



# GARY GALYEAN'S GOLF LETTER®

THE INSIDE REPORT ON WORLD GOLF

NUMBER 328

OUR 30<sup>th</sup> YEAR

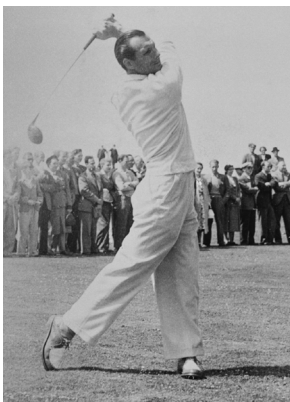
JULY 2019

Dear Subscriber:

*[Royal Portrush] is truly magnificent, a monument more enduring than brass. The course does not disdain the spectacular ... does not depend on any such dramatic quality, rather on the combined soundness and subtlety of the architecture. Altogether I find it hard to imagine a more admirable test of golf.*

- Bernard Darwin

**A**N ANCIENT IRISH LEGEND tells the story of Fionn who departed from the world of men wondering "in great distress of mind" through an imaginary world. He returned from that world with memories of where he had been even though very few people who have been to this other world remember they were ever away. "It was wonderful, then, that Fionn should have remembered all that happened to him in that wide-spun moment."



Max Faulkner  
1951 Champion Golfer of the Year

Applied as allegory for the first Open Championship on Irish soil in 68 years - the second in 148 playings - it is unclear which of the Irishmen (if not both) played the role of Fionn: Rory McIlroy, after his first stroke at the first hole finished out of bounds, or Shane Lowry, after his last stroke at the last hole went in for a six stroke victory over an Englishman. But we get ahead of ourselves.

Who better than the Irish to weave a golf tale of tragic failure and glittering victory; tears of sorrow and joy? It was a raucous four days that began on the anniversary of the death of Caravaggio (1610) and finished on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the landing on the moon (1969).



REFLECTIONS

## THE OPEN 148<sup>TH</sup> ROYAL PORTRUSH

Portrush, which in Irish means "promontory port", is a small seaside village where the shoreline forms a natural roadstead for ships needing protection from the sea. Just east of the village is the extraordinary golf ground where Harry S. Colt created his masterpiece that is Royal Portrush. From the Club's handbook:

*When the club was formed in May 1888, it was known as the County Club. It became the Royal County Club in 1892, when H.R.H. The Duke of York was its patron and the name was changed to 'The Royal Portrush Golf Club' in 1895, with the H.R.H. The Prince of Wales (later King Edward VII) as patron.*

Important championships hosted by Royal Portrush include four Irish Opens, six Senior Opens, two Amateur Championships, and now two Open Championships. A comparison of the two Opens played in Ireland - separated by past 68 years - tells a story of expansion:

1951		2019
6,802	Course Length	7,344
£300	First Prize	\$1.935 million
98	Total Players	156
4	American Players	47

Nothing in Ireland - no other golf championship or sporting event of any kind - is comparable to this year's

Open Championship in attendance and drama. The long anticipated return of the Open that coincided perfectly with the prominence of Mr. McLroy's golf career provided the perfect moment for perfect disappointment.

The disorienting deficiency of Mr. McLroy's first stroke on Thursday was perhaps too bizarre for even an Irish or Shakespearean tragedy ... more Gloucester than Lear; more Gildenstern than Hamlet. His resulting 79 included a quad, a triple and a double, which sounds more like elements included in a figure skating championship than an Open Championship. His heroic 65 on Friday, attempting to make the cut [low 70 and ties], provided a mini championship within the major one. Completing the tragedy, Mr. McLroy finished one short.

As is the case at all stroke play tournaments where starting times are set and then flipped for the second day, there is speculation, prior to the start, as to the good and bad side of the draw. Will Thursday morning/Friday afternoon bring advantage, or Thursday afternoon/Friday morning afford on edge?

Thursday's round finished with 41 players under par. Of those, 19 started in the morning and 22 in the afternoon. Nine of the 19 players at 2 under or lower played in the morning; 10 - including the leader - in the afternoon. There was no discernible advantage to either a morning or afternoon start.

Friday's round finished with 44 players under par. Of those, 27 played in the morning; 17 after noon. Of those at 8 under or better for 36 holes, 14 played in the morning, 3 in the afternoon. Fifteen who were *over* par on Thursday, played far enough under par on Friday to be under par for the 36 hole total. Eleven of those 15 started on Friday morning. While Friday morning play seemed to provide an advantage, the 36-hole co-leaders at 8 under did not reflect that: Mr. Lowry started at 12:53; J.B. Holmes at 9:25. Weather during the first 36 holes was mostly a non-event although light rain began

to fall on Friday about 3 pm and became heavier by 4:30. It was a soft day, as is sometimes said.

Mr. Lowry won the 148<sup>th</sup> Open on the in nine Saturday afternoon. While Tommy Fleetwood and he both went out taking 33 strokes; Mr. Lowry's incoming 30 bested Mr. Fleetwood by three. The eventual champion's 63 set a new Royal Portrush course record; was the lowest 54 hole score in Open history; and made him the first Irishman ever to hold the 54 hole Open lead.

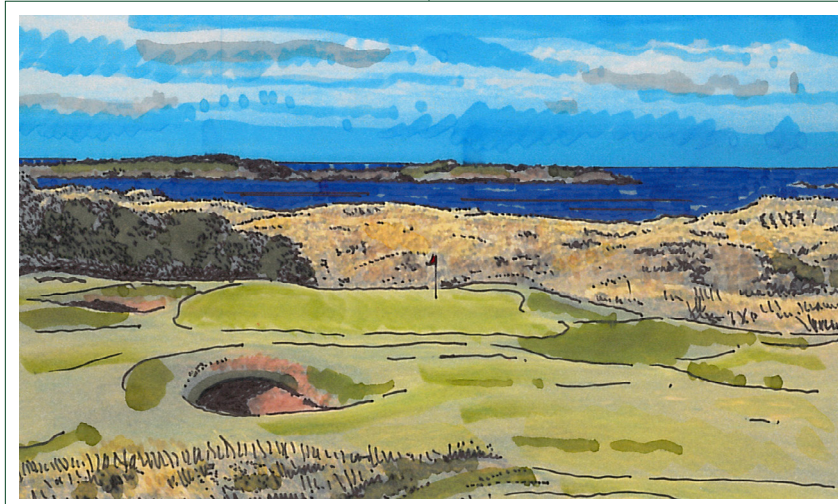
Despite, or perhaps because of, those lofty records as well as some seriously hideous weather, Mr. Lowry's Sunday golf was even more impressive than Saturday's because of the mental pressure he had to deal with in order to win not only for himself but for Ireland.

Not unlike what happened on Sunday at this year's Masters Tournament, the eventual champion

held strong to his lead while those around him folded. As Mr. Lowry and his caddie, Brian "Bo" Martin, exchanged their serious and happy craic and producing the fourth day's 1 over par round, theirs was simply too much of a lead for the others to overcome.

### Of Note

♣ When the South African Dylan Frittelli lost his ball in the right rough at the 17th on Friday afternoon, none of the television commentators, including of course a number of golf professionals, could recall one of the most rudimentary Rules of Golf which states: *A ball is lost if not found in three minutes after the player or his or her caddie begins to search for it.* Mr. Frittelli asked his walking official for a hiatus in his three minutes because incoming balls from the group behind prevented him from searching in an area where he felt his ball might be. The suspension was granted. During the suspension the babbling "experts" chuckled about spectators continuing to look while Mr. Frittelli did not. Was that legal, they pondered; was that a clever way around the three-minute rule? Despite years of playing professionally, none of



SKERRIES - PRONOUNCED "SCARIES"

THE 15TH AT ROYAL PORTRUSH. PAR 4; 426 YARDS.

*Old Norse - A rock in the sea is a sker; the island fringe of Norway is a group of glacially formed skerries. The small islands off the Portrush coast are also referred to as skerries.*

them, even one who captained the Ryder Cup and won the P.G.A Championship, could reflect on the many times their golf ball was searched for by spectators and marshals before they or their caddie arrived on sight.

✿ Ireland will host the Ryder Cup for the second time in 2026. Adare Manor will be the venue.

✿ David Feherty's comments proved valuable and entertaining time after time.

✿ Sunday's golf coupled with the previous Sunday's Wimbledon final and England's World Cricket Cup victory gave us a memorable British summer sports season.

✿ The current name of the Irish Open - the Dubai Duty Free Irish Open - is an abomination.

### The Kings and Queens of Clubs Defining Royal Golf

✿ THIRTY-SEVEN GOLF CLUBS in the British Isles comprise the list of those given the honor of designating themselves *Royal*. Royal Portrush is one of five so privileged in Ireland. There are 10 in Scotland, 18 in England, 2 in Wales and 2 in the Channel Islands. In other parts of the world the list is made up of that many again. From Calcutta to Durban to Adelaide and Montreal, where the British settled and governed they always took their cricket, golf and marmalade.

There is no exact pattern to explain why one club was made royal and another was not. The designation has nothing to do with whether or not the monarch played(s) golf - in some cases they did; in others they did not - or were not even a member of the club.

The method for being made royal has varied and evolved since Royal Perth in central Scotland became the first in 1824. While the right of a club to style themselves Royal is, according to *THE GOLFER'S HANDBOOK*, always "bestowed by the favor of the Sovereign or a member of the Royal House", it is not always clear just why it was done.

In 1603, James VI of Scotland (1566-1625) inherited the British throne, which included England, Wales and Ireland. These three were then joined with Scotland under one monarch and the result was called Great Britain.

James was the first to bring golf, along with his Royal Household and a golf club maker, to London, when he was crowned James I of Great Britain. James learned to play golf in the Scottish town of Perth on the North and South Inch courses. There is written record of this golf

✿ *THE SUNLEY BOOK OF ROYAL GOLF* by Sir Peter Allen is a valuable source on this subject and was relied upon for this piece.

ground dated 1599 in the town's records when four men were publicly rebuked for "playing at golf on the North Inch at the time of the afternoon preaching on the Sabbath".

The Perth Golfing Society was formed 225 years later; and nine years after that was made royal by King William IV. The king was asked by the Club to become its patron and to grant his permission for styling it the *Royal Perth Golfing Society*. So it began. Royal patronage continued for Royal Perth by Queen Victoria, Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII, George VI and today by the Duke of Edinburgh.

The idea caught on: Six months later, in January 1834, the Golf Club of St. Andrews asked the King, who was also Duke of St. Andrews, if he would become their patron too and, because St. Andrews was the second oldest Club in Scotland (1754), if he would permit it to be styled *Royal & Ancient*. The king was delighted to agree. When William died in 1837, his widow, Queen Adelaide, as Duchess of St. Andrews, continued the royal patronage and gave the Club a medal named for her that has become the Club's highest award. Queen Adelaide's Medal is to this day the symbol of the office of the Captain and worn on the left lapel of his crimson tails on formal occasions.

Montrose was next. In 1845 it became the *Royal Montrose Golf Club* and was followed by 34 sister golf clubs in various corners of the British Isles. Most, such as Royal Liverpool, Royal Dornoch and Royal Cinque Ports you will recognize and others, such as Royal Guernsey, Royal Cromer or Royal Epping Forest, you may not. In 1978, Royal Troon became the last, thus far, to be awarded the designation.

### Ireland

It may come as little surprise that the most startling stories about royal designation should involve two Irish golf clubs. Golf was brought to Ireland in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by British troops who were posted there. The golf courses that were created by the garrisons - mostly the officers - are as fine or finer than any in the world, and the five royal ones are truly notable:

Royal Belfast	formed 1881	royal 1908
Royal Curragh	formed 1883	royal 1910
Royal Dublin	formed 1885	royal 1891
Royal Portrush	formed 1888	royal 1893
Royal County Down	formed 1889	royal 1907

The Curragh is a plain of 5,000 acres in County Kildare, about 30 miles southwest of Dublin. It is common land with sandy soil. In the mid 1850s it was used to camp 10,000 British troops preparing for the Crimean

War. The Curragh Golf Club was created by the officers of Scotch regiments posted there. Golf, and undoubtedly the soldiers, suffered when the regiments were sent first to the Boer War and then to France for World War I. Irish independence (1921) severed the 26 southern counties from the north and the Irish Army took over the camp.

The royal title was conferred upon Curragh in 1910 but, once the British left, the title was not used, nor was it repudiated. However, the Club's records from 1923 state that the Club should simply be called "The Curragh Golf Club". Thirty-five years ago an inquiry to Buckingham Palace confirmed that the title was never withdrawn. (Royal) Curragh simply chooses not to use it.

The Royal Tara Golf Club, a 90 minute drive northwest of Dublin, conferred upon itself the royal designation because of its proximity to the Hill of Tara, the inauguration site and seat of the High Kings of Ireland. Some have said that while this self-awarding of the title is not illegal it is certainly a breach of good manners.

### Empire & Commonwealth

The royal golf clubs that were formed throughout the British Empire and then the Commonwealth are some of the game's oldest. Royal Calcutta, the oldest golf club outside the British Isles, was founded at Dum Dum in 1829; Royal Bombay was second oldest until it closed in 1947. Royal Western India at Nasik is another no longer in operation. Royal Montreal (1873) is the oldest golf club in North America; Royal Quebec followed two years later; Royal Ottawa in 1891; and Royal Colwood in British Columbia in 1913.

Australia's eight royal clubs are as substantial as any outside the British Isles. They are all perched around the



For D.M.W. III:

*"I asked this literary agent what kind of writing paid the best.  
He said ransom notes."*

Harry Zimm [played by Gene Hackman] in GET SHORTY  
Screen play by Elmore Leonard

rim of the island continent. Royal Adelaide was first in 1870, and Royal Canberra last in 1926. Most notable are Royal Melbourne (1891) and Royal Sydney (1893).

South Africa's four - Cape (1885), Johannesburg (1890), Durban (1892) and Port Alfred (1907) - are notable for having survived the country's turbulent times.

Royal clubs were established on Malta and Singapore, in Nairobi, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and Hong Kong. Golf, indeed royal golf, has survived in all these places even when governments and country names did not, e.g. Royal Salisbury in Southern Rhodesia is now Royal Harare in Zimbabwe.

### Other Monarchies

In Europe, the Belgian and Spanish monarchies awarded royal titles to 10 and 11 golf clubs respectively. In Belgium: Royal Antwerp (1888) is the oldest; Royal G.C. de Beligue (1905) the most sought; Royal Zoute (1908) respected for its course design; and Royal Waterloo (1923) has the best name.

In Spain, the royal golf title has come and gone and come again with the elimination of the monarchy in 1931, its restoration by Franco in 1948 but without a monarch, and the 1975 ascension of King Juan Carlos.

Elsewhere royal golf clubs have appeared and disappeared. Royal Baghdad and King Faisal II were both eliminated in 1958. The Imperial C.C. of Tehran saw its demise with the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. Royal Swaziland received its designation in 1966 from King Sobhuza; and King Hassan II of Morocco has been a force for golf in northern Africa. He hired Trent Jones and Mr. Jones' acolyte, Cabell Robinson, to design and build Royal Dar-es-Salam in Rabat. There are also royal clubs at Marrakech, Casablanca, Tangier, Agadir, Mohammedia and d'Anfa.

Yours vy truly,

Gary A. Galyean  
Editor & Publisher

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