annual membership sum of £5 p.a...."
 - support from the manager of E.I. Company and from the General Manager of S.P.S.
 - support from Shannon Community Association."

All of this activity culminated with the first Meeting at the International Hotel, Shannon at 8.30 p.m. on the 9th November, 1965.

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Minutes of first Meeting held in the International Hotel, Shannon at 8.30 p.m. on the 9th November, 1965.

Present: Dr. W. Flynn, M. McCavana, G. Le Chambre, J. Doyle, C. Corry, M. Quinlan, H. Scott and J. D. Grey.

The Captain of the Steering Group, Dr. W. Flynn, outlined the history of the project to establish a Golf Course on Shannon Airport. To date the Minister of Transport and Power had approved the use of the desired land as a Golf Course. A number of restrictions applied to such use. The S.F.A.D.Co. were willing to lease this land from the Minister and sub- lease to a properly constituted Shannon Club. A letter to this effect was in hand from the S.F.A.D.Co. and a formal acceptance of the offer was required.

ESTABLISHMENT OF CLUB:

The motion that "A Golf Club, by name The Shannon Golf Club, be founded" was proposed by M. McCavana, seconded by H. Scott and was passed nem.con.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

The following were elected.

CAPTAIN: Dr. W. Flynn prop. G. Le Chambre, sec. J. D. Grey.

TREASURER: C. Corry prop. W. Flynn, sec. M. McCavana.

SECRETARY: J. D. Grey prop. H. Scott, sec. J. Doyle

EX-OFFICIO COMMITTEE: M. McCavana, H. Scott, J. Doyle, M. Quinlan, G. Le Chambre. prop. W. Flynn, sec. J. D. Grey.

The Second Meeting was held on December 7th, 1965 and they had not let the grass grow under their feet. The firm of Cotton, Harris and Penwick were chosen as the course architects and a letter from Commander John D Harris outlining his charges and services etc. was at hand. S.F.A.D.Co. provided a comprehensive survey map to satisfy the Golf Architects cartographic requirements.

In early 1966 the land was inspected and a layout for six temporary greens was agreed - temporary greens at that time meant an area cut in the fairway a little better than the fairway itself - however, there were stumbling blocks in the way. The land had been leased to a local farmer who had a herd of big hefty bullocks and some horses on it, in fact the first mare "Shannon Lass" to win a Grand National was reared on this land.

After some talking and wrangling it was agreed that these animals would be removed by the end of May 1966. However, as a compromise the farmer would put sheep on the land instead of cattle. In order to establish the clubs rights, practice golf was played as much as possible. In April 1966 McLysaghts were contracted to cut 9 greens, fairways and tees and in the same month an account was opened in the name Shannon Golf Club with the Bank of Ireland, who are still our bankers. The cattle were removed but the sheep stayed, meanwhile Commander Harris provided detailed maps and drawings for permanent greens at a cost of £25.00 per green.

There was a fence around the land and it ran through the now 7th green and also through what is now the 2nd green. There was a gate at the present crossing of the 11th to 12th with a big sign "Cattle please keep the gate shut". Inside the gate and to the right was the Clubhouse, consisting of a Container and a box. You put your money into the box and off you went. If the doors of the container were not shut properly you may have to share the Clubhouse with the sheep.

It is amazing to look back and appreciate the speed at which this small group got work done. The cattle were removed on the 14th of June 1966. By that evening nine greens were cut and shaped and flagpoles put in place. These included the six already in play. There was £269 in the bank. The greens committee felt that the greens were not being maintained as well as they should and proposed that a tractor and mower be purchased by the Club. This was done and £465 was the outlay just one month after opening (July 1966). The first mention of a greenkeeper and Clubhouse came up in August of that year.

In August 1966 the first competition was organised. A cup was donated by Thomond Supply which is still there to-day now known as "The Thomond Cup". The knockout stages over 9 holes and the quarterfinals and final over 18 holes.

In September, work started on the formation of the permanent greens (greens No.7 and 8 now 9 and 10). Interesting to note that green No. 8 was 90 dog leg right the original green was located in the dip between the current blue and white tee markers of the current eight hole behind the 8th tee and quite close to the boundary fence of the Airport. The estimated cost per green including seeds and fertiliser was £300.00.

The first A.G.M. was held on 7th March, 1967 at the International Hotel. That month also saw the beginning of tree planting - 500 down 4,500 more to do, the second temporary nine holes of the course almost ready to play. McLysaghts were contracted to cut the fairways and greens. While all this frantic work was going on golf was being played regularly. The sheep were causing some problems, as they particularly liked the greens. Great efforts were made to keep them off, wire, ropes even bushes were used with very limited success. On the greens particularly favoured by the sheep a brush and shovel were placed by the side of the green and you were encouraged to clean a bit more than you required - to-days members are just encouraged to replace divots. The permanent new greens were making good progress and at this stage it was imperative to clear the land. After much haggling and encouragement the momentous day arrived and on the 20th of June 1967 when the sheep were removed. This was the first time the Golf Club was sole occupiers of the land.

On the 13th of May 1967 Shannon Golf Club was officially opened by Mr. Tom O'Donnell, President of the Golfing Union of Ireland who was elected an honorary member of Shannon Golf Club. Mr. O'Donnell was a prominent solicitor in Limerick at the time.

In this year, also, now that the club was officially opened, the following cups were presented:

The Drumgeely Cup presented by The Limerick Leader and this has been played for every year since then with a handicap limit of 18 and up.

The Rineanna Cup was presented by Mr. Andrew Tezler who was the President of Lana Knit one of the major employers of Shannon Industrial Estate with a handicap limit of 9 - 12.

The "Ram" was presented by Mr. Robert Page, Managing Director of E.I. Company, one of the biggest employers in the Shannon Industrial Estate. The "Ram" was specially commissioned to commemorate the removal of the sheep from the course. This trophy is presented each year to the "Golfer of the Year". In those early years, on the annual presentation night the "Doc" would discourse at length - sometimes on a particularly good night it may extend to an hour - on the origin of the "Ram" and all he contributed to the area.

The Ladies, meanwhile, had set about forming their side of the Club. The first meeting took place on the 4th of May, 1967 and approximately twenty interested ladies attended. The Men's Committee sent two representatives to wish them good luck and assure them of their help and advice at all times.

Mrs. K. Quinn, Limerick Golf Club was also present and advised on the start up of the club, as follows:

1. Formation of Committee

2. Application to I.L.G.U.
3. To acquire rule books
4. Commence yearly Office

Following this a committee was formed that night as follows:

Captain:	Mrs. B. Scott
Vice-Captain:	Mrs. F. le Chombe
Hon. Treasurer:	Mrs. P. O'Dowd
Hon. Secretary:	Mrs. J. O'Callaghan

Committee: S. O'Meara, B. O'Doherty, E. McCarthy, I. Jones, D. Scott

To get affiliated Mrs. Quinn undertook to get Limerick Golf Club to propose Shannon and have them seconded by Castletroy. Mrs. Bishop to supply rule books.

The second meeting of the ladies committee took place on the 11th of May 1967. The first item on the agenda was to get a ladies day on the course. Every Wednesday was proposed from 9.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. even though there were only approximately ten playing members. The first ladies competition was held on June 7th, 1967. The I.L.G.U. were asked to lay out the course and indexes. The Captain's Prize was played on 20th of September, and after that weekly competitions were dropped and replaced by a once a month competition.

The first Ladies A.G.M. was held on 29th February, 1968. Dr. W. Flynn attended and outlined the progress to date re course and Clubhouse it was decided to increase the size of the Committee from nine to twelve. Just like the men's club the ladies had no money and ways of raising it were discussed. The bank balance was £35.6.9. (approximately E50.00).

Mr. Brendan O'Regan, General Manager of Aer Rianta presented a cup to the ladies for their Match Play Competition to be known as the Fort Henry Cup. His home in Killaloe was called 'Fort Henry'. This is still played for every year.

Hand in hand with the course development it was deemed necessary to have a clubhouse, and as there was a disused radio hut already on the course (on the right hand side of the now 3rd) a second one was acquired. The two huts were joined together by voluntary labour, water and electricity were connected and this became the Clubhouse situated on the right of the 2nd green where the sheds are at present.

Alterations to rules of the Club were made to incorporate the Intoxicating Liquor Act 1960, what followed on from that was unforgettable days and nights enjoyed by members and their guests. There were many bar extensions sought in those early years.

The second A.G.M. was held at the International Hotel on 27th February 1968. There were 29 members present. In March 1968 the first greenkeeper, Mr. Martin O'Neill, Newmarket-on-Fergus, was appointed, he was also to act as part time steward of the Clubhouse. Gouldings Horticulture Ltd. was contracted to build the last six greens and tees at a cost of £699 per green and £213 for tees. The Clubhouse was extended to provide a residence for the steward and store for bar. Keeping up with the course development 6 permanent greens were completed and nine tees. Fantastic progress considering there was only one permanent employee and one temporary.

Competitions were going hand in hand with the course development and in addition to the Drumgeely and Rineanna Cups and the Golfer of the Year Ram, The Club Fourball Competition was inaugurated. Dr. Flynn and Fr. Gaynor presented the cups for this competition.

A new full time club professional was appointed who came from John Jacobs Golf Centre in Blackpool and was a member of the P.G.A. The A.G.M. on the 27th of February, 1969 had 46 members in attendance and it was reported that there were 167 Ordinary Members. During those early days the running of the bar was causing major problems, Stewards changed often and to fill the gaps members were pressed into service, whether they had any experience or not was irrelevant.

It was nothing new for the Club to have volunteers in those formative years and it was a common sight to see 30 to 40 members leaving work in the evening and heading straight to the golf course picking stones, raking greens, shaping bunkers and forming mounds around the greens. It often ended with a competition to see who could throw a stone off a shovel the furthest.

The dump for the Airport was situated between the present putting green and the septic tank. This attracted hundreds of seagulls that used the now 18th fairway as their resting-place with the result that it was covered in white feathers etc. making it almost impossible to find your ball. There was a further bird problem, which seemed to manifest itself on the now 6th fairway, grey crows would swoop down on your drive and you could watch your ball soar out over the runway. Some members brought their shotguns in their golf bags but the crows were always out of range. There was a theory that crows could not count, so four hit off, the one with the gun would hide behind the trees and wait for the next ball to arrive, of course this never worked because the crows had an aerial view.

Meanwhile, during 1969 other ladies clubs were being invited to partake in matches against Shannon. Limerick, Castletroy and Ennis were the first.

A fund to buy a piano was opened and the ladies selling sandwiches on Captain's Day raised the first money. The deposit of £20 was forwarded to Rippon a piano manufacturing company in the Industrial Estate in October, to be followed by further instalments.

The Men's A.G.M. was held in the Clubhouse on 25th of February 1970 and there were 41 members present. At an E.G.M. on the same date a motion empowering the club to issue debentures to raise funds was passed. A motion empowering the Club to borrow money from various financial institutions was also passed unanimously. At the end of 1969 there were 201 ordinary members.

The Club was growing in strength and confidence and the first mention of a watering system for the greens and tees was discussed. With the new found wealth from the debentures it was also decided to solicit help from Aer Rianta. By the fourth month of 1970 a tender for the sprinkling system had been accepted and the work was to be overseen by a member who was an engineer in one of the factories on the industrial estate. In those early years there was real difficulty with staff both on the course and the clubhouse.

On the 21st November, 1970 the sprinkler system was turned on as a demonstration to the committee. The system was one of the first to be installed in Ireland and Dr. Jerry Owen, President of the Golfing Union of Ireland came to Shannon and performed the turning on ceremony. The members were very disappointed because immediately after the inauguration it rained for the best part of three weeks. Not to be outdone by Mother Nature, the sprinklers were turned on anyway to show off to the members.

Just as this system was commissioned the committee planned to do a comprehensive study and plan for a drainage system. The flooding on the 5th, 6th, and 15th was a priority.

Since the ladies section came into being the entertainment - sing-alongs, auctions, Halloween and Christmas parties were organised by the ladies. In fact they needed very little excuse to have a party usually supplying the food themselves. Bar extensions were received and absolutely brilliant parties were the order of the day.

The fifth Men's A.G.M. was held in the Clubhouse on 26th February 1971. There were 44 members in attendance. In the same year the Clubhouse was extended to include a stewards quarters, the cost of which was £3,600. During those formative years the course was much different. The trees had just been planted; the lakes were taking shape, more bunkers were being added, and on the 17th hole (now the first) reed was growing right across the fairway and up to the 200-yard marker. There was a small path to reach the fairway and if members were making their way to the fairway they could not be seen from the tee.

As the course was improving, so were the golfers and this year saw the inaugural Junior Scratch Cup being played for. Mr. Paddy O'Rourke otherwise known as "The Butcher" presented this Cup. Handicap limit 5 – 11.

In 1972 the Clubhouse was again extended to make room for a dance floor and extra bar space. A machinery shed was a priority and ways and means of funding it were exercising the minds of the committee. A 200-club draw was the preferred option.

In early 1973 a tender was accepted to build a machinery shed. The A.G.M. was held on February 7th, 1973 with 52 members present. There were then 292 ordinary members.

This year, also, Mr. Paddy Casey, (Publican), Sixmilebridge presented a cup known as the "Tradaree Cup" or the "Casey Perpetual Trophy". Paddy was very closely associated with greyhounds, and Tradaree, a townland between Newmarket-on-Fergus and Sixmilebridge is the venue for one of the region's major coursing meetings.

Also presented this year was the "Tullyvarraga Cup". This cup was presented by Mr. Bill Jones, Managing Director of Lep Transport. In those early days Lep was the only Freight Company in the Industrial Estate and was a huge business. Handicap limit 13 – 17.

By the beginning of 1973 the ladies section had run into some financial difficulties and the Men's Club were written to about the possibility of getting a loan from them.

In this year year also, John and Shelia O'Neill who were business people in the Shannon Region presented the Ladies Section with a cup to be known as The Comeragh Trophy. This trophy was originally played for in a singles event but in the late 90's the format was changed to foursomes, which has proved very popular.

In early 1974 it was decided to build some new tees, because the course was too long and was not attracting enough of green fees. The turnover of staff both clubhouse and course continued unabated. The 8th A.G.M. was held on the 25th February, 1974 with 49 members present. The original temporary layout of hole 7 (now 9) a par 4 was a dog leg left, the green was situated on the hill on the left before the grove of big trees, and the tee for the 8th (now 10) was where the grove of trees are, the green being left of the present 11th tee (blue markers). The new layout of the 7th lengthened the hole considerably and after much deliberation and debate to make it a par 4 or 5 it was decided to lengthen the tee and make the hole a par 4.

In November 1974 at a Special General Meeting a motion to charge an entrance fee of £20.00 was accepted by the members after a long and sometimes heated discussion.

Mr. Mark Andrews presented the Knapogue Cup, which is the trophy for the club mixed championship. Mr. Andrews owned Knapogue Castle near Quin, Co. Clare a venue still operating and where thousands of visitors enjoy medieval meals and pageantry.

The Pat Street Memorial Trophy was presented to the ladies by the staff of "Newsweek" in memory of the late Pat Street who was one of their colleagues. Pat Street spent quite a bit of time in the Shannon Region and in Shannon Golf Club. He loved the area so much that when he was killed in a car accident; his colleagues considered it fitting to donate this trophy in his memory. For several years after this presentation Newsweek also sponsored this competition and all the entry fees were donated to the Mid-West School for Deaf Children.

February 1975 A.G.M. saw Fr. E. Gaynor made an honorary life member. By then there were 305 ordinary members of the club. The first Pro-Am was played on 13th of October 1975 sponsored by The Clare Vintners Association. The thinking at the time was to show off the new course and get good press coverage. Major problems with staff Clubhouse, course and professionals continued.

In November 1975 an event happened that was to have a huge effect on Shannon Golf Club that was the appointment of Christy O'Connor, Jr. as the pro in Shannon and his brother Eugene as teacher, Shop Manager and generally Resident Club Professional while Christy was on tour. A new shop was to be built to meet the needs of this move, at the time Christy and Eugene were in Carlow Golf Club. Christy, Snr. and Jr. represented Ireland in the Canada Cup (now the World Cup). Junior represented Shannon as his Club. Dr. Flynn to be nominated Honorary Life Member. Interest free loans were sought from members and a sum of £1,500.00 was collected in a very short time. The Wednesday Nighters started Summer 1975.

Golf was improving and the Ladies Section won The Thomond Shield which was an inter-club Competition in the region. The ladies were complaining that the Course in Shannon was too long and difficult.

This year also saw the inauguration of the Scratch Match Play Competition, handicap 5 down. Dr. W. Flynn presented the cup.

At the A.G.M. on 29th February, 1976 there were 247 ordinary members a drop of 57 from the previous year. 1975 was the first year the club showed a profit. A 200 Club was up and running in 1975 and was supported very well, it brought in much needed revenue which was used in course development and repairs to the Clubhouse.

Along the side of the present 2nd a practice area was cleared, as the new pro would require it for lessons, etc. New and second-hand machinery was being acquired bit by bit. The condition of the course was improving beyond everybody's expectations, even the finances of the club had stabilised and was now reporting good cash flow and a small profit. The advice of the head greenkeeper in Hermitage was sought on the recommendation of Christy O'Connor; in fact the head greenkeeper of Elm Park came instead and gave his advice.

1976 was the year that Shannon Golf Club came of age, the ProAm was held in the Autumn and due to the O'Connors' influence there was a huge response from the top golfers of the world at the time. It was run immediately after the Irish Open and was won by Arnold O'Connor with a course record of 67 edging out John O'Leary and Sam Torrance both on 68. He got £600.00 for winning and £400.00 for the course record. The organisation and the smooth running of such a major event took an enormous amount of time and effort and received nothing but praise from all participants. It was a measure of the esteem in which Christy was held amongst his fellow professionals that he was able to get so many world class players to participate, including Peter Townsend, Maurice Bambridge, Bob Charles, Hugh Baiocchi, Sam Torrance, John O'Leary, Tommy Horton, Brian Barnes, Eamonn Darcy, Seveeriano Ballesteros, Des Smith, Jimmy Kinsella, Liam Higgins, Christy O'Connor Jr. and Snr and J Cabera.

1977 saw great improvements in the staffing both of the clubhouse and course. Being in Shannon, where wages at the time were probably the best in the country, it was difficult to hold staff. However, as the club progressed so did the monetary situation and the working conditions.

The A.G.M. was held on 28th February, 1977. It was reported that Eddie Dunne established a new course record (amateur) of 67 in the Scratch Cup and Arnold O'Connor established a new professional course record in the ProAm. Christy O'Connor, Jr. was made an honorary life member of Shannon Golf Club, little did anybody think that 10 years on in the life of the Club, the professional would be playing in the U.S. Masters in Augusta, Georgia, he was invited to participate in the 1977 Masters. The Club was really progressing and the introduction of Junior Caddies was welcomed, the charge being £1.00.

The first mention of a new Clubhouse was put on the Agenda for further discussion. The practice ground was made ready, this was situated between the road and the present bunkers on the present 2nd hole, there were no oil pipes there at the time. The G.U.I. set up a committee in an effort to raise the standard of greenkeeping in Ireland and Dr. W. Flynn was the Munster nominee. This was only right and fitting as the Club had gained vast experience from the number of greenkeepers that passed through in a short space of time.

There was feverish activity again this year as another Pro-Am was planned. Volunteers were called for various chores. Again fifty professionals were in the field from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Rhodesia, Italy, Spain, Britain, Ireland and America. Six of the twelve man Ryder Cup team and many of the top money earners in Europe were present. The expose of the Pro-Am was paying off as the number of green fees had increased 80% from the previous year. At a special General Meeting the subject of a new Clubhouse was discussed and the committee were urged not to delay in progressing the idea.

The A.G.M. on the 27th February 1978 was attended by 72 members. A meeting was held with Aer Rianta re the future development of the club and more especially a new Clubhouse. Aer Rianta were committed to the continuing development of the Club and suggested that S.F.A.D.Co may be able to help financially because of their wider role in tourism. Another Pro-Am was being planned and volunteers were again hard at work. Every year since its inception work was done to improve the course and 1978 was no exception. The 1st. (now 3rd.) 7th. (now 9th.) tees were being elevated and new mounds and bunkers being built at the 4th. (now 6th.) 12th (now 14th.) 16th (now 18th.) As mentioned earlier the reeds on the 17th (now the 1st.) fairway gave way this year as the drainage was improved and the reeds were cut. In the Autumn of 1978 our very popular and

esteemed Captain, Jim O'Donnell died in office to the great sorrow of the members. In this year also another milestone was reached, as the Club was no longer indebted to the Bank. Green fees for 10 months were £5,000.00.

The A.G.M. was held on December 18th, 1978 the year-end was changed to October 31st at the previous A.G.M. Due to impending financial commitments relating to the new Clubhouse it was decided that the 200 club would cease. The speed that the committee worked in the early days overflowed into the following years. Just a few months after the first mention of a Clubhouse options in relation to the design, construction and location were considered with the help of a Dublin architect. +6 Aer Rianta was willing to offer £25,000 debenture and S.F.A.D.Co had offered a £25,000 grant. A sub committee was formed to carry through their plans. The location for the new clubhouse was agreed with the Airport engineer. The A.G.M. was held on December 18th, 1979 and a motion to employ a Secretary/Manager was put to the meeting and carried. Outline planning permission had been sought for the new Clubhouse location near the 6th green (now the 8th). A special General Meeting would be called to consider plans and means of funding. The burden of running the ProAm was draining the enthusiasm of the members and questions were asked if it was worth it.

By February 1980 a study had been completed on the feasibility of running the ProAm for another year and it was agreed that it should continue with a purse of £12,000 on offer. In the same month the subcommittee had its first report on the new building. It was envisaged that 10,000 sq. ft. be built, but the size would be determined by the funds available. The funding that was proposed at that meeting was a levy of £300, as mentioned earlier £50,000 from Aer Rianta and S.F.A.D.Co. and bank borrowing of £50,000. Bank interest rates at that time were up to 19%. The ongoing problems of staff both clubhouse and course continued unabated.

First quotations for the new building were received working out at about £25 per sq. ft. Three designs were sought from local Architects and builders and costings projected. In the earlier design submissions, squash courts were included, however, these were eliminated when the costings were scrutinised. Doubts were expressed as to whether any financial benefit to the club would accrue from catering facilities. The possibility of building a portion of the clubhouse as a stage one project if sufficient funds were not available.

A special General Meeting was held in June, 1980, agenda being the new clubhouse and funding of same. The plans submitted by Hassett/Leyden were the preferred choice and motions of a £200 levy and £200 entrance fee for new members were passed. In the very short space of 14 years the club had developed at an extraordinary rate, starting with just an idea with no money or site and hoping to attract members, it had now developed into an 18 hole championship course and now had a brand new clubhouse. This progress would not be possible were it not for the unselfish giving of time and energy of those early Presidents, Captains and committee members. They carried the full burden of the day to day running of the club, a very onerous task. They also managed to build a golf course from scratch with very little capital. We should be ever grateful to those early pioneers. Even the most optimistic of those early members could never have envisaged the results of their endeavours. The year 1980 will be remembered also by the fact that the club won its first National Title the Pierce Purcell Shield, and the victory was celebrated in style.

Michael Lynch builders were appointed to build the clubhouse for a total cost of £215,000 approximately and £75,000 was paid upfront to get the project on the way. Finance was a big worry and the fund raising committee was being pressed to get results quickly. Corporate Memberships were sought in Shannon and some in Limerick and Ennis, a 100 club was set up and was very successful.

As a memorial to the late Mr. Ml. O'Grady, past Captain, the O'Grady Family presented a cup to the Club known as the "Michael O'Grady Memorial" and this is played for in a monthly medal competition.

In 1981 the club lost its first Honourary life member when Mrs. Margaret Flynn passed away.

Margaret Flynn never played golf in her life, yet she spent more time on Shannon Golf Course than any other member did at that time. When the club decided to go ahead and build a full championship course it was always going to be an enormous challenge but Margaret Flynn and her husband Dr. William Flynn (The Doc) could never visualise failure.

When the greens and the mounds were shaped, Margaret Flynn would supervise the laying of the topsoil, the peat moss, the fertiliser and every ounce of grass seed. Once the grass started growing and the weeds appeared, Margaret could be seen on her knees at any hour of daylight picking each weed individually.

The greens have stood the test of time and it was only recently that five have been replaced to sand based. They remain a permanent reminder of her. She did not stop at the greens, the trees and the shrubs are another tribute to her memory. She never believed the experts when they told her nothing would grow on this bare and wind-swept strip of land. These experts have been proved wrong and Shannon Golf Club should never forget that or her.

A poker classic for fundraising was held and it was a huge success. The ProAm was continued in a much smaller scale that year confined to 35 pros and any extra Irish pros would have to supply their own teams. At the end of 1981 Christy O'Connor Jr. resigned his position as Professional of Shannon Golf Club. He had done a great deal of good for the promotion of the Club and was wished every success in his future career. New machinery was becoming a priority for the maintenance of the course and a sum of £13,000 was mentioned as the cost. Because of financial constraints this project had to be postponed.

The first committee meeting was held in the new Clubhouse on the 21st of January 1982. December was the last month in the old clubhouse and the turnover in the bar was a record with nostalgia breaking out all over. The financial situation was very good with only

£27,000 of the term loan drawn down. The new practice area was cut for the first time. The 15th and 16th tees were beginning to erode due to high tides and steps were taken to correct the situation. Aer Rianta was asked to give some assistance.

The old clubhouse was dismantled and any fixtures or fittings of any value were sold. The clubhouse was completed more or less on budget with a shortfall of £15,000 and a big push on fundraising in the year would see this shortfall cleared. It was decided that all future monies would be spent on the course development, the lake in front of the 14th, sand in the bunkers and drainage were priorities. The course was now changed with the 1st tee where the old 17th tee was and a practice area was considered. The new building was proving very satisfactory and the turnover in the bar and the restaurant was very good.

The A.G.M. was held on December 16th, 1982 and at the meeting Mr. Myles Murphy was made an honorary Life member in recognition of all his time and dedication to the club especially in getting the new clubhouse built. There was a net income for the year of £107,000 compared with £70,000 the previous year. The ProAm was dropped. "After careful consideration of all the facts, Shannon regrets it has no option but to cancel the years Pro-Am" reported the National papers. The reason being, arrangements for the same day of a Links Society Pro-Am likely to be held in The Grange GC, Dublin with a prize fund of £20,000.

August 16th was to have been the date for the 1982 Shannon Pro-Am so the Club sought different means of bringing world class golfers to their rapidly emerging course. As it happened the dilemma was resolved for them by the players themselves who were very upset that Shannon had lost their traditional Pro-Am date. Led by Dubliner John O'Leary, strongly urged on by Brian Barnes and Sam Torrance, they offered the services of up to eight leading professionals to put on what they described as a "Company Day" on August 16th. A sum of £10,000 was raised by the Club for this undertaking and O'Leary, Barnes and Torrance were joined in Shannon by Greg Norman who was presently leading the European Order of Merit. Also present were Bernhard Langer, Sandy Lyle, Bernard Gallacher, Christy O'Connor Jnr and Maurice Bambridge. To ensure against any slip-ups the players went to the PGA and told them what they felt Shannon Pro-Am should not have been upstaged and asked for their approval of the "Company Day".

At the beginning of 1983 Membership had grown to 375 – a very satisfactory number, and it was envisaged that this would grow every year for the foreseeable future. The S.S.S. was fixed by the G.U.I. as follows: - Blue 72, White 71, and Green 69. Ladies Day was switched from Thursdays to Tuesdays. Every year, work was being done to improve the course, work was presently going ahead on the clean up of the area behind the 7th and 16th greens, the rushes, reeds and briars were right up to the back of both greens. The ProAm in a modified form like 1982 was played again and Christy O'Connor, Jr. was instrumental in getting top pros to compete. Leasing of course equipment started and this spread the cost more evenly over the life of the equipment, and a draw was organised raising £15,000.

In 1984 fundraising had a huge target of about £60,000. Corporate Golf, Company Donations, Societies, New Members were targeted. Costs were cut and any expenditure was scrutinised. New machinery was either not bought or if absolutely necessary leased. There was discussion in splitting the committee into two sections (a) Day to day running of the club and (b) Finance because of the increasing size of the Club. However, this was not followed through at that time.

In the beginning of 1985 it was agreed to purchase some machinery, - a tractor, shredder, hollow coring machine and other small items. Expenditure kept rising and again great emphasis was placed on fundraising and cost control. Advertising was initiated and brochures placed in hotels and the Airport, results were reported in the papers. The Club kept growing and there was a huge sense of pride and belonging among all the members. This was evident by the support the Captain, President and the committee got since the beginning. All these office holders were young, holding down jobs and with young families and running golf club business in their spare time. The club did not just happen –it took an awful lot of dedication and hard work. Looking back we should be very proud.

The greens were being cut 7 days a week during the growing season and were in very good condition. A fairway bunker was put in on the 7th hole and two greenside bunkers on the 18th. The machine shed was erected and extended. A function to honour Christy O'Connor and his wife Ann was held and a small presentation made to them. Tee times for Societies were constantly discussed and were a vital source of income to the Club. Drains were opened across the 1st and 16th Fairways.

At the Special General Meeting on 16/12/85 after 19 years in existence Dr. Wm. Flynn, President said, "I did not think the club would ever last twenty years but is getting bigger and better every year." The annual subscription of £180 and £250 entrance fee was agreed. At the subsequent A.G.M. it was clear that the Club's finances were in a poor state. Due to the generally poor economic conditions prevailing in the Country, members were finding it difficult to afford membership, some members who joined in 1984 failed to renew in 1985. Two important motions amending the rules of the club were passed as follows:

1. "The basic course layout as designed by John D Harris cannot be changed other than in the manner herein described. Should any fundamental or major alteration of the course be necessary, the Committee will engage the services of a recognised architect whose drawings, once approved will form the basis of any future alterations to the course. It is recognised that ongoing improvements will continue at the discretion of the Committee."
2. "The Committee is authorised to offer retired persons aged 65 years or over reduction in the annual subscription at a rate of 2% per year of membership prior to age 65, to a maximum reduction of not more than 50%".

The background to motion 1 was that following the building of the new Clubhouse at the original 17th tee, the balance of the course was disturbed. The original layout had two loops of nine holes each with a par of 36, the new layout had 1st. nine holes par 38 and 2nd 9 holes par 34. Some members felt that modifications should be made in order to achieve two loops of 9 each with par 36.

The possibility that Aer Rianta would be requiring part of the course for future development was also mentioned.

In early 1986 the Club owed Aer Rianta £9,000 in rent arrears and a new rent rate was being levied. Temporary overdraft facilities had to be arranged with the Bank despite the Bank's jaundiced view of the Club's affairs. By late 1986 the problem with Aer Rianta was resolved.

Running costs were an ongoing problem, bar usage was low, and consideration was given to redesigning the bar to make it more attractive. The Munster Junior Boys Championship was held in Shannon in July. By the end of 1986 membership stood at 519, this was seen as a marvellous achievement considering the economic position pertaining.

A problem in renewing the licence because the second floor had no fire exit was resolved by blocking off the entry to the second floor. The question of full membership for ladies was being addressed in a G.U.I. questionnaire. It was agreed that the Captain should get a Club blazer. The financial situation improved somewhat and a second hand tractor was bought, the embankment on the 18th was cleared of briars and weeds etc and re-seeded. By the end of the year the fire officer agreed not to oppose the licence of the Club provided they undertook to do remedial work at a cost of £4,000.

In September 1987 the ILGU booked the course for the European Junior Championship in 1990; this would be another major undertaking for the Club. As the Club was growing it was becoming harder to control by committee and it was decided to engage the services of a Secretary/Manager. The Clubhouse was becoming a major problem, leaks were appearing, the central heating was giving trouble, the fire officer was not happy. A five-year plan was prepared with proposals for modification/extension of the clubhouse.

Drainage work costing £4,000 sponsored by FAS was planned for the course and funds from the National Lottery were sought but were not available, as the Club did not have a twenty year lease. The Committee agreed to increase the length of the Blue Course by 75 yards to 6884 yards. Drainage of practice ground costing £3,200 was put in hand and SFADCO pledged £5,000 per annum over three years. However, by the end of the year this offer had been increased to £30,000 to be paid over two years. A decision to hire a Secretary/Manager and defer the appointment of a Greenkeeper was reached.

The Treasurer reported in November, 1988 preliminary figures showing a gross profit of £26,000 which was the best result for five years. It was also reported that S.F.A.D.Co offered a grant of £30,000 to be paid over two years. In this month also, Mr. John Quigley was appointed the first full time Secretary/Manager. A new Greenkeeper was appointed in March 1989, however, he resigned in October of the same year due to ongoing staff problems.

In July/August 89 three greens were damaged 3rd, 12th and 17th. Attempts at re-sodding were not very successful and temporary greens were prepared. The course, generally, was in poor shape. A new sprinkler system was proposed costing £40,000. Plans were submitted to give 1861 sq. ft. extra floor space in the Clubhouse costing approximately £150,000. It was agreed that a five year plan would be drawn up both for the Clubhouse and the Course and a decision would then be made.

In early 1990 the Club appointed a full time professional. Preparations were in full swing for the European Girls Championship. Irrigation system was installed and 100 trees were planted throughout the course. In 1990 the sewerage system was giving major problems. Estimated cost to fix £400 to £15,000. A new category of member was accepted – 5 day with new rules passed at a S.G.M. to govern this category. The first mention was made of Eddie Connaughton outside Consultant to advise on all matters relating to the course. A decision was made to join SWING and monitor its impact on green fees. In late 1990 the President of Ireland, Mr. P.J. Hillery was elected Honourary Life Member.

In 1991, Munster Branch of G.U.I. prohibited open team events, this was becoming a problem throughout the country. As golf was becoming more popular and soccer matches were being televised a new satellite dish was installed. At this period, in 1991, the Club had a waiting list of 100 applicants for membership and the sub-committee on the change of the Constitution was still considering ladies as full members. By late 1991 there were 810 members in total. The Club was in very good shape, borrowings were reduced from £86,000 to £3,000. Mrs. Brenda Scott was elected as Honorary Life Member.

In the first months of 1992 five separate drawings for modification/extension of the clubhouse were obtained. A sub-committee was set up to consider methods of funding. The latest version of the new constitution was circulated in draft form. The steward terminated his employment and this time the catering was offered to an outside catering contractor.

The Club was trying to raise its profile and wrote to G.U.I. stating that they were willing to stage a major event. In very high tides and wind the fairways of the 17th and part of the 16th and 18th would flood so it was decided to raise the bank a couple of feet. Aer Rianta was asked to contribute to the cost of this work. The ladies section had indicated that they wished to have the option of full membership at the full membership cost, as was proposed in the new constitution drawn up in conjunction with the G.U.I. A special General Meeting would be held in 1993 to consider the new constitution.

Cable T.V. arrived and it was decided to get all the sports channels. The colours of the Club were decided and all future members representing the Club should wear Navy with the Shannon Crest. Crest to be agreed. In early 1993 there were 551 members and it was decided that the subscription for the year could be paid by Bankers Order over a six-month period. A newsletter would be issued and the first edition posted to each member. Subsequent issues to be available in the bar. A computer system was introduced for entry to competitions, and the mandatory call through at the 17th was introduced. The trees around the 10th were causing trouble to the Airport and it was agreed to thin out some trees and to top the remaining.

During the year, prizes which were not collected on prize giving night were forfeited and this led to some controversy.

In early 1993, the catering was taken back by the Club as contracting arrangements were not satisfactory. A new constitution was being drafted whereby the club would move away from the committee system and in future the club would be run by a much smaller Board of Management. The new constitution would also provide for associate members to become full members. Shannon was among the first clubs to take such a step. Swing was an organisation set up to represent some of the clubs of Kerry

and Clare in promoting their courses. Shannon agreed to join at a cost of £500 per annum. The ladies held a special general meeting in June 1993 to discuss the new constitution. Members of the Men's Committee were on hand to answer questions re same. Third floor of the Clubhouse was giving trouble and the insurance Co. were looking for limits on the number of members permitted up there at any one time. A second sluice gate was completed at the 17th to help with the drainage around the 16th and 17th. The shoreline was reinforced by large boulders and filling to stop the erosion and most of the flooding in high winds and high tides. The committee could not agree on the design of the Club crest and it was decided a referendum would be held on Captain's Day, the result of which was old Crest 176 and new 153. The Club colours and emblem as agreed by majority vote are a phoenix above two crossed golf clubs on a navy background with the words "Shannon Golf Club" underneath. A new layout for the 2nd and 5th hole due to the possibility of Aer Rianta requiring the land to develop the Airport facilities, no firm proposal was at hand but it was possible that the development could impact on the 11th, 12th, 3rd and 2nd holes. It was also decided to shelve the plans for the 5th hole. The Clubhouse also needed to be refurbished and a decision to be taken re the third floor.

A Special General Meeting was held in November 1993 the purpose of the meeting was to adopt the draft constitution. On a show of hands the motion was carried by a large majority. The men's tees on the 13th, 16th and 17th were completed and would be ready to play on in April 1994. The winter of '94 was very bad, the course was closed a lot and the Winter League was way behind schedule. The idea of playing major competitions over two days was adopted because of the number of members playing competitive golf. An Honorary Membership was accorded to the Australian Ambassador and his wife for the duration of his office.

The first Special General Meeting of the Joint Club was held on March 1st, 1994, the purpose being to elect officers, regularise and adequately indemnify the trustees of the Club. A motion that an equal number of ladies be elected to the Management Committee was defeated. At this meeting also a motion to make Mrs. Jean Kennedy Smith an honorary life member was passed on a show of hands. The first committee meeting of the joint club was held in April 1994. A letter from the Royal and Ancient GC confirmed that Shannon would qualify for a grant of £4000 and £16,000 by way of interest free loan repayable of 10 years. There now existed a men's club who would be responsible for the running of competitions, sponsorship for same, handicaps and the day to day running of the men's club. A similar system would operate for the ladies section. The joint Club would take on the responsibility of the overall running of the Club. The Secretary/Manager resigned in April 94 and the recruitment of a replacement was a priority. Concern was expressed by the ladies regarding their numbers and the difficulty of fielding teams.

The Clubhouse was eating up a lot of money in maintenance and repairs which seemed to be growing from year to year. Green fees had grown dramatically to £120,000 but the committee felt with development of new courses in the area it may be difficult to expand or even hold on to such green fees. A revamp of the Clubhouse was considered and a sum of £300,000 was mentioned. A new Secretary/Manager was appointed effective 4th July, 1994. A Seniors was set up and every effort would be made to facilitate senior golfers from other clubs to come to Shannon and play competitions. The Jimmy Bruen Team won the Munster Final at Castletroy.

Money continued to be the main topic at meetings, bar sales down, catering losing money, and course machinery needing to be replaced. Two F.A.S. people to be employed to help in course maintenance. The committee structure was explained further, Management Committee consisted of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and a total committee of 16. Being members of Swing was costing the club money and very little was gained in return. Lahinch, Tralee and Ballybunion were gaining most. The Munster Boys Final was fixed for Shannon, but due to double booking this fixture was transferred to another Club. The Secretary/Manager resigned his position and advertisements were placed for a replacement. Mr. Michael Corry was appointed new Secretary/Manager and attended his first Management Meeting on 25th September 1995. The Bar and catering income was still causing huge concerns, as both were falling far short of budget. Aer Rianta started the new roadway through the course. The distance between light standards was agreed with Aer Rianta but on review the distance was cut back to 20 meters.

Discussions re the Clubhouse were ongoing and it was agreed to take in extra members and put aside £50,000 to be used on the Clubhouse. In September of this year Clare won the All Ireland Hurling Final – a great boost for sport in the County.

In early 1996 Shannon Golf Club was mourning the loss of its most distinguished member and founder of the Club, Dr. William Flynn. The "Doc" as he was known will be remembered forever.

Dr. Flynn was born in 1913 and after qualifying as a doctor he served in the British Army Medical Corps. He was appointed Shannon Airport Medical Officer in 1947.

While the purpose-built Doctor and Nurse House was under construction, he and his wife Margaret lived in the Airport Hostels. In those years many transit and other passengers overnights at the Airport in what was known as the "Hostels". These were wooden structures with well-appointed accommodation close to the Airport. On completion of the Doctor and Nurse House Dr. Flynn and Margaret moved in and the house was named "Balbride", after Margaret's birthplace.

At that time the nearest golf course to Shannon was Ennis. He joined and very soon was elected to the Committee becoming Captain in 1956. He also joined Lahinch where he enjoyed his winter golf and became Captain in 1965 and President from 1981-1983. He subsequently was a Trustee of Lahinch Golf Club. He was, of course, the first Captain of Shannon Golf Club in 1967.

Behind the Doctor's house at the Airport was a tract of land, which belonged to the Airport. It comprised some 100 acres of rough pasture and about 40 acres of swamp ground covered in tall weeds and reeds. Some of the land was subject to tidal inflow and was very wet. The Doctor would often walk this land and one can imagine him taking a club and a few balls along to keep his swing in shape.

As the Airport and in particular the Industrial Estate expanded the "Doc" began to dream of Shannon having its own Golf Course. He pursued these thoughts with people of influence and found ways to get the relevant Ministers to lease the land behind his house for the purpose of establishing an eighteen hole Golf Course. He embarked on a sustained campaign to

persuade all in positions of power or authority to back his idea. When the "Doc" decided to do something it would be almost impossible to stop him, such was his single-mindedness. The word 'failure' was not in his vocabulary.

Having secured the lease of the land from Aer Rianta in 1965 his problems were just beginning and the real work was only starting for him, his wife Margaret, and indeed their children. He had no money, no members and the land was rough and swampy. It was only his unwavering belief in his dream that led us to where we are in 2005.

He was an outstanding motivator and could be found at anytime, day or night, on the land, surveying and planning the development. Voluntary labour was given freely by the members and the 'Doc's' own commitment was never found wanting. He later said that he had learned a lot about his pitching from the shovel.

He was an absolute gentleman in every way and was an outstanding Ambassador for the Club. He was a Member of the Munster Branch of the G.U.I. and was an honorary delegate to the G.U.I. for many years. His idea for Shannon was inclusiveness and his wish for Shannon was that the subscription for any one-year would be about the average one weeks wages in this area.

As long as Shannon Golf Club continues so will the memory of the 'Doc' who has become synonymous with the Club.

V.A.T. became an issue in this year as all green fees must be charged 12 %V.A.T. and indeed on other purchases not relating to Bar/Catering. Tree topping was a priority for the Airport around the 10th hole and the back of the 9th. Discussions re the 13th hole of balls going over the road because new road opened in July. Options being discussed (a) opening in trees line of sight from tee box to road, (b) to make crossing road out of bounds. The latter was agreed. A newsletter was introduced and was very informative. The Scratch Cup presented to the Club by Dr. W. Flynn went missing. Greens were oversprayed and some damage was done. A new ornamental roundabout flowerbed was constructed in the back of the 14th green and in front of the 5th tee box. The provision of toilets on the course was discussed, costing to be prepared. It was agreed that Pine Ridge Golf Club, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada would twin with Shannon as a sister club. A competition between the clubs would be held every second year, Pine Ridge coming to Shannon first in 1996. Any member visiting either club would be very welcome. The Pierce Purcell Team brought back the Munster Shield and Pennant from Dungarvan and the Junior Cup team were narrowly beaten in the North Munster Final. The Senior Cup team also reached the North Munster Final, but were beaten by Limerick who went on to win the Munster Final.

A Pro-Am was held in August, 1996 and it was a huge success. Damien McGrane created a new course record of 65 in the event. The upgrading of the clubhouse was being discussed at length, and ways and means of financing same. Suggestions of 100 Life Members, 50 New Members, Corporate Membership and Member's Contributions were discussed. The turnover of the Club at this stage was below half a million pounds.

A new road system for the Airport was discussed which is the present set up, the club was guaranteed that it would not interfere with the club in any way. Time sheet bookings for members became a reality, and the Clubhouse proposal would be put to a Special General Meeting where the different ways of financing it would be put to the members. The fire officer was objecting to the Club's licence being renewed, as it was not complying with fire regulations.

Green fees for November 1996 were twice the November 1994 fees, catering was up by 30% for the same period and the bar takings up 20%/ Letters inviting applications for 100 life memberships were sent out, the terms of which were as follows: Membership will be non transferable, non refundable and will be subject to any future levies that may be introduced. The budget for the next year was drawn up for a break-even situation. Drains were opened around Green No. 3, 5, 8 and 13 and a footpath constructed at the approach to the 6th hole. Our insurance Company to clarify our position in relation to the new roadway through the course. Long and protracted discussions took place about the ownership of the land. Senior Counsel's opinion was sought. The Committee suggested two options.

1. A special committee be formed to meet Aer Rianta senior personnel. This committee to remain in office for continuity purposes to deal with issues of lease negotiations, land etc.
2. A more drastic approach was to find alternative lands and rebuild from scratch.

About this time also the committee were of the opinion that the Management of the Club should be the subject of a major review.

Early in 1997 a Special General Meeting took place to discuss, and if thought fit, to adopt the following resolutions.

1. That the proposed Clubhouse Development Plan by Ml. Healy and Associates as presented at the previous Special General Meeting 12th November, 1996 is hereby approved by the members.
2. That the proposed Development Finance Package as presented at Special General Meeting on 12th November, 1996 is hereby approved in principle.

There were over 200 members at the S.G.M. and both proposals were approved. A special sub-committee was set up to make recommendations to granting waivers, the recommendations were as follows: (a) medical waiver (b) overseas waiver and (c) general waiver. The committee approved these recommendations. A long and detailed discussion took place on the state of the greens, as a chemical had been applied to them that was not recommended for use during the winter months, resulting in several greens being scorched and damaged. It was decided to look for an experienced, fully qualified greenkeeper immediately. The problem with SWING was ongoing and the club felt that we were not getting value for money. Several meetings were held with SWING but nothing was resolved. It was hoped that the greens would have recovered by the end of April. Position of Course Manager advertised in Sunday Independent.

The financial report for the six months showed a big drop in green fees and it was felt that this was caused by the problem with the greens. By May the greens were back to full use. The Captain's Prize was postponed in June to 30th August due to bad

weather and had to be postponed until September 7th again due to bad weather. A sub-committee was working overtime on the drawings and the financial package for the extension of the Clubhouse. The costings of the refurbishment was £725,000 to be financed by £150,000 bank borrowings, a levy of £250 per member, life memberships, corporate members, new members, fundraising and grants. At the same time another committee were re-drafting the constitution.

Some trees were removed from the left-hand side of the new 11th tee so as to improve visibility and for safety. A new chef had been appointed to take over the catering as the previous cook had resigned.

A starter was now in place on the first tee and was proving very successful. There was a very severe storm over the Christmas period and approximately 50 trees were lost. There was flooding on the 16th, 17th and 18th. 300 new trees were planted over the winter months and an extra tee box constructed.

Concern was raised that only 27 ladies had joined the Club over the past four years and the cause should be studied to seek improvement. It was also felt that the size of the committee was too big and the business of the club would be better served by a much smaller group.

Mrs. Bina Donworth was nominated as first lady member to become President of the Club. She accepted to huge acclaim.

The Special General Meeting was held in December and all motions put forward re the Clubhouse and finance were passed. A contractor was appointed and the final tender cost was £749,000. The Clubhouse was handed over to the builder on 20th January, 1998 and the duration of the contract was 22 weeks. At that stage there were 50 applicants for Life Membership. In early 1998 another founder member and past captain died suddenly and an air of deep sadness prevailed.

The weather in early 1998 was very bad and the course was closed for 13 days in January following an eight day closure in December 97. Temporary portocabins were set up in the car park to provide changing rooms, ladies and mens, and another to accommodate the bar and kitchen while work was carried out on the Clubhouse. Green fees were down due to the bad weather. Tight control of the expenditure and the schedule was the brief of the sub-committee looking after the building programme. Concern was raised about health and safety regulations for the course work area. Bar and Catering stock was being moved into the new Clubhouse on schedule. A standards committee had been formed and was advising the Board re standards both on and off the course. The first standard to be introduced was as follows; "card playing, pool or T.V. is not permitted in the Main Lounge" The bank loan was approved for £175,000 plus £30,000 overdraft, even though operating out of temporary accommodation, bar and catering sales were ahead of budget.

Bad weather prevailed right through June with the course closed three full days and four half days. The Clubhouse was handed back to the Club on schedule and a comprehensive snag list was being prepared. The course continued to develop and was being recognised as one of the best. The G.U.I. Munster Branch requested Shannon to host the Barton Shield in June 1999 and G.U.I. venues and fixtures committee requested Shannon to host all the Cups and Shields Finals in 2004. The committee agreed to both requests.

Trees on the right of the 18th green had been cut so that the line of vision from the clubhouse to 18th was not impeded. The Clubhouse re-opened on Friday 26th of June, 1998 on schedule and it was generally agreed that it was a vast improvement. The official opening took place on September 12th, 1998 at 5.30 p.m. Mr. Jack Lynch, President of the Munster Branch of G.U.I. performed the ceremony. As a mark of respect to the late Jerry Dunworth who was held in high esteem by the Club, the Committee Room was named the J.D. Room.

A complaints and grievance procedure was agreed and a committee to review the constitution was put in place. This committee would also recommend on the structures of the Club. Work on improving the course was ongoing. Extra drains on the 1st, 3rd, 5th, 9th, and 14th were constructed and should be ready for the start of the new season.

By the beginning of March 1999 the course had been closed for 34 days due to bad weather. The package and conditions for life membership available to help finance the Clubhouse development was closed. The contentious issue of having cards and T.V. in the Main Bar area was discussed at length and it was decided that both would be allowed. The snag list was being perused and the lighting in the car park was a big issue.

In early 2000, the committee decided to franchise out the catering of the club. The contract was for one year to be reviewed. From the very beginning of the Club, finance was always very tight, bearing in mind that it started without any capital and right up through the years the Club was developing with the most meagre of resources. Having completed the Clubhouse renovation and extension, the financial situation was again extremely difficult. The subscription was increased by a very small amount and a proposed bar levy of £50.00 per year was defeated at the A.G.M. The stone sides to the bridges of 16, 17, and 18 were completed and 120 trees were planted on the 1st, 9th and 11th. Toilets on the course were discussed. The Club Lotto got underway the first draw to take place on 10th April 2000 it was hoped to raise much-needed funds with these initiatives. The open singles to start on April 5th.

The living quarters for the steward was converted into office space and was leased to a golf travel company. The first draft of the amended constitution was presented to committee. The trees around the 9th and 10th had matured and grown to such a height that they had to be cut and trimmed for safety of the Airport. Two new tee boxes were built on the 11th behind the road and 18th. These were first used for the Captain's Prize. Some of the greens were again damaged during the high season and ways and means of correcting and preventing this was discussed at length. Many hours were spent investigating this. Green fees suffered but by September the majority of the damaged greens had recovered. Green fees had grown to £131,000 gross for the year 2000, the big increase coming from the Open Wednesday singles. The lotto was also bringing in its share, for 30 weeks its nett profit was almost £8,000. Shannon were asked to host the International European Ladies Amateur Championship in August 2003.

In 2001 cost continued to be scrutinised and savings made where possible. Expenditure was postponed where possible (example - amplification and blinds for the windows). Tee boxes were built for the ladies on 3rd and 6th and the 8th tee box for the ladies

was modified. This was the year of the foot and mouth outbreak, but fortunately for Shannon it did not have a material affect on its activities. This year there were 50 new applications for membership. The lotto was proving to be very successful, and for 47 weeks the nett profit was approximately £10,000. It was the view of the committee that the money generated by the lotto should be used for course development, only, the 15th and 18th greens were earmarked. A new computer was purchased for the Men's Club to cater for the ever-increasing competition and handicap workload. A website was being planned. The ladies Munster Championship was held in April and was very successful. In July of the year 2001 nine greens were damaged, some more than others. It was thought that the sprayer used had a residue of Roundup in it. This was completely unacceptable to the committee and it was decided that a Course Superintendent would have to be found immediately. Ads were placed in the local papers and the Greenkeeper's trade magazine "Greenside". The committee were very concerned, green fees plummeted and in September there was the unforgettable 9/11 debacle which did not help matters either.

The sub-committee drawing up the new constitution reviewed the draft after taking into account the amendments proposed at the Special General Meeting. There was considerable discussion on this and it was decided to go along with the management set up rather than committee. The Board would be made up of a Chairman and three portfolios i.e. Course, Development/Property and House, the Hon. Treasurer, Captain, Lady Captain and President would attend but would not be entitled to vote. This was later amended at the next Special General Meeting and the Captain, Lady Captain, and President were made part of the Board with full voting rights. The new Constitution was passed by the members on 8th January, 2002 with an assurance by the Chairman that all amendments passed would be included in the final document.

The first meeting of the new Board was held on 28th January, 2002. A course Superintendent was appointed, he was fully qualified and was previously second-in-command in Lahinch, and as set out in the Constitution would report to the General Manager.

It was decided to build two new greens the 15th and 18th changing the structure and the layout to sand based. The inclement weather hampered the building of the new greens, the result being that the 18th was completed and the work on the 15th was postponed until September 2002. The cost per green was E30,000 plus.

A meeting with Aer Rianta took place and charges were agreed for the following three years. The Board got off to a flying start and the main business at the beginning was to finish off items that had been deferred for financial reasons and shortage of staff, i.e. lighting in the car park, a few leaks and smells, and the ongoing problem with the septic tank. It was also looking at the possibility of refurbishment of the Clubhouse – carpet, painting and the general presentation of the Clubhouse. A new telephone system was installed suitable for the current needs. The new 18th Green was opened in May 2002 and was a huge improvement.

Plans were drawn up to re-do two greens in September - the 6th and 15th. This work was started in the first week of September and completed by mid-October. A three- year business plan was being prepared for the development of the Clubhouse and the course, with the work on the Clubhouse given priority. Ways of financing this plan were discussed in great detail. E120,000 was budgeted to complete the refurbishment. Meanwhile out on the course, re-constructed tee boxes on the 6th, 9th and 15th holes and improvements to the ladies tee box on 17th were completed. Drainage was planned for the 1st, 6th, 15th, and 18th holes. This was completed in early 2003. A portable toilet was in place but was not successful. Toilets were built in the upstairs Bar, and it was proposed to use this bar for the winter months or for special small functions.

The swipe card system of entering competitions for men was introduced in March 2003. Membership was discussed at length and after a vote a majority agreed to take all suitable candidates approved by the Men's committee – 47 new members were accepted. The lotto was still running and a profit of E6,000 was achieved for the first six months (October 2002 – March 2003). The new 6th and 15th greens opened in early April. Plans were well in hand for the running of the European Ladies Championships. This was a huge undertaking and a lot of hard work was done to get the course, Clubhouse and environs ready for such a prestigious event. Detailed planning was also taking place for the redevelopment of the 5th and 12th greens, this project would start as early in September as possible as this would guarantee that the new greens would be in play by April 2004. In conjunction with these two greens the bunkers on holes 8, 9, 10 and 11 would be re-shaped and filled with silica sand. A new tee would also be built on the 12th hole.

The greens were damaged again this year, fortunately after the Captain's Prize. Samples of soil were sent away for analysis and this proved completely inconclusive. All efforts to find out what happened were unsuccessful. The Board felt as a unit that they had let down the members and a lot of recrimination and soul searching was done at the time. The Munster Finals of the Senior and Junior Cups and the Barton Shield were hosted by Shannon. Shannon's Jimmy Bruen team was Munster Champions but unfortunately they were beaten in the All Ireland semi-final in Lisburn in early September.

The European Ladies Championship was held and was an outstanding success. A representative from Coillte was brought in to advise on tree trimming and culling, and work was planned to be done during the winter. By November, the new greens (5th and 12th) and the new 12th tee were being cut and were turning out exactly as planned. The original plan of having two bunkers on the 12th was scaled down to one. The bunkers on the 5th, 8th, 9th, 10th, and 11th holes were reshaped and silica sand used to complete them. The maintenance of machinery was a major cost item and a programme was drawn up to replace all the machinery over a three- year period. Even though we had the damage to the green, the European Ladies and some of the Cup competitions, green fees earned during the year came to E164,000.

The Board of Management saw the benefits of new sand based greens and a plan was drawn up to develop further greens, to have machinery capable of maintaining the course to the highest standard, to drain all areas of poor drainage, to build some new tees, to upgrade the pumping system, to fill all bunkers with silica sand, to build toilets on course and the pruning, culling and replacement of trees.

A plan was drawn up to cover a three- year period to develop the course and replace machinery. The estimated cost was E1,100,000. This information was sent to each member with the A.G.M. agenda and plans were made for an information meeting to be held early in 2004, followed by an E.G.M. where this would be voted on. Various options for raising necessary money

were presented, ranging from bank borrowing, life memberships, leasing, club classics and increasing the subscriptions, members contributing E250 per year for three years and the club getting a tax rebate of about 40% on this contribution.

An information meeting was held on 12th January, 2004 and the various options were put to the meeting and with the input from the meeting the Board would come back with firm proposals to be voted at a S.G.M.

A Special General Meeting took place on the 15th March, 2004 Two plans for financing the course development and the purchasing of machinery were put to the meeting and both plans were rejected.

The lotto was still running but support had dwindled to a trickle and it was struggling to break-even. The Pro-Am came to an end after eight years, the main sponsor having withdrawn. It was decided that instead of the Pro-Am a two-day club classic would be run with all proceeds to be spent on the course, this was planned for the same dates as the Pro-Am. It was decided that the watering system be upgraded as far as possible. All sprinkler heads to be replaced, two new pressure pumps to give even distribution of water and a new well bored so that the club would be self sufficient.

The two new greens, the 5th and 12th opened in mid April 2004 as did the new 12th tee, all very successful. Considerable disruption was caused in mid 2004 because world leaders, including President Bush, were meeting

in Dromoland. The course and its confines were closed completely for two days and movement very restricted for two weeks prior to the event. The development classic was very successful and very well supported raising in excess of E35,000. The All Ireland Cups and Shields were held in September and a huge effort was put in to staging these events. The Clubhouse and the course were on show and proved to be one of the best. A special award was made to Shannon at the Annual General Meeting of the Munster Branch of the G.U.I. in recognition of our first class presentation of the club during the All Ireland Finals.

Artificial winter tees were built/installed for 4 tees – 2nd, 8th, 9th and 10th and this added greatly to these tees. Two compressors for cleaning shoes and trolleys were installed, one coming off the 15th and one at the 18th. These helped considerable in keeping the Clubhouse and its surrounds clean.

Another meeting was held with Aer Rianta who reported that they were in the process of drawing up a five and ten year plan. They would discuss the implications of these plans with the Club when they were ready. Car parking extension and the possibility of requiring a parallel taxiway for would probably be included in these plans.

A swipe card system was introduced this year in the bar and a E100 bar contribution was also introduced giving a 10% discount every time the card was used.

This was also the year during which the smoking ban was introduced by the Government and arrangements had to be made for a smoking area.

At the beginning of 2005 the Board decided that a small sub committee be set up to take responsibility for negotiations with Aer Rianta and to have sole contact with them until all current issues were resolved satisfactorily. The sub-committee is empowered to employ the services of outside professionals for legal or any other areas they deem necessary. This is the second such committee set up in recent years the previous one now being defunct. At the AGM at the end of the year, this sub-committee reported as follows:

“Some indications had earlier been made by the Airport Authority to the effect that they were in need of car parking space, and that this need could impact on the Golf Course – particularly the holes closest to the Airport Terminal.

Recognising the problem which this would pose for SGC our committee wrote to SAA – expressing our concerns.

Since then, three meetings have taken place between our Special Committee and SAA.

At those meetings, we – the Special Committee – have voiced our opposition to any interference with our Golf Course and we are maintaining that stance.

For its part, SAA have assured us at our most recent meeting, that they are very anxious to continue with the co-operation which has always existed between themselves and SGC, and that no changes would take place without full consultation and agreement with the Club.

Agreement has been reached with SAA, firstly, that there will be no interference with our course in the short-term.

With regard to the future, SAA are working on a long-term plan for the Airport, which is expected to be completed by end of 2006.

It is not yet known what that plan will show – but we have been advised that, depending on the expected growth in traffic at the airport, an aircraft taxiway may be required – which could impact on the golf course.

SAA have suggested that a Joint Committee be formed comprising SAA & SGC – which would look at what impact the future growth of the Airport may have on the Golf Course and how such impact could be minimised.

The scope and terms of reference for such a committee have not been agreed, but if those terms of reference are satisfactory to the Golf Club, we – the Special Committee – will be recommending participation.

We feel that among the matters to be reviewed by such a Committee, would be the future of the Golf Club, and its relationship with SAA – in its totality.”

The drainage on the 16th, 17th and 18th fairway was discussed and it was felt that a new sluice gate or gates would have to be installed and proper professional help would be sought to advise on this.

A motion was proposed and put on the agenda of the AGM that any member attaining their 80th birthday would get a free subscription thereafter. This motion was passed unanimously.

Another fund raising classic was held during the year, and together with other events a total of E33,000 was raised. New toilets were installed on the course between the 7th tee and the 8th fairway. Power and water were brought from the clubhouse for this installation. Tree culling, trimming and replacement was continued and this had made a vast improvement to the presentation of the course and speeded up play.