“[T]he gospel according to St. Andrews:”
Golf and Tourism at the Seaside in late Victorian Co. Donegal, Ireland

by

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ABSTRACT

“[T]he gospel according to St. Andrews:”
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In the late nineteenth century, golf developed for the first time as a global phenomenon, closely tied to countries with a strong colonial British presence. In Ireland, golf emerged in the 1850s as a preserve of elite members from the upper echelons of English and Scottish society residing in Ireland. This rapidly changed between 1890 and 1900, when the burgeoning middle classes in Ireland and England claimed the sport for their own purposes as well. Using case studies of two rural seaside resort towns in Co. Donegal, Buncrana and Bundoran, which both adopted golf as a leisure amenity during this period, this thesis examines the contested role of golf at the Irish seaside. Golf was far from just a sport during this period. It was an imported element of British – and especially Scottish – culture enmeshed in a complex framework of political manoeuvring, entrepreneurial influence, and societal transition that was occurring simultaneously in Ireland during the final decade of the century. This thesis unpacks these developments, charting golf’s progression during a period characterised by programmatic efforts to raise Ireland’s social, cultural, and political profile as a nation within the United Kingdom. Utilising a wealth of archival material, this thesis demonstrates golf’s instrumental legacy to Ireland’s development as a touring nation, transitioning from a marginal game to a major element of Ireland’s social and cultural sporting heritage.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to a number of individuals for their assistance in this thesis project. First and foremost on this list is my supervisor, Dr. Kevin James. Kevin has provided valuable guidance through every step of my academic career, from my time as an undergraduate at the University of Guelph until the end of my Guelph career in the Master’s program. The course paper I wrote for his graduate course in the fall term of 2014 inspired this project, changing the focus of my initial subject matter. Since that time Kevin has been a tireless system of support, not only as a mentor, but also as a travel companion and confidante. Kevin has inspired me time and again to see this project through to its finish, and I owe this project’s completion to his commitment and belief in me as an academic.

I would also like to thank the two other members of my committee who have given me feedback so far: The University of Stirling’s Dr. Alastair Durie, and the University of Guelph’s Dr. Alan McDougall. There is no better expert on golf and tourism than Alastair, and I am extremely fortunate to have had his knowledge and guidance for this thesis. He has given crucial advice at each stage in this project’s development, and his insights were instrumental in formulating my argumentation. Alan also played a key role, sharing his knowledge as a talented sports historian to give important suggestions on early drafts.

A host of individuals provided crucial research assistance for my project during my summer in Ireland in 2014, which was funded by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Michael Smith Foreign Studies supplement. I was also privileged to receive a Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship. I am heavily indebted to golfing enthusiast Alistair Smith and his wife Eithna, from Co. Wicklow. Alistair’s impressive private collection of Irish golfing material (which he most graciously allowed me access to) provided a critical background source base that I never dreamed I might have. This thesis strongly improved because of it, and their wonderful combination of Scottish and Irish hospitality was a marked highlight of my three-month research stint. Alistair, I hope you continue to put the upstarts at your club in their place (and further your impressive hole-in-one record while you are at it).

I was highly fortunate to serve as a visiting scholar at the National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) during my summer in Ireland. While there, NUIG’s Dr. John Cunningham served as my host supervisor, sharing his knowledge and ideas pertaining to the West of Ireland, while ensuring a comfortable and easy transition for me into the school. I also benefitted from the encyclopedic wisdom of NUIG’s Dara Ó Cualáin, who went above and beyond to accommodate me during my stay in Galway, providing much appreciated academic advice, suggestions, and most of all friendship. Thank you for making me feel at home, Dara.

A number of staff at both public and private archival repositories in Ireland also gave me instrumental assistance. I would like to thank the staff at the National Library of Ireland (NLI) in Dublin for all of their help; particularly Mary Broderick from the Prints and Drawings room at the NLI for setting up a meeting to view prints on short notice and helping me navigate the NLI’s online and in-house systems. The staff at the Derry Central Library in Londonderry was most accommodating, allowing me access to the full run of the Derry Standard and the Londonderry Sentinel on microfilm. Also the staff at the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)
in Belfast requires thanks for their dutiful procurement of multiple boxes of source material. Lastly, the librarians at the Buncrana Public Library in Co. Donegal gave me helpful research suggestions and local history studies that formed the contextual aspect of my Buncrana case study.

Tom Plunkett, from Co. Donegal, entrusted me with a copy of his working manuscript on Donegal golf that is awaiting publication, along with some of his personal research notes, for which I am also grateful.

The history department at Guelph has supported and motivated me time and again. I am appreciative of each and every one of the professors in the department that I have taken classes with over the years, but I would like to single out Dr. Andrew Ross in particular. Taking his course on sports history in the United States in my third year at Guelph changed the way I think about the discipline and thrust me down a path of sports history myself, from which I have never looked back. Thank you for challenging me to become a better researcher and writer by focusing on original content and ideas.

I could not have made it this far without the unreal friends I have in my life, both past and present, from around the world. Specifically for the purpose of this project, I would like to give a shout out to all of my compatriots in Guelph’s history graduate program. Thank you for all of the ridiculous distractions, nights, experiences, and memories, which I truly cherish. For golf knowledge in particular, I can look no further than recent graduate from Guelph’s MA program, Wade Cormack. Wade worked tirelessly on the transcribing and coding of the Lough Swilly Visitor’s book for a separate project, and my thesis greatly benefited from (work that I also did not have the time to do myself). I will also single out three of my other partners in crime at this point: Alex Clay, Emily Compton, and Joe Cull, who all volunteered for the arduous task of editing the following pages. Clay was as tenacious as ever in his revisions. Compton’s well-trained legal eye detected several errors in style and argumentation that had slipped by me. Joe’s thoughtful comments gave me a lot to consider, for which I am highly appreciative. I have had the privilege of collaborating with all three of these academics in the past, and I find it highly fitting that these good friends, after being with me for the entire process, also helped me reach the final finish line – even though we are no longer all in the same city. A special thank you, then, to this terrific trio, for all of their support.

Last, but certainly not least, I must acknowledge my family. My dad Peter and mom Cheryl, along with my sister Magda, and my brothers Andrew and Joel, have lovingly put up with my shenanigans for, well, my entire life! I had the unique experience of starting graduate school at the same time as my mom, thus inspiring a race to completion (to which I humbly admit defeat). I could not ask for a better family, who supported me through my tumultuous high school days and my shaky start at university. Each of them challenge me to be a better person and a stronger academic every day, and I had the fortune of attending the same school where both Magda and Andrew achieved brilliant success as undergraduate and graduate students in the French and Organic Chemistry departments, respectively. Two very tough acts to follow, undoubtedly, but my brother and sister inspired and pushed me to reach a level of success I did not think I was capable of. I hope I have done my whole family proud with this project, and it is to them that I dedicate this work. Thank you for always being there.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDB: Congested Districts Board

GNR: The Great Northern Railway

GUI: The Golfing Union of Ireland

IHHC: Irish Highlands Hotel Company

ITA: The Irish Tourist Association

ITDA: The Irish Tourist Development Association

LSR: The Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway
Introduction: “[T]he gospel according to St. Andrews”

While Scotland is traditionally viewed as the birthplace of golf,¹ many countries around the world have since adopted this ‘royal and ancient’ pastime. During the 1890s, the rapid expansion of golf links across Ireland became intimately associated with the Irish seaside resort. The integration of golf as a key feature of resort and spa towns such as Buncrana and Bundoran in Co. Donegal reflected efforts to diversify tourist markets, and Irish tourism itself, by drawing upon a wider range of potential guests (notably from England and Scotland). Case studies of these two towns allow me to address several lacunae in critical Irish leisure and tourism historiographies: the paucity of comparators outside established resorts such as Bray, Co. Dublin, which has been the focus of much study, but whose market area was heavily influenced by its proximity to the city of Dublin;² the expansion of transport infrastructures that linked north-west Ireland to critical Scottish markets outside the island; and vigorous efforts to incorporate tourism within programmatic efforts at improvement in rural Ireland in the late Victorian period. These, in turn, inform the dissection of the rhetoric of ‘tourist development,’ deployed by people who sought to redress perceived reputational and infrastructural weaknesses within tourist resorts throughout the late Victorian period, and in particular offers two case studies which illustrate how golf became central to the development of new leisure facilities at Irish resorts.

From the first issues of their trades magazine, the editors of the *Irish Tourist* aimed to change the perceptions of Ireland as an inhospitable and undeserving host for foreign guests.

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“Our reputation must be redeemed,” one of the first issues advocated. Raising Ireland’s profile both culturally and politically was a concerted effort by a multitude of actors by the end of the nineteenth century, promoted from local business owners to prominent politicians. Ireland’s political position within the Union was a tumultuous one during this time, which reflected poorly on the nation’s ability to generate touring interest from potential guests. Articles in the Irish Tourist and elsewhere promoted the country’s benefits to English and Scottish readers, providing them with a sense of what they might expect to encounter should they choose their ‘sister isle’ as a travelling destination. Quoting famed English novelist William Makepeace Thackeray:

> What sends picturesque tourists to the Rhine and Saxon Switzerland? Within five miles round the pretty inn of Glengarriff, there is a country of the magnificence of which no pen can give an idea. Were such a bay lying upon English shores, it would be a world’s wonder. Perhaps, if it were on the Mediterranean or by the Baltic, English visitors would flock to it by the hundreds. Why not come and see it in Ireland?\(^4\)

Ireland was depicted as a cost-friendly destination worthy of equal comparison to some of the finest existing holiday locales across Europe. Underlying these goals of tourist development was a larger concern revolving around the image of Ireland in itself, which these authors and advocates fought to reverse and erase. Ireland had the same tourist potential as any other country around the world during this period, and as these authors demonstrate, Ireland also had the modern infrastructures and hospitable hosts to both meet and surpass the desires of their visitors. These sources also underscored a political message time and again: that there was unity in tourism, and that the rebranding of Ireland would not only heighten its allure as a country but would make the Emerald Isle an integral partner in the politics and culture of the United Kingdom. Golf played an important, if indirect, role in these developments: writing in 1898, Garden Smith’s London-based publication The World of Golf praised “the gospel according to

\(^3\) Irish Tourist vol.1.3, ed. F.W. Crossley (1894), 65.
\(^4\) “Opinions on Ireland (from Thackeray),” in Irish Tourist vol.1.2 (1894), 49.
St. Andrews,” which, after its acceptance, formed an important part of the revitalisation of sport in Ireland.  

“Thanks to Scottish pioneers, Ireland now has a sport in which ‘classes’ and ‘masses’ meet upon equal terms,” Smith intoned. This was not an immediate process, of course. This study will detail the changing perceptions of golf’s space in Ireland leading to its acceptance in the country by century’s end.

**Historiographical Contexts: Irish Golf and Irish Tourism**

The critical motivation for this study, but also its biggest challenge, was the absence of any major or sustained historically based piece, beyond one excellent article length critical analysis, on the history of golf in Ireland at any point in time. Such is the near-universal case for the history of sport in Ireland: it has remained largely understudied until recently, and these surveys have primarily focused on Irish-based sports such as hurling and Gaelic football. The presence of imported and non-native sports in Ireland, such as golf, has remained almost exclusively outside the purview of historical analysis. There is one good monograph exploring Irish golf specifically, but its focus is informational rather than analytical, indicating the potential for further research in this field: there is an absence beyond these initial inroads. The high numbers of Irish golf club histories, while useful in their own right for their inclusion of rare and unique primary source material from these clubs, hold less value from the perspective of scholarly analysis, although they are highly beneficial in exploring contemporary promotional strategies. Additionally, no sustained study yet exists which plots the rise of Irish golf in relation to a particular resort. Even in Britain, where there are several studies on golf, very few examine

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5 Garden Smith, *The World of Golf* (London: A.D. Innes & Company Limited, 1898), 224. Located in Scotland, St. Andrews is perhaps the oldest and almost certainly the most well known golf course in the world.


golf with a specific geographic focus. Buncrana and Bundoran thus provide excellent case studies. While none of the courses in Co. Donegal achieved the size or grandeur of the Royal Portrush, Co. Antrim, or the Curragh in Dublin, the fact that the courses at Buncrana and Bundoran experienced success in a remote and comparatively small district is indicative of the resorts’ efforts to successfully attract visitors during a period when competition for tourism was especially fierce, prompting in part the adoption by both resorts of new leisure amenities. Golf increasingly competed with bathing and other leisure activities as the primary attraction at many seaside resorts in Ireland during the 1890s, and Buncrana and Bundoran were at the forefront of this movement, creating and sustaining demand during this period.

Few studies engage with sport and tourism per se. Alastair Durie, in one of the rare pieces on the role of tourism and golf in Ireland, suggests that in comparison to other sports, the impact of golfing tourism is more difficult to analyse. He argues that this is particularly the case in terms of gauging estimates for the numbers of visitors, but one also must consider the time period when golf became a major factor in a visitor’s choice of final destination, thus determining their travel plans. While these are valid concerns, the comparative absence of studies of golf at the Irish seaside resort needs to be remedied, as there are certainly connections. As Durie notes, over time golf became “the sine qua non for a Scottish hydro.” In a similar socioeconomic approach, John Walton, investigating the role of golf in Scotland, argues that it was “central to the appeal of Scottish resorts since the late nineteenth century.” Durie and M.J. Huggins argue in their work on sport at British seaside resorts that sporting activities in resorts

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12 John Walton, The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century, 103
moved beyond a leisure activity in and of itself, shaping visitor and resident patterns and also forming sites of conflict between the two. They conclude their study by suggesting that a “fuller study would have to examine the detailed local and regional complexity of the theme, since the wide variety of amenities and social mixes found in resorts acts against such overall categorization.” This thesis seeks to answer this call, placing golf within a specific spatial context, connected, however, to a much larger network beyond the confines of the seaside resorts and golf links at Buncrana and Bundoran.

**Touring Ireland: Critical Studies**

As golf in Ireland became closely associated with tourism during the 1890s, this study builds on the existing body of literature focused on resort development in England, Scotland, and Ireland. I define a ‘resort’ for my period of study as a commercial establishment designed by hosts and used by guests for rest, relaxation, and the consumption of leisure activities, with an emphasis on seaside golf resorts. While I focus on golf links development and the improvement of commercial accommodation, it is important to explore the factors that enabled golf to succeed in Ireland during this period. Like sport in Ireland, it is only recently that tourism in Ireland has become the subject of historical analysis. Irene Furlong’s study on Irish tourism between 1880 and 1980 contextualises the changes which took place by century’s end, with a particular focus on political and administrative actors. In a similar vein, Eric Zeulow’s post-partition study of

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Irish tourism examines tourism through a policy perspective. Using guidebooks and travelogues, William H.A. Williams’s study of pre- and post-Famine Irish tourism skilfully adds a cultural narrative and dimension to this discussion. Kevin James’s recent study was most helpful in this regard, carefully dissecting tourist narratives relating to the promotion of the Killarney tour throughout the nineteenth century. His discussion of “tourist development” is essential in this regard: this movement was not a static process, and James rightfully underlines its flexible and ever-changing status in Ireland, debunking the exclusive role of political actors and bureaucrats in Irish tourism’s promotion during the 1880s and 1890s. Given this project’s focus on Donegal, Angela Mehegan’s study was also highly useful, highlighting the importance of landscape commodification (as popularised by various railway companies) in the promotional allure of the county. These works were all useful, yet they leave room for further analysis: Williams’ study takes place before my time period, and Zeulow’s focus is afterwards. While Furlong and James both discuss the final decade of the nineteenth century in their monographs, Furlong’s work often overlooks the importance of agency at the local level, while James’s study focuses specifically on Killarney, a region that was already well-versed in tourist traffic by this period. Mehegan’s piece on Donegal does not systematically apply her findings in relation to specific area(s) in the county in order to demonstrate and prove her argumentation in practice. This study draws on these works and others, expanding and strengthening their conclusions by

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19 James, *Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland: The Commodification of Culture*.
20 See in particular James, *Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland*, 50-51.
examining a political narrative alongside a cultural one, and applying a lens of sport to Irish
tourism and Irish resorts in Co. Donegal in a sustained manner.

Transport History

While this study is not framed primarily as a contribution to the field of transport history,
the importance of Irish railways to a discussion of Irish tourism necessitates its inclusion,
especially given golf’s connection to transport. Many tourism studies highlight the importance of
rail legislation for the development of leisure amenities, such as Furlong’s monograph.22 This
study adheres to this approach, but I also include a closer investigation into the important role of
the individual railway companies involved at the local level, an essential analysis for sporting
tourism.23 Both Walton and Durie chart the progressive spread of transport networks in the latter
half of the nineteenth century, which opened up England, Scotland, and Ireland, and facilitated
an increase in numbers of travellers, including travellers from a variety of class backgrounds.
The expansion of leisure activities and modes of transport, the definition of ‘holidays,’ and the
availability of free time increasingly created new avenues for relaxation and self-definition.24
Furlong sees a progression from travel as a necessity to travel as a leisure activity, and a more
comfortable and inexpensive one at that.25 Both the Irish Tourist Association and the Hotel and
Restaurant Proprietors’ Association also played key roles in this development, working alongside
railway companies to offer bundled rail and accommodation packages, and mutually agreed upon
decreased fares during the offseason.

22 Furlong, Irish Tourism, 23.
23 The most significant work in terms of legislation for this study is Ciara Breathnach, The Congested Districts
Board of Ireland, 1891-1923 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), a crucial study on light rail lines that were
inadvertently instrumental for tourism in the case of Co. Donegal.
24 Walton, The English Seaside Resort, 40-3, Durie, Water is Best.
25 Furlong, Irish Tourism, 15.
Durie’s work on sporting tourism, and his work with M.J Huggins suggest this relationship worked both ways, as railway promoters also advertised the sporting and healthful benefits to be found across Ireland as an incentive for people to travel.\textsuperscript{26} Benefits indeed appear to have been mutual, as John Heuston demonstrates in his case study of a resort at Kilkee, Co. Clare. As early as 1840 local interests began campaigning for a rail link, and the introduction of the railway to Kilkee in 1892 provided a “major stimulus to the resort,” culminating in the establishment of a golf links in the same year.\textsuperscript{27} These scholars have gone beyond simply identifying these trends, exploring the associations that various forms of transport held, thus bringing the seaside from a study not just of the hotel itself, but of the hotel and its wider place and space in Ireland.

**Seaside Resorts**

Considering the heavy focus on seaside resorts (in the form of case studies) in England and Scotland in the existing historiography, this study requires an investigation of this more extensive body of literature. Case studies of resorts offer unique analyses relating to a specific area of study: this approach provides stronger conclusions by avoiding the application of generalisations to entire regions, a strong reason why this approach predominates the existing literature. This is particularly the case for many Irish case studies, which primarily focus on applying a local lens to their social history analyses. Current scholarship largely utilises a socioeconomic analysis and portrays the seaside resort as an institution that is enmeshed within a complex framework of transport, advertisement, public and private interests, and the related commerce involved in all these forms. Two studies by John Walton, for instance, emphasise the

\textsuperscript{26} Durie, “Sporting Tourism Flourishes,” 139, and Durie and Huggins, “Sport, Social Tone, and the Seaside Resorts of Great Britain, c. 1850-1914,” 173.

resort as a unique establishment.  

He provides a sophisticated examination of the “flexibility of the seaside in catering for the serious and the hedonistic, the quiet and the noisy, the respectable and the rough,” which ensured the success of these British resorts over time. Both studies are efforts to remedy some of the voids in the existing historiography by providing a sustained academic approach to an investigation of the seaside resort, emphasising the resort as a “crucible of conflict” and struggle between host and guest. The resort is also examined not as a standalone institution, but as a phenomenon linked beyond the confines of the resort’s walls, providing the means for a larger discussion of class and politics, for instance. By doing so, Walton also offers a call and an answer for a more academic consideration of the seaside resort, which has largely been pursued through cultural analyses, such as Alain Corbin’s *The Lure of the Sea: The Discovery of the Seaside in the Western World.*

In a similar vein, Durie’s work on the Scottish hydro takes a view of hydrotherapy and the hydro hotel as a wider and complex social, cultural, and political phenomenon, touching on business and industry at local and national levels, while charting the fluctuations in leisure practices against initially held values of the hydro as a curative agent. While the health benefits of bathing had long been the attraction of both coastal and inland resorts, such as the Scottish hydro (which was not necessarily on the sea), sporting amenities increasingly proliferated and came to define the seaside resort. More conventional ideas of what was expected at a seaside

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thus changed, as both adolescents and their parents craved variety alongside excitement.\textsuperscript{33} To a surprising extent then, the development and maturation of England’s resorts followed the class and sectional lines of wider society. John Heuston’s study on Kilkee is certainly useful, but Ireland’s resorts have generally not received the same degree of academic attention as Britain has for this time period. These developments were also seen in Ireland’s resorts, but were by no means duplicated and were not always similar; the ensuing case studies of Buncrana and Bundoran will underscore these differences.

**The Resort Life Cycle Theory**

I have chosen to discuss a conceptual framework relating to the two case studies by using geographer R.W. Butler’s resort life cycle theory, which is a rare model in that it examines change over a long continuum.\textsuperscript{34} Butler sees a resort as being characterised by seven stages: *exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, and stagnation*, followed by either *decline* or *rejuvenation*. As Butler remarks, “[t]here can be little doubt that tourist areas are dynamic, that they evolve and change over time.”\textsuperscript{35} His life cycle model begins with an unexplored space, often a resort, which gains popularity over time, attracting greater numbers of guests while exhibiting a heightened degree of commercialism, often from external sources (both public and private) to market attractions to specific sections of the population. As new leisure amenities develop, resorts adapt their market appeal (most often in the *rejuvenation* stage) to capitalise on opportunities of profit and growth.\textsuperscript{36} This theory, while useful as a portrayal of resort development, is imperfect: Svend Lundtorp and Stephen Wanhill argue that it is “more descriptive than normative,” as case studies demonstrate a departure from his theoretical model.

\textsuperscript{33} Walton, *The English Seaside Resort*, 184-5.
\textsuperscript{35} Butler, “The Concept of a Tourist Cycle of Evolution,” 5.
\textsuperscript{36} Butler, 9, 10.
on both the demand and supply axis of resort development.\textsuperscript{37} Because markets are not uniform, this also problematises the relation of case studies to stages on the cycle, while also challenging the linear progression from one stage to the next, as Butler has identified.\textsuperscript{38} However, if provided with case studies that fit Butler’s scheme, as the resorts at Buncrana and Bundoran broadly do, the life cycle theory allows for informative analysis relating to a resort’s progress and growth from a conceptual point of view. Walton questions the theory’s historical usefulness, however, which is why I apply Butler’s methods with caution. Most resorts are “far too idiosyncratic to fit within the straightjackets of [this approach],” he argues, suggesting it is a “much cruder, economically driven model.”\textsuperscript{39} In order to adequately test the life cycle theory (as Butler would have it) a much longer period of research is required detailing the entire history of a resort, with a specific focus on the resort’s initial rise and its ensuing state of progress until the period of study: this research was outside the purview of this project. As such I will treat this model as “a useful basic introductory tool of classification” as Walton recommends, applying it to my case studies as an informative instrument.\textsuperscript{40} Spas and resorts provide a unique lens through which I can analyse a cultural turn taking place in Ireland at the turn of the century in its sporting heritage, by charting the ebbs and flows of these seaside resorts within the wider historical context of the late-nineteenth century.

**Source Selection: Driving Through the Archives**

A rich base of primary sources has been accumulated to undertake this project. The full run of volumes from *The Golfing Annual* is a critical source set. It is a London-based publication

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\textsuperscript{38} Lundtorp and Wanhill, “The Resort Lifecycle Theory,” 962.
\textsuperscript{40} Walton, “Prospects in Tourism History,” 785.
\end{flushleft}
established in 1888 by one C. Robertson Bauchope, the first editor of the *Annual*, after receiving multiple enquiries “entreating him to take the matter in hand” during his time as a representative for *The Field*, a British sporting magazine with a long pedigree.\(^{41}\) The *Annual* represents a response to this call for a more enlightened and entertaining view of golf, structured on “the possibility of amusing the reader while imparting information to him.”\(^{42}\) The *Annual* has club directories, which are essential, as well as an increasing inclusion of material on Irish links, including notes on quality, but also accommodation and transport concerns. Laurie Auchterlonie, a famed Scottish golfer, signed one of the volumes of the *Annual* consulted for this project. Whether this was a personal copy, or a signed copy for a fan, is difficult to deduce, but in any case the *Annuals* circulated around the world, and was a mainstay of the golfing community from its creation, remaining popular well into the twentieth century. The 1901 *Annual* held in the private collection I accessed was inscribed “Worcestershire Golf Club” on the frontispiece, suggesting that golf clubs purchased the *Annual* for their members’ leisurely reading in the clubhouse.

Both the British and Irish press is also consulted, including such publications as Ireland’s *Freeman’s Journal*, which opposed the Irish nationalist politician Charles Stewart Parnell, and thus became more conservative, under the management of Caroline Gray in the 1890s, wife of the deceased Edmund Dwyer Gray, who had done much to popularise and circulate the *Freeman* around Ireland during his lifetime.\(^{43}\) Given Belfast’s proximity to both case studies, the anti-Catholic, conservative Unionist *Belfast News-Letter* is also utilised.\(^{44}\) The *Irish Times*, Ireland’s

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\(^{42}\) *The Golfing Annual* vol. 1, (1888), iii.


first penny daily newspaper, with the largest circulation in the country during this period, is also
drawn upon. A strong emphasis for both case studies is placed on the liberal-oriented *Derry
Standard* and the conservative Protestant Unionist newspaper the *Londonderry Sentinel* as well,
as Londonderry often provided the press to towns such as Buncrana and Bundoran in the absence
of their own newspaper. *The Times*, one of England’s most influential newspapers, provides
informative insights on English views. Under the editorship of George Earle Buckle and the
management of Charles Frederic Moberly Bell, a prominent journalist of the period, *The Times*
was of conservative slant and represented a vehement oppositional force to Parnell’s politics.

Another major source for this thesis is F.W. Crossley’s *Irish Tourist*, a trade periodical
which began circulating around Britain in June of 1894 at the low cost of two pence per issue.
Crossley was the son of a Lancashire artist and former employee of Thomas Cook in Dublin.
Seeking a new career, he was “convinced of the economic potential of Irish tourism,” and
established a variety of publications for both tourists and Irish residents promoting Ireland as an
attractive holiday destination. Crossley wanted to raise the profile of Ireland not only as a tourist
destination, but also as a nation, seeking to rectify misconceptions of the Irish as a backwards
race. Using his influence, Crossley established support for the tourist movement from such
notables as Gerald Balfour, chief secretary for Ireland from 1895 to 1900. Government support
lent a certain popular credence to the movement, which also encouraged the transference of
funding to various areas from both official and private investors into the development of
accommodation, transport, and advertising, to name a few.

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46 North, 339.
48 Irene Furlong, “Frederick W. Crossley: Irish Turn-of-the-Century Tourism Pioneer,” *in Irish History: A Research
Yearbook* no. 2, eds. Joost Augusteijn, Mary Ann Lyons, Deirdre McMahon (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), 166.
Inside the *Irish Tourist’s* pages were travel advertisements, a variety of recommendations for choices of destination, travel routes, and details on transport costs, itineraries, and locations, in a magazine initially marketed towards external guests, for the most part. While this publication was a success, Crossley was not *the* “engine of Irish tourism,” as he is depicted by Furlong. Crossley could, and did, publish vociferously, which certainly played its role in terms of advertising and promotion, but his campaign did not always align with the “modernising programmes” of the day, as James argues.\(^{49}\) What drew tourists to Ireland, and continued to draw them into the twentieth century, were efforts made by the hoteliers, railway magnates, concerned politicians, and active inhabitants at the local level. Working together, they aimed to entrench Ireland in both citizens’ and visitors’ minds as a destination both worthy and deserving of patronisation by the tourist. This was a protracted process that raised conflicts between host and guest, and publications such as the *Irish Tourist* attempted to alleviate visitors’ concerns by addressing them in focused articles and advertisements.

The mastheads of the *Irish Tourist* are telling of the magazine’s objectives, both of which varied over time. The first issues advertised “A Journal Devoted to the Promotion of Travel in Ireland.”\(^{50}\) By 1898, this message had changed to “A Journal for Travellers, Cyclists, Golfers, Anglers & Sportsmen,”\(^{51}\) and in the second issue of 1901 the title was changed again to the “Official Organ of the Hotel Proprietors Association.”\(^{52}\) The objectives of the *Irish Tourist* were clear, but also diversified over time, from their initial goal of raising awareness of Ireland to a more focused publication aimed at a specific subset of travellers. In this sense, “A Journey=Journal,” which was adopted after the second masthead, is emblematic of the overall

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\(^{49}\) James, *Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland*, 53.

\(^{50}\) *Irish Tourist* 1.1 (1894), cover page.

\(^{51}\) *Irish Tourist* 5.1 (1898), cover page.

\(^{52}\) *Irish Tourist* 8.2 (1901), cover page.
aims of the publication: charting the progression of Ireland during this time, in journal form, as a journey for both its inhabitants and its visitors. While circulation numbers for the *Irish Tourist* are impossible to discern, if Crossley is to be believed, the magazine was a near instant success upon its introduction. Enda McKay demonstrates how the lifespan and success of trade journals like the *Irish Tourist* was often dictated by the temporal circumstance into which they were born. Indeed the *Irish Tourist* (established in 1894) was published during a period marked by the burgeoning field of Irish tourism, thus contributing to its success.⁵³ Tourism was often marketed as a trade in these pages, with columns regularly providing not only useful information but also educational anecdotes amongst its various advertisements. While this does problematise an understanding of the magazine’s impact, the figures given in Irish newspapers as well as the *Irish Tourist* can provide some sense of its influence.

This study relies on a diverse range of printed media, utilising photographs, guidebooks, travelogues, advertisements, newspapers, trades magazines, and golfing publications (amongst others) to supply its evidence. Travelogues were especially useful as the often first person narrative provided social and cultural commentary on specific circumstances in Ireland, namely golf for this study, while guidebooks gave a sense of the details revolving around golf: a course’s size, the number of hotels and rooms available, and the essential information of the cost relating to each of these mediums. The case study of Buncrana also benefits from statistical analysis by using the Lough Swilly Hotel’s visitors book from the years 1891 to 1903 to chart the resort’s tourist season and demonstrate the resort’s heightened patronage. The numbers from this book are used with caution, as the signing of hotel books is a scribal practice associated with hotel culture, and was thus not a legal requirement for guests. While these numbers provide an

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approximate count of guests on a yearly basis, it is not an exact depiction of hotel guests (nor
does it guarantee that these guests visited and utilised the golf course).

While a plethora of writings exist in the primary source material relating to an Irish golf
courses’ design, structure, and drawbacks, for example, there is much less material providing an
analytical commentary on golf’s status in Ireland during the 1890s. Finding this information
necessitated a close reading of various articles and advertisements from this period to arrive at a
conclusion on golf’s place in Ireland as a social and cultural phenomenon. As this study is as
much about English perceptions as it is about Irish ones, the use of a variety of publications from
both countries provides a multitude of perspectives for consideration. It also uses sources that
have been given short shrift, or have never been used in the academic sense. Both Kevin James
and Irene Furlong have mined the pages of the *Irish Tourist* in the past, and yet this source
remains ripe with potential as a trove of useful information for the historian. To my knowledge
no study exists that uses *The Golfing Annual*, an extremely useful source for early golf, and with
certainty *The Irish Golfing Annual*, a very rare text, has never received academic analysis.
Utilising these sources as a collective provides an encompassing and critical background for this
study, which is thoroughly grounded and guided by primary source material.

**Conclusion**

This study draws upon a diverse range of source material to support its conclusions.
Given the lack of scholarly study on Irish golf, and the general absence of works examining
sport’s place in Irish society, particularly at the seaside, this analysis is a relevant and useful
contribution to the historiography on sport in Ireland. Utilising recent studies of both British and
Irish resorts, it situates golf, an imported (and thus non-Irish) sport, within the burgeoning
phenomena of the late Victorian seaside pleasure resort. The emphasis on Irish tourism
development occurred concurrently with the increase of transport infrastructures in Ireland, an industry closely linked with golf’s development, as will be shown. Because Irish golf has not been a focus of contemporary historians, this study’s findings and conclusions are primarily founded upon a rich array of source material from late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries sources bases, drawn largely from Britain and Ireland. Within a short period of time, Irish golf became a normal and accepted activity in the country, both as an indispensable adjunct to the seaside resort and a favourite leisure activity for the middle and upper class enjoyment of both English and Irish guests. This was not an immediate process, nor was it without conflict, as will be shown in the following pages.
Chapter 1: Golf in the Irish Context

Golf was played in Ireland as early as 1762, where the first mention of Irish golf is found in an edition of *Faulkner’s Dublin Journal* from that year, where a “Goff Club” is mentioned.\(^1\) References to the game are scarce for the remainder of the century, but are increasingly found over the course of the nineteenth century. The sport continued to grow on a small scale during the 1850s, after which it increased in popularity and proliferated across the country by the end of the century, at both inland and coastal locales. By the 1890s golf’s existence in Ireland was most often associated with seaside resorts, not just as an extension of leisure experiences at the seaside resort, but also as a primary factor in the choice and destination of the tourists’ stay. This movement was particularly marked between 1890 and 1900. Golf may have been Scottish in origin, but it was appropriated by the English within an Irish context as an affirmation of English identity out of place. As the game developed on a wider commercial scale, Irish entrepreneurs catered to the holidaying desires of the English traveller, while also placing a distinct Irish dimension within this discourse – defined not necessarily in opposition to the English, as other Irish sports such as hurling were, but certainly as an effort to bring the Irish as a race on level terms in the eyes of their continental counterparts. This chapter analyzes these developments, starting with the social and political climate that encouraged the game’s growth (that was in many ways popularised by the golfing duo Arthur and James Balfour, prominent British politicians). It then transitions to the standardisation of golfing practice; the body that allowed this to take place was the Golfing Union of Ireland, which codified rules countrywide, but was also witnessed through an increased transport presence, particularly through the railway, which allowed guests to arrive at these various golf courses. The role of hotels is then considered, as

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\(^1\) Gibson, *Early Irish Golf*, 9.
well as the increasing importance of advertisements in successfully selling these destinations to potential tourists.

**Golf Comes to Ireland**

The increasing presence of golf in Ireland during the 1850s had strong ties to the influence of its Scottish neighbour. During this period, a steady influx of Scottish immigrants arrived on Ireland’s shores, many of whom had military connections and were among the first to play golf in Ireland.\(^2\) This remained a limited process in terms of the game’s development, however: by the end of December 1889, there were only seven golf clubs in Ireland, four of which were in the province of Ulster and three in the province of Leinster. Efforts were made to establish a club at Fota in Co. Cork, but the course appears to have quickly folded.\(^3\) During its early stages, golf in Ireland was restricted to areas known as strongholds of English and Scottish settlement. Upon its introduction, the game’s virtues and worthiness were not readily embraced by all in Ireland, as it was initially considered the preserve of elite Protestants, which is evidenced by the prevalence of politicians, lawyers, and law enforcement officials amongst the surnames in early Irish club lists: surnames that were often non-Irish in origin.\(^4\) While these clubs were certainly pioneering in Ireland, and while they were often in affluent areas, none of these initial clubs owned their own course, either renting common land or borrowing space on private property (thus highlighting the exclusivity of the sport).\(^5\) While they lacked a unified direction and operated in separation from one another, these clubs established the precedent for the expansion of the early 1890s.

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\(^2\) Gibson, 23, 32.
\(^3\) Gibson, 56.
The rapid growth of courses in Ireland was not a unique phenomenon. An investigation of club directories listed in *The Golfing Annual*, an influential book circulated from London, reveals the international nature of golf’s spread. The *Annual* from the year 1896 noted how “the Royal and Ancient Game has driven far and sure almost to the uttermost ends of the earth.”⁶ Since the first publication in 1888, where courses from around the world listed in the *Annual* numbered 195, an incremental period of growth of “truly aldermanic proportions” occurred: in 1889, 230 new clubs, in 1890, 277, in 1891, 387, in 1892, 529, in 1893, 634, in 1894, 759, in 1895, 999, and by the 1896 edition, 1,400 clubs from around the globe were detailed in the *Annual*’s pages.⁷ By 1898, the names of golfing committees were omitted due to the “exigencies of space,” as 1,750 clubs now graced the Annual’s pages.⁸ The editor was frank the following year with the addition of 353 new clubs: “These figures speak for themselves.”⁹ Indeed, the rapidity of the game’s growth as a worldwide phenomenon is undeniable, and was strongly linked to the British themselves, as “the internationalization of golf went hand in hand with the development of British imperialism.”¹⁰ It is no surprise then that golf’s rapid increase in Canada took place from the 1890s onwards as well.¹¹ What is a surprise, however, is how golf escaped the stigma that became associated with sports such as cricket, as will be demonstrated later.

With golf’s new global presence, it became necessary to set Ireland apart as a country with a distinct golfing heritage that was worthy of the golfer’s time and money, as entrepreneurs in Ireland seeking tourist income quickly realised. As H.M. Rush of the Tantallon Golf Club in North Berwick argued, “Golfers [in England and Scotland] are perhaps rather apt to regard the

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⁶ *The Golfing Annual* vol.9 (1896), 1.
⁷ *The Golfing Annual* vol.9 (1896), 1.
⁸ *The Golfing Annual* vol.11 (1898), preface.
⁹ *The Golfing Annual* vol. 12 (1899), preface.
¹⁰ Ceron-Anaya, “An Approach to the History of Golf,” 340. He cites the Curragh in Dublin as a prime example of this phenomenon.
links of the Sister Isle as too far away to be thought of when planning a holiday, whereas Newcastle is really nearer than many of the Scotch and English links.”

While proximity of courses was certainly marketed, the quality of the Irish game was also lauded. Standing at the first tee of the Royal County Down Course, Rush suggested that “you cannot fail to see that the country was intended by nature for golf.” Ireland became renowned for its links golf courses by the seaside, “the natural home of golf,” as R.A. Collingwood, the secretary for the Co. Antrim Golf Club argued in 1890. Rush’s sentiments were echoed in numerous articles and publications from this period, insisting that Ireland was unique in its golfing pedigree, specifically citing the quality of turf and the beauty of scenery. Geographically close and increasingly accessible to England and Scotland, Ireland was well deserving of every golfer’s attention (as proponents of Irish golf would have it). While these sentiments emanated from Ireland, they were adopted and disseminated by other nations as well, perhaps most importantly by the English.

**Golf’s Boom Stage in Ireland: 1890-1900**

What accounts for the rapid expansion of golf in Ireland during the final decade of the century? A multitude of factors must be considered. Increasing prosperity expanded to the middle class while a simultaneous transition in the workplace provided an upsurge in available leisure time. As the “industrial heart of the island,” the northern province of Ulster, with its strong links with Scotland, had a high population density supported by industry. Thus, a large, leisured professional class emerged by the end of the century, complete with disposable income for activities such as golf. One specific incident that indirectly aided Irish golf’s progress was the

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14 R.A. Collingwood, “More Golf in Ireland,” in *The Golfing Annual* vol.3, ed. David S. Duncan (London: Horace Cox, 1890), 76. Collingwood was a frequent contributor to the *Annual*, and his articles are drawn from *passim*.
death of Charles Stewart Parnell in 1891. Parnell was well known for his role in agrarian unrest and political upheaval, and his passing brought uncertainty to the political nationalist movement in Ireland. Parnell was also an important figure in the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), a movement dedicated to the promotion of traditional Gaelic sport. It suffered from his sudden passing, as Parnell’s supporters (in politics and in the GAA) lacked a united focus with his absence, which will be returned to later.\(^\text{16}\)

As the period of agrarian unrest experienced around Ireland during the 1880s settled, the landed gentry often turned their attention to golf, even providing land free of cost for local clubs to utilise. This was the case at Cavan, Co. Cavan, Massareene, Co. Antrim, and Rostrevor, Co. Down.\(^\text{17}\) Interest was further stimulated by the aforementioned Scottish military presence, which worked side by side with gentry at the local level to provide organisation and stability to golf’s growth.\(^\text{18}\) Railway companies were notably astute in their investment in golf, witnessing the game’s popularity with the gentry and extending this success to their own benefit. A simultaneous movement in the hotel industry utilised golf courses as a means to capitalise on this new golfing fad. Together with the major railway companies, these parties saw the benefits of a diversified series of leisure practices along both major and minor rail lines, a movement that proved highly profitable everyone involved. It was the upper echelons of society in Ireland that initially embraced golf, and as the 1890s unfolded, this elite allure was packaged, commodified, and sold to the emerging professional middle classes who were seeking this exact variety of leisure experience.

After bathing (whether for health or pleasure) was no longer a marketable attraction on its own, new leisure practices were widely adopted in Ireland: particularly angling and shooting. Golf overtook both in popularity, however, and was promoted as the primary leisure activity at


\(^{17}\) Gibson, 62. The landed gentry were often non-Irish by birth, and possessed significant tracts of land.

\(^{18}\) Gibson, 62.
the seaside resort for a variety of reasons. In contrast to angling and shooting, golf involved a much closer association of space with place, evinced through the fixed rather than transient nature of the sport itself; while the golfer’s ball might stray beyond the confines of the course, the links themselves were tied to their locales, and integrated with the resort and its capital investment strategies. Neither angling nor shooting possessed the same territorial relationship. While a river might be overfished, or an animal overhunted, golf links did not suffer in nearly the same way from heightened patronage. Clearly delineated boundaries ensured that players were more likely to stay within the borders of the links, and the varied nature of the links themselves ensured that play remained fresh and new, in contrast to sports such as tennis or bowls, where the field of play remains consistent regardless of location. Golf also ensured that guests remained firmly within the orbit of the resort, while providing a markedly accessible space for female golfers, as will be seen. As the sport grew in popularity, and resort owners realized its potential, the establishment of links by existing hotels, hotels at existing links, or the creation of both in tandem was made possible through the combined efforts of local land agents, hotel proprietors, railway magnates, and even politicians.

The ‘Golfours’

Golf’s rapid spread in Ireland was popularised through the presence of important celebrities and politicians. Two British figures were particularly influential in this regard: the brothers Arthur and Gerald Balfour, who were prominent British Conservative politicians of Scottish birth. Arthur Balfour was appointed chief secretary of Ireland in 1887, which he held until 1891. Gerald Balfour assumed this position from 1895 to 1900. Arthur Balfour also became the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom in 1902. Arthur’s vision for Ireland, shared by a series of successive Conservative administrations, revolved around the reduction or elimination of Irish
unrest regarding their Union with Britain by targeting land reform in Ireland, as land issues in the country were historically at the heart of the problematic relationship this Union was characterised by.\textsuperscript{19} This policy was designed to deprive Irish nationalists of political ammunition for resistance to British rule, and was firmly given expression through Gerald’s work as chief secretary from 1895 to 1900 in the Unionist administration of his uncle Lord Salisbury.\textsuperscript{20} Given the fraternal relationship, Arthur and particularly Gerald were uniquely positioned in their posts as chief secretary to propose widespread reform in Ireland. As Fergus Campbell argues, from 1879 to 1914 the chief secretary “held the most powerful position in Irish society.”\textsuperscript{21} David Hudson, in his study on the Balfour brothers, suggests that the heavily marked Irish Office papers and the mass of communiqués sent under Gerald’s tenure “reveal a chief secretary who was intimately involved in every aspect of the legislative program enacted under his authority.”\textsuperscript{22} A rapidly changing political environment in Ireland simultaneously underscored a society in transition by the century’s end. Both brothers were deeply enmeshed in Ireland’s future, as they attempted to stabilise the country while maintaining it as an element of the United Kingdom and improving its infrastructure, all the while hoping to quiet the influence of Irish nationalists.

‘The Establishment Messiah:’ Arthur J. Balfour

Arthur’s passion for golf, which was also shared by Gerald, stemmed in part from their father’s influence. In 1887 James Balfour published a book of reminiscences regarding the links at St. Andrews, one of his favourite places to play.\textsuperscript{23} He lauded the Scottish role in popularising the sport “as to make it a game for all classes; and all classes do play it – judges of the Supreme

\textsuperscript{19} David Hudson, \textit{The Ireland That We Made: Arthur and Gerald Balfour’s Contribution to the Origins of Modern Ireland} (Akron: The University of Akron Press, 2003), 2.
\textsuperscript{20} Hudson, \textit{The Ireland That We Made}, 3, 4.
\textsuperscript{21} Fergus Campbell, \textit{The Irish Establishment 1879-1914} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 55.
\textsuperscript{22} Hudson, 103.
\textsuperscript{23} James Balfour, \textit{Reminiscences of Golf on St. Andrew’s Links} (Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1887).
Court, officers of high rank in the Army and Navy, noblemen, tradesmen, men of all professions and of all ages, fathers and sons.\textsuperscript{24} While he does not mention Arthur and Gerald, it seems probable that he introduced the game to his children and played it with them. By 1887, golf’s spread around the globe was notable, particularly in British territories, a development James noted with relish. For him, golf’s success was attributed
to the variety of its attractions. It is a fine, open-air, athletic exercise, not violent, but bringing into play nearly all the muscles of the body; while that exercise can be continued for hours. But it would be a mistake to suppose that it is only muscular exertion that is required. It is a game of skill, needing mind and thought and judgment, as well as a cunning hand. It is also a social game, where one may go out with one friend or with three, as the case may be, and enjoy mutual intercourse, mingled with an excitement which is very pleasing, while it never requires to be associated with the degrading vice of gambling.\textsuperscript{25}

Arthur and Gerald’s father thus highlighted golf’s attractions as a physically and mentally challenging sport that was well suited for social interaction. Given these traits, it is not surprising that both Arthur and Gerald became ambassadors for golf. It was a game both respectable and (in theory) open to all, without negative stigmas associated with other sports.

Both Balfour brothers thus possessed a long personal history with the game of golf. Before holding his position as chief secretary in Ireland, Arthur was a member of the North Berwick Club in Scotland.\textsuperscript{26} The first mention of his presence on Irish courses came in 1888, when he visited a course in Dublin.\textsuperscript{27} After this his name appeared widely in the late-nineteenth century press, as he was quoted in various golfing publication, while also offering his own personal contributions to some of the establishment magazines. As an influential figure, he was also widely sought after for club captaincy, since it was common practice at this time to recruit

\textsuperscript{24} Balfour, \textit{Reminiscences of Golf}, 53.
\textsuperscript{25} Balfour, 54.
\textsuperscript{26} Gibson, \textit{Early Irish Golf}, 54.
\textsuperscript{27} Gibson, 54.
an individual of notable standing to one’s club in order to attract other players.\textsuperscript{28} During his time in Ireland he gained great publicity for his political activity and public attention to Ireland’s golf courses. As John Gordon McPherson argued in his 1891 book \textit{Golf and Golfers, Past and Present}: “Nowhere has the game made more rapid strides during the past year or two than in Ireland, which is as it should be, seeing that the chief ruler of the country is the right honourable A.J. Balfour, who is one of the keenest Scotch golfers.”\textsuperscript{29} Even after his tenure as chief secretary he remained an active and avid proponent of the game, lending much-needed credibility to the sport that assisted in its popularisation and survival in Ireland, which led \textit{Punch} to label him, in good humour, as “the Hon. Arthur Golfour.”\textsuperscript{30} It appears that Arthur embraced this persona. Noting his Scottish ancestry in a speech given before the Chislehurst Golf Club in Kent in 1894, he expressed “without any undue exhibition of national vanity” his satisfaction of witnessing “the gradual Scottification of England by the great golfing propaganda,” a statement drawing laughter and cheers from his audience.\textsuperscript{31} Intriguingly, golf, even as ‘propaganda,’ did not draw the same negative stigmas that other English and Irish sports held in this period.

A comparison of the Balfours and Parnell provides a fitting discussion at this point. Both of the brothers and Parnell lent credibility to their respective interests (golf for the Balfours, and Gaelic sports for Parnell), but in a different way. Parnell’s involvement with the GAA possessed highly political and nationalist connotations, which often led English commentators to decry these Gaelic sports. In 1881, the London-based newspaper \textit{The Graphic} described hurling as “the

\textsuperscript{28} Gibson, 54.
\textsuperscript{29} John Gordon McPherson, \textit{Golf and Golfers Past and Present} (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1891), 88. The dedication in the book’s frontispiece is worth mention: “To the Right Hon. Arthur James Balfour, LL.D., M.P., The Chief Secretary for Ireland; An Accomplished Scholar, A Strong Thinker, A Distinguished Statesman, And a Keen Golfer, This Volume is Gratefully Dedicated by the Author.”
\textsuperscript{30} Gibson, 54, and \textit{Punch}, in “The Royal and Ancient Game of Golf,” \textit{The Derry Sentinel}, 18 June 1891.
cricket of barbarians,” tying into ideas of an uncivilized Irish society. Hurleys, the club used to play the sport, increasingly were looked upon as a nationalist weapon by the British authorities and became associated with violent nationalism and Irish political agitation, causes that Parnell was tied to in his later life. Parnell’s connection with these Gaelic sports aided in their politicisation and marked them as deviant. The Balfours on the other hand had a vastly different relationship with the sport. While they both served as honorary captains for different clubs, neither had any association with the Golfing Union of Ireland (discussed in the next section), which was the golfing equivalent of the GAA. Their relationship with golf served as relief from politics rather than a close association with it. A golf club as an implement did not play the same role as the hurley, nor did the sport itself attract any great degree of negative attention in the Irish press, while Gaelic sports most certainly did in English newspapers. Detractors criticised the Balfours for avoiding politics by golfing, a critique that was not entirely without merit: Arthur enjoyed the game to such an extent that he publicly declared in 1900 that he would rather be a scratch golfer than a Member of Parliament. In an article entitled “A Cabinet of Incompetents,” the Freeman’s Journal did not take kindly to this jibe, arguing that “this was an expression of his sentiments, so far as his sentiments are to be judged by his conduct.” The relaxed relationship that the Balfour brothers shared with golf draws a stark distinction between Parnell and hurling. Given their prominent position as elite members of English and Irish society, it is no surprise that the Balfour’s sporting practices (although for different reasons) drew scrutiny within Ireland.

34 “A Cabinet of Incompetents,” The Freeman’s Journal, 3 December 1900.
Resisting the ‘Golfours’

While the Balfours enjoyed the game of golf immensely, not everyone in Ireland enjoyed the fact that they partook in this leisure activity. The *Irish Field* recalled how Arthur “employed two caddies, one for carrying the clubs and the other to act as forecaddie, both being trusted (and fully armed) members of the famous ‘G’ Division of the [Dublin Metropolitan Police].”\(^{35}\) That he required an armed escort for the majority of his stay in Ireland speaks to his unpopularity in some quarters and also hints at the origin of the nickname given to him by his critics, ‘Bloody Balfour.’ Arthur’s open support for golf created opposition in the press. This was most notably articulated in a series of illustrations penned by J.D. Reigh, an Irish nationalist who created political cartoons for Charles Stewart Parnell’s arch-nationalist newspaper *United Ireland.*\(^{36}\) Reigh tackled Arthur’s penchant for the golfing green in two 1890 images pictured in Figures 1 and 2. Both Arthur and Gerald held visions of “Constructive Unionism,” or “Killing Ireland With Kindness.” They believed that reconstructed districts in Ireland “would look to its English benefactors with gratitude,” and were left confused when “the Irish were less than wholly grateful for the benefits of English rule.”\(^{37}\) The Balfours thus displayed a certain naïveté relating to Irish perceptions of the work they had accomplished. Arthur (and particularly Gerald) worked tirelessly to offer a reprieve for Ireland’s ‘congested districts,’ but their efforts were not always judged effective or welcome, as Reigh’s cartoons demonstrate.

Arthur’s brief moments of leisure away from politics, such as his time on the golf course, were highlighted as evidence of decadence and abuse of power, and as a signal of his detachment from the deep poverty and alienation that attended Ireland. The Balfours’ failed efforts to be

\(^{35}\) *Irish Field*, 29 July 1922, in Gibson, 55.


\(^{37}\) Hudson, 106-7.
Figure 1: “Ireland Wrestles with Famine,” supplemental image free with United Ireland, 23 August 1890

Figure 2: Reigh’s second cartoon, in a similar vein to his first work. From The Weekly Freeman, 23 August 1890
recognised as the source of the aid coming into Ireland, monetary or otherwise, were highlighted by these cartoons. “Let the Boards of Guardians look to it,” Arthur says in response to the shadow of Famine hanging over Ireland, “I can’t attend to it now, I have got my Golf to mind,” as Figure 2’s caption reads. This cartoon presented the Board of Guardians, a system of support for the poor, as the only presence taking an active stance against the hunger famines sweeping the West of Ireland during the 1890s. Figure 1 has ‘Ireland’ personified in female form fighting off the aftermath of the plague while Arthur Balfour ignores the Irish peasants’ plight by turning his back on them, choosing instead to golf. It was Arthur and not the game itself that these cartoons attacked (indeed, based on the drawings it appears Reigh was highly unfamiliar with the sport’s mechanics). Golf is a unique instance of an imported sport in Ireland at this time. Unlike English sports such as cricket, golf’s status as a Scottish game lent it legitimacy in Ireland. It escaped prohibition by the Gaelic Athletic Association in this period, which consciously worked to curb the tide of rugby and cricket, both seen as definitively English sports.38

Of course, not everyone disagreed with Balfour’s golfing ways. In the 1893 edition of the Golfing Annual, one Mr. Donald Ross from Ireland addressed Arthur’s critics in a poem entitled “Our Statesman Golfer,” the last seven stanzas of which are reproduced here:

His enemies rose, in their wealth and their might,
And they said that for golf his work he did slight;
A butterfly statesman, perched on pleasure’s flower,
Unequal to rule and unfitted for power.

They forgot that the best work of life is oft done
With a mixture of play and a soupçon of fun;
That the lordliest lion may play with his cubs;
Then why not a minister play with his clubs?

All history tells us that great men, ere now,
Have laid down the sceptre to take up the plough,

And the minds that could temper their work with bright play
Have best met the shocks in the world’s rude fray.

His friends, who knew Balfour, but knew not his game,
Which they looked on as childish, insipid, and tame,
To probe the grand secret resolved to essay,
And find out the charm he found in its play.

So they took up their clubs, in pastime’s strife,
Ne’er to lay down again, except with their life;
For they who once take to the practice of Golf
Are bound by its spell, and can ne’er throw it off.

Now, where’er there’s a links or a bit golfing green,
There crowds of gay golfers are sure to be seen,
Till our tight little island can scarce find them room,
Thanks to Balfour, the bright, and the great golfing boom.

Ye gay southron loons, who follow with pride
The best of all games that you once did deride,
If e’er at old Scotland you’re tempted to scoff,
Mind she gave you a king and the old game of Golf.39

Here Ross derided Balfour’s critics, both friend and foe, for their opposition to his golfing ways.

Elsewhere in this poem Ross paraded the benefits of the “health-giving heath” where all one’s troubles were “driven off with the ball from the tee.”40 Regardless of anyone’s opinion regarding the fact that he played, Arthur undoubtedly assisted the progress of early Irish golf. Throughout his tenure in Ireland, during which time the Irish Tourist suggested he “ruled sturdily but kindly,” Arthur “institution a vigorous policy which he pursued with heroic determination and with complete success, and the country is now reaping the fruits of his labour.”41 The Balfours did much to ignite golf’s popularity (albeit amongst an exclusive social class), but the game’s endurance in Ireland was not their exclusive doing. Both men worked tirelessly to create a successful Ireland as they saw fit. But, as the tone of this poem suggests, there was something

41 “Right. Hon. A. J. Balfour Descending Killala Round Tower. The Only Climb Down He Ever Made in Ireland,” The Irish Tourist vol.5.6 (1898), 116.
inherent about the game itself that won adherents beyond the influence of these two men alone.

The early standardisation of Irish golf was certainly influential in this regard.

**Organising the Game: The Golfing Union of Ireland**

Golf’s rapid spread from 1890 to 1900 was reflected by the creation of The Golfing Union of Ireland (GUI), established in 1891. Between 1881 and 1889, seven clubs were founded in Ireland. From 1890 to 1899, 103 additional clubs were founded, followed by 68 from 1900 to 1909, as Table 1 shows – many of which were members of the GUI.\(^{42}\) The importance of standardisation was essential in this regard. With an established framework for golf’s dissemination across the country and farther afield, a recognisable system could be reproduced with relative ease at the local level in a template, usefully characterised through a standardised handicapping system. The *Irish Golfer’s Annual*, a publication designed to mimic the success of *The Golfing Annual*, published a full report of the GUI in its first edition of 1897.

**Table 1: Number of Clubs Founded in Ireland Between 1881 and 1985**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Clubs Founded</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881-1889</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890-1899</td>
<td>103</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900-1909</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>1910-1919</td>
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<td>1920-1929</td>
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<td>1940-1949</td>
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<td>1950-1959</td>
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<td>1960-1969</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970-1979</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1985</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{42}\) Gibson, 62. Table also derived from Gibson.
The GUI’S first president was the 5th Earl of Ranfurly, Uchter John Mark Knox, a British politician and colonial governor. The imported elements of early Irish golf’s first adherents thus remained strong, with a marked British element in the original committee responsible for the GUI. By 1897, the GUI was “now regarded as the referee for all Golfing matters in Ireland,” which may seem like an overstatement. However, a closer examination of the figures serves to support the GUI’s claim: its membership of nine clubs had reached forty-four by this time, and each club was eligible to send one delegate for every 150 club members to meetings held by the GUI, where issues such as golfing handicaps or the date and location of championship events were determined and resolved.

Writing about the Union for the Golfing Annual in 1892, R.A. Collingwood encouraged the development of these championship meetings, and particularly the creation of an Irish Championship, “for which it is hoped the Scotch and English ‘cracks’ will cross the Channel.” It remains unclear who the desired participants for these events were to be, or if there were trophies or prizes awarded. The GUI recognised, however, that they would have to convince the best English and Scottish professionals of the quality of Irish golf before the everyday golfer from the British mainland would make the trip to see for themselves. The importance of spectacle was also essential in this regard, and although golf may not have had spectatorship similar to an exhibition such as horse racing, spectators played their role in popularising the sport nonetheless. It was one thing to get both players and spectators to a golfing match; it was another to provide rules and scoring systems that were understood by both parties alike.

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43 “Golfing Union of Ireland (Founded 1891),” in Arnold Graves, ed. The Irish Golfing Annual vol.1 (Dublin: The F.W. Crossley Publishing Co., 1897), no page number.
44 “Golfing Union of Ireland,” no page number.
45 “Golfing Union of Ireland,” no page number.
enough for travel writers and journalists from the period to promote the sport through print alone. Golf’s adherents often needed to be convinced in person, and the GUI recognised and embraced this reality.

The GUI was unique in several ways. William Menton’s study of the GUI claims how it was the world’s first national governing body (as distinct from club). The Ladies’ Golf Union and the Irish Ladies’ Golf Union were founded soon afterwards in 1893 and were also the first of their kind. Collingwood’s discussion of the GUI lauded Ireland for being “in the van” for establishing this institution. “That such an organisation is much wanted in Scotland is admitted by many competent authorities,” he suggested, “and English clubs would appear to be arriving at the same conclusion.” While they may have agreed with the principle, it was not until after the First World War that a Scottish Golf Union was created (1920), and the English were even later, forming the English Golf Union in 1924. While golf was popularised in both England and Scotland much earlier in the nineteenth century, the rapidity with which an Irish golfing union was founded after golf was introduced to the country was highly beneficial for its aggressive spread during the 1890s, hinting towards its greater cross-class appeal and perhaps a heightened democratic basis. Because the game had an earlier and stronger foundation in England and Scotland, it is possible that Unions for both countries were not deemed necessary until this later period. Once the sport had an administrative body in Ireland, however, Irish golf was popularised and made accessible to those previously outside of its purview: one of the main objects of the Union was to spread the game outside of Ulster and Leinster, a goal in which they were

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successful. While many of the over 100 new courses remained in these provinces, a lasting legacy in a golf courses’ success was seen across the country during this decade.

Popularising the sport was an immediate objective of the GUI. The Union itself provided the necessary framework to allow this success, by establishing golfing championships and other incentives that were designed in part to attract visitors, although it is unclear whether tourists or domestic traffic was the intended audience of their efforts. The necessary transport infrastructure was required at the local level to achieve the Union’s desires. As such, one of their very first orders of business was to form partnerships with various Irish railway companies. While offering incentives for golfers to ride their rails was an important first step, the GUI touted a more proactive stance on the part of these companies through the extension or creation of golfing facilities along their lines. This was a highly practical resolution for the period, considering that the vast majority of golf courses were constructed close to a major railway station’s branch line. The Union recognised this connection, and made strides to strengthen these ties by encouraging decisive action on the part of railway companies: a challenge both parties accepted.

**Irish Golf and the Railway**

As golf expanded by the century’s end, so to did Irish railways, which were also experiencing massive growth during this period. In 1890 the number of train miles run in Ireland was 13,600,000, and by 1900, this figure had expanded to 17,300,000 miles, or an increase of 27%. For this same period the number of track miles laid in England and Scotland was much higher, but the total increase in overall track laid only amounted to 28% and 30% respectively, thus demonstrating the competitive nature of the Irish rail system within the United Kingdom.

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51 Menton, 17.
52 Menton, 12.
53 Joseph Tatlow, “Irish Railways. Their Progress During the Last Decade of the Last Century,” read before the Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland (Dublin: John Falconer, 1901), 9.
Capital was essential to fund these expensive projects. So it was almost natural that railway companies targeted golfers to fill their first and second-class rail cars, as many of these golfers represented affluent sections of the Irish community. Tapping this tourist class required multiple changes along the lines. The philosophy remained simple, however: by investing in golf, in golf clubs, and in proximate sites of accommodation, the railway company would profit at every juncture in their service.\textsuperscript{54} An 1899 article from the \textit{Irish Golfer} noted how Irish railway companies had discovered golf to be “a veritable gold mine to them.”\textsuperscript{55} With the absence of large industrial bases such as factories and shipyards outside Dublin, Cork, and Belfast, these new golf courses served as leisure amenities in and of themselves, promoting passenger traffic in areas little known for freight traffic. As Mike Cronin and Roisin Higgins argue, railways in this period “were not altruistic constructions. They were built to make money from those who wanted to watch and play sport.”\textsuperscript{56} Golf courses thus provided a destination where one had not existed previously, and railway lines capitalised on this opportunity by enabling golfers to seek out these new ‘tourist hubs,’ thus making railways one of, if not \textit{the}, most important factors in the expansion of Irish golf.\textsuperscript{57}

Railways during this period were representative of the new and changing industrial world. As Higgins argues, railways “increased productivity, created demand for certain goods, and altered the rural and urban landscape.”\textsuperscript{58} While this new urban environment created many new opportunities for those living within it (particularly with an increase in income and leisure time), it also generated a desire to escape from this environment, which could, and did, become oppressive. The golf course and its attendant facilities appeared as a solution to this problem,

\textsuperscript{54} Ian Nalder, \textit{Golf and the Railway Connection} (Edinburgh: Scottish Cultural Press, 2004), 17, 102.
\textsuperscript{55} \textit{The Irish Golfer}, 1899, in Higgins, “‘The Hallmark of Pluperfect Respectability,’” 27.
\textsuperscript{56} Cronin and Higgins, \textit{Places We Play}, 38.
\textsuperscript{57} Higgins, 23-4, 25.
\textsuperscript{58} Higgins, 25.
providing a new leisure activity in Ireland for those who could afford it. While golf courses seemed to offer a release from a hectic urban lifestyle, they in fact “extended its values and practices into the rural environment.”\(^{59}\) While the game of golf itself was not constrained by time, the trains required to deliver players to these courses were. The standardisation of railway schedules rendered journey times to destinations feasible for those on a time budget. By 1899, a passenger could travel coast to coast from the East to the West in four and a half hours, “leaving Amiens Street [Dublin] at 9 AM and arriving in Bundoran in time for lunch,” as the *Irish Golfer* boasted.\(^{60}\) The regulation of the transport process necessarily impacted a golfer’s scheduled time on the links. The existence of the segregated clubhouse at the course, and the introduction of a golfing network in Ireland (under the GUI) signal that “golf’s explosion in popularity occurred precisely because it was so deeply ingrained in the infrastructure and values of industrial capitalist society.”\(^{61}\)

Railways brought passengers to rural Ireland, while simultaneously giving life to areas that were previously of small importance. In 1890, the total number of passengers carried on Irish rail lines was 21,400,000, and by 1900, this number had increased by 29% to 27,600,000.\(^{62}\) Railway companies received an increase of 19% in profits by the end of the century, while the average amount paid per passenger fell from 1s. 3d. in 1890 to 1s. 1¾d. in 1900. Because of the increase in inexpensive excursion fares, the “advantages of which the public have availed themselves,” Irish railway companies “have carried a largely increased number of passengers for comparatively smaller remuneration.”\(^{63}\) This process created both *rus in urbe* and *urbe in rus*,

\(^{59}\) Higgins, 26.  
\(^{60}\) *The Irish Golfer*, 1899, in Higgins, 27.  
\(^{61}\) Higgins, 26.  
\(^{62}\) Tatlow, “*Irish Railways,*” 17. While the type of travellers is uncertain, tourism certainly played a role here.  
\(^{63}\) Tatlow, 9-10.
that is, expanding the influence of major city centres while bringing picturesque and rural Ireland into amiable contact with the rest of the country.

Accommodating Leisure Seekers: Golfing Hotels

The *Irish Tourist* consistently promoted the improvement, creation, and extension of hotels in Ireland. The first issue of the *Irish Tourist* underscored the progress of Irish hotels, which were becoming increasingly more spacious, comfortable, and inexpensive, and bedecked with modern conveniences. By 1894, the *Irish Tourist* casually claimed that Irish hotels “now hold their own with those in any part of Great Britain.”64 At the end of the 1894 tourist season, Ireland was noted in the *Tourist* as a “land of delights” for the touring sportsman, who was well looked after by their Irish hosts: “Add to this good Hotel accommodation and easy means of communication,” the *Tourist* argued, “[s]urely the tourist can ask for nothing more? Echo answers, ‘Nothing more.’”65 The low standard of Irish hotels and services was a constant complaint before this time. Crossley praised the reversal of this trend, noting how “‘for the first time for centuries you can sleep in comfort. The railway companies are also laying down something like £100,000 for the building of hotels at all the most famous spots.’”66 Both the Irish Tourist Development Association and the Hotel and Restaurant Proprietors’ Association also had their role to play in this development, working alongside railway companies to offer bundled rail and accommodation packages, and mutually agreed upon decreased fares during the offseason.

As golf became a necessary adjunct of the seaside resort experience, existing Irish hotels either added a course to their repertoire of leisure activities, or a new hotel and golf course were simultaneously constructed to capitalise on this new trend. For instance, the cover of the first

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64 *The Irish Tourist* vol.1.1 (1894), 19.
65 *The Irish Tourist* vol.1.6 (1894), 166.
66 “From the Columns of To-day,” *The Irish Tourist* vol.2.1 (1895), 7.
Figure 3: Cover photo for the Irish Golfers’ Annual. This cover was almost identical to the original publication of the English Golfers’ Annual, suggesting the desire for continuity through a familiar representation.

Irish Golfer’s Annual (Figure 3) includes an ambiguous building in the background, which can represent either a clubhouse or a golfing hotel. Just as golf was a new phenomenon during this time, so too was the golfing hotel. As A. Graves, a correspondent to the Irish Tourist noted in 1897, “[w]here there were hotels there was no golf, and our best links were not provided with hotels.”67 This relationship had rapidly developed during the 1890s, as hotel owners were “eagerly on the look out for suitable links, close at hand, and still more enterprising builders are at work erecting hotels near some of our best golf links.” Graves commended the efforts of these men: “It is a crazy world; but we certainly ought to take advantage of the golf craze, which is for the time, at least, a profitable one.”68 For existing hotels without a golf course, golf thus became what the Irish Tourist labeled as “a most valuable adjunct to the Hotel industry of Ireland.”69 Considering the vast influx of golfing visitors, railway companies were encouraged to “offer

67 A. Graves, “A Golfing Tour in Ireland,” in The Irish Tourist vol.4.5 (1897), 91.
69 “Tourist Talk. – Things We Have Heard,” in The Irish Tourist vol.6.7 (1899), 120.
facilities on liberal lines to *bona fide* members of Golf Clubs” in thankful recognition for these golfers’ business. After the requisite hotel accommodation was in place for golfers, railway companies worked with hotel owners (or by their own enterprise, in the case of railway hotels), to offer golfers incentives to ride, stay, and play. This relationship most often took the form of reduced rail tickets and free or nominally priced access to golf courses nearby hotels that were made available for paying guests.

**Advertising Leisure: Selling the Golf Experience**

In 1897, Frederick W. Crossley advertised in the *Irish Tourist* for his newest publication, the *Irish Golfers’ Annual*. As the *Irish Tourist* argued, “[w]e have only to mention Portrush, Newcastle, Lahinch, Portsalon, Rosabanna [sic], Baltray (Drogheda), Dollymount, Portmarnock, Buncrana, and Malahide, [as] a few out of many charming Golfing centres where perfect Golf and the best hotel accommodation can be procured.” This list underscored the increased presence of golf in Ireland during this period, with over 100 golf links established across the country. Golf was taken up not only by enthusiasts, but also resort promoters. The preface to the first edition of the *Irish Golfers’ Annual*, included as well in the advertisement, provided further essentials:

> The children love above all a place where they can dig the sand with their spades, while the fond father prefers to use his niblick; so the existence of Golf Links by the sea, where both bunkers and strand can be found, is often the deciding consideration in selecting the holiday house. But, in addition to holiday parties, there is an ever-increasing army of unattached Golfers who like to tour Links to Links, wherever they can get good Golf and good entertainment. For these two classes this ANNUAL was originally planned.

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70 “Tourist Talk. – Things We Have Heard,” *The Irish Tourist*, 120.
71 *Irish Tourist* vol. 4.1 (1897), 11.
72 Ibid. A niblick is a variety of golf club similar to a nine iron. Additional details from the preface: “It is beautifully illustrated, and contains information as to the names of the Club’s Officers; how to get to the Links; the best hotels; the subscriptions to the Club, and the terms on which visitors are admitted.”
Resorts, it suggested, catered to those from home or abroad, looking to stay for extended periods, and shorter-term visitors who were looking to play their nine or eighteen holes and move on to the next links. As the majority of visitors by the end of the century traveled in family groups, the encompassing nature of the Irish resort by this period was essential, appealing to both sexes, and increasingly multiple classes as well (of all ages). Whether by car, train, or bicycle, visitors were arriving in droves, and it was the onus of the resort owner to cater to their whims.

Escaping the city for a day, a weekend, a week, or even longer was a very real desire for members of almost every class during this period. As available leisure time and wages increased, entrepreneurial individuals (particularly from railway companies) marketed this desire and sold it as a packaged commodity to these consumers. Oftentimes this was accomplished through the use of attractive posters portraying exotic and rustic locations within Ireland accessible by means of a short train ride. Irish resorts were made out to be a unique experience, where one could find comfortable lodging comparable to anywhere in the kingdom. Mehegan shows how these railway posters “traditionally reflected the territorial boundaries of each railway line, and acted as visual signposts to the sights on offer.” Often representing the ‘first contact’ potential visitors had with a given destination, these posters were carefully constructed forms of print media.

Posters were designed and promoted to selectively craft the attractions available on each railway’s line, as Figures 4 and 5 demonstrate. While these figures demonstrate print media disseminated by the hotel at Bundoran, rather than the Great Northern Railway (GNR), they

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74 Angela Mehegan, “The Cultural Analysis of Leisure.” Considered a “dubious art form” by artists of the period, the artists responsible for these works were most often anonymous.
75 Given the hotel’s name on the postcard, the time period from 1897 to 1910 is appropriately fitting.
Figure 4: Undated promotional poster for hotels at Bundoran and Warrenpoint, two locations operated by the Irish Highlands Hotel Company. Both hotels pictured are at Bundoran.

Figure 5: An undated postcard (roughly between 1897 and 1910) sent from the Bundoran hotel. In what appears to be a reproduction of a watercolour painting, Bundoran’s many attractions (with a focus on bathing) are displayed.
possess similar themes. As Angela Mehegan argues in her thoughtful analysis of railway-poster iconography, these posters were “loaded with inbuilt codes that directed the tourist through unknown and presumably unexplored sites. This paternalistic structuring and ordering of space was designed to reassure yet control the new participants in leisure, the aspirant middle classes.” Figure 4 illustrates the establishment of these codes. After assuring potential guests of the quality of the lodging site, the imposing structure which commands the central gaze of the poster, four of Bundoran’s attractions are listed: golfing, fishing, boating, and bathing, while also indicating the potential for many additional activities. Golf’s prominent placement as the first listed activity speaks to its importance for the Bundoran resort. In the same manner as the postcard, the caption reads “Great Northern Hotel and Golf Links” on the advertisement despite the sea, and sea bathing, occupying the primary focus of the scene. The possibility for multiple and diverse leisure outings offered activities for any member of the family, while the presence of the dominant hotel structure on these advertisements ensured a comfortable residence for these guests. Finally, the focus in Figure 4 shifts from the organised and subdued to the rugged and wild of Donegal, thus turning the gaze of the traveller, “and in the context of the aestheticizing of the tourist imagination, signified Ireland’s difference from England.” Donegal’s empty space and difficulty of access, which proved a hindrance to the county for such a long period, was now a marketable and even essential element of its overall attractiveness as a destination.

**Accounting for Golf’s Success in the Nineteenth Century**

How did contemporaries explain the rise of golf? An uncritical opinion is found from one Dr. J.G. McPherson, who wrote a full-length piece for the 1908 *Golfing Annual* entitled “The

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76 Mehegan.
77 Mehegan.
Humanity in Golf.”78 For McPherson, golf’s adoption around the globe was a result of the inherently humane nature of the sport itself. “There is a manliness, an equalising element, a brotherhood in this game which is not so strongly manifested in any other,” he argued. Rather than “levelled-down equality; golf levels up. It is the best golfer who, for the time being, whatever his profession or means, is the best man.”79 Even if an insufficient golfer found themself on unequal playing terms skill or age-wise, handicapping systems helped erase this deficit and allow a match to remain competitive. Ministers played with their congregations, and politicians played with the common people. While these groups may have disagreed in other spheres, McPherson employed optimistic rhetoric when he noted that a “thorough match” made them “‘brithers for a’ that’ at the touch of the club and with the spring of the turf.”80 While golf as a sport remained largely stratified by class in England, golf became a sport that was widely respected by members of all classes to meet together on a level playing field. Because of this, McPherson insisted that “[g]olf eclipses all outdoor games for developing true sociability.”81 While his view is highly positive and elides many of the social divisions that segregated clubs, links, and tee-times, McPherson’s comments are revealing. Golf was initially an elite sport for the middle and upper classes, and yet it carried a fairly universal appeal that catered to all comers. H.C. Hart, the secretary for the Portsalon Golf Club, noted in the 1894 Golfing Annual that unlike cricket or tennis players, for instance, “the golfer goes to meet and to see he knows not what. A new links is to him a new world.”82 Variety of the playing ground was stressed, and increasingly as well the variety of the players themselves, as the sport itself was made accessible.

The introduction of the gutta percha ball, which was mass produced from rubber rather than

80 McPherson, 52-3, 55.
81 McPherson, 55.
hand-made from feathers, drastically reduced the material cost of outfitting the average golfer for play.\textsuperscript{83} As more courses opened, playing costs were driven down in an effort to remain financially competitive with rival companies. Resorts of a higher status attempted to protect their exclusivity, however. In 1892, due to the esteemed pedigree of the famous Royal Portrush Golf Course in Co. Antrim, the large number of members in the club “necessitated the making of defensive restrictions against the casual tourist who ploughs round with one club, but the recognised golfer from England or Scotland will meet with a hearty welcome.”\textsuperscript{84} Clearly there were restrictions, but they were not universal. The game became a popular leisure activity across the country, and as economic disincentives were lifted and an improvement was witnessed in living standards and leisure time for the masses, golf around the globe gained a significant increase in adherents.

‘Social Tone’ and the Irish Golfing Experience

While players at the links may in theory have experienced a “levelled-down equality,” as McPherson suggested, this was a highly contested notion in practice. Harold Perkin’s illuminating study of the ‘social tone’ of Victorian seaside resorts addresses this concern, arguing that “most of the English in that age took their pleasures separately, in the company of their social equals, and each resort had its own ‘social tone,’ finely adjusted to the exact status of its clientele.”\textsuperscript{85} A resort’s tone was not a fixed idea, and was constantly changing based on geographic area, accessibility by transport, time of year, and by the amusements and amenities offered in the district. The nature of services supplied by these elites often predetermined the

\textsuperscript{83} Gibson, 14.
\textsuperscript{84} Collingwood, “The Progress of Irish Golf,” 8. Entry to the clubhouse at Portrush “will not be found a difficult proceeding to a member of any recognised club.”
social makeup of their clientele.\textsuperscript{86} Golf, as an elite sport, was an amenity designed to cater to upper class individuals, and Alastair Durie and M.J. Huggins demonstrate the importance for resorts of maintaining a ‘sporting social tone’ to remain relevant and competitive in the resort market.\textsuperscript{87} The two case studies I selected for this project, seaside resorts in the towns of Buncrana and Bundoran, are located in remote Co. Donegal, and both resort towns had golf courses (several, in fact, for the case of Buncrana) constructed by regional and local elites to revitalise the image of these towns. As Perkin notes, the social tone that was originally intended for a given location was not always what was manifested, was changed based on season to attract a wider clientele, or ended up as a compromise of ‘social zoning.’\textsuperscript{88} Some resorts attempted to maintain an upper class reputation with the coming of the railway, while others embraced the influx of the middle classes.\textsuperscript{89} This process was not always successful, as the Royal County Down Club experienced in 1880 when efforts to broaden the club’s exclusive nature in order to ensure economic success were not initially successful at expanding the clubs’ ranks.\textsuperscript{90} As the century reached its close, however, to a much greater extent this process of heightened inclusivity for the middle classes in golf clubs around the country took place.

Such was the case for these Donegal resorts, and yet it remains a difficult task to determine the value of golfing tourism, or to quantify the numbers of golfing visitors. By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all private golf courses offered affordable terms for visiting golfers to play,\textsuperscript{91} but the absence of Irish club ledgers documenting these visitors is problematic for analytical research. An equally difficult question revolves around the right to play at these

\textsuperscript{86} Perkin, “The ‘Social Tone’ of Victorian Seaside Resorts,” 74.
\textsuperscript{87} Durie and Huggins, “Sport, Social Tone and the Seaside Resorts of Great Britain,” 181.
\textsuperscript{88} Perkin, 83.
\textsuperscript{89} Durie and Huggins, 176.
\textsuperscript{91} Durie, “Sporting Tourism Flowers,” 137, 139.
resorts: did summer guests, who often paid higher prices, receive preferential treatment over off-season guests, who may have been locals, upon their return in peak season? While initially a preserve of English elites in Ireland, the game of golf was also played by Irish elites, and eventually the Irish middle classes dominated the sport in the wake of waning social and economic influence from the landed gentry. As Roisin Higgins argues, one key to the game’s success in Ireland was that golf “honored the old social order while also providing a meeting place for the new establishment: the professional, managerial, and business classes.” While they did not possess the same spending power to afford an aristocratic lifestyle, many members of the emerging middle class sought ways to distinguish themselves from the lower orders of society nonetheless. Golf was ideal in this regard, as these emerging middle classes at both local and national levels entered the Irish golfing sphere without much resistance from its elite benefactors in both Scotland and Ireland, a process that Durie argues “smoothed class tension rather than exacerbating it.” This willingness to share facilities also kept golf not only fairly democratic from a liberal late nineteenth century middle class perspective, but also economically feasible, as the increasing accessibility of green access lessened the financial burden on the collective. The more encompassing version of Irish golf for these ascendant socio-economic classes was accomplished, however, “within strict rules so that the shift in social and political power seemed orderly and a model for society.” These new golfers from a host of social and economic backgrounds, both English and Irish, thus found inclusion in the sport by adhering to respectable and restrained codes of behaviour.

92 Durie and Huggins, 182.
93 Higgins, 15.
94 Higgins, 19.
95 Ceron-Anaya, 344.
96 Durie, “Sporting Tourism Flowers,” 144.
98 Higgins, 31.
Sabbath Sticks and Religion

Respectability also applied to the time of week that golf was played, and even despite the relatively high proportion of Protestants in the county, golf’s adherents were unenthusiastic about laying their clubs down in the face of opposition to Sabbath play. Co. Donegal in 1881 had a population just over 206,000, of which 157,608 or 76.5% were Roman Catholic, 24,759 or 12.0% were Protestant Episcopalian, 20,784 or 10.1% were Presbyterian, and 2,014 or 1.0% were Methodist.99 The Protestant influence often originated from England or Scotland, in a settlement pattern that had occurred centuries before. In fact, 75% of Irish Protestants in this period lived in Ulster, and the province consisted of almost equal parts Protestant and Catholic. As David Hempton and Myrtle Hill argue, “the balance of denominational allegiances did not change all that much over the course of the century.”100 While this relationship originally had a strongly colonial element to it from the seventeenth century, by the end of the nineteenth century this had changed and some Presbyterians “who were organically linked to the country” did not share this same colonial linkage, suggesting that the duration of their stay in the country qualified them as Irish, and that they shared sympathies with the indigenous Irish.101 Still, the relationship between these religious groups remained uneven: the lower classes, who were most often Catholic, could not afford the exclusive and elite privileges shared by those of a higher class. Cusack identifies resort establishment as an effort by ‘improving’ landlords, who were often involved in some way in this process, who were projecting forms of “orderly modernisation” to

100 David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society, 1740-1890 (London: Routledge, 1992), 162.
101 MacLaughlin, Donegal: The Making of a Northern County, 3, 5-6.
the Irish seaside as a salient example highlighting the ‘orderly’ English with the ‘disorderly’ Irish [read: Catholics].

John Sugden and Alan Bairner unpack the difficulties of understanding sport and religion in the North of Ireland:

Sports preference can be seen to stand alongside religious affiliation as an important indicator of a person’s cultural and political location. In addition, sports preference can be used to reveal a person’s religion and this can be dangerous in a region where religious affiliation not only defines the boundaries of the two cultural traditions, but also identifies many of the targets for cross-community conflict.

Protestants in Ulster “constructed a whole way of life which as much as possible was independent of and insulated from the activities of the remaining Gaelic population.” This social division particularly reflected itself through sport, and golf’s exclusivity (especially with the phenomenon of the clubhouse) helped maintain the cultural and religious divide between Protestants and Catholics. Playing sports on the Sabbath remained a divisive issue in Ireland throughout the nineteenth century, as priests and ministers railed against golf and cricket, but also Irish sports such as hurling and Gaelic football (amongst others) from their pulpits. It would appear that critiques of those playing golf were often Evangelical in origin, yet their reception was weak. This said, breaking the Sabbath was an issue for members from all classes and religions during the nineteenth century, yet Sabbatarians were unsuccessful of convincing even there own adherents of the ‘dangers’ of leisure. Golf does not seem to have had the same

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104 Sugden and Bairner, *Sport, Sectarianism and Society*, 17.
105 W.F. Mandle, *The Gaelic Athletic Association & Irish Nationalist Politics, 1884-1924* (London: Christopher Helm Publishers, 1987), 68. Governing bodies of British sport preferred to meet on Sunday rather than play, as they believed Sunday should be reserved to a day of rest. Additionally (while this affected the lower classes to a much greater extent) the Ten Hours Act of 1847 in Britain had the desired effect of creating more free time for the British in Britain, but largely did not extend to the Irish workplace, thus making Sunday the only time for sport in Ireland amongst factory workers.
cultural or religious resistance in Ireland on the Sabbath as other English sports such as cricket or rugby. Criticising Sabbath breakers’ playing golf was an Evangelical Protestant reaction to modernity and its resultant social and economic changes, in an effort to align religion “with ‘respectable’ values in a period of cultural differentiation and class formation,” as Hempton and Hill argue.\(^{106}\) While this resistance ultimately proved ineffective as a measure of controlling Sunday leisure habits such as golf, it nevertheless represented continued efforts by Evangelicals to hold an active and legitimising role in people’s lives at this time.

Debate on Sunday golf found limited resonance amongst players of respectable sports, which golf was seen as. Tellingly, opinions from this period on this contentious matter are found in newspapers rather than advertisements, guidebooks, or trades magazines, where the issue of Sunday sport received little or no attention: in part because they did not often represent venues for social or cultural commentary, but a more convincing reason is that this issue rested at the heart of where (and at what time of the week) the authors of these sources derived income from their intended audiences. As with the game of golf itself, religious attitudes towards the sport were often derived from Scottish precursors. Old Tom Morris, who was born in St. Andrews, Scotland, an area well known for its pioneering relationship with golf, insisted that “no man who is in a position to make Sunday a day of rest will lose anything if he decide on that one day in seven to abandon both work and play.”\(^{107}\) For Old Tom, nature itself also required a break on Sundays: “‘If the players don’t want a rest, the green does.’”\(^{108}\) Aside from treating the Sabbath as a rest day, the game itself was decried as a distraction from religion. The *Weekly Irish Times* circulated a story in 1885 of a bishop from Galway who was “reproached for his love of golf,” including an additional twist to this tale that the devil himself possessed this bishop during his

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106 Hempton and Hill, xi.
107 “Old Tom in the Pulpit,” quoted from the *Scotsman* in *The Irish Times*, 7 November 1902.
108 “Old Tom in the Pulpit,” *The Irish Times*. 
time at play “and greatly discomposed the holy man.” One agitated religious devotee penned a letter to the editor of the Derry Standard in 1890, insisting that if “the Sabbath be surrendered at call of pleasure or of profit the chief citadel of our Christianity shall with it be destroyed,” as train and steamboat whistles signalled religious followers away from the church bell and towards “the excitement of noisy frivolities.” It appears that such opinions were held in the minority by this time; golfers were often disconcerted with these restrictive attitudes towards the sport and repudiated the alleged allegations between golf and Sabbath breaking. The same article from the Weekly Irish Times noted how golfers complained that “‘if there ever comes a fine day, the Sabbath just nips it up.’” Resistance to religious opposition to the sport increased by the century’s end, as will be seen.

This issue became widely publicised when high profile members of Irish society took to the game: as the Irish Times noted in 1902, “[b]arristers, doctors, members of Parliament, even the SPEAKER of the House of Commons himself, have all fallen victim to the Siren of the Links.” The Irish Times also noted how the question was seriously being asked “whether the passion for the pastime, which a few years ago was contemptuously designated ‘Scotch croquet,’ has not arrived at the condition of a public danger which, in the old phrase, ‘has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished.’” It is unclear if the Balfours were accused of Sunday play, but it certainly happened to other politicians of note: religiously speaking, golf was “a subject of first-class importance,” and was raised at the 1902 election for the Solicitor General.

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110 “Railways and Pleasure Boat Companies and the Desecration of the Sabbath,” The Derry Standard, 26 May 1890. It does not appear that this initiative had much effect: four days later in the Standard, an advertisement for Bundoran noted that “[o]n Sunday, the 1st of June, 1890, and every Sunday until further Notice, Cheap Tickets will be issued to Bundoran.”
112 The Irish Times, 3 May 1902.
113 The Irish Times, 3 May 1902.
for Ireland, James Campbell, 1st Baron Glenavy, who held the post from 1903 onwards.\(^{114}\) Campbell quickly responded in a letter to the *Irish Times* addressing claims that he devoted his Sundays to golf, debunking them as “absolutely and entirely inaccurate.” He added this caveat, however: “I have upon some few occasions in a country holiday after weeks of unusual strain in my professional labours played golf upon a Sunday, and I retain my liberty to do so again.”\(^{115}\) Campbell recognised the potential threat to his campaign, but defended his desire to play golf every now and then as a respite from the toils of his profession, a desire increasingly shared by others.

The *Weekly Irish Times*, in a 1901 segment on ‘Society Gossip,’ insisted that the weekend was “a modern institution which makes for merriment, rather than for old-fashioned Sabbath observance.”\(^{116}\) The article suggested this was a new trend, noting how “[s]mart society is always – be it regrettably or the reverse – a decade in advance of the times, and the Day of Rest is now a day of recreation. Golf or croquet in the morning, motoring in the afternoon and bridge at night, are the chosen amusements of our twentieth century Saturday to Monday parties.”\(^{117}\) Even in areas where resistance to the game continued, cunning entrepreneurs introduced ‘Sabbath sticks’ to remedy this problem. Golf clubs bearing a close resemblance to walking canes were simply flipped on end, while a ball hidden in one’s pocket was hastily and discretely driven up the fairway.\(^{118}\) Some courses continued to forbid Sunday play, but others happily catered to “smart society”\(^{119}\) by lifting these restrictions regardless of opposition from the pulpit. Garden Smith’s publication suggested Co. Donegal was at the fore of this movement:

\(^{114}\) *The Irish Times*, 3 May 1902.
\(^{115}\) *The Irish Times*, 3 May 1902.
\(^{119}\) In Scotland, Fife was one of the first regions to introduce Sunday play, although many participants often did not admit to playing (Durie and Huggins, 175).
Here we are amongst pure Celts, and, though golf flourishes, the Scottish element, so abundant in Ulster generally, has been left out of sight, and while the Queen’s Writ runs in Donegal the anathema maranatha of the General Assembly does not, having escaped from its jurisdiction, have more than once engaged on a Sunday with the profane native in a good tussle over eighteen holes.  

As noted, Ulster often followed a Scottish precedent in matters of golf, but Donegal appears to have largely avoided stipulations against Sunday play. Donegal’s increased recognition as a leisure playground appears to have silenced the voice of golf’s critics. Starting with putting on the green, short approaches, and finally entire games, Smith noted how, by 1898, “the genial Sabbatarian strays far from the principles of his forbears.” By the end of the century, it appears that golf’s adherents ignored religious opposition or played their way around it.

**Ladies at the Links: Female Golfers at the Irish Resort**

Resistance to golf came not only from a religious perspective, but also a gendered one. While golf was not overly accessible to the sporting masses, it was surprisingly open to both genders, with ‘lady golfers’ increasingly present by the seaside. The result was an expansion of the social base of the resort clientele, which was central to the wider investment strategies pursued by the resorts’ owners in the 1890s. It appears that women’s access to the sport was contested, particularly in England, where a woman’s shorter drives and greater difficulty with bunkers and hazards led men to criticise their “slow play,” which, coupled with overcrowded English links, may very well have provoked the final element of resistance from male golfers. However, golf’s heavily regulated environment created a “safe place” for female golfers during a

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120 Smith, 244-5. *Anathema maranatha* is derived from 1 Corinthians 16:22: “If anyone does not love the Lord, he is to be accursed.”

121 While surveying the *Derry Standard* and the *Londonderry Sentinel*, I did not come across any negative references associating golf with Sabbath breaking.

122 Smith, 245. As Sugden and Bairner indicate (59), to this day it is almost exclusively Gaelic sport which is played at a series competitive level on the Sabbath.


period when women playing sports was considered taboo. As Richard Holt suggests in the
case of England, women were not granted full access into this male dominated preserve, but they
certainly experienced extensive incorporation at a time when women were often confined to a
spectatorial role. Even if this access was restricted in nature, with shorter tees or separate
courses altogether (reinforcing the notion of golf as masculine), women’s influence over the
sport remained, and continued to grow over time.

In England and Scotland, female golfers hovered at the periphery of involvement in the
sport. In Ireland, however, women played a notably greater role (although it was no less
contented than in England). Writing for the Golfing Annual in 1890, R.A. Collingwood weighed
in as such:

The ladies of Ireland are also taking to the game, but whether this is a matter for
congratulation is a much debated question, at least amongst Irish golfers….For a
time their visits resembled those of angels, but soon their courage and their
numbers increased, and they brought their sisters, their friends’ sisters, their
female cousins, and their aunts….until it became no uncommon spectacle to see
two infuriated male golfers vainly endeavouring to swallow their rage, and as
vainly endeavouring to pass these Amazonian phalanxes. Drastic measures were
vehemently clamoured for, with satisfactory results to golfers of the baser sex,
thought not without protest from the ladies against masculine selfishness.

This passage is illuminating in several respects. While women were initially valued for a visually
appealing change of scenery, their increased presence (associated with slow play) caused the
novelty to wear thin. “Masculine selfishness” may have prevailed, but these Irish female golfers
managed to secure their place nonetheless: many Irish links from their inception had courses for
both men and women. By the turn of the century, women’s access to the sport was certainly
increasing, in a process Walton attributes in England to forms of “middle-class courting rituals,”

125 Higgins, 23.
126 Holt, 83.
127 Vamplew, 365.
which was often indeed the focus of many seaside leisure activities for members of all classes, as people’s expectations were “freer but still bounded by wider notions of respectability and propriety.”

Tricia Cusack’s arguments regarding the respectability of Irish resorts is also important in this regard, as she suggests it “neither became wholly liminalised nor predominantly carnivalised” during the course of the nineteenth century. Keeping this in mind, it could be argued that Ireland’s golfing resorts remained respectable without pushing the limits of acceptability: rather than as spectacle alone, female golfers found a place to compete, even if their relationship to the sport (and to the men playing it) remained on uneven terms. While this certainly indicates the separate spheres that both parties were intended to occupy, Ireland remained progressive for the time: it was not until 1867 that St. Andrews, established in 1552, opened a Ladies Golf Club. It is also possible that economic necessity, given the initial exclusivity of the sport, granted a greater degree of leeway for female golfers in Ireland.

The Golfing Union of Ireland became the world’s first national organising body for the sport in 1891, while the Irish Ladies’ Golfing Union accomplished the same feat shortly after in 1893. Both men and women founded and established the golf course in Bray, Co. Wicklow that was built during the 1890s. William Park’s 1896 book entitled *The Game of Golf* addressed female golfers in the preface: “I hope that the lady golfers will not feel disappointed because they are not specially referred to. There is but one game of golf, and what has been written is applicable to all who play it,” Park suggested. While the exact reasoning is not entirely clear, the Irish were perhaps at the vanguard of this movement, taking pioneering steps to provide a universal golfing experience at the Irish seaside.

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130 Tricia Cusack, “‘Enlightened Protestants,’” 180.
131 Menton, 14.
Irish Inclusivity: Accepting Golf

While golf began as a novelty in many parts of Ireland, and was often associated with non-Irish participants, over time the game was accepted and extended to the Irish themselves as well. The Rev. T.D. Miller addressed this success in an article he wrote for the *Golfing Annual* in 1904, noting that the “virtues which we admire in others we soon begin to cultivate in ourselves, and the apologetic onlooker begins in time to try his own hand at ‘billiards on the green.’”

Golf’s existence in Ireland could not rely on tourist traffic alone: the Irish themselves also had to take to the game in order for golf to remain as a significant sporting presence in the country. Each year more courses were established, and Miller penned with pleasure how “every season gives fresh proof that, besides the two great centres of life and industry, many other towns are waking to the merits and advantages of the game.” Besides the main golfing strongholds in Ireland of Portrush, Newcastle, or Portmarnock, all well known for their pioneering courses of a high quality, and distinguished patronage, little known towns such as Buncrana and to an extent Bundoran also capitalised on the sport’s spread, well utilising their naturally beautiful geographic advantages, which were also well suited to the sport itself. Golf as a leisure activity, then, was a notable spark in Ireland’s tourist industry. Miller lauded this transformation:

> When we see the relish and keenness for golf in Old Ireland, and the crowds of spectators out on the breezy heath, drinking draughts of ozone, inflating their lungs, stretching their muscles, and flinging care to the winds, we cannot but feel that a very substantial measure of justice has been done to that once ‘distressful country,’ in supplying her with so lasting a source of pleasure and recreation not to speak of unity and peace, when her sons and daughters find a substitute in the witching birch and hickory for the once popular and pugnacious black-thorn.

For Miller, a golf club provided the ideal replacement for a hurley, the bat so often associated with unruly violence in the popular Gaelic sport of hurling. Critical assessments of Arthur

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136 Miller, 26-7.
Balfour’s golfing game focused on the man himself rather than the sport. Golf, despite the well-known political figures who played it (both Irish and English) was fairly free from overt politicisation, which is often why it was promoted as a democratic game, despite the exclusivity of the sport by its design. Golf during this period, then, stood for more than a leisure activity, representing a sport where English, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, and even American guests could meet on equal ground with a mutual understanding and respect for a common sporting interest.

By century’s end, golf in Ireland had come to stay. As R.A. Collingwood argued in 1892, “[t]he oft-quoted maxim that ‘nothing succeeds like success’ is as applicable to forms of recreation as to matters of graver import.” He urged Irish golf’s pioneers to bear the truths of this adage in mind, insisting that they recall “the contemptuous reception of their proselytizing efforts less than ten years ago.” While golf’s progress occurred rapidly by the turn of the century in Ireland, initial efforts were often met with indifference at best and hostility from the Irish themselves at worst. Miller noted that some of the Irish peasantry, “ignorant of the advantages to be reaped from the cultivation of golf, if not in open rebellion, at any rate look askance upon the game.” He relayed a story by ways of warning of a golfer who strayed beyond the confines of the Lisfannon course at Buncrana, and was bayonetted with a pitchfork by the land holder for his efforts: a struggle that “was likely to have proved a deadly combat” had members from the clubhouse not diffused the altercation. Miller recognised this event as an isolated event, nothing that in time “some of the peasantry will reap a richer harvest from the links than from their potato patch.” As entrepreneurs recognised the potential for profit,
opinions changed and golf became an accepted leisure activity in Ireland. Collingwood congratulated these golfing pioneers for their dedication:

As they witness the enthusiasm displayed at the numberless competitions, the presentation of cups and medals galore, the erection of commodious club-houses, the rivalry of railway companies and hotel proprietors for their patronage, the newspaper columns devoted to their doings, they must find it hard to realise that, so short a time back, they were regarded as lunatics, though fortunately harmless, both from the absurd form of their mental aberration, as well as from the extreme paucity of their numbers.¹⁴¹

Upon its introduction, golf was not regarded with any degree of seriousness in Ireland. Initially a preserve of external elites from the upper class, golf became a major leisure amenity in Ireland with facets of the game tailored to individuals from every walk of life. It also launched a new era for the seaside resort in Ireland, while simultaneously improving and regulating railway service across the country. Visitors from home and abroad flocked to these new or repurposed Irish coastal resort towns to play golf or to spectate. Within a period of ten years, golf in Ireland was transformed from a peripheral sport to a commodified leisure experience.

“The New Crusade”

A drawing from the 1899 *Irish Tourist* is illustrative of this new and changing relationship seen between England and Ireland during this period. Figure 6 details the results of “The New Crusade” which was taking place by the century’s end. Arthur Balfour features prominently in this image dressed as a knight, with a briefcase containing documents on “Local Government Light Railways,” both causes that he championed. A golf bag graces his right arm, while a book on golf rests under his left arm (perhaps as a nod to Crossley’s *Irish Golfing Annual*). In his retinue, a squire is seen carrying a lance bedecked as a fishing rod. Balfour looks on with curiosity as Ireland’s offerings are advertised to him with representatives from the major

railway and steamship companies selling their services. A diverse smattering of flags from different countries welcome all visitors with the traditional Gaelic “Cead Mile Failte” greeting. What is telling about this image is how all parties met together on even terms. While the English guests look on in a smugly paternalistic fashion, the Irish representatives meet their gaze and return it with confidence. The British Treasury looks on in a stance of half-commitment, only donning the knight’s helm for this particular ‘crusade,’ which proves irrelevant as a mischievous winking man, perhaps a personification of Ireland itself, profits from the treasuries’ purse nonetheless. While Balfour’s role in this tourist development is highlighted by his central
position in the image, the agency exhibited by the Irish themselves illustrates the equalising of positions. This English ‘crusade’ was thus also encouraged and promoted by the Irish themselves, who were well set to profit from this relationship.

“The New Crusade” highlighted the major reasons why golf became so successful during this period. Arthur Balfour is shown as a prominent golfing figurehead in the foreground. Balfour aided in the popularisation of the sport by drawing attention to it during a period when leisure time for the masses was plentiful and new leisure activities were in high demand. In the forty years preceding the First World War, golf also represented one of the fastest growing leisure activities in Britain.\textsuperscript{142} Sports such as golf remained on the periphery until the Victorian and Edwardian ages when they were modernised, organised, standardised, and commercialised for the masses.\textsuperscript{143} For Irish golf, this process was rapid and almost simultaneous, a result of the efforts of the Golfing Union of Ireland, Irish transport networks, and Irish hotels that allowed the sport to flourish countrywide. “The New Crusade” lauded the Irish effort to secure the much sought after British pound, and golf was a major element in this success.

**Conclusion**

Golf, despite a slow spread in the 1850s, experienced a rapid acceleration across Ireland by the end of the century, with 103 new courses established in the final decade, compared with seven in the 1880s. While Arthur and Gerald Balfour did much to popularise the sport during this time, it was the expansion of the middle class and the creation of new leisure time and expendable income that thoroughly cemented the game as an institution in Ireland. The Golfing Union of Ireland standardised the game’s play, while a concerted effort by Irish entrepreneurs saw the extension of railways, steamer lines, hotels, and golf links (amongst other leisure

\textsuperscript{142} Vamplew, 360.
\textsuperscript{143} Neil Tranter, *Sport, Economy and Society in Britain, 1750-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 16.
amenities), along with the infrastructure to advertise these new additions to the Irish landscape. While golf was a contested process, from a religious, gender, and class standpoint, it demonstrated a marked inclusivity by century’s end, notably meeting little resistance to its introduction in the Emerald Isle.
Chapter 2: Deepest Darkest Donegal

Co. Donegal is located in the north-western corner of the province of Ulster in Ireland. Characterised by its natural beauty, it has remained an iconic representation of rural and picturesque Ireland over the years. James MacDevitt, situated in Raphoe, Co. Donegal, published a book called *The Donegal Highlands* in 1866 which outlined the attractions of the region for potential visitors. Despite areas of interest for the antiquarian, the geologist, and the botanist, MacDevitt bemoaned Donegal’s status as “a *terra incognita* to the generality of tourists, although within one hour’s rail of Derry, while it may be reached in eight hours from Dublin, and in about half that time from Belfast.”¹ MacDevitt’s criticism of the touring populace reflected the same arguments that were amplified by the end of the century – that the English, the Scottish, and even the Irish needlessly spent their money abroad for an experience they could just as easily encounter closer to home.² He found solace, however, in the fact that “the old caricature depicting Ireland as a land where nothing is to be seen but fighting, drinking, and superstition, has been taken down from its high place,” and was instead replaced with praise from English journals who “repeatedly recommended our island as one of the most desirable places in the world in which to spend a holiday with pleasure and profit.”³ As Ireland’s natural bounty was made known, its weaknesses were also revealed. MacDevitt was an early critic of Donegal’s hotel accommodation, which, although well taken care of in many areas, was “not all that could be wished” in others. As a consolation for this, he highlighted how the people of Donegal were both “civil and intelligent,” ready to service incoming guests.⁴ Lauding the increase in English visitors to Irish shores, MacDevitt awaited the time when Ireland’s profile as a prosperous nation

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² MacDevitt, *The Donegal Highlands*, ix.  
³ MacDevitt, ix-x.  
⁴ MacDevitt, xx.
would be established throughout England. Making Ireland better known, he believed, would “lead to a wider diffusion of kindly feeling between the two nations, and to other results beneficial to both, especially to our own.”

Marie-Ann de Bovet, a famous biographer, novelist, and travel writer from France, published a travelogue in 1891 based on a three-month tour through Ireland that she took in 1890. While critical of various areas around Ireland, she reserved her sharpest barbs for Donegal, describing it as “the most poor and savage county of poor and savage Erin.” In a country characterised by perceived backwardness, Co. Donegal was often centred out as the least well off in terms of its people, its industry, its landscape, and its culture. Many of these criticisms rested on a general lack of knowledge regarding the county, which was, in the 1890s, “one of the last uncharted tourist districts in Ireland.” Donegal was ripe with tourism potential by century’s end, and tourism advocates and private enterprises, especially railway companies in the case of Donegal, connected their personal agendas of tourist development with simultaneously occurring efforts from Westminster “to promote economic and social improvement and incorporate the coastal fringe within the structures of modern tourism.” Ironically, it was the ‘unspoilt’ qualities of the county that attracted tourists to it.

As the negative stigmas associated with the Famine in the West began to fade (alongside the visual distractions of abandoned homes and farms), the unchanged picturesque scenery once more came into the travellers’ focus, highly beneficial for a region whose future lay in tourism. While Donegal continued to suffer from the attacks of critics such as Bovet for its supposed

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5 MacDevitt, x.
8 James, “Constructing the Donegal Seaside at Rosapenna,” 212-13.
9 James, “Constructing the Donegal Seaside at Rosapenna,” 212-13.
10 Williams, Creating Irish Tourism, 190-193.
backwardness, its status as a natural wilderness was developed into a positive trait. Both Catherine Nash and Angela Mehegan have focused on the transformation of Western Ireland’s landscape into one of the definitive elements representing Ireland itself, a process James coined as “re-sighting.” This new image of the West is essential in relation to both internal and international tourism, and formed an integral element of travel accounts from this period, as Nash demonstrates. This new physical image of the West came to symbolise Ireland’s historic past “through its language, folklore, antiquities, and way of life,” yet one that was also “conceived of as outside time, separated from normal temporal development,” providing a different yet shared cultural experience for internal Irish visitors while simultaneously marketed as the authentic and true version of Ireland to external guests.

The host-guest relationship became increasingly commodified in Ireland by century’s end, particularly so in the West. The terra incognita that MacDevitt highlighted was now exactly what English and Scottish guests sought out: a respite, and a diversion, from their everyday lives. With expansive stretches of coastlines, Donegal was ideally suited for links golf, the preferred variety of course in Ireland. The introduction of new social amenities during this period, as Garden Smith argued in his 1898 publication, “is not far to seek, and it may confidently and safely be attributed to the fact that nearly the entire seaboard of Ireland is peculiarly well adapted to the exercise of the game of golf, and little is needed in the way of preparation beyond the tread of the human foot.” The untouched qualities of seaside landscape so often associated with Donegal and the West of Ireland could thus remain largely unchanged,

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11 James, “Constructing the Donegal Seaside at Rosapenna,” 211.
12 Catherine Nash, “‘Embodying the Nation,’ The West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity,” in O’Connor and Cronin, 86.
13 Nash, “‘Embodying the Nation,’” 87.
14 Mehegan.
15 Mehegan. In many ways guests availed themselves of a comparable resort experience found elsewhere in England, but the picturesque and pastoral imagery of Donegal heightened its allure and mystique.
16 Smith, 224.
with the inclusion of a luxury hotel marking one of only a few visual alterations to the original landscape. Golf courses often encircled these resort hotels “and effectively cut the building off from public intercourse.”17 Golf links along the Donegal coast provided an impetus for tourist traffic while also protecting these lands from development for other purposes, thus aiding in the preservation of the county’s picturesque imagery. As the county modernised with extended and improved transport infrastructures and hotel accommodation by century’s end, its potential as a playground for not only the Irish, but the English, and beyond, was increasingly realised and commercialised.

**Donegal and the Congested Districts Board (CDB)**

Throughout the nineteenth century, Donegal struggled with its industries, which were marginally profitable. James Hack Tuke, a banker and philanthropist from York, sought to remedy this problem. His business and political connections were instrumental in acquiring state cooperation for impoverished regions in Ireland: Galway and Mayo both received his attention, but Donegal was another region of focus.18 Tuke had a series of letters pertaining to Donegal’s plight printed in *The Times* in the year 1889. He also had these letters printed in a book later that year which was published in both England and Ireland, with additional suggestions for developing and improving the congested districts of Ireland, in order to “remedy [their] unhappy condition.”19 Tuke quoted Earl Fitzwilliam on the frontispiece of his book: “If England does not raise Ireland – Ireland will sink England.”20 While he desired to alleviate the plight of the Irish in these districts, he also demonstrated a marked worry that Ireland’s economic misfortunes would

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17 Mehegan.
hamper England as a nation, a common concern throughout the nineteenth century. Tuke joined the cause of other prominent figures from England in this regard, such as Alice Rowland Hart, who worked tirelessly to promote Donegal’s Industrial Fund from 1882 onwards, which was one of the most successful financial relief programs for the Irish peasantry in Donegal at this time.\textsuperscript{21} Regardless of which initiative he favoured, he was highly successful in his endeavours to raise Donegal’s profile.

Tuke identified three major problems with Donegal: unemployment, overcrowding, and inadequate resource management by the Irish.\textsuperscript{22} “How can it be possible to secure a healthy social tone,” he argued, “where thousands of people, not only the poorest, but even those in fairly good circumstances, are living in dark hovels filled with smoke…[?]”\textsuperscript{23} This social tone was essential not only for the Irish themselves, but also for guests visiting Ireland from abroad, who came bearing preconceptions of the Irish. Clearly Bovet was not alone in her application of the “savage” stigma. For Tuke, these problems stemmed first and foremost from unemployment. In Western Donegal, he noted that five out of six residents were “attempting to live on petty holdings of land at or under £4 valuation.”\textsuperscript{24} As their land was unproductive, they had to seek alternatives. In one Donegal parish of approximately 7000 people in this period, 1000 boys and girls aged nine to fifteen were forced to leave Donegal to find work in other counties during the summer and autumn months.\textsuperscript{25} If this exodus (which was often permanent) were to be stemmed, Tuke insisted that the state needed to provide money for tramways and light railways, “which are required if these districts in the West of Ireland are to be easily governed and their slender

resources developed.” Assuming a highly paternalistic stance, Tuke took it upon himself to raise awareness of Donegal’s misfortunes.

Tuke played a pioneering role in the promotion of the Congested Districts Board (CDB). The CDB, which had such a major impact in Ireland during this period, was particularly active in Donegal. After developing publicity for the county through The Times, Tuke was pleased to receive Gerald Balfour’s attention, particularly pertaining to the dearth of railway infrastructure. “The primary measure, and that upon which the success of any other remedial legislation depends, is, beyond all doubt, the development and extension of the railway system,” Tuke argued in his May 28 letter to The Times, adding that “[i]t is everywhere stated to be the measure preliminary to all others for opening up the country.” Tuke thus noted with pleasure that Balfour had drafted a bill specifically for the extension of railway systems, “which for comprehensive grasp of the needs and circumstances of these districts, as well as for generous boldness in dealing with them cannot be too highly commended, and which demands the gratitude and warm support of every true friend to Ireland.” The obstacles were great, as Tuke rightly noted. Railway lines in remote areas of Donegal were highly uncertain investments. This is why it is all the more impressive that he successfully entreated the government to endorse the scheme regardless, with minimal return from the lines (and the possibility of their failure). Speaking not only to the state, Tuke asked “that all minor differences may be put aside and that a united and determined effort may be made by all Irishmen to ensure the passing of Mr. Balfour’s very liberal scheme for the extension of railways in the West of Ireland. Such a measure, if

26 Tuke, 40.
28 Tuke, preface.
thrown out, is hardly likely ever to be offered again to the country.” Tuke’s worries were unfounded: the bill was passed, and rail lines began to weave their way across Donegal.

**The Balfours and the Congested Districts Board**

In 1896, Gerald Balfour spoke to a delegation of the Irish Tourist Association in London. He decried the fact that Ireland’s greatest locations of beauty were also its most congested and financially unstable districts. “If nature had laid the foundations,” he asked the Association, “what could they do to build up the superstructure?” Gerald believed in the development of Ireland, which he thought “was desirable in the interests of the tourists themselves, in the interest of the population, and for the sake of the friendly relations between the two countries.” Ireland’s tourism potential was seen as a remedy for the country’s ills, and the CDB was designed to realize this dream. Founded in 1891, the CDB represented “a form of ‘Constructive Unionism,’ a policy that aimed at ‘pacifying’ Irish agrarian unrest by a combination of coercive and conciliatory measures.” In this regard, ‘congestion’ was a euphemism “for relative poverty stemming from an over-dependency on smallholdings,” as land holdings in congested districts averaged approximately four acres during this period. This board handled rural poverty primarily in the western counties of Donegal, Sligo, Mayo, Leitrim, Roscommon, Kerry and the west riding of Cork, thus representing a new policy where “areas of exceptional distress” were for the first time given special attention. While golf and even tourism itself was not a direct solution to the troubles of these congested districts, it certainly aided their cause, particularly those districts with extensive swathes of coastline. Although golf, in theory, is a year-round

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31 “ITA. Important Meeting in London,” in *Irish Tourist* vol.3.3 (1896), 65.
33 Breathnach, *The Congested Districts Board of Ireland*, 11.
34 Breathnach, 11.
35 Breathnach, 11.
activity, tourism’s restricted season meant that tourism was not an economically feasible alternative for these struggling districts (particularly as its benefits did not always reach those who needed them the most: the peasantry).

The CDB was Arthur Balfour’s project from its inception. In the previous eight years before his election to chief secretary, nine people revolved through this posting, a job he occupied from 1887 to 1891.\textsuperscript{36} The Balfours – undoubtedly influential politicians in both Britain and Ireland – are often given undue credit for their creation of the CDB, a board that was essentially forced into existence after public awareness regarding Ireland’s poverty was raised by prominent visitors to the country, such as Tuke.\textsuperscript{37} Existing systems designed to combat rural poverty in Ireland were decried for inefficiencies, corruption, and a lack of autonomy, which prompted the creation of an entirely new and separate board. Gerald continued Arthur’s work after assuming the post of chief secretary in 1895.

In an 1898 article entitled “Imitation, The Sincerest Flattery; Success, the Best Test,” the Irish Tourist lauded the success of the CDB, an action that created a similar institution in the Scottish highlands to deal with their congested districts.\textsuperscript{38} In Ireland, the article noted how “the beneficent action of the Congested Districts Board have made Mr. Balfour’s name a household word in these regions.”\textsuperscript{39} This was particularly applicable in the case of railways, a cause for which Arthur was especially supportive, even before the establishment of the CDB. A unique source that testifies to his deep personal – as well as political – investment in this initiative is a beautifully illustrated pictorial book that was gifted in 1896 to Arthur Balfour by the people of

\textsuperscript{36} Breathnach, 20. Only two others held the post for a period of this length since the title was created in 1804.  
\textsuperscript{37} Breathnach, 21.  
\textsuperscript{38} “Imitation, The Sincerest Flattery; Success, the Best Test,” in The Irish Tourist 5.3 (1898), 47.  
\textsuperscript{39} “Imitation, the Sincerest Flattery,” 47.
Galway while he toured through the region. In the preface to this book, a representative from Galway (likely from the landed gentry, due to the economic benefit that this class received from these rail initiatives) thanked Arthur for his work in constructing the railway, which provided a marked assistance to Galway’s local economy: Galway’s financial predicament at the time was similar to that of Donegal’s. “The charge of ingratitude is one often leveled at Irishmen,” the anonymous author intoned. “We hope you will not think us deserving of it. Though we fail in expression, believe us, Sir, that we are not wanting in feeling; and that, long after we who have watched the making of the Line have passed away, your name and your good deeds will survive in the grateful remembrance of our children.” The CDB was certainly a success, albeit a limited one, as will be shown. Both Arthur and Gerald Balfour believed that causes of rural unrest stemmed from economic conditions alone. In the long run, this belief had a negative impact on their image and what they tried to accomplish.

A guidebook published in 1900 entitled A New Pictorial and Descriptive Guide to the Donegal Highlands praised the success of the CDB in Ireland. Among the members were Arthur and Gerald Balfour, as well as the Right Honourable Horace Plunkett, an Anglo-Irish Unionist MP, who formed part of the board of directors for the CDB at its inception in 1891. At the time of this guidebook’s publication, approximately £250,000 had been invested across Ireland into light railway lines, and Donegal, “the main seat of the work of that excellent body,” received significant portions of this funding. As Tuke hoped, the majority of this was devoted to light railway lines designed to open up the district. While their income was small (given the

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42 Breathnach, 20.
44 N.A., A New Pictorial and Descriptive Guide, 10, 11.
limitations outlined by Tuke), the CDB was “remarkably free from red tape, and being under excellent local management has already done a marvellous amount of good since its formation.” The board, notably Arthur Balfour, was also successful at persuading the relevant railway lines to commit to a railway extension after they received financial assistance in the form of a grant. The CDB furthered the goals of preceding schemes while also inspiring the establishment of others to further the creation of goods-based rail traffic, such as light-railway acts, and the establishment of the Recess Committee under Horace Plunkett. The CDB tactfully used the available funds to their advantage, while railways at the local level capitalised on the opportunity presented by the CDB, generating a wealth of job opportunities in the district.

Tuke focused on the benefits the CDB would bring for the fishing and agricultural industries, which were certainly realized; however, other notable industries including textiles and quarrying also developed. The highly influential Irish journalist, writer, and nationalist M.P., Stephen Gwynn, also weighed in on the CDB’s success in Donegal: no surprise, given the frequent focus of his writings on Irish myth and tradition, both so often associated with the county. His 1899 travelogue *Highways and Byways in Donegal and Antrim* is a particularly useful source for this analysis. While political writings were his forte, Gwynn consistently returned to Donegal as a theme in his writings, and *Highways and Byways*, composed as part of a wider series on British and Irish travel writings, represents a “travel guide-cum-social history,” as Colin Reid argues. Spending extended periods of time in Donegal as a youth, Gwynn penned

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47 James, *Tourism, Land, and Landscape in Ireland*, 53.
*Highways and Byways* from England “as both an insider and outsider to the worlds which he described in essays and fiction, allowing for distance and clarity as well as empathy.”

Just as Gwynn had ‘discovered’ Donegal as a youth, so his travelogue served as a medium for prospective guests to find their way around the county. And what these guests would discover was an improved Donegal, as he happily noted:

You may also see, what is more encouraging, the results produced by many essays in paternal legislation. The ‘congested districts board’ has been so busy in the west of Donegal that it has generated an adjective: there is a ‘congested’ bridge over the Gweebarra river, ‘congested’ roads carry you over much of the country, and you may meet ‘congested’ fish being hawks all the way from the Bloody Foreland down into Cavan.

While Gwynn’s statements are an exaggeration, they are not entirely fantastical. This funding, which did not represent an enormous sum, was nevertheless tactfully delegated by the CDB, and was well implemented by the companies to which it was assigned. Working together, all parties created a noticeable difference in Donegal’s outlook.

The CDB, although not a universal success, was highly profitable for certain areas of Donegal. MacLaughlin argues that Donegal “has been a social construct, a state of mind, and a collection of sometimes flattering, oftimes patronising images that often had little connection with the realities of life in the county.”

‘Improving’ landlords, business moguls, and politicians were constantly making efforts to better the county. These movements were one-sided, however, and suffered from the constraints of the “paternal legislation” described by Gwynn. While exacting a great degree of independence in its dealings, the CDB’s efforts towards “killing Home rule with kindness” ultimately failed the county as a whole “because it never commanded

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54 Jim MacLaughlin, 7.
sufficient local resources with which to tackle larger problems of rural underdevelopment.”

The CDB’s benefits were spread to the more successful sectors of communities at the local level in Donegal, leaving underserviced regions no better off than where they had began. Particularly relevant for golf, this often meant that areas ideally earmarked for seaside resort towns benefited to a much greater extent. This will be demonstrated for the case studies of Buncrana and Bundoran, two regions in Donegal that were already popular in the 1890s.

**A ‘Society in Transition:’ Rebranding a ‘Backwards’ County**

Gwynn’s travelogue discussed the rich background of history and legend in Donegal. Despite its potential, he argued that it was “a history cherished only in the vague popular tradition of a defeated race, and a legend lore which has never been wrought into famous poetry.” He believed that while Donegal would never be a thriving county in Ireland, it might finally emerge and escape from the negative and stigmatising effects of the Famine: “[A]nd it is in the meantime no worthless appendage of the Empire,” he argued. “While human beings in these islands increase and multiply as they are doing, every year will give an added value to these lonely regions which become the breathing spaces and playgrounds of our laborious race.” After suffering during the Famine years from an agricultural and economic standpoint, Donegal emerged by century’s end as a rejuvenated county.

A major element of this transformation was its effective ‘rebranding.’ Gwynn believed there was no better alternative in either Great Britain or Ireland for “the ordinary man with the ordinary purse, who seeks his pleasure most willingly in some form of open air exertion.”

Without the infrastructure to house these guests, such a “playground” was an impossibility. By

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55 MacLaughlin, 14.
56 MacLaughlin, 14.
58 Gwynn, 4.
59 Gwynn, 4.
the end of the century Gwynn commended the changes that had taken place in this regard:

railways serviced the interior of the county, roads were numerous and improved, inns were proliferating, and there was “a considerable sprinkling of really good hotels.”  

However, for all that had been accomplished, there was still work to do. Gwynn issued a call to endeavour to stimulate desire to go to this playground of northern Ireland and to furnish out some sort of running comment by the way. But the best comment really is what any civil-spoken friendly traveller can collect for himself…. For my own part I had far sooner pitch my tent at one, two, or three of the places by the way where one can fish, play golf, boat, or climb mountains according to one’s inclinations, and above all, where one can make friends. For there are two things in this part of Ireland that never disappoint – the scenery and the people.

Here Gwynn relayed his desire to change the perception of this “playground of northern Ireland.” And the best way to accomplish this, in his view, was by getting visitors to formulate their own firsthand impressions.

The railway guidebook, the *Guide to the Donegal Highlands*, described Ireland as “an ideal holiday ground, whether one goes north, south, east or west; but the nearer the coast the better.” 

Donegal is well situated in this regard, possessing the largest and longest coastlines of any county in Ireland. This nearness to the ocean provided “a delightful sense of space, of pace and rest,” provided by “the special charm of Irish air” known for its “balmy and healthful character.”

While the lack of industry in Donegal was an economic hindrance for the majority of the year, this proved a marketable feature to potential guests. This particular guidebook lauded the absence of factories and their smoke (thus leaving the charm untainted in the Irish air), while also reducing noise and commotion. 

Echoing Gwynn, this guidebook also guaranteed two things: the “finest scenery in Ireland” along the coast, and the easy-going disposition of

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60 Gwynn, 5.  
61 Gwynn, 7.  
Donegal’s inhabitants.\textsuperscript{65} Both of these were essential, because “Irish country towns and villages are not, as a rule, attractive,” the *Guide to the Donegal Highlands* argued: “Some have become popular so suddenly that they have not had time to adapt themselves to the inroad of travellers, and shops and lodging-houses are poor. In many there is an oppressive sense of decay and lifelessness.”\textsuperscript{66}

Such were the stigmas that Bovet highlighted, and that remained in Donegal even by the century’s end when progress towards modernisation became evident. Although, compared to other congested districts, Donegal was in a much better position financially. Guidebooks and travelogues from this period thus demonstrated Donegal’s shortcomings while encouraging guests to ignore them. “But, inhospitable though it looks,” Gwynn suggested, “welcome is ready enough where there are human faces; and desolate as the place seems, it is not so in reality.”\textsuperscript{67} In a similar vein, the *Highlands Guide* invited guests to approach Donegal “in a holiday mood, determined to be interested and amused.”\textsuperscript{68} Donegal was thus as much about individual perspective as it was about geographic landscape during this period: a “dream space,” as MacLaughlin suggests, “a place apart from the modern world, a part of Ulster that was also set apart from Ulster.”\textsuperscript{69} Part of Donegal’s attraction was its timeless nature, its position as a remaining untouched outpost of rural Ireland that remained for ‘discovery’ by the curious tourist. In July 1899, the *Belfast News-Letter* reported that the “romantically ragged coasts” of “Dark Donegal” had “become more than ever alluring and accessible to the tourist.”\textsuperscript{70} While it remained apart from the modern world, as the CDB proved unable (and likely unwilling) to

\textsuperscript{65} N.A., *A New Pictorial and Descriptive Guide*, 2.
\textsuperscript{67} Gwynn, 4.
\textsuperscript{68} N.A., *A New Pictorial and Descriptive Guide*, 2.
\textsuperscript{69} MacLaughlin, 2007, 7.
provide relief for the entire county, the trappings of modern luxuries penetrated deep enough into Donegal to sate the tourist’s desire while providing economic relief, albeit limited, to an impoverished region. The CDB benefited the friends of the tourism development initiative in Ireland, the ascendant middle class, and the tourists themselves who were often from this class as well, more than it brought relief to the Irish peasantry who truly required it.

Golf in Donegal

Golf’s spread in Ireland quickly reached the shores of Donegal. By 1895, the *Belfast News-Letter* reported that the “royal game” was “well patronised” in the county, where five golfing grounds had already been established. While golf clubs and courses had sprung up across the country, writers (perhaps because of this) pointed to the county as a destination particularly worthy of attendance, as a stanza from this poem published in the 1900 *Golfing Annual* suggested:

Though in life our brightest pleasures are in people, not in place,
Yet to none beyond her borders the ould counthry owes her grace,
And I’ve felt old Erin’s magic, and I live a willing thrall,
With her lapping water whisper, Come you back to Donegal.
   Come you back to Donegal,
 ‘Tis the place for club and ball:
Won’t you all come back together to the links of Donegal?
   Oh! the links of Donegal
   Have a charm surpassing all,
Where the loughs and havens ruffle ’neath the dark Atlantic squall.

The author of this verse relied on Donegal’s intrigue, playing on its picturesque and mysterious landscape to advertise the county as a golfing destination. Practical introductions of transport and leisure facilities made this sort of fantasy writing an attainable reality for golfing tourists.

Gwynn, writing on Donegal’s development for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1899, described the

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county as “one of the most beautiful and interesting tracts in Great Britain, but it was also one of the most difficult and expensive places to travel in. Nowadays we have changed all that.”

Gwynn attributed a majority of this success to golf, a sport which “gave an impetus to tourist traffic in Donegal,” proving itself as a “great agent...for opening up the country.” Golf became a part of the landscape, particularly in areas where land had previously sat in disuse: at the opening of the Otway course in Rathmullen in 1896, the Irish Tourist praised the course’s architect for squeezing nine holes “on this wild and rugged spot.” As these areas were transformed and made accessible to the average tourist, the wilderness was ‘tamed’ so to speak, and, more importantly, a discussion was raised on the merits of the county. “The golfer is proverbially a talker,” the Irish Tourist reported in 1897, “and he cannot, however willing, always talk golf. In his weak moments he discourses to his non-golfing friends of the natural beauties of Clare and Donegal, till many Saxons who never read pamphlets have their dense ignorance of things Irish dissipated, and are inspired to visit our shores.” Golf thus served as an agent for tourist development: not only as a sport in itself, but as a medium through which Ireland could be discovered and discussed. Even if visiting golfers did not read the guidebooks or travelogues, as the Irish Tourist suggested, they could rely on glowing reviews spread by word of mouth to popularise the district, which was exactly the outcome that these writers from this period hoped to accomplish.

By the early twentieth century, Donegal’s success as a golfing haven was well publicised, and its courses vied with Ireland’s best for the tourist’s attention. Edgar S. Shrubsole’s book, entitled Picturesque Donegal: Its Mountains, Rivers, and Lakes, was published in 1908 on behalf of

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74 Gwynn, 177.
76 “The Otway Golf Links. Macamish, Rathmullen, Co. Donegal,” The Irish Tourist vol.3.7 (1896), 122.
77 “Golf in Ireland: The Championship Meeting at Dollymount,” The Irish Tourist vol.4.6 (1897), 113.
of the Great Northern Railway.\textsuperscript{78} By 1908, he claimed that the links found in the Donegal Highlands “include some that rank among the very best sporting links in the kingdom.”\textsuperscript{79} These newly established links, whether or not they were truthfully the “very best” in the kingdom, quickly established a reputation for some of the finest golf to be had in Ireland. Gwynn argued that one could enter a series of golfing competitions all around Donegal during the summer season as “a pleasant way of making a tour through this part of the county even if you go no further.”\textsuperscript{80} Donegal was thus transformed from a little known and “backwards” county to a destination. The new transport infrastructures and improved hotel accommodations played an instrumental role in this development. This said, it was not enough to simply attract these guests: something was needed to get them to stay as well. Golf, ideally suited for Donegal’s picturesque and ‘wild’ scenery, helped fill this void by transforming previously idle land into an attractive and marketable asset with enormous economic potential for the region.

\textbf{Conclusion}

By the end of the nineteenth century, Co. Donegal’s position as a county in Ireland was revitalised. The negative effects of various nineteenth-century famines were vanishing, leaving behind the picturesque scenery to predominate the tourists’ perception of Donegal. The county’s remoteness, so long a deterrent to investment and progress, now served as a highly attractive and marketable feature to guests from around the world who sought a rural escape from modern society. Paradoxically it was the influx of luxurious surroundings that facilitated this process, as increasingly comfortable hotels serviced patrons along railway hubs that quickly spread throughout the county, creating easy access from major cities in England and Ireland for the first

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\textsuperscript{79} Shrubsole, \textit{Picturesque Donegal}, 2.
\textsuperscript{80} Gwynn, 313.
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time, a result of both public and private impetus. Donegal was particularly well suited for golf, with expansive stretches of shoreline, and turf virtually ready for the game’s play in its existing condition. While the effects of this period of tourist development were unequally distributed, the county undoubtedly experienced a process of “re-sighting,” as the West of Ireland became an attractive destination for the average tourist. It was through this process that small towns such as Buncrana and Bundoran proliferated in this time, a process that is examined fully in the final chapters.
Chapter 3: Buncrana: The Origins of a Seaside Resort

Located on the east shore of Lough Swilly in Co. Donegal, as Figure 7 shows, Buncrana functioned as a secluded yet naturally endowed resort predominantly known as a bathing locality in the mid-nineteenth century. The reputation of its waters endured even as more amenities were added in subsequent decades, although the focus in place promotion quickly shifted away from bathing amenities. Buncrana’s rise in popularity as a touring destination affirms Butler’s life cycle theory, although the emphasis of this case study is on the latter stages of his life cycle, as this was the focus of my research. Buncrana’s early years as a touring destination developed after a local building company from the town constructed ‘the Swilly’ hotel, which was erected in 1867. At this time, the hotel, in an account of the region from that year, was “well calculated to enhance, among bathers and excursionists, the attractions of Buncrana and its neighbourhood.”

These guests, often seeking Buncrana as a bathing destination, most frequently made the train trip from Londonderry, a major commercial and industrial centre in west Ulster that was, at this point, the shirt-making capital of the world (with production organised on a system that mixed central and dispersed stages of production, incorporating urban and rural, and male and female workers). The hotel was built after the Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway Company (LSR) built Buncrana’s first railway in 1864, making this remote Donegal region generally accessible for the first time, and offering tourists opportunities to tap its popularity as a local bathing site, characterised by good sands and strand (a popularity that was adopted from the much earlier English practice of sea bathing). This can be categorised as the involvement stage, which is the second stage in Butler’s life cycle concept, as the hotel’s construction and the extension of the railway began the process of economic development for the district, while creating and shaping

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the “tourist season” in Buncrana.\textsuperscript{2} Using guest statistics from the Swilly’s visitor book for the years 1891-1903 (see Figure 8), this season is defined for this period between the months of April and October, the months when the hotel was busiest.

\textbf{Figure 7:} The town of Buncrana on Lough Swilly, including railway lines servicing the area

What contributed to demarcating the season at this resort, and to its development? The healthful properties attributed to water played a major role. In his 1888 publication on Irish health resorts Dr. D. Edgar Flinn provided an outline of the “localities most likely to afford health combined with pleasure” located in Ireland.\textsuperscript{3} Buncrana was one of these localities,

\textsuperscript{2} Butler, 7.
Figure 8: Guest Numbers (in hundreds) from the Lough Swilly Visitor’s Book between the years 1891-1903. A ‘tourist season’ has been defined here between April and October.

accessed through a curious combination of light and heavy gauge railways from Londonderry, via the LSR: the “Balfour lines,” granting money through the CDB for light railway lines, were often “constructed in a thoroughly substantial manner” to accommodate heavier trains that were used in part for industrial purposes, thus increasing the practicality of select lines for the LSR.⁴

The LSR worked and maintained the railways in the Buncrana region free of cost to the county, after the CDB supplied initial start-up funds for rail lines.⁵ In fact, as The Times noted in 1890, the 1889 Railways Ireland Act, which came in effect before the CDB, “had deliberately substituted the word ‘resources’ [in the existing legislation] because they foresaw that it would be desirable to open up various tracts of country, not alone for developing the industries of the district but also for developing the tourist traffic.”⁶ The resort attracted guests due to its ease of access – and the “Lough Swilly Hotel, being well situated and comfortable,” was doing brisk

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⁴ Tatlow, 7.
⁵ “Ireland,” The Times, 8 March 1890.
⁶ “Ireland,” The Times, 8 March 1890.
business. While this was the case, Flinn also underlined the comparative lack of tourist amenities in Ireland, compared to England and Scotland, as well as the apparent preference of Irish tourists to travel abroad on holiday. “The only effectual means of combatting this continual exodus,” Flinn argued, “is by straining every effort to render our health-resorts attractive, and providing them with all the necessary adjuncts to make them cheerful and interesting.”

Raising awareness of these resorts to Irish, British and other tourist markets was a critical first step, and was largely accomplished through advertisement in both local and foreign trades journals, guidebooks, and newspapers. That this movement was focused first and foremost on external visitors rather than Irish tourists is telling. The _Irish Tourist_ announced the goal in its first edition to “attract multitudinous visitors to annually sojourn at our health and pleasure resorts, and thus leave with us that historic ‘plethora of wealth,’ which might act as the panacea for Ireland’s ills,” specifically citing the English as the source of this wealth. During this period, the tourist development movement also extended its promotional activity beyond an emphasis on the historic bathing functions of the locality, which also signals ways in which its promoters sought to adopt and adapt both amenities, from accommodation to leisure facilities and advertising, to meet perceived changes in market demand: a key element in Butler’s third _development_ stage, as imported facilities (marketed by external organisations) change a region’s physical complexion.

**Hotel Development: The Lough Swilly Hotel, Buncrana**

Critically in the case of Buncrana, I can chart over the course of the thirty years from 1867 the application of increasing capital in efforts to expand beyond the original bathing

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7 Flinn, 102.
8 Flinn, 10.
9 _The Irish Tourist_ vol.1.1 (1894), 1.
10 Butler, 8.
functions of the resort to establish sporting facilities – in keeping with initiatives that were intensifying elsewhere in Ireland, that were mimicking the standards set in England and Scotland as well during this period.\footnote{Durie and Huggins, 179.} The first hotel company was organised in the form of a joint stock company in 1865, bringing together shareholders in Swilly Hotel Company (Limited) with £3,000; two years later the company was wound up.\footnote{N.A., “Joint Stock Companies. Names, Objects, Places where Business is or was conducted …” (429), HC 1866, vol. 66, p. 99. Seven individuals signed the original memorandum of association for the company.} It was not until 1890 that Buncrana became firmly established as a resort, in no small part due to the rebranding of the primary accommodation in the area – the ‘Swilly’ hotel, and the involvement of another limited liability company in the venture. In 1890 a group of six men purchased the ‘Swilly’ from its previous owners. James McNeil was the chairman, and the remaining five men were Joseph Ballintine, George H. Mitchell, J.P., Thomas Colquhoun, J.P., R. Lee Hogg, and James E. O’Doherty. Together they ran the Lough Swilly Hotel Company, Limited.\footnote{“Lough Swilly Hotel Company, Limited,” Londonderry Sentinel, 5 May 1891.}

While Buncrana possessed a wealth of natural beauty, the Swilly itself was not up to the standard demanded by international guests, particularly British ones, who increasingly expected (if not demanded) luxury hotels fitted with modern and state of the art amenities. A signal decline occurred not long after the heady days of the ‘Swilly’s’ construction, making the hotel inadequate in this regard. According to the \textit{Londonderry Sentinel}, “the days before its ownership became vested in enterprising directors it was a sorry place.”\footnote{“Lough Swilly Hotel, Buncrana,” Londonderry Sentinel, 10 July 1894.} The new owners completely remodeled the hotel, which was redesigned to cater to a wider audience than bathing enthusiasts alone, as this leisure practice fell increasingly out of vogue. On 22 May 1890, the \textit{Sentinel} suggested that Buncrana would be well patronised in the tourist season because of these men,
“who have acquired, enlarged, and, it may be said, revolutionised the Lough Swilly Hotel.”15

The building was expanded with the addition of new wings containing eighteen additional bedrooms and a remodeled reception area.16 Baths were constructed, with a covered passage to protect guests from the elements, and a stillroom and icehouse were introduced to improve the ‘Swilly’s’ culinary department. Lauding the “noble proportions” of its interior design, the Derry Standard argued that the new hotel “worthily crowns, perhaps, the finest site around the celebrated lake.”17 Although electricity was not adopted until 1905,18 the hotel prospered. Even before the golf links were put in place, the new company “showed a most prosperous and encouraging result” during the first eight months that the hotel was open, with a profit of 7% per year reported – a surplus of close to £120.19

Figure 8 illustrates the success of its first years under new ownership – the year after it opened, the number of guests who penned their names in the visitor’s book nearly tripled, and remained high. 611 guests signed the book in 1893 alone, compared to 130 in 1890. A dip in visitors occurred during 1895, as Figure 9 demonstrates. The reason for this dip is not entirely clear,20 although the numbers are uniformly lower than an average year’s guest totals by roughly half, with the exception of July, typically one of the most popular months, twenty two guests compared to 122 for the same month in 1893, as Figure 9 also shows. The average number of guests over this period was approximately 400. For a region with a limited tourist infrastructure only years before, this dramatic increase in guest numbers is telling of the success that Buncrana had (amongst other seaside towns) in attracting visitors where none had previously existed. The

15 “Lough Swilly Railway Summer Train Arrangements,” Londonderry Sentinel, 22 May 1890.
16 “Lough Swilly Hotel, Buncrana,” Londonderry Sentinel, 10 July 1893.
17 “The Lord Lieutenant in the North-West. Enthusiastic Reception. Arrival at Buncrana,” Derry Standard, 1 August 1890. Lough Swilly is a sheltered saltwater loch, although the water is fairly choppy (from my own experience).
19 “Lough Swilly Hotel Company,” Londonderry Sentinel, 5 May 1891.
20 Given Ireland’s reputation for rain, the weather’s role is not entirely out of the question here.
refurbishment of the hotel was critical to the physical extension of the resort’s activities, and to the promotion of the site in language that emphasised the improved character of its amenities.

**Figure 9**: Guest Numbers by month from the Lough Swilly Visitor’s Book for the years 1893 and 1895, representing one of the highest tourist years from this selection, as well as the lowest

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**Alternative Recreation: The Extension of Facilities Through Golf**

What accounted for the upsurge in patronage at this resort? A number of factors must be considered: the availability of capital for investment, the extension of transport, and effective promotion. At the core of its reputation, however, was the hotel’s new links. Various strategies were initiated, with sport at the forefront, in a programme of place promotion that was adopted throughout the UK at this time to encourage guests not only to visit a locale, but stay for longer periods. The new hotel certainly played its role, but the introduction of golf fully launched Buncrana into the *development* stage of the resort life cycle theory, the third stage of the cycle characterised by extensive development: visitor numbers matched or exceeded Buncrana’s permanent population, as advertisements promoted not only the natural and cultural attractions of
the area, but also purpose built facilities, such as the golf course.\textsuperscript{21} Statistics from the ‘Swilly’s’ visitor’s book confirm this conclusion.

It was through the initiative of the ‘Swilly’s’ new owners that the first golf course in the region was built, shown in Figure 10. After a protracted process involving negotiations with tenants who lived on the land where the course was constructed, the railway company, and the hoteliers, a piece of land owned by the hotel was granted for the construction of the nine-hole course.

\textbf{Figure 10}: A mixed foursome is shown golfing at the Lisfannon links while a caddy looks on. The ideal rural state of the links was preserved here by the resident sheep, who likely belonged to a nearby farmer, who served a dual role here as a lawn maintenance crew (in the absence of lawn mowers).

\textsuperscript{21} Butler, 8.
According to the *Londonderry Sentinel* these terms were offered at a favourable price in exchange for playing rights for the Swilly Company’s executives, as well as their hotel guests (although it is unknown what this exact price was).\(^{23}\) From the beginning, free play on the links was included in the price of the hotel stay. It opened in June 1891, and by August the club had already acquired 100 members, including fifteen women, who had their own nine-hole course: based on the visitor’s book numbers, many of these members were likely seasonal summer visitors.\(^{24}\) This success was attributable to the fine course design, which created a links “pronounced by competent authorities to be the finest in Ireland.”\(^{25}\) This second dimension of resort improvement reflected the strategies of capital investment in new amenities favoured by the hotel’s new proprietors, and signalled the diversification of the resort’s role beyond bathing, too. The incorporation of golf links at Irish resorts mimicked the same process that was taking place in England, where by the turn of the century virtually every seaside resort either had its own course or was in easy reach of one.\(^{26}\) This was enabled in part by the expansion of the geographic scope of the tourist market, as transport links improved. Indeed, the 1892 bi-annual meeting for the LSR noted an unusual increase in profits of £203 11s. 2d., which was, “no doubt, largely due to the new golf club…and to the increased hotel accommodation provided at Buncrana by the Lough Swilly Hotel Company.”\(^{27}\) These increases were “all the more satisfactory” given decreases in the profits of other local railways, such as the West Donegal Railway and the Belfast and Northern Counties Railway.\(^{28}\) Competition was fierce, and the LSR


thus benefited from the expansion of leisure amenities and facilities recently introduced in Buncrana.

**Lessons from Buncrana’s North West Golf Club Rule Book**

Recognising the success of the Buncrana Municipal golf links, which was operated by local authorities, competitors in the golfing market quickly moved to emulate their example. In 1891, the North West Golf club was established nearby, south of Buncrana’s links. Municipal links, publicly owned, were more accessible than private clubs like the North West. Both courses were similar in design, and were located on the shore of Lough Swilly. They also shared their connection with the ‘Swilly’ hotel: while guests of the ‘Swilly’ hotel could not play for free at the North West club, they enjoyed the same benefits as privileged ‘visitors’.\(^\text{29}\) While those who could afford to do so could pay to play, the clubhouse was a separate sphere reserved for an elite fraternity of players, maintained by the high entry fee of £11. 1s. for gentlemen with an annual subscription of the same rate subsequently, and 10s. 6d. for ladies.\(^\text{30}\) Higgins demonstrates the importance of the club as a social space for those of shared business or political interests who were also of a similar socioeconomic background, thus reflecting the stratified nature of society.\(^\text{31}\) The Royal Irish Constabulary’s County Inspector Thomas Hayes was a leading member of the North West Club, for instance. In a meeting with various notable golfing authorities in 1891, Hayes noted that the club “was in reality a branch of the [Royal] Portrush, and many members were connected with both.”\(^\text{32}\) In fact Charles Thomson, the professional

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\(^{30}\) *The Golfing Annual* vol. 5 (1892), 227. Just one year after opening the course had “101 Gentlemen, 46 Ladies.”

\(^{31}\) Higgins, 21, 23.

\(^{32}\) *The Belfast News-Letter*, 12 October 1891. The captain at Portrush also helped the North West open their club
greens keeper from Portrush, laid out the greens for the North West.\textsuperscript{33} The North West Club associated itself with one of Ireland’s most elite clubs from the period.

Privileged members at the North West Club included members of the course, members of recognised courses elsewhere in Ireland, temporary members (who were required to reside at least thirty miles outside of Londonderry, and were only allowed to be “temporary” for a period of two months in one calendar year), and visitors, who either had to be introduced exclusively through full members, or be paying guests of the ‘Swilly’ hotel.\textsuperscript{34} Not only were the clubs an expensive supplement to golfing itself, but if one were to obtain the full experience, a club membership (if only to enjoy the benefits of the clubhouse) was almost expected. The North West Club went so far as to serve beverages, alcoholic or otherwise, to full members only: exceptions were granted for guests of club members.\textsuperscript{35} These stipulations exemplify the exclusive nature of the Irish golf club during this period, and undercut, or at least complicate, the democratising aspects of golf’s development in Ireland, although the courses themselves were much more accessible. Golfers could use the grounds themselves, represented through the greens, without the use of the clubhouse, representing its institutional body of users.

Clearly the North West clubhouse offered an attractive social gathering place, but it was a markedly segregated sphere during this time period. Despite being an essential element of the wealthy golfer’s game, caddies (who were usually natives to the area) were not allowed into the clubhouse “on any pretext whatever.”\textsuperscript{36} Inclusion on the green and exclusion in the club was a common element found in golf around the U.K. in this time period: Wray Vamplew’s study on

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{The Golfing Annual} vol.5 (1892), 227.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} N.A., \textit{The North West Golf Club}, 15-17.
  \item \textsuperscript{35} N.A., \textit{The North West Golf Club}, 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{36} N.A., \textit{The North West Golf Club}, 22.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
“shared space” at pre-war British golf clubs provides a similar conclusion.\textsuperscript{37} While golf was perceived as a sport fairly democratic in nature, this did not necessarily apply to its facilities and amenities. The ‘Swilly’ enjoyed a higher status and patronage than other hotels in either Donegal or Ireland at large. This ‘social zoning’ was not indicative of the overall resort experience during this period, where top quality accommodation (and thus higher average pricing) excluded a portion of the ever-expanding spectrum of travellers on a class basis. Efforts to promote the resort reflect the strategies that were used to highlight its ‘improvement,’ and to link it to a wider discourse that drew promiscuously on comparison. As Durie and Huggins argue, “resorts recognized that if they were to maintain their social tone and keep themselves in the top stratum, golfing facilities for the visitor were essential.”\textsuperscript{38}

Dress, behaviour, and the environment that activities within a specific area take place shape ‘social tone.’ In the context of golf, this required orderly proceedings without physical contact: respectable and restrained proceedings, rather than riotous and disorganized behaviour.\textsuperscript{39} The North West Club pronounced an emphasis on “the HONEST Golfer” to replace his or her divots in the course (or at the very least, have their caddy perform this service for them).\textsuperscript{40} This rhetoric was implemented in part by the adoption of the rules from the course at St. Andrews in Scotland, one of the world’s oldest and most elite courses. Deeply seated in a tradition of honour and respect, St. Andrews provided a fitting course for the North West to model their golf links after. Indeed, one of the adopted rules from St. Andrews was called “the honour,” allowing the winning golfer the right to tee off on the next hole in recognition of the superior performer’s

\textsuperscript{37} Vamplew, “Sharing Space,” 360.
\textsuperscript{38} Durie and Huggins, 181.
\textsuperscript{39} Alastair Durie, email message to Evan Tichelaar, September 22, 2014.
\textsuperscript{40} N.A., The North West Golf Club, back cover.
achievements on the preceding hole.\textsuperscript{41} Golf’s early days in Ireland and elsewhere were thus marked by selective play, with participation initially reserved for the upper echelons of society. Mehegan argues that the “retreat by the landed gentry to exclusive, enclosed private spaces had particular relevance against the backdrop of the threat of Home Rule and the establishment of tenant rights by the Land League.”\textsuperscript{42} The clubhouse served as such a haven during a period when the landed gentry in Ireland experienced a loss in their financial and societal positioning. In a short period of time the exclusivity of the clubhouse was undermined as the burgeoning middle classes dominated this sphere, as this class increasingly represented every aspect of the seaside resort, from the seaside, to the hotel, and other leisure activities such as boating and bathing.

**Developing Transport Infrastructures: the Lough Swilly Railway Company**

A marked movement was seen in Ireland to make the country more accessible, not only for the purposes of tourism, but on the basic level of remaining more economically viable with Britain – a call often made to government officials by entrepreneurial members of Irish communities in the North.\textsuperscript{43} During this period, this was increasingly reflected in the development of steamships, notably service from Scotland in the 1890s. Water transportation to and within Ireland via steamers reached the same heights of success as the railways did during the nineteenth century, as steam power and the dredging of canals connected the country while making the trip both faster and more accessible for external visitors.\textsuperscript{44} For the purpose of this discussion, however, this relationship was most pronounced and significant in relation to the railway network, and is focused on railways as such. The Londonderry and Lough Swilly Railway was one of the first Donegal-specific railway companies, servicing Buncrana and its

\begin{footnotesize}
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  \item \textsuperscript{41} N.A., *Rules for the Game of Golf as Played on St. Andrews Links* (Edinburgh: Goudie & Co., 1891), in *The North West Golf Club*.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Mehegan.
  \item \textsuperscript{43} T.W. Freeman, “Buncrana and its Environs,” *Geographical Society of Ireland* vol. 2.3 (1951), 99-100.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Desmond Keenan, *Ireland 1603-1702, Society and History* (Indiana: Xlibris Corporation, 2013), 174.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
surroundings in the county.\textsuperscript{45} Incorporated in the 1850s, it experienced a difficult start at its inception in 1864, requiring government aid to save the railway from extinction. As a smaller railway, servicing “some of the bleakest and most remote landscapes in the whole of Ireland,” as Tom Ferris suggests, the LSR often required loans.\textsuperscript{46} In 1883, for instance, it required a loan from the Board of Works to upgrade several of their lines, and in 1889 they benefited from a government grant for the same purpose. By the 1890s, however, the company was turning a profit.\textsuperscript{47} The fares were low in relation to England and Scotland:\textsuperscript{48} in 1891, a return trip from Derry to Buncrana cost 2s. for first class, 1s. 6d. for second class, and 1s. for third class.\textsuperscript{49} Given its proximity to Londonderry, Buncrana also enjoyed patronage from those who preferred a short trip at less cost.\textsuperscript{50} One of the competitors of the LSR, the Great Northern Railway, offered return fares from Londonderry to the popular resort at Bundoran for the much higher prices of 5s. 6d. for first class, 4s. 6d. for second class and 3s. 6d. for third class (a journey that took three times as long).

Buncrana had become one of the most popular destinations on the LSR line, in no small part due to the new golf links – of 1,110 excursion tickets sold on their line for the first Londonderry general holiday in July 1891 after the links opened, 41% of all passengers (356) went to Buncrana, while 227 (26%) went to Rathmullan, 181 (21%) to Portsalon, and 111 (13%) to Letterkenny.\textsuperscript{51} The LSR arranged a special train specifically for tourists to attend the opening

\textsuperscript{45} Tom Ferris, \textit{Irish Railways: A New History} (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan Ltd., 2008), 115.
\textsuperscript{46} Ferris, \textit{Irish Railways}, 117, 120-1.
\textsuperscript{47} “Irish Railway Returns,” \textit{Derry Standard}, 29 August 1890.
\textsuperscript{48} Tatlow, “Irish Railways,” 8-10.
\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Derry Standard}, 1 July 1891.
\textsuperscript{50} “Lough Swilly Railway Summer Train Arrangements,” \textit{Londonderry Sentinel} 22 May 1890. Their comparatively low price was noted in relation to other companies as well.
\textsuperscript{51} “Londonderry General Holiday,” \textit{Derry Standard}, 6 July 1891. The increase of “general holidays” also expanded the Irish resort’s class basis, as the working class were accommodated through this measure.
of the links in 1891.\footnote{"Local Brevities," \textit{Derry Standard}, 3 August 1891.} This was in keeping with their other relations with the hotel and golf links: the \textit{Londonderry Sentinel} lauded the LSR for its “earnestness in catering for the convenience of the public,” thus indicating the shifting focuses of class to which the railways catered.\footnote{“Lough Swilly Railway Summer Programme,” \textit{Londonderry Sentinel}, 29 May 1894.} This practice of offering “special inducements” was commonplace by the 1890s, as railway and steamboat companies capitalised on people’s desire to travel.\footnote{“The General Holiday,” \textit{Derry Standard}, 1 July 1894.} In 1891, the Swilly reached an agreement with the LSR to offer tickets including rail fare and hotel accommodation, which also included use of the golf course for guests.\footnote{“Lough Swilly Railway Excursions,” \textit{Derry Standard}, 31 May 1895, “Lough Swilly and Letterkenny Railways,” \textit{Londonderry Sentinel}, 26 May 1891.} In 1894, a first class single day return from Londonderry including room and board at the Swilly cost 10s. 6d, while a weekend’s stay from Saturday to Monday cost 20s. Weekly inducements were also offered, including room, board, and daily travel from Londonderry to Buncrana for 58s.\footnote{“Hotels: Lough Swilly Hotel and Baths, Buncrana,” \textit{Londonderry Sentinel}, 9 June 1894.} Considering that the average unskilled working wage in England at this time was roughly 20s. a week, these costs certainly catered to middle to upper class patrons.\footnote{Holt, 77.} The hotel, the golf links, and the railway rapidly attracted a brisk business from this audience, and the emerging transport infrastructure became critical to the resort’s prosperity in the late-Victorian period. These features were also central to the promotion of the district.

**Selling the ‘Swilly’ as a Tourist Destination**

Efforts to position the hotel within a promotional campaign that underscored its new amenities are illustrated by a variety of printed materials from the era. Advertisements for the modified hotel emphasised the diversity and accessibility of leisure activities near the resort; the
Irish Tourist frequently printed advertisements promoting this resort. A close dissection of its rhetoric and imagery illuminates the promotional strategies that its key sponsors and investors, as well as the trade journal itself, championed. While the medicinal baths at the hotel were still mentioned, its new features were highlighted: the recreational benefits of sea bathing were a two-minute walk from the hotel, but by the 1890s the district’s accessibility by light railway was trumpeted, as well as the free use of golf links for guests.

In 1897, a frequent contributor on golfing material for the Irish Tourist writing under what is assumedly a pseudonym (given its golfing connection), ‘A. Divot,’ published a piece about his stay with his family at the ‘Swilly.’ “I am one of those persons who likes to get everything for nothing,” Divot wrote. “I inquired from all my friends where I could find a place which was at once cheap, and which combined bathing, boating, and fishing for my family, and good golf links for myself.” Cost was certainly an important factor for potential tourists. As Butler argues, “the initial selection of the area to be visited by [tourists] was determined by cost and accessibility rather than specific preferences.” Divot’s inclusion of cost as his first determining factor is indicative of guests’ desire to “get everything for nothing,” as he suggested. Ireland was promoted as a destination comparable if not better than its continental counterparts, at a fraction of the cost, in a clear effort to appeal to the domestic market while highlighting the potential savings for guests visiting from abroad. This aided the middle classes’ increasing involvement in Ireland’s tourism industry, as the costs remained affordable and made their holiday time an attainable reality.

58 Irish Tourist vol.4.4, ed. F.W. Crossley (1897).
59 A. Divot, “Buncrana Golf Links (North West Golf Club),” in Irish Tourist vol.4.4 (Special Horse Show Number, 1897), viii.
60 Butler, 10.
Readers of the *Irish Tourist*, including hoteliers and others involved in the sector, for whom it served as a trade organ, were reminded issue after issue of the idea that Ireland had first-rate resort potential at second-rate pricing, lending it a comparative advantage over other sites within the UK. While Divot does not say where he stayed in Buncrana, “because I am not advertising anybody’s hotel,” it is clear that he, with his family, stayed at the Lough Swilly. He wrote a favourable review of the North West Golf Club links, where he noted that the “only fault I have to find with the links is that the scenery is so distractingly beautiful, that it is almost impossible to keep one’s eye on the ball.” Divot praised the ‘Swilly,’ alongside an examination of the hotel’s environs, Buncrana. As Divot intoned, “[t]he village is clean, the inhabitants look well fed and well clothed, and the ‘gentry’ are friendly and hospitable. So what more could we want?”\textsuperscript{61} Divot quickly returned to his master narrative after this aside: “Dear me! that reminds me I have quite forgotten the part of Hamlet. I came to Buncrana to ‘water’ my family and to play GOLF myself. My family is enjoying the water thoroughly, and I am playing golf to my heart’s content.”\textsuperscript{62} While Divot is likely a fictional character, and his response to the resort was very much along the lines of what its proprietors hoped for (and the editorial guidelines of the *Irish Tourist* as well), he does indeed showcase the very real diversification of the resort’s leisure activities and the affordability of local sport that were critical features of Buncrana’s appeal to tourists. Buncrana was now able to compete with the far-famed links and resorts of Britain, each vying for the tourist pound.

“Mentone in Ireland:” International Comparisons of Qualities and Features

The effort to develop Ireland during this period was programmatically promoted by an all-Ireland body, and supported by many members of the 1890s Tory ministries who engaged in

\textsuperscript{61} A. Divot, “Buncrana Golf Links,” in *Irish Tourist* vol.4.4 (Special Horse Show Number), ix.
efforts to fund infrastructural improvement and trumpet tourism as an engine of unionism, firming up fraternal sentiment in the islands in the midst of ongoing debate over Ireland’s status under the Union. Often, this involved flattering comparisons designed to dissuade Irish and British tourists from holidaying abroad, and to encourage them to sample the delights of Ireland instead. The Irish Times, alongside other Irish literature, frequently drew parallels between popular holidaying destinations not only in England, but also in France, Germany, and especially Switzerland.  

Kevin James demonstrates how the Irish Tourist “implicitly relied on the reader’s familiarity with those British sites in order to succeed as a rhetorical device.”

By 1897 these comparisons continued, as evinced through an article titled “Mentone in Ireland” dedicated to Buncrana, which intertwined discourses of comparison and improvement to lay claim to the superior status of its facilities. The author questioned “why English tourists will persist in going to Mentone in France when a climate not dissimilar to Ireland could be readily found.” Buncrana then became a possible substitute for Mentone, as a “charming watering place, which a generation ago had but an indifferent patronage as a health retreat, but is now growing up to become a favourite summer, autumn, and winter resort for the upper and middle classes.”

Underscoring the more elite tone of the Swilly in comparison with other British seaside resorts, the author noted how both the hotel and the resort at large had recently “gained in popularity, and promises to outrival many Continental watering places more pretentious in name.” Here, acknowledging the focus of the resort in the past on bathing alone, the author pointed to the resort’s more vibrant future—once again pitting the Irish resort against its English counterpart, with the Irish resort championed as a superior species, drawing visitors from across the Irish Sea.

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64 James, “A ‘Vice Amongst Tourists,’” 52.
65 “Mentone in Ireland,” in Irish Tourist vol.5.5, p. 106.
who recognised its advantages. “It is not surprising, therefore, that this resort should be growing popular with the well-to-do classes of the English people…. and the number is on the increase,” as the author continued.66 This rhetorical strategy and wider promotional programme were designed to highlight the cachet of the resort, and in some respects sits uneasily alongside the assertions that recreation was to be had there – particularly sporting recreation – at a lower cost than elsewhere. And it relied on comparison, and on framing this expanded leisure resort as a peer of better-known English counterparts, while at the same time appealing to the British tourist as a way of encouraging greater human traffic across the Irish Sea, partly to promote Ireland’s prosperity, but also to effect closer cultural and political affinities between the ‘sister isles’.

Conclusion

Buncrana provides an illuminating case study of resort development at the end of the nineteenth century occurring not only in Co. Donegal, but also around the country. The ‘Swilly’s’ revitalisation in 1890, together with the opening of Buncrana’s first golf links, created a new cachet for this seaside town. No longer focused on bathing alone, and with a first-class luxury hotel, Buncrana vied with destinations of greater size and import in Ireland and further abroad for the tourist’s attention. The North West Club’s rulebook gives a sense of the exclusive nature of its clubhouse, but the golf course and the town itself increasingly pandered to a wider audience of middle-class holiday seekers, while advertisements compared the town with famous international resorts of the period, such as Mentone. The statistics provided from the ‘Swilly’s’ visitor book, although imperfect (and representing just one set of accommodation in the town) illustrates nonetheless the rapid increase in guests that is discussed in publications from the period. This study examines Buncrana at the height of its success, before it entered the

66 “Mentone in Ireland,” in Irish Tourist vol.5.5. p. 106.
consolidation and finally stagnation stages of Butler’s model, as guest visitor numbers peaked and the town proved unable to redefine itself once more after the First World War.\textsuperscript{67} It is thus to Bundoran that this study turns, focussing on another Donegal resort that rebranded itself behind the schedule of many others in Ireland, but nevertheless secured a lasting longevity well into the twentieth century.

\textsuperscript{67} Butler, 8.
Chapter 4: Bundoran: The Origins of a Seaside Resort

Bundoran is the most southerly located town in the Donegal region, and has been a popular seaside resort town since the eighteen century, thus having a longer history than Buncrana as well as a greater influx of tourist traffic, despite its distance from a major population centre. Advocates for Bundoran’s coastline as a tourist destination highlighted the qualities that were said to be exclusive to the region. Bundoran “possesses a climate of remarkable salubrity,” an Irish tourism development guide argued: “the invigorating breeze of the Atlantic being tempered by the thermal influence of the Gulf Stream.”\(^1\) In August 1901, the *Weekly Irish Times* pronounced that “one breath of Bundoran air sweeps the cobwebs from your brain and gives you a feeling of strength and vitality that no other ever did,”\(^2\) making similar health-giving claims to those of Buncrana’s authorities. Bundoran was thus marketed not only as an ideal climate based on its geographic location, but as an area that possessed unique health benefits available to potential visitors should they choose the district as a holidaying destination. Flinn’s publication on Irish seaside resorts had similarly high praise for Bundoran, deservedly calling it “the most favourite watering place on the north-west coast of Ireland.”\(^3\) As Flinn suggested, “[t]he tourist and invalid will here enjoy the invigorating breeze of the Atlantic in all its freshness,” noting the presence not only of “bracing sea air,” but the quality facilities for sea bathing (which was advertised, in Buncrana’s vein, as possessing excellent sand and strand).\(^4\) The Great Northern Railway’s lines ran through Bundoran, servicing the district from all its major hubs around Ireland, but Bundoran was not close to a major city terminus as Buncrana was: “its great

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2. *The Weekly Irish Times*, 10 August 1901
3. Flinn, 100.
4. Flinn, 100.
drawback is its distance from the capital and other populous centres of Ireland.”\(^5\) While Bundoran had two “comfortable and well managed” hotels, in ‘The Terrace’ and ‘Sweeney’s,’ neither received much attention in the advertisements of the day, suggesting that both were of debatable quality.\(^6\)

As was the case in Buncrana, Bundoran was popularised first and foremost as a bathing destination open to all classes. Even as the resort town’s focus shifted, notably to sporting ventures, the connection to the town’s seaside origins remained. The multi-faceted appeal of Bundoran was central to its success. John Walton notes how the fastest growing English and Welsh resorts were those that responded to the “new informal modes of holidaymaking” by adapting and adopting leisure amenities as they came into vogue, capitalising on these new opportunities.\(^7\) While the motivations for visiting the seaside remained similar, “there was a continuing change in emphasis from health to pleasure among all social groups.”\(^8\) As with many areas not only in Ireland, but also in England (which set the standards for leisure practice), a reliance on sea bathing was no longer enough to guarantee an influx of tourist traffic to the seaside resort. Bundoran was locked in Butler’s involvement stage for too great a period of time, having reached the latter forms of the cycle in the consolidation if not stagnation period by the early 1890s, as the resort’s cachet diminished. During Butler’s consolidation stage, existing resort facilities “may now be regarded as second rate and far from desirable.”\(^9\) Bathing no longer held the same pull in Bundoran that it had earlier in the century. If the town was to avoid decline through the stagnation phase, where the resorts’ image “becomes divorced from its geographic

\(^5\) Flinn, 100.
\(^6\) Flinn, 101.
\(^7\) Walton, The British Seaside, 5, 36.
\(^8\) Walton, The English Seaside Resort, 41.
\(^9\) Butler, 8.
environment,” a variety of changes were necessary.\textsuperscript{10} Understanding the need to expand their assets and offerings, the GNR sought alternatives to bathing in order to stay abreast with their local and international competition, many of whom had already taken this step. By diversifying the seaside experience at Bundoran before the resort entered a phase of decline, the town transitioned to the \textit{rejuvenation} stage through a complete change of focus in the attractions upon which its tourism was based: namely golf.\textsuperscript{11} Companies such as the Great Northern Railway made the resort experience all the more attractive to guests, swelling the demand for a holiday by the sea amongst the ever-expanding middle classes.\textsuperscript{12} As the \textit{Derry Sentinel} noted in 1890, this town, with a population of just over 800 inhabitants, was “well patronised from June to September by the residents of Cavan, Monaghan, Fermanagh, and Leitrim, and parts of Tyrone and Sligo.”\textsuperscript{13} Its popularity thus rested not only on external visitors, but on extensive visitation from the Irish themselves.

Commenting on Bundoran’s legacy, the \textit{Belfast News-Letter} suggested that the town was “so popular a watering place and so excellent a fishing centre that its own charms in these respects need scarcely be resung,”\textsuperscript{14} suggesting that the resort was a popular and well-known site. This was in part because of its long history. Both towns were renowned bathing resorts in Donegal, and yet Bundoran benefited earlier on from what Buncrana lacked, notably capital and well-developed (and advertised) transport infrastructures. Entrepreneurs in Bundoran recognized the success of many Irish resorts during the 1890s, and they likely noticed the achievements of Buncrana’s new golf courses. By 1894, Bundoran boasted its own golf links, alongside a new hotel purpose built specifically for golfing guests. The major difference in this case was that the

\textsuperscript{10} Butler, 8-9.  
\textsuperscript{11} Butler, 9.  
\textsuperscript{12} Walton, \textit{The English Seaside Resort}, 43.  
\textsuperscript{13} “Donegal Watering-Places (From a Correspondent),” \textit{The Derry Sentinel}, 17 June 1890.  
\textsuperscript{14} “Through the Donegal Highlands,” \textit{The Belfast News-Letter} 24 July 1899.
initiative was created and sustained by a major railway conglomerate of the time: the GNR. The GNR funded the building of both the course and the hotel, with the express purpose of extending tourist amenities for the district beyond what the attraction of sea bathing alone could offer: this process was repeated elsewhere in Ireland, such as at Bray, Co. Wicklow, with similar results, as K.M. Davies’ study demonstrates.\(^{15}\)

**Hotel Development: the Role of the Great Northern Railway**

As Gray predicted, the new hotel opened on Saturday, 11 May 1895. The building was constructed by the Irish Highlands Hotel Company (IHHC) which, as in the case of Buncrana, took the form of a limited liability company. This case operated differently, however: the GNR’s strategy for their lines was to provide the initial financial backing to such a company, while owning enough shares in the company to appoint the director of its newly formed board of management (which they did, for instance, in 1892 at both Warrenpoint and Rostrevor, two towns in the North of Ireland serviced by their lines: see Figure 12 for further details).\(^{16}\) The GNR purchased £5000 worth of stock to help establish the IHHC in 1894, a company that was created exclusively “to provide suitable hotel accommodation at Bundoran in County Donegal.”\(^{17}\) The GNR was clearly financially savvy in this regard. Although they were attempting to generate revenue at certain areas of their lines that were struggling to create a profit, they did not want to jeopardize the position of their own company through the construction or renovation of hotels under their own auspices. By placing the accountability for failure elsewhere, the GNR enabled the relatively safe extension of their own business, while exerting an extensive level of control in these companies’ proceedings.

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\(^{15}\) Davies, “For Health and Pleasure in the British Fashion,” 35, 36.

\(^{16}\) McCutcheon, 200.

\(^{17}\) McCutcheon, 200.
The IHHC invited “a numerous and influential body of gentlemen” to attend the grand opening of the hotel, and upwards of 150 guests were present.\textsuperscript{18} Notable attendees included the mayors of Belfast, Londonderry, and Dublin; James Hamilton, the Duke of Abercorn; Armar Lowry-Corry, the Earl of Belmore; John Henry Crichton, the Earl of Earne; and James Gray, representing the GNR, to name but a few.\textsuperscript{19} This impressive list demonstrates the high profile of the new hotel, attracting major players from the political and commercial world in both England and Ireland. It also indicates the importance that powerful and influential individuals from the period saw in the Irish tourist movement overall. While tourism during this period was no longer a subject for casual discussion or debate, the fact that these gentleman travelled to this relatively remote location is indicative of the tourist movement’s success in attracting not only these men’s attention for one evening, but the attention of those from a similar class (or those who at least aspired to imitate them) who followed in the ensuing months and years. Additionally, while an article in the \textit{Irish Tourist} openly admitted in 1901 that they “advocate the policy of encouraging British and foreign tourists,” it also addressed another element in the tourist development cause: “We want the Irish tourist, too. Emigration is a sad business, but migration is excellent.”\textsuperscript{20} As such, this same article argued that “it is the duty of every Irishman and Irishwoman to visit the beauty-spots of their own country before patronising any other country.”\textsuperscript{21} The importance of civic pride, ceremony, and duty for the Irish themselves also characterised this movement by the century’s end.

The mayor of Dublin at the time, Valentine Blake Dillon, gave a lengthy address on the importance of the new hotel to Ireland. Dillon lauded “the development of that latent industry

\textsuperscript{18} “Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran. Public Opening on Saturday,” \textit{The Derry Standard}, 13 May 1895.
\textsuperscript{19} “Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran,” \textit{The Derry Standard}, 13 May 1895.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.8.1 (1901), 2.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.8.1 (1901), 2.
which exists in her lovely scenery and the attraction to the country of tourists and travellers of all kinds looking for pleasure or health,” a statement that drew applause from the audience. He praised the efforts of the Irish Tourist Development Association (ITDA), which was a development syndicate founded by Crossley in 1891 to unite parties interested in Irish tourism, for its work in evolving Ireland as a tourist resort, and asked the hotel and railway owners to lend their full cooperation to the ITDA’s efforts. Bundoran’s example as one of the best new hotels would raise the standard of quality, so that other hotel owners in the country “would be forced to fall into line with the improved system.” However, his most fervent belief, and his concluding desire, was that “Ireland, instead of being the battlefield for political parties, would become the playground for the English people.” Dillon’s closing remarks, which earned him an ovation, are indicative of the sentiments held by various English and Irish politicians from this time period. For Dillon, the hotel was more than a building, and the juxtaposition of ‘battlefield’ and ‘playground’ was no accident in this regard. It represented a principle, a boon not only for Bundoran, but for all of Ireland, and the hotel’s opening was a chance for Dillon’s voice to reach beyond the assembled guests as an articulation of the tourist development ideology in Ireland. However, as James has noted, while tourism development was championed by the likes of Dillon and others, it “was no great motivator of broader political consensus,” and the sentiments of these politicians should thus be treated with caution. The work of Gray and entrepreneurs like him is what truly spurred on the development aspect of tourism during the 1890s.

James Gray also spoke to the 150 assembled ladies and gentleman, but his speech had a different tone. For Gray, as a representative of the GNR, Bundoran’s hotel was a business

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22 “Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran,” *The Derry Standard*, 13 May 1895.
23 Furlong, 19.
24 “Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran,” *The Derry Standard*, 13 May 1895.
venture and he contended that “the company felt [that the] more facilities and inducements to travel were given the people the more likely they were to use the line.”26 Here Gray pointed to the very practical measures taken by the GNR and other major commercial players from this period that responded to consumer demand in an effort to diversify their services. While Gray acknowledged that part of the goal of the GNR was “to bring every part of the country into close connection with each other,” his first priorities were “to make progress and to keep abreast of the time.”27 Here the gulf between Dillon and Gray’s discursive construction of tourist interests and the purpose of tourist development are stark. While Dillon’s appealed to loftier and more ideological sentiments, the ideas held by Gray, the GNR, and other industry motivated actors were profit-driven and practical according to their specific needs and responding to the changing popular tides at the local level. Specifically for Bundoran, the town required rapid rebranding to stay abreast of competing seaside towns in the area: as the Derry Sentinel noted in 1890, the industries in Bundoran were “few and unimportant, the town depending for support mostly on its summer visitors, of which there are many hundreds every season.”28 Gray and his ilk capitalised on the opportunities indirectly provided by proponents of constructive unionism, particularly through the CDB in Donegal, by piggybacking on the new infrastructure financed by the British treasury for the West of Ireland. While this was a protracted process, Ireland increasingly developed into England’s playground outside the auspices of a political agenda. For those involved in its practical day to day economy, the greatest concern was attracting guests, filling hotels, and turning profits: something its golf links aptly accomplished.

In 1897, the Irish Tourist commended the “almost perfect” state of hotel accommodation in Ireland. “It is necessary that it should be so,” the article argued, “in order to keep pace with the

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26 “Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran,” The Derry Standard, 13 May 1895.
27 “Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran,” The Derry Standard, 13 May 1895.
28 “Donegal Watering-Places (From a Correspondent),” The Derry Sentinel, 17 June 1890.
times, and to uphold the present popularity in Ireland as a tourist resort.” This feature length article focused on the success of two Great Northern Hotels: Warrenpoint and Bundoran. In a matter of years, Bundoran had proved an “unsurpassed” success. James Gray reported that in its first year of operation, the Great Northern Hotel’s forty bedrooms were occupied for the whole tourist season, and advised the IHHC to expand the number of available bedrooms to facilitate the resort’s new popularity. The GNR’s financial backing of the IHHC certainly proved a success. In 1895 the GNR purchased an additional £4000 in stock in order for the IHHC to improve the Beach Hotel at Warrenpoint, thus expanding the company’s influence, while 1896 saw an additional £2000 for the expansion of bedrooms in the Bundoran hotel, along with salt-water baths, indicating that both hotels were proving successful. By 1897 the Bundoran hotel’s structure was altered and enlarged to accommodate forty additional bedrooms, responding to demand and furthering the resort’s appeal: after this action was completed, the Irish Tourist remarked that the Great Northern Hotel “now vies with any in the kingdom.” After surveying the continued success of the hotels both at Warrenpoint and Bundoran, in 1899 the GNR purchased both properties from the IHHC for a sum of £29,000. This action by the GNR represents Bundoran’s return to the crucial (and profitable) development stage of the resort life cycle theory, as external funding superseded local involvement from an economic standpoint. Initially the GNR did not want to jeopardize their own business with a failed venture, but both hotels had proved their worth. As such, the GNR’s purchase was a calculated manoeuvre designed to protect their present holdings while securing future revenue. In addition, by sharing

29 “The Great Northern Hotels,” The Irish Tourist vol.4.5 (1897), 103.
30 The Irish Tourist vol.2.4, 17.
31 McCutcheon, 200.
32 “The Great Northern Hotels,” The Irish Tourist vol.4.5 (1897), 103.
33 McCutcheon, 200.
34 Butler, 8.
the name of an established railway with the network of hotels, the cachet of the GNR’s was
associated with new hotel enterprises (albeit a hotel initially run by a separate company). The use
of the same name for all hotels also represented an early example of brand association through a
chain of institutions characterised by similar architectural design as well as a heightened quality
of service.

Adopting Alternative Recreation: The Extension of Facilities Through Golf

From the Great Northern Hotel’s establishment in Bundoran, its golf links were one of
the primary features of the resort itself; they are pictured in Figure 11. The hotel was built into
the landscape of the green itself. The nine-hole links was constructed on Bundoran’s seashore
under the guidance of G.L. Baillie, co-founder of Ireland’s oldest golf club, the Royal Belfast,

Figure 11: The golf links at Bundoran. In a fitting juxtaposition to the photo at Buncrana, a
much larger crowd is present at the links, including a well-represented contingent of female
spectators.
and a founder of the Portsalon course as well. Once again the GNR played a key role in this development, helping establish not only these links, but also such notable clubs as the Royal Dublin and Portmarnock, as well as a links at their other hotel in Warrenpoint. Visitors to the hotel were granted use of the links for three free days during the course of their stay, after which time a payment of 2s. 6d. per week was required. As suggested in 1895 by the Golfing Annual, “[i]n a short time the green will take rank as one of the best in Ireland.”

Sure enough, by 1896, Arnold Graves (a frequenter of the Portmarnock course) listed Bundoran amongst “the better known first-class courses, where golfers can obtain comfortable accommodation” in the Irish Tourist: a fine list to be included in, naming some of Ireland’s best known courses at Portrush, Newcastle, Portsalon, and Portmarnock. Already a popular seaside destination, the establishment of the new golf links transformed Bundoran’s tourist potential yet again.

Bundoran’s links and golf club were both instituted into the Golfing Union of Ireland in August, 1894, just a few months after opening. The new greens were so popular that 94 members, each paying an £11. 1s. entrance fee, and the same amount annually, were enlisted into the new clubs ranks in a matter of months (these figures were identical to the amounts paid at the Buncrana clubhouse). Intriguingly, the Duke of Abercorn, James Albert Edward Hamilton, who was one of the notable figures present at the hotel’s unveiling, was the club’s first president. Hamilton, a British Unionist, was surrounded by a host of other non-Irish surnames in the club’s upper ranks. Even though golf had become increasingly popularised in Ireland, its early years remained firmly under the patronage of a non-Irish community of elites at the organised level.

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35 The Golfing Annual vol. 8 (1895), 154.
36 Tom Plunkett, Golf in Donegal, 1899-1935 (unpublished manuscript, used by author’s permission, 2010), 1.
37 The Golfing Annual vol.8 (1895), 154.
38 The Irish Tourist vol.3.2 (1896), 31. Buncrana was certainly as well established, if not as famous as these courses during this time.
39 The Golfing Annual vol.8 (1895), 154. While I have not found evidence to substantiate this, it is entirely possible that these fees were predetermined by the Golfing Union of Ireland
40 The Golfing Annual vol.8 (1895), 154.
Similar to the case in Buncrana, the sphere of the golf clubhouse remained exclusive. Golf was expensive enough as it was, and the high entrance fees at the Bundoran club (and subsequent annual fees) maintained this division. The course, however, remained open for all, even if the luxuries of the clubhouse were reserved for a select few. It appears the clubhouse at Bundoran, then, resembled that of the Buncrana club, not only in terms of cost, but also its membership. Outside the clubhouse, Bundoran itself remained highly accessible, however, maintaining the inclusivity that defined the town from its early days.

**Developed Transport Infrastructures: The Great Northern Railway**

The GNR was a pioneering force in the Irish railway industry, representing a major reason for the influx of capital to the locality in an effort to expand this resort’s appeal. The GNR was the product of an amalgamation between the Northern Railway Company and the Ulster Railway Company in 1876: the Ulster Railway Company, already a prosperous business in its own right, “was not to be drawn into any such scheme easily or without the assurance of due financial recompense.” 41 The scheme laid out by the new GNR was characterised by consolidation of existing railways and standarisation of rail cars, rail lines, and uniform time schedules, which attracted rival railways to become a part of the GNR railway network. With rail lines running all across the country, as Figure 12 shows, the GNR was an important company from this period. The volume of traffic on their lines illustrates this: between 1890 and 1905, the GNR saw an increase of £256,435, or 36%, in overall traffic receipts from all sources of income. To compare, between 1890 and 1900, the average increase of traffic receipts for any Irish railway company was 19%, putting the GNR at the upper level of this spectrum. 42 In 1905, the GNR’s average annual income per track mile was £1,819, compared with an average income

42 Tatlow, 9.
from all other Irish railways of £1,079.\textsuperscript{43} Considering it had nearly doubled profits in relation to other railways, the GNR had clearly established itself by the late nineteenth century as a major force on the Irish transport scene, simultaneously balancing both goods and passenger traffic across their lines.

\textbf{Figure 12}: Great Northern Railway Map: bold red lines show the extent of the GNR railway lines. Green flags indicate GNR refreshment rooms, while purple flags (at Bundoran, Rostrevor, and Warrenpoint) show GNR hotels.

\textsuperscript{43} McCutcheon, \textit{The Industrial Archaeology of Northern Ireland}, 113.
These successes did not come easily, however: they required judicious planning and execution. On 17 August 1894, for instance, the GNR held its bi-annual shareholders meeting. The chairman of the GNR, James Gray, addressed concerns centred on a dip in railway profits: while the stock for the company’s overall lines was up 6% that year, at an increase of £9,087, certain areas in the North of Ireland were operating at a loss (although he does not specify exactly where). One of his major assurances for GNR shareholders that this trend would reverse was the promising progress of the new Bundoran hotel. Gray pinpointed the hotel’s completion for the winter of 1894/5, but noted that it would not accept guests until the new spring tourist season, suggesting that “when it is opened this and the golf links that are being laid out there will attract many people to the place and over our line.” While golf played a minor role in Ireland only a few years prior, by the mid 1890s, it was almost a required luxury for any destination worthy of recognition. Gray noted the draw that golf now possessed, indicating its significance for drawing patrons to the GNR lines: just the sort of news its shareholders wanted to hear, particularly in the context of temporary dips in profits while other companies, such as the LSR, were profiting from heightened tourist traffic.

The GNR was open to any opportunity to advertise their lines and increase rail traffic. On 24 July 1894, it hosted a conference for the Railway Managers of the United Kingdom at their central terminus in Dublin. While this conference was intended to remain centered in Dublin for its duration, the managers of the GNR insisted that the conference attendees embark on a three-day voyage through the North of Ireland at the GNR’s expense. A journey of this sort not only reflected positively on the GNR’s generosity, it also brought the United Kingdom’s most

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44 *The Irish Tourist* vol. 1.4 (1894), 99.
46 “Great Northern Railway Company,” *The Derry Standard*, 17 August 1894.
important railway magnates along sections of their lines that were not turning a profit. As the

*Irish Tourist* remarked on this matter,

> [t]he creating of a good impression regarding Irish tourist resorts with any of these gentlemen means an increased traffic for Ireland, and their influence in rendering such places popular is very evident. The Great Northern Railway Company – always alive to the interests of ‘Irish Tourist Development’ – did not lose sight of this fact. It is hoped that the English and Scotch members of the Conference have carried back with them to their respective districts favourable accounts of Ireland’s attractiveness, and so aid in the movement we have so much at heart.\(^{48}\)

Crossley and other members of the Irish Tourist Development Association would not be disappointed. Through the enterprise of the GNR, remote areas along their lines were popularised through advertisement and place promotion until they, too, became profitable. By providing the necessary infrastructure (such as a hotel) along its lines, the GNR created the reality of an attractive destination for guests, and a profitable venture for itself.

**Branding Bundoran: Selling the Great Northern Hotel as a Tourist Destination**

Responding to external competition from competing resorts, Bundoran’s image needed a programmatic rebranding through a variety of media to promote its new facilities and leisure amenities, focused around the new hotel. If Bundoran was to exit the *consolidation* stage of Butler’s life cycle theory, this necessitated heavy advertisement. The town required advertisements focussed not only on the new attractions of the district, which were pivotal to a resort’s *development* phase, but also ones that shifted attention away from the towns’ previous sites of accommodation and leisure activity.\(^{49}\) The IHHC was prompt in developing advertisements for the new hotel. After its unveiling in May, the first announcement for the new hotel appeared in the June edition of the *Irish Tourist*. Below a photograph of the hotel picturing men golfing within steps of the hotel’s front door, a paragraph of text lauded the “delightfully...

\(^{48}\) “Conference of Railway Managers,” *The Irish Tourist* vol. 1.4 (1894), 101.

\(^{49}\) Butler, 8.
situated” location, “close to a delicious strip of sand somewhat apart from the neat little village of Bundoran, in the midst of lake, river, coast, and mountain scenery, as picturesque as it is varied, romantic, and distinctive.”\textsuperscript{50} The hotel was presented as distinct and separate from the town of Bundoran, itself an isolated destination. Tourists (specifically referred to in the advertisement as the target audience) could thus ‘discover’ a remnant of remote and picturesque Ireland on their holidays. The incentive to do so was the hotel itself, providing guests with recognisable comforts. The hotel was constructed in the early Tudor style, as the Bundoran postcard shows, complete with gabled windows, and the forty bedrooms, side rooms, dining, smoking, and sitting rooms were “furnished up in quite a luxurious fashion.”\textsuperscript{51} Understanding their guest’s country of origin (which most often was England or Scotland), the IHHC erected a building that was both familiar in architectural style and well suited to the demands of the elite traveller, mimicking the early Tudor style in symmetrical layout and extravagance. In an 1895 article by V. Hussey Walsh, a correspondent to the \textit{Irish Tourist}, Bundoran’s hotel was listed as a destination “where almost every want can be satisfied.”\textsuperscript{52} By 1897, the \textit{Irish Tourist} suggested that Bundoran now had “everything that modern science can suggest or supply for the comfort of tourists or visitor.”\textsuperscript{53} In the past, this lack of luxury was one of the major disincentives for travel in and around Ireland, a specifically salient issue in Co. Donegal historically speaking. The \textit{Irish Tourist} noted how the “finest scenery in the world was nothing without a good hotel in the foreground.”\textsuperscript{54} This was especially important for international guests, who expected a high standard of quality wherever they travelled. The \textit{Irish Tourist} and other publications promoting

\textsuperscript{50} \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.2.2 (1895), 41.
\textsuperscript{51} \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.2.2 (1895), 41.
\textsuperscript{52} V. Hussey Walsh, “Ireland as a Winter Resort,” \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.3.7 (1896), 125.
\textsuperscript{53} “The Great Northern Hotels,” \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.4.5 (1897), 103.
\textsuperscript{54} “The Great Northern Hotels,” \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.4.5 (1897), 103.
Bundoran responded with rhetoric that was applied to virtually every resort at this time, insisting upon the unique offerings of each respective locality.

**Bundoran for Everyone: Class Origins of Tourists to the Resort**

In the literature on Bundoran, there is a much greater emphasis (when compared with Buncrana) on Bundoran’s accommodation for all comers. This study focuses on the Great Northern Hotel, which was the best hotel in the district, but this building was, of course, new at the time, and the town itself had a longer historical pedigree as a bathing site. As noted by the *Irish Times* in 1902, the Great Northern Hotel “brings one into social touch with Dublin and London,” which is a telling example of artistic license on the part of this particular author. The advertised “social touch” was primarily reserved for those who could afford the comforts of the separate spheres in town, such as the clubhouse, and yet this social experience was advertised as an experience anybody could attain if they visited Bundoran. The article commended the Great Northern Hotel for its success in creating “a favourite stopping place with the tourists of all nations,” which in essence described the elite tourists who could afford this hotel. They also mentioned, however, that “[t]here is every accommodation, and at reasonable rates.” The *Weekly Irish Times* pointed out the aforementioned ‘Sweeney’s’ and ‘The Terrace,’ where guests could find suitable lodging (if not at a similar standard of luxury to the Great Northern Hotel).

Additionally, alternative accommodations for those unable to afford a hotel of any standing were provided at reasonable rates, reflecting the existence of different amenities at different price points. As such, Bundoran was highly accessible: the *Irish Tourist* described Bundoran as “the most fashionable watering-place on the north-western coast of Ireland,” and that during the

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55 “At Bundoran,” *The Irish Times*, 8 September 1902
56 “At Bundoran,” *The Irish Times*, 8 September 1902
summer season, “people of all classes, from the nobleman down to the bourgeois, flock to this charming seaside resort.” Bundoran was a well-marketed example of a successful Irish resort town. The Great Northern continued to fill its rooms (even after doubling in size), but the market of opportunity allowed for other hotels and alternative lodging houses to experience comparable success as well. While exact visitor numbers are uncertain, by many accounts guests of all classes were “numerous from May to September.” It is possible that Buncrana attracted fewer visitors because its accommodation was not as inclusive compared with Bundoran’s, who attracted a much larger portion of short-term stay lower class guests. After the ‘Swilly’ reopened in 1890, the Derry Sentinel encouraged capitalists from Derry “to build a number of additional houses for summer visitors” in order for the town to compete to a greater degree with other resorts in the area, but it does not appear that this occurred. Unfortunately no visitor data is available for Bundoran in the absence of a visitor’s book or similar, but the literature from the period emphasised its inclusive nature.

“Brighton of the North:” International Comparisons of Qualities and Features

Just as Buncrana was referred to as “Mentone in Ireland,” Bundoran shared a less exclusive title as the “Brighton of the North,” a comparison that was widely disseminated in the press of the period, and not just for Bundoran. This moniker became attached not only to Irish resorts, such as Bray, Co. Wicklow, Newcastle, Co. Down, and Kilkee, Co. Clare, but also a variety of resorts in British colonial lands further afield. Brighton’s status as a premier resort in England lent a familiarity and legitimacy to resorts that adopted it, even if the resort did not boast

59 The Irish Tourist vol.9.5 (1902), 5.
60 “Summer Holiday Resorts. Bundoran,” The Weekly Irish Times, 10 August 1901
61 “Lough Swilly Railway Summer Train Arrangements,” The Derry Sentinel, 22 May 1890.
63 Cusack, 170, 182.
the same established history, comparative size, or range of amenities (as was the case in Bundoran). Marie de Bovet’s 1891 account satirised Bundoran’s status as “another ‘Irish Brighton,’ – another ‘queen of watering places,’” noting the overuse of the title, although agreeing that the “wearied tourist may make an agreeable halt at Bundoran.”\(^6^4\) By at least 1891, then, the title of ‘Irish Brighton’ became associated with the resort, and the GNR certainly capitalised on it, using the title in advertisements from the period.\(^6^5\) “The Donegal hotels are doing splendid business,” the \textit{Irish Tourist} noted in 1900. “The tourist routes through this magnificent country are growing in popularity. The management of the Great Northern Railway recognise the importance of cultivating the tourist traffic, and they are going the right way about doing it.”\(^6^6\) Not only were their hotels named after their successful railway, the GNR also developed these comparisons of well-reputed international resort destinations (making the same connection to Mentone with their two other hotels in Rostrevor and Warrenpoint as advertisements for Buncrana did).\(^6^7\) As was the case in Buncrana, advertisements also highlighted that while these locales shared similar features, the Irish counterparts could be experienced at a lower cost. Small wonder then that Bundoran, already a popular tourist destination before the arrival of the luxury hotel and golf links, quickly prospered during the mid 1890s, and established itself once more as a favourite Irish resort destination for tourists from both home and abroad.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Unlike Buncrana, Bundoran’s resort town was already a highly popular destination before the start of the 1890s. Despite this success, those concerned with Bundoran’s economic future as

\(^6^4\) Bovet, \textit{Three Month’s Tour in Ireland}, 252.
\(^6^5\) \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.6.5 (1899), advertisements
\(^6^6\) “Jottings,” \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.7.6 (1900), 81.
\(^6^7\) \textit{The Irish Tourist} vol.6.5 (1899), advertisements
a touring resort recognised the need to redefine the town out of financial necessity. In 1894, in what was likely a calculated response to hotels and golf links like the ‘Swilly’ in Buncrana, Bundoran responded to the changes taking place through a programmatic rebranding of the resort’s cachet, particularly emphasised through the introduction of new facilities, which were subsequently heavily advertised in all manners of popular press from the period. Both towns did not possess a single “timeless attractiveness” that would ensure a steady influx of visitors, or either town’s ability to handle these visitors, as Butler argues,\(^6\) and yet the pressures of increasing external visitation were managed effectively at this time. The work accomplished by the GNR is particularly notable in this regard, as they created through their own initiative, or through the assistance of a third party, the necessary addendums to the Bundoran resort experience. Golf became a defining adjunct of the Irish seaside resort during the 1890s, and with the introduction of the new links at Bundoran, in conjunction with a luxury hotel befitting the needs of the wealthiest tourists, witnessed with the Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran once again became a top tourist destination in Ireland.

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\(^6\) Butler, 9, 10.
Conclusion: The Success of Irish Golf

Despite its late adoption in Ireland during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, golf had come to stay by the turn of the twentieth century. The ten years between 1890 and 1900 witnessed the largest golfing expansion in the country’s history, as a handful of courses increased tenfold during this time. There are many reasons for this success: golf established a global following wherever the British had colonial ties, a movement experiencing incremental growth on an international scale during the 1890s. In Ireland, an increasingly prosperous middle class with expendable leisure time and income sought out the fashionable leisure experiences popularised by elites in Ireland, such as the landed gentry, who often took to golf as a respite from everyday tasks, particularly in a relatively settled phase of Ireland’s agrarian unrest.

Important figures in this regard were Arthur and Gerald Balfour, Scotsmen by birth who both led illustrious political careers that were both characterised by their affinity for golf in their spare time: behaviour that attracted mixed reviews in the press from the period. While a select few dissidents criticised their play as a distraction from their political duties, others saw the ‘Golfours’ as a major impetus for golf’s success in Ireland. In the 1907 Golfing Annual, one Mr. Donald Ross penned a poem to this effect:

For long the sister nations from golf held aloof,
For its charms and its merits they ne’er put to the proof,
Till the magnet of a Balfour drew all eyes to sense and sight
Of the life-giving game in which his soul took delight.

Then England and Ireland went for golf heart and soul,
And through hazards and o’er bunkers found their way to each hole,
Until they made such strides in their knowledge of the game
That Bonnie Scotland trembled for her prestige and fame.

Now Old Ireland, defiant in her own island home,
Trails her coat in the dust to all golfers that come,
And the sons of Merrie England have not been idle the while,
For in many raids on Scotland they have carried off the spoil.
If the men of other nations took kindly to the game
Then peace o’er the earth its mission would proclaim,
And the heads of each nation at war’s arbitrament would scoff
While they settled their disputes with a quiet round at golf.¹

Here Ross exaggerated the effects of the Balfours’ involvement in golf’s progress, who were certainly influential, but did not undertake a concerted effort to promote the sport. Ross also echoed the sentiments of an 1891 article in the *Belfast News-Letter*, which suggested that “as a means of creating harmony and good feeling among people of diverse views, golf was of the greatest possible benefit.”² Writers of the time often provided rose-hued interpretations of golf’s rapid success, championing it as a bastion for international harmony.

A more realistic article from the *Belfast News-Letter* in 1895 attempted to explain the success of “‘golf mania’” taking place, noting how many prominent figures in English and Irish society “have of late caught the [golfing] ‘fever’ very badly, as some call it. After all, it is better than cricket, for there is less standing still, and it is superior to mere pedestrianism, because you do not get too friendly with your opponent while sharing his society over the links.”³ Certainly, as a sport, golf provided a desired alternative to existing popular recreations during this time. This ‘mania’ can be attributed to a much more complex series of events taking place simultaneously in the 1890s, however. While the ‘Golfours’ certainly played a role in this development, the Golfing Union of Ireland, established in 1891 at the very beginning of golf’s expansion in the country, formed a crucial institutional body working to not only standardise the playing of golf across the country, but also facilitate and encourage its rapid growth. This was done by encouraging famous players to play on Irish links, while inviting spectators to share in

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¹ Mr. Donald Ross, “Golf,” in *The Irish Golfing Annual* vol.20 (1907), 99.
² *The Belfast News-Letter*, 12 October 1891.
this social experience at the same time. However, these patrons required transportation to get to these destinations, which were often located along remote areas of the Irish coast. The GUI stimulated railway development on the part of major Irish railways, which was part of a larger programmatic effort during this time, at both the local and national level, to make these remote and rural areas of Ireland accessible. As this thesis has demonstrated, however, it was the concerted efforts of entrepreneurs, rather than proponents of constructive Unionism, that were primarily responsibility for the success of tourism development in Ireland.

This project focused on the Congested Districts Board in this regard, which was also established in 1891 in response to petitions designed to reverse the plight of ‘congested’ or unviable districts raised by concerned British philanthropists such as James Hack Tuke. A major element of the CDB was railway expansion, and Buncrana was one of the first regions to receive financial assistance in this regard. The CDB, although designed to alleviate crippling poverty in regions such as Co. Donegal through the introduction of various industries, often benefited areas that already were already experiencing a relative degree of economic success. While the CDB did provide opportunities in industry for some impoverished Irish peasantry “who would otherwise be congested in the worst sense of the term,” as The Times noted in 1898, the development of tourism proved to be one of the most important (albeit indirect consequences) of the CDB’s work in the region. This also demonstrates the uneven effect of economic relief for counties such as Donegal, given tourism’s summer seasonality and unpredictability as a source of income. The county’s inexpensive prices were an important element of its allure, however, with the Irish Times noting in 1896 that “Donegal is an excellent place for low living and high thinking.” Writing for the Pall Mall Gazette in 1899, Stephen Gwynn insisted that Donegal

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4 “Irish Tourist Development (from a Correspondent),” The Times 23 August 1898.
5 “Ireland for Tourists,” The Irish Times 22 February 1896.
possessed the same variety of attractions that might be found in Scotland, but “without the Scotch prices and with the chance of sport added.” This concerted process of rebranding or “re-sighting” Donegal took place throughout the nineteenth century, experiencing a marked degree of success by the final decade. An important element of this success, from the golfing tourists’ perspective, was the provision of modern amenities for the course of their stay: specifically through the golfing hotel. As Garden Smith pointed out in his 1898 publication, “golfers are not all Spartans, and some have a luxurious and epicurean side to their nature.” By this time, Donegal’s hotel and transport infrastructure had developed to a comparable standing with the rest of Ireland, and indeed the rest of the United Kingdom (and further afield). R.A. Collingwood noted in the 1892 *Golfing Annual* that English and Scottish golfers, “weary of crowded links, and the too frequent cry of ‘Fore!,’” sought less crowded golfing greens in picturesque and rural environments. Smith assured readers with pleasure that a full week (if not more) of golf could be had in Donegal alone, “if the visitor is keen enough for it,” penning with surprise that “it almost requires the convincing production of an atlas to prove this to those who have travelled in the South of Ireland and are acquainted with its people.” No longer perceived as a backwards rural county mired in the aftermath of the Famine, Co. Donegal during this time became a well-established and fashionable destination for tourists of every persuasion, both English and Irish.

This thesis focussed on two small towns in Co. Donegal: Buncrana and Bundoran. By analysing these two case studies side by side, a more complete depiction of the changes taking place in the tourist development of Co. Donegal during the 1890s is possible. While both of these case studies broadly fit into Butler’s life cycle model, the absence of a data set for Bundoran’s

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7 Smith, 234.
9 Smith, 244.
visitor numbers during this period is an issue, and, more importantly, the focus of this projects’ research (between 1890 and 1900) excludes a focus on the initial and final stages of Butler’s approach. Both resorts are considered in this thesis over a continuum, but their entire life cycle, including their eventual decline, falls outside the purview of this project. This said, both case studies affirm his argumentation on a resort’s incremental development over time, and a project with a historical focus examining each step of his life cycle would prove a fruitful exercise. In the existing historiography, case studies of Irish resorts are often considered as standalone phenomena. Comparing both of these Donegal resorts highlights differences between the two while allowing for stronger argumentation and a greater understanding of seaside resorts in the north west of Ireland. This also allows for broader connections to be made, and this thesis highlights the place of these towns within the purview of tourism development occurring across the country at this time.

Donegal thus became a focused area well known as a golfing haven patronised by not only the British tourists, but also the Irish themselves. While the tourist development movement in Ireland initially focused on external visitors, there was an increasing push “to make the country in a new sense ‘Ireland for the Irish,’” as the Irish Times suggested in 1896.10 Part of this process included the appropriation and acceptance of golf within this framework. In stereotypical fashion, Smith noted that “[i]n truth the Irish, though of a character versatile and exceedingly brilliant, seemed very unlikely ever to become subservient to the calm stoicism and hardheaded philosophy which golf demands from its votaries.”11 Smith did not see traditional Gaelic sports as “legitimate athletics,” and thus was surprised by the success the Irish demonstrated in golf.12 While initially a preserve of an external elite, golf became a much more inclusive activity within

10 “Ireland for Tourists,” The Irish Times, 22 February 1896.
11 Smith, 222-3.
12 Smith, 223.
a short span of time, in a process that was comparatively uncontested. Unlike Gaelic sports, and especially other English sports such as cricket or rugby, golf largely escaped negative stigmas in a country with a turbulent sporting heritage, which was particularly unsettled during this period of study. Golf has truly become an “international pastime” over the last century, and in Ireland, “few nationalists would denounce it as a foreign game.”13 Golf was, and is, not just a sport – it is much more, and as this study has demonstrated (in contrast to older literature on the place and space of sport), golf is thoroughly enmeshed within complex notions of identity and leisure in Ireland and beyond.

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13 Sugden and Bairner, 70.
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