

And so began...

Elm Park Golf and Sports Club

Club Foundation

ELM PARK GOLF AND SPORTS CLUB WAS FOUNDED IN 1925 by Louis McMullen, a well-known Dublin auctioneer. He persuaded a group of gentlemen, formerly members of the recently defunct Stillorgan Park Golf Club to join him in establishing a new country club in South Dublin.

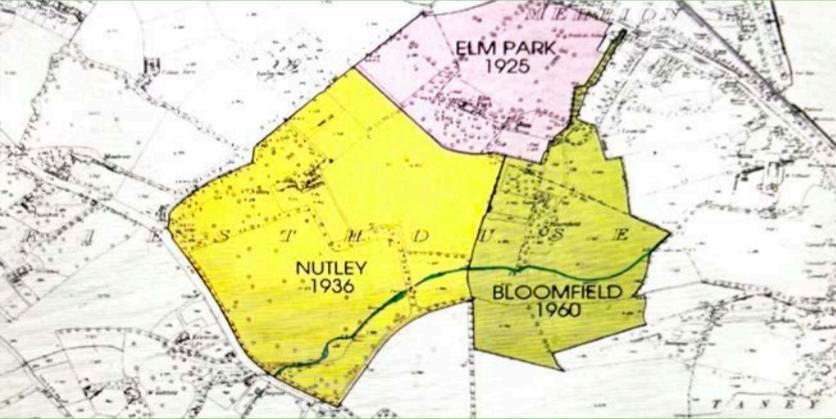
They held their first meeting on 29th October 1924 and this was re-enacted on 29th October 2024 in the present Club premises, Nutley House.

The members of the original committee were: Dr. David Jackson, Alfred Dickie K.C., H.J.Molony, B.L.M. Walsh, E.J. Kilduff, J.F. McMullen and C.E. Done.

Elm Park Ladies 1928



Members and officials 1928



Initial home and facilities of the Club

Louis McMullen was interested in Elm Park House, Merrion, a Georgian mansion with twenty two acres of parkland together with a farm and considered it to be well suited for his purposes as it was located near the main tram and rail routes into the city.

His initial plan was to have a 9-hole golf course, eight tennis courts (Including two hard courts), and a Badminton Hall; facilities would include, Tea Rooms, a Billiards Room, and Dining and Drawing Rooms where Bridge could be played. He obtained a lease on the property in 1924.

Membership & Subscriptions 1936

The first home of Elm Park Golf and Sports Club was in Elm Park House. Initial membership comprised 145 gentlemen and 204 ladies. The annual subscriptions in 1931 were as follows:

- Club membership: 2 guineas
- Club and Golf: 4 guineas
- Club, tennis and badminton: 4 guineas
- Club and tennis: 3 guineas
- All sports membership: 5 guineas.

OUR LINKS LETTER
ELM PARK POSSIBILITIES

(BY L. H.)

THE big luncheon of last week at the new Elm Park Golf and Sports Club has been fully reported and needs little comment from me, beyond expressing how enjoyable it was. The president of the club, Dr. H. Jackson, very kindly showed me over the clubhouse, which is a very fine building that has been adapted to the needs of a golf clubhouse in a very efficient manner. Whatever the club may develop into, it is primarily for golf, and by its golf it will stand or fall. Therefore the committee has wisely provided all the needs of a golf club, the locker arrangements being adequate and well carried out.

Members can reach the locker rooms without having to go into other parts of the house first. A wise arrangement is that of having the bar down beside the locker rooms. The kitchen, lavatory, ladies' rooms, etc., are all first-class. The dining-room is spacious and handsome, as are the two lounges off the hall. One may say that the comfort and convenience of the members is assured. Numerous hard and grass tennis courts will be provided, as well as badminton courts. Inside the house are two excellent billiard rooms with plenty of light.

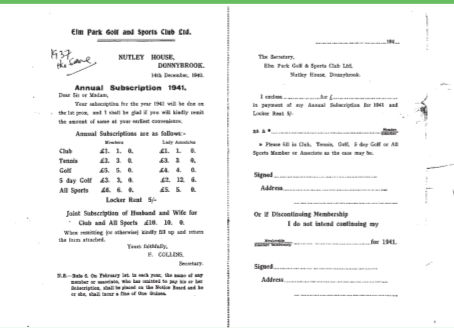
THE COURSE.

Unfortunately the deluge on the day of the luncheon prevented anyone with incipient "flu" from venturing over the course. This has been in the charge of Mr. P. E. Davies, who may be relied on to do good work. At first the idea was to have 12 holes, but this was wisely altered to 9, the available ground being better suited to the latter number. Dan Mahony, late of Skerries Club, is the professional and greenkeeper; and he takes the greatest interest in his work. The new club is the only attempt so far as a general sports club in Dublin, but in Co. Dublin we have Woodbrook on the same lines.

Elm Park should not be long in filling up, and those joining now obtain much better terms than will be the case later on. The tennis and badminton courts will be a great attraction, as will be the commodious clubhouse and the easy accessibility of the club. The committee is an influential one, and the captain, Mr. A. Preston, is a highly popular golfer.

Some years before the war I visited Elm Park with a view to studying the possibility of golf, but conditions were not then favourable. Mr. McMullen, the present owner, is to be congratulated on turning the place into a sports club in preference to building plots.

The Irish Independent, Feb 2 1925



Membership form for 1941

Dr David Jackson

1st President of Elm Park Golf and Sports Club

- Well-known GP at 84 Ranelagh Road
- Held in very high esteem by colleagues and friends
- Described as having a kindly disposition, a cheery manner and a wide breadth of view through having worked abroad in Lagos and the Gold Coast
- He was a former member of the defunct Stillorgan Golf Club and was said to have been the life and soul of that Club.
- He died from cardiac failure in 1929 at aged 63, and is buried in Mt. Jerome.

Golf Course Evolution

- The initial course in 1925 consisted of nine holes, designed by Fred Davis on the lands of Elm Park House .
- In 1936, when the Club moved to Nutley, they retained four of the original holes on Elm Park lands and added five new holes within the Nutley estate.
- In 1941 the Sisters of Charity agreed to lease some additional lands within the Nutley Estate to the Golf Club and this was sufficient to provide a further seven holes.

- Two additional holes were made possible by leasing a section of the adjacent Bloomfield property which was owned by the Rourke family who had a well-known bakery in Dublin.
- Elm Park was now an 18 hole golf course, a situation which continued until 1955.

- In 1955 however, the nuns sought the return of the Merrion lands. Elm Park House was now demolished and the hospital was taking shape
- In 1960, Elm Park Club successfully completed negotiations for the purchase of the 32 acre Bloomfield property including the house, which was in decay. The development was funded by loans from members, a loan from a Building Society and the recruitment of new members. The property was completely overgrown and a lot of the heavy preparatory work was done by members of the club.

- A new 18 hole course layout was agreed.
- Separately, 4.5 acres surrounding the 4th and 12th greens were held on a temporary lease from the Pembroke Estate. In 1973, the Club bought out these leases and in 1985 purchased the freehold interest.

- In 1995 a further 2.25 acres adjoining the 11th and 12th holes were purchased from the Sisters of Charity with the help of members' bonds.
- The lands at Nutley continue to be leased by the Club.

A time of turmoil for the Club

Louis McMullen who leased the House and lands from the Earl of Pembroke on behalf of Elm Park Golf and Sports Club ran into financial difficulties and in 1933 he was obliged to lease it to the members of the Club. They too ran into financial difficulties and the Estate was sold to the Irish Sisters of Charity as the location for a new hospital. The Club ceased to exist at the Merrion site on 1st January 1934, just eight years after its establishment.



Dolphin Hotel advertisement

The Club fights back

The Committee resolved to stay together and made their base in the Dolphin Hotel in Central Dublin. They formulated a scheme to raise money in order to purchase a suitable site and copies of the pledges made by members at that time are in the Club Archive. The Club's Golf section remained active during this period and arranged regular outings to local golf clubs.



Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Alfred Byrne

Elm Park Golf & Sports Club Ltd

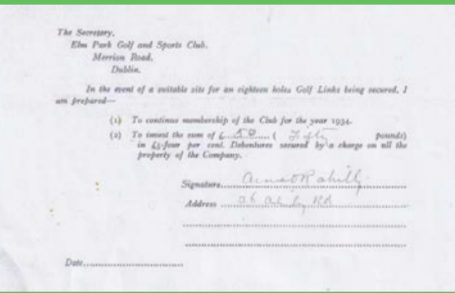
The Elm Park Golf and Sports Club, Ltd., Stillorgan Road, will be reopened shortly. The old Elm Park course and a portion of the Nutley Estate having been purchased by St. Vincent's Hospital, the hospital authorities have leased to the club some 50 acres, on which a 9-hole golf course will be constructed. The area leased includes 4 holes of the old course and 5 new holes will be constructed on the Nutley portion of the estate.

The spacious residence of Nutley House, formerly occupied by the late Judge Madden and then by the late Mr. J. J. Hill, is being converted into an up-to-date club house.

Tennis courts, both hard and grass, are being laid down in the extensive grounds attached to the residence, and it is hoped to add, in the near future, a first-class bowling green and squash racket court.

The club has been registered as a Limited Company under the title of Elm Park Golf and Sports Club, Ltd.

The Irish Independent, Dec 9 1935 - The Club re-opening announcement



Aine O'Rahilly's debenture pledge

A chink of light and a permanent home

The Irish Sisters of Charity had also purchased Nutley House and grounds immediately to the west of Elm Park Estate with its main entrance on the Stillorgan Rd. They found, at a certain point in time, that it was surplus to requirements and it was leased to Elm Park Golf and Sports Club in 1936.

The official opening of the re-established Elm Park Golf and Sports Club was performed by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alderman Alfred Byrne in June 1936. The Club has remained at Nutley (with the entrance relocated to Nutley Lane) to this day and continues to thrive with a current membership of over 2,500.

History of Elm Park Estate, Merrion

Location and extent of the property

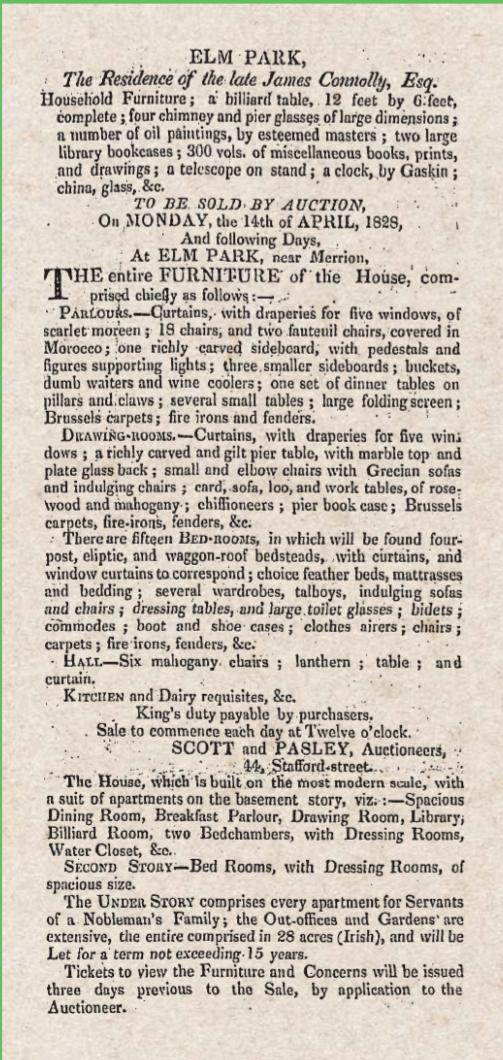
ELM PARK HOUSE WAS AN IMPOSING GEORGIAN MANSION with 25 rooms, 22 acres of parkland and a farm. It originally formed a substatntial part of the vast estates of the Earl of Pembroke and his family.



Elm Park Clubhouse 1928

Previous owners

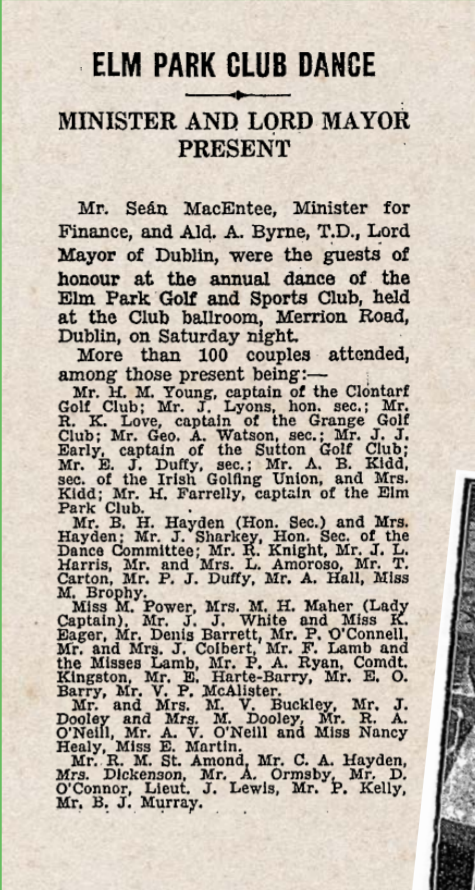
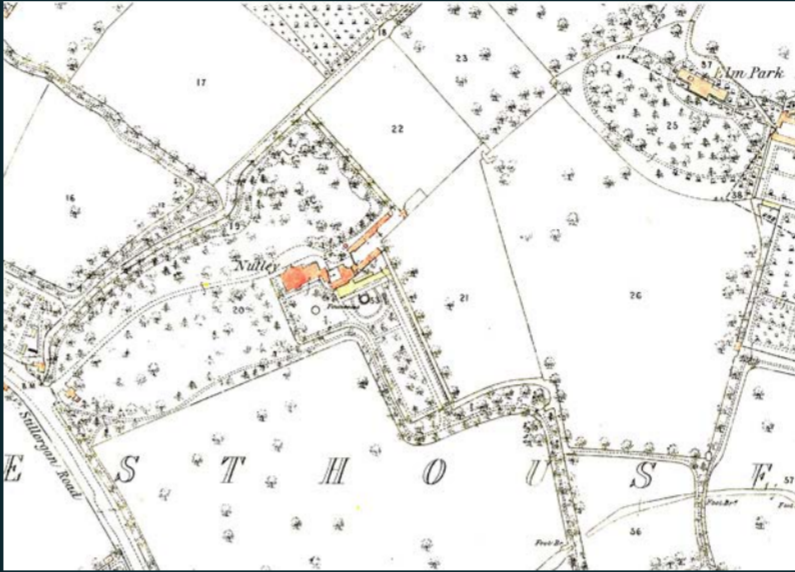
- 1 The first recorded owner was James Connoly, a brewer, who was granted a lease dated 1813 at a rent of £150 p.a. He was active in the Dublin Brewers’ Association and signed a petition opposing any reform of the Penal Laws. An Ordinance Survey map of 1867 shows the land divided into Elm Park and Nutley Estates.
- 2 The second owner of Elm Park House was Joseph Watkins, also a brewer, who purchased the estate for the sum of £3,250 in 1845 (so it was no longer being leased).
- 3 The third owner was Thomas, 4th Baron Ffrench who lived there from 1873 until his death in 1892. He was a member of a well-known Catholic family from Galway and was in favour of Home Rule. His wife, Lady Mary Anne, inherited the estate and lived in Elm Park until her death in 1916. Both are buried in the Pro-Cathedral in Dublin.
- 4 The next owner was Louis McMullen who acquired a lease on the estate in 1924 and this facilitated the foundation of Elm Park Golf and Sports Club which had been his dream.



1828 notice of auction of contents of Elm Park House

Located on the Merrion Road, opposite what is now the Merrion Inn, it had a Gate Lodge at the entrance and the house was approached by an avenue lined with elm trees - hence the name of the house. The extent of the property and how it related to Nutley House can be seen in the image, below, from the Ordnance Survey showing Elm Park House and Nutley House.

1867 Ordnance Survey map of Nutley House grounds, west of Elm Park estate



Report from dance at Elm Park Golf and Sports Club in 1932

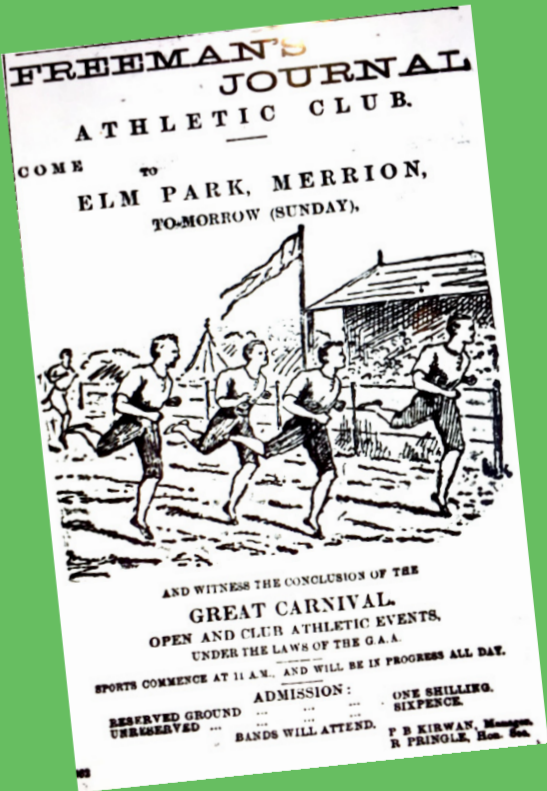


Tennis Players O'Grady & O'Leary at Elm Park House

Varied uses of the Estate

Baron Ffrench, who lived there from 1873-1892 was very generous to the Gaelic Athletic Association and allowed them to hold football matches and social events on the lands at Elm Park. There are records of GAA games played there between ‘Limerick Commercial’s and Co. Meath and a hurling match between Counties Galway and Wexford. There was even talk of the GAA purchasing the estate, but in the end the site at Jones’s Road, now Croke Park, won the toss.

During World War I the British War Office set up a Command Grenade School in the Elm Park Estate to train troops. It is said that indentations showing an outline of the trenches may still be seen in sections of the golf course today.



Elm Park Merrion 1928



Replica of newspaper advert



History of Nutley House

Origins of the House and Estate

NUTLEY DEMESNE WAS ORIGINALLY PART OF THE EXTENSIVE estates of the Earl of Pembroke and was included in the Elm Park Estate. The Ordinance Survey map of 1843 shows it as a separate entity. It included pleasure grounds, gardens, orchards, kitchen gardens and home farms.

The House was commissioned by George Roe, c.1820, owner of George Roe & Co. Distillery in the Liberties. The architects are reputed to have been Richard Morrison (1767-1849) and his son, William Vitruvius Morrison (1794 - 1838).



Roe's Distillery, Liberties



Ninian Niven's gardens at Nutley House



Edward Granville, Lord Lieutenant 1853-55

Distinguished guests of George Roe at Nutley

The daily newspapers of the day reported on the visits of many distinguished and international guests to Nutley House for luncheons and receptions. They included: **The Lord Chancellor 1846-1852** (Sir Maziere Brady)

The Lord Lieutenant and his wife 1853-1855 (Earl and Countess St Germans)

Daniel O'Connell - who was succeeded by George Roe as Lord Mayor of Dublin in 1843

Her Majesty Queen Victoria - following her visit to the Great Industrial Exhibition in 1853, she is said to have remained in Dublin after her husband and sons returned to England and to have done George and Mary Roe the honour of visiting them in their home at Nutley

Queen Victoria, 1838, painting by Thomas Sully Metropolitan Museum, New York



Entertainment at Nutley

George Roe's wealth allowed him and his wife Mary to entertain lavishly and to travel widely. There is evidence that two regimental bands were employed to entertain guests on the lawn at one and perhaps more than one of the many receptions hosted by the Roes in Nutley House. That same lawn is now the putting green at Elm Park Golf and Sports Club! George Roe died in 1863 and is buried, with his wife, in Mount Jerome Cemetery. Their tomb was recently restored at the request of an Elm Park member (Beatrice Doran) with funding from Diageo.



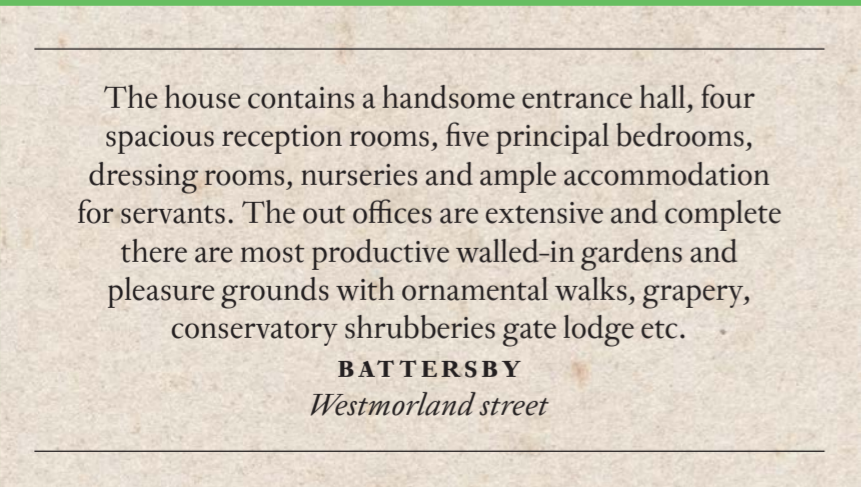
The original main entrance to Nutley was on the Stillorgan Road with a 'handsome set of gates' and a Gate Lodge, *very much in keeping with the mansion to which it leads"*

The House

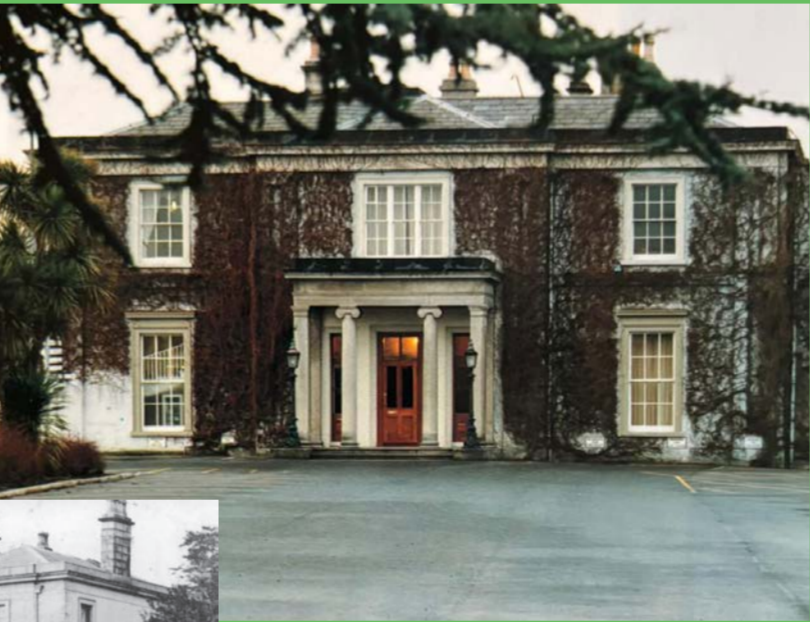
Nutley House is an early Georgian house with typical features - an iconic portico entrance and Georgian style windows as well as high ceilings, especially on the ground floor, and a beautiful cantilevered staircase curving upwards across a window in a small side hall.

Ninian Niven, Director of the National Botanic Gardens and a distinguished botanist was engaged by George Roe to design the gardens and the demesne has been described as '*one of the finest demesnes in the county of Dublin - it was planted and kept with exquisite taste surrounding a mansion furnished in a manner with which a duke might be satisfied*'.

Nutley House for sale 1878 -a year after Mary Roe died



Nutley house sale Irish Times February 14 1878



Front view of Nutley House



Rear of Nutley House. showing the original conservatory, to the right of the house



Later Occupants

Rt. Hon. Dodgson Hamilton Madden, Solicitor-General for Ireland 1888-1890 later Attorney General for Ireland and a judge of the Irish High Court, and also Vice-Chancellor of Trinity College Dublin. His book Madden on Deeds remains the standard work on the subject.

Herbert Sharman Crawford occupied Nutley from 1925-1927.

The owners from 1927 were **Francis Lillis** and **F. Thompson**, who sold some land in the area now called Nutley Park, and some more on the main Stillorgan Road, both lots for housing.

Nutley House was bought by the **Irish Sisters of Charity** in the mid 1930s and leased to Elm Park Golf & Sports Club in 1935 and the Club moved to its new headquarters in January 1936.

